

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Evaluators' Briefing.

1. **A proposal should correspond to the topic against which it is submitted.** This means that the work should address the specific challenge, and fall within the specified scope, set out in the work programme. If a proposal fails to do so in any meaningful way, the proposal will be considered “out of scope”, will not be evaluated, and will be rejected.

If part of the proposal addresses the topic in question, then the proposal is considered to be “partially in scope”. In this case the proposal is evaluated, but the score for the first criterion (Excellence) will be limited at a level broadly proportionate to the degree that the proposal is relevant.

It is up to the experts to judge the appropriate level of this capping, since it cannot be a precise arithmetic operation. But by way of example, if the experts consider that only two out of five work packages are relevant, they may conclude that the maximum possible score for the first criterion would be 2. The quality of the proposal parts that fall out of scope of the topic is not taken into account – no matter how excellent they may appear.

If the two work packages are judged to be excellent, then the score for the excellence criterion would be 2. If they are flawed, then the score might be 1.

Clearly a proposal that is only partially in scope is unlikely to be funded.

2. **Innovation** is relevant across Horizon 2020, and may be addressed in any proposal, albeit to different extents. The term 'innovation' is used in the EU policy context and more widely to mean the introduction in the market of new or improved products, services, processes and solutions. These activities are closer to the market than R&D and will allow:

- Market uptake of an innovative product, process, service or solution leading to increased sales/market share, job creation and social benefits
- Fast deployment of the innovation resulting from greater user acceptance, visibility of the innovation and creation of scalable markets

H2020 supports all stages in the research and innovation chain and a natural integration and continuum of activities. Generally, the role of **innovation activities** that are **required/allowed** depend on the '**type of action**':

(a) 'research and innovation actions (RIA)' (i.e. actions whose main purpose is to establish new knowledge and/or explore the feasibility of a new or improved technology, product, process, service or solution) must focus on:

- basic and applied research
- developing and integrating technology
- testing and validating a small-scale prototype in a laboratory or simulated environment.

RIA may include closely connected but limited demonstration or pilot activities designed to demonstrate technical feasibility in an environment very similar to the one where such

activities would actually be carried out, as long as they do not constitute the core of the project (e.g. substantially less than half of the eligible costs)

(b) ‘innovation actions (IA)’ (i.e. actions designed mainly to produce plans and arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services) must focus on innovation activities, such as:

- **Prototyping**: activities to design and construct a model used for testing and demonstrating
- **Testing**: activities to assess technical and/or economic performance of a new or improved technology, product, process, service or solution
- **Demonstrating**: activities to show, validate, or confirm technical and/or economic viability of a new or improved technology, product, process, service or solution
- **Piloting**: exact meaning varies depending on sector; frequent meaning refer to activities undertaken in a (near to) operational environment to demonstrate to users technical and/or economic performance.

The terms 'prototyping', 'testing', 'demonstrating' and 'piloting' are not specific to Innovation Actions; they are also used under R&D type of actions. The difference is that in the case of **R&D**, 'testing', 'demonstrating' and 'piloting' are undertaken on a small scale prototype, in a laboratory or simulated environment, while in the case of **Innovation Actions**, these activities are conducted in a (near to) operational environment, whether industrial or otherwise, and often involve a larger scale prototype or demonstrator

- Large-scale product validation and market replication.

‘Market replication’ means to support the first application or market deployment of an innovation which, though already demonstrated, has not yet been applied or deployed on the market, owing to market failure or other barriers.

It does NOT cover multiple applications in the market of an innovation that has already been successfully applied in the market once.

‘First’ means new at least to Europe, or at least in the relevant sector. Such projects often involve validating system-level technical and economic performance under real-life operating conditions determined by the market.

An Innovation Action may include some R&D activities as long as they do not constitute the core of the project (e.g. substantially less than half of the eligible costs).

For proposals under the Parts ‘Societal Challenges’ and ‘Leadership in Enabling and Industrial Technologies’, innovation may also include (where appropriate) activities underpinning social innovation and support to demand-side approaches, such as:

- pre-standardisation or pre-commercial procurement
- procurement of innovative solutions
- standardisation
- other user-centred measures designed to bring innovative products and services onto the market faster.

