

*Horizon Europe - Work Programme 2023-2024*  
*Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area*

Expenditures for research and innovation activities (such as seed funding for collaborative research projects, activities linked to joint doctoral and postdoctoral research, knowledge valorisation activities, etc.) cannot exceed a maximum of 20% of the total budget.

The actions should envisage a duration appropriate to the ambition and complexity of the alliance of higher education institutions. The duration should not exceed 5 years.

**Call - Pathways to Synergies**

***HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-04***

**Conditions for the Call**

Indicative budget(s)<sup>18</sup>

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) <sup>19</sup>	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2023		
Opening: 28 Mar 2023 Deadline(s): 28 Sep 2023				
HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-04-01	CSA	20.00	0.50 to 1.20	20
Overall indicative budget		20.00		

<b>General conditions relating to this call</b>	
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B.
<i>Financial and operational capacity and exclusion</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex C.

<sup>18</sup> The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening.  
The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.  
All deadlines are at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.  
The budget amounts are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for years 2023 and 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

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<i>Award criteria</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex D.
<i>Documents</i>	The documents are described in General Annex E.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G.

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-04-01: Pathways to Synergies**

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 0.50 and 1.20 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 20.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, participation as coordinators to the call is limited to legal entities established in Widening countries, as defined in the Horizon Europe regulation.</p> <p>This action is open for participation of the JRC that can contribute, where relevant, specific expertise