(c) ‘pre-commercial procurement (PCP) actions’ (i.e. actions focusing on procurement of R&D services involving risk-benefit sharing under market conditions, and competitive development in phases, where the R&D services procured are clearly separate from the deployment of commercial volumes of end-products)

(d) ‘public procurement of innovative solutions (PPI) actions’ (i.e. actions funding ‘contracting authorities’^[1] that act as a launch-customer for innovative goods or services that are not yet commercially available on a large scale (conformity testing included).

For Part II of the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme, ‘Leadership in Enabling and Industrial Technologies’, and Part III, Societal Challenges 1-7, innovation is particularly important, since they concern activities that are close to end-users and the market (*e.g. demonstrating or piloting*).

This H2020 innovation approach allows:

- developing new products and services based on scientific and technological breakthroughs
- using existing technologies in novel applications

Evaluation

Evaluators must identify the innovation activities in the proposal and examine how ‘innovation’ is reflected for each of the three award criteria (i.e. excellence, impact, and quality and efficiency of the implementation):

- for '**excellence**': evaluators must examine the *innovation potential* (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches, new products, services or business and organisational models) of the work proposed.
- for '**impact**': evaluators must check the extent to which project outputs contribute to:
 - each of the expected impacts mentioned in the work programme under the relevant topic
 - Any substantial impacts not mentioned in the work programme, that would enhance *innovation capacity*, create new market opportunities, strengthen competitiveness and growth of companies, address issues related to climate change or the environment, or bring other important benefits for society

They must also consider:- the draft ‘plan for dissemination and exploitation of the results’- the explanation of how the measures proposed will help achieve the expected impact- the strategy for knowledge management and protection.

- for '**quality and efficiency of the implementation**': evaluators must check how the management structure and work plan deals with managing innovation effectively. *Managing innovation* requires an understanding of both market and technical problems. Its aim is to implement appropriate creative ideas successfully (e.g. by producing a new or improved product, service or process). It also allows consortia to respond to external or internal opportunities.

Evaluators must also check applicants' description of any barriers/obstacles and any framework conditions (e.g. regulation, standards) that may determine whether — and to what extent — the expected results will be achieved.

3. **Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) in H2020 proposals.** SSH are needed to tackle many of the complex societal challenges addressed in H2020, and contributions from one or more of these disciplines are frequently necessary for a successful proposal. These contributions are usually part of an interdisciplinary approach, involving either:

- collaboration between SSH disciplines and/or
- collaboration between SSH disciplines and non-SSH disciplines such as natural sciences, medicine and technology.

Topics where SSH contributions are required are flagged as '[topics for Social Sciences and Humanities](#) (SSH-relevant topics)'. Proposals under these topics must take account of the social, economic, political, legal, behavioural, institutional, historical and/or cultural dimensions of a given issue, as appropriate and required by the topic description. A proposal without a sufficient contribution/integration of SSH research and competences will receive a low evaluation score.

SSH disciplines include sociology, psychology, economics, law, political science, public and business administration, demography, anthropology (except physical anthropology), geography (except physical geography), peace and conflict studies, human rights, education science, journalism and communication, cultural studies, religion, linguistics, literature, cultural studies, history, archaeology, philosophy, ethics, arts and crafts (list adapted from the UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education, ISCED 2011).

Evaluation

Evaluators must identify the SSH contributions expected according to the topic description (the 'scope' part) that will address the problem described in the specific challenge section. Evaluators are expected to evaluate the SSH contributions in accordance with the evaluation criteria for Horizon 2020 (Annex H of the General Annexes to the Work Programme) while paying attention to two elements that point to a successful integration of SSH contributions in the proposed project:

- The proposal clearly articulates what the contributions of SSH partners will be;
- The composition of the consortium should strike the right balance between participants from SSH and non-SSH disciplines in order to ensure a good collaboration between participants.

The evaluators must examine how the SSH contributions are reflected for each of the three award criteria: for '**excellence**': evaluators must examine the appropriate consideration of interdisciplinary approach. It is important that the SSH contributions represent an integral part of the proposal and not just an add-on; for '**impact**': evaluators must check the extent to which project outputs contribute to each of the expected impacts. The SSH contributions should include the impact on society, economy, and the uptake by society/industry/public policy of the proposed actions to address the problem/challenge at stake; for '**quality and efficiency of the implementation**': evaluators must assess

- the complementarity of the participants (i.e. involvement of SSH partners)
- the quality of envisaged collaboration between various SSH disciplines and/or between SSH and non-SSH disciplines.

Even if the assigned proposals do not belong to an SSH-relevant topic, they may contain contributions from the SSH disciplines and should be evaluated against the text of the topic.

4. **Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI)** implies that societal actors (researchers, citizens, policy makers, business civil society organisations, etc.) work together during the whole research and innovation process to better align both the process and its outcomes with the values, needs and expectations of society. RRI, therefore, anticipates and assesses potential implications as well as societal concerns and expectations with regard to research and innovation activities, with the aim notably to foster the design of inclusive and sustainable research and innovation.

In practice, under Horizon 2020, RRI is implemented as a package that includes multi-actor and public engagement in research and innovation, enabling easier access to scientific results, the take up of gender and ethics in the research and innovation content and process, and formal and informal science education.

The way certain public engagement and gender are addressed and evaluated is described under separate FAQs.

5. **Public engagement (PE)** is one of the components in **Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI)**. It is about co-creating the future with citizens and civil society organisations, and also bringing on board the widest possible diversity of actors that would normally interact with each other, on matters of science and technology.

Public engagement may be embedded in proposals with aim to:

- a) Build participatory Research & Innovation (R&I) actions. PE can be specifically called for or voluntarily built-in to projects to promote more societally relevant outcomes. Ideally this engagement would be embedded in the research design and process from an early stage, and in an iterative fashion, so that the learnings can contribute to enriching the process and outcomes (citizen science actions could also fall under this category).
- b) Provide inputs to influence EU R&I policy agenda. Launch more widespread initiatives (similar to VOICES) involving citizens' engagement that employs face-to-face as well as on-line participatory methods to provide input to policy and participatory foresight for selected themes. Such initiatives would require high-level commitment, transparency and traceability of outcomes, timely and legitimized integration into our existing Horizon2020 institutional mechanisms and strategy.
- c) Support the development and implementation of thematic policies. A major aim of R&I policy is to provide knowledge and evidence to support the design and implementation of thematic policies (e.g. environmental, health, transport) at national to local level, in particular in relation to societal challenges. Public engagement has its rightful place in science/policy/society interfaces supporting both thematic policy development and implementation.

Evaluation

If public engagement is explicitly indicated in the topic description, or if the work would benefit from such activities in one form or another, then the evaluators will assess under the award criteria:

- ‘**excellence**’ (concept and methodology, and appropriate interdisciplinary considerations and where relevant stakeholder knowledge) and
- ‘**impact**’ (communication, dissemination and exploitation activities)

Evaluators must examine whether the engagement process:

- is methodologically sound
- includes the appropriate expertise and resources needed to design and implement the process
- is well-timed (— especially important for policy development; such initiatives would have to be taken at the right time to feed into the most appropriate phase of the policy cycle (e.g. participatory foresight , policy definition, policy impact assessment, policy implementation or policy review), at global, EU, national or local levels, depending on needs. Impact depends on timeliness.)
- is likely to have a genuine positive impact during and after the project.

6. Gender dimension.

a) Gender dimension in Research and Innovation content

A topic is considered gender relevant when it can be expected that its findings affect women and men or groups of women and men differently.

In these cases, applicants should integrate sex and/or gender analysis and, when relevant specific studies, as part of the proposals. This is what we call the 'gender dimension' in research and innovation content. Addressing the gender dimension will contribute to the scientific quality and societal relevance of the produced knowledge, technology and innovation.

In Horizon 2020, the gender dimension is explicitly integrated in [a number of topics](#) across sections of the Work Programme. This means that each of these topics specifies under its scope and/or under its expected impact in what way gender is relevant, in order to ensure a clear understanding by applicants.

In these cases, evaluators will check how sex and/or gender analysis is taken into account in the proposal and consider this while giving a score under the "excellence" and/or the “impact” criteria.

When the gender dimension is not explicitly integrated into a topic, applicants can still decide to address it in their proposal if they find it relevant.

In these cases, evaluators will deal with the proposed gender issues as they will with other relevant aspects of the proposal.

b) Gender balance in research teams

Applicants in Horizon 2020 are encouraged to promote equal opportunities in the implementation of the action and to ensure a balanced participation of women and men at all levels in research and innovation teams and in management structures.

Alongside other factors, gender balance also comes into play as a ranking factor to prioritise ex-aequo proposals with the same scores for the three criteria, as set out in [Part H of the General Annexes](#) to the work programme.

If ex-aequo proposals cannot be prioritised on the basis of work programme coverage or budget allocated to SMEs, the relative gender balance of the consortium teams will be used to rank the proposals; this refers to section 4.1 of the proposal template ("Participants"), where applicants are asked to specify the gender of the persons who will be primarily responsible for carrying out the proposed research and/or innovation activities.

c) Unconscious Gender Bias during evaluations

Gender stereotypes are scientifically documented and correspond to socially and culturally constructed pre-conceptions of the needs, roles and abilities of men and women, boys and girls. Stereotypes may lead to "unconscious gender biases", such as the under-evaluation of women's roles and abilities. Experts should guard against the risk of unconscious gender bias in the evaluation process. All proposals will be assessed on equal terms, impartially on their merits and irrespective of the origin, identity and gender of the applicants.

To make yourself more familiar with the concept of "unconscious gender bias" and to help you avoid it in your evaluations, you can find further explanation on two portals funded by FP7 and aiming at sharing knowledge and practices on gender equality in research and innovation : "Gendered Innovations[\[2\]](#)" and GenPORT[\[3\]](#) .

7. **Trans-disciplinarity.** In much of Horizon 2020 the topics addressed can go beyond the scope of a single discipline or field of research practice. Therefore, a successful project will often require an interdisciplinary approach.

Interdisciplinarity means the integration of information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts or theories from two or more disciplines. Disciplines may be from the natural sciences, technology, engineering, economics, social sciences and humanities.

A project may also need to integrate knowledge from stakeholders beyond academic disciplines, for example, from farmers, patient groups or consumer organisations.

The project consortium will need to bring along the relevant expertise accordingly.

Evaluation.

A proposal must show that interdisciplinary approaches, and possible use of stakeholder knowledge, are adopted to the extent that they are appropriate to the objectives of the topic. The experts will judge whether such approaches are adequate, and will consider this

as part of the criterion ‘**excellence**’. If applicants believe that an interdisciplinary approach is not appropriate for a particular topic, then this should be explained in the proposal. In this case, if the experts are persuaded that a mono-disciplinary approach is adequate, the proposal will not be penalised.

The fact that certain disciplines are co-located in some academic institutions, and separated in others, is not relevant when evaluating interdisciplinarity. The experts simply judge whether the approach proposed is appropriate for the objective.

8. **International cooperation** ensures that European partners have access to talent and resources wherever they are located; that they can tackle global societal challenges effectively; that EU companies participate in global value chains and can access new and emerging markets and helps strengthen the EU's position as a major global player. As a general rule, all actions under Horizon 2020 are open for participation of third countries and international organisations. This is the principle of general opening of Horizon 2020. For some topics in the work programme, however, it has been clearly identified that there is a clear interest and benefit in engaging in international cooperation, both for the Union and the partner in question. These topics have therefore been flagged in the work programme as being particularly relevant for [international cooperation](#).

Evaluation

Experts will consider the following aspects in particular:

- In some cases, topics in the work programme encourage international cooperation and state explicitly that 'this will be positively considered during the evaluation of proposals'.
 - Part A of the General Annexes to the work programme includes the list of countries from which legal entities are automatically eligible for receiving EU funding. International European organisations are also eligible for funding. Unless otherwise stated in the work programme, legal entities from other countries and international organisations can only be funded in exceptional cases where the Commission deems the participation of the entity in question essential for carrying out the action. This exceptionality needs to be justified in the proposal and will be judged on whether or not the participation of the entity in question in the project is essential, with clear benefits to the consortium. These benefits may include, for example, outstanding competence and expertise, access to unique, know-how, access to research infrastructures, access to geographical environments, involving key partners in emerging markets, access to data, etc.
9. **Communication**. Proposals must include a work package with the communication activities to be carried out during the action (or the communication activities have to be part of another work package).

The communication activities must be strategically planned and implemented from the beginning of the action. They must be based on a comprehensive communication plan with clear objectives (for different target audiences that go beyond the project's own community including the media and the public) and concrete plans for communication activities (including a description of each activity and its timing).

Communication activities should be able to convey research in a non-technical way to different groups of people. It should address the public policy perspective of EU funding for research and innovation. This means considering aspects such as:

- cooperation within a European consortium between organisations based in different EU countries(showing how better results can be achieved through cooperation)
- scientific excellence
- contributing to competitiveness and helping to meet social challenges (e.g. impact on everyday life, better use of results, and spill-over to policy-makers, industry and the scientific community).

Good communication will:

- **Start at the outset of the action and continue throughout its entire lifetime;**
- **Be strategically planned** and cannot be just ad-hoc efforts. This requires careful planning and preparation;
- Identify and set clear communication **objectives** (e.g. have final and intermediate communication aims been specified? What impact is intended? What reaction or change is expected from the target audience?);
- Be targeted and adapted to **audiences** that go **beyond the project's own community** including the media and the public (e.g. is each target audience a relatively homogenous group of people? Can the target audience help the action achieve its objectives?);
- Choose pertinent **messages** (e.g. how does the action's work relate to our everyday lives? Why does the target audience need to know about the action?); and
- Use the right **medium and means** (e.g. working at the right level – local, regional, national, EU-wide?; using the right ways to communicate - one-way exchange (website, press release, brochure, etc.) or two-way exchange (exhibition, school visit, internet debate, etc.); where relevant, include measures for public/societal engagement on issues related to the action);

Evaluation

For all actions: Evaluators must evaluate the quality of the communication activities proposed under the award criterion '**impact**'.

10. **Dissemination and exploitation of the expected results.** In evaluating proposals for Leadership in Enabling & Industrial Technologies and Societal challenges, experts will look at the proposed draft dissemination and exploitation of the expected results. A plan for this is part of the proposal (unless the call states otherwise). Below is a short list that experts can take into account. This list may assist experts, but is by no means compulsory or comprehensive.

- Is the proposal well linked to the policy context of the call for proposals?
- Are potential end-users and stakeholders involved in the proposal?
- Does the proposal mention the expected application of its results?
- Does the proposal show a good understanding of the barriers for the possible application of its results, and how it plans to cope with these?
- Does the proposal consider what follow-up steps would be needed upon successful completion of the research that would support its application?

- Does the proposal consider how it will manage its data, including access rights?
- Is the dissemination plan well developed?

The EU IPR Helpdesk provides applicants with some guidance: [Fact Sheet: The Plan for the Exploitation and Dissemination of Results in Horizon 2020](#)

Dissemination is the public disclosure of the results of the project in any medium. Disclosure may sound passive, like a shop opening up, but it is an activity, like a shopkeeper attracting customers. It is a process of promotion and awareness-raising right from the beginning of a project. It makes research results known to various stakeholder groups (like research peers, industry and other commercial actors, professional organisations, policymakers) in a targeted way, to enable them to use the results in their own work. This process must be planned and organised at the beginning of each project, usually in a dissemination plan.

Exploitation is the use of the results during and after the project's implementation. It can be for commercial purposes but also for improving policies, and for tackling economic and societal problems.

Communication means taking strategic and targeted measures for promoting the action itself and its results to a multitude of audiences, including the media and the public, and possibly engaging in a two-way exchange. The aim is to reach out to society as a whole and in particular to some specific audiences while demonstrating how EU funding contributes to tackling societal challenges.

11. **Operational capacity** shows whether a partner has the basic operational resources and capacity to implement the action, and, in particular, the parts in the proposal for which they are responsible. This assessment is based on the information provided by the applicant in the proposal such as:

- Curriculum Vitae or description of the profile of the applicant
- Relevant publications or achievements
- Relevant previous projects or activities
- Description of any significant infrastructure or any major items of technical equipment

Evaluation

If an expert believes that one or more partners lack sufficient operational capacity, s/he should nonetheless continue to evaluate the full proposal, including the parts related to the applicant(s) concerned. (It is only later — at consensus group stage — that the experts should come to a common view on this question). If the consensus group agrees that one or more applicants lacks sufficient operational capacity, they should continue to evaluate the proposal without these applicant(s) (i.e. disregarding their activities and their estimated budget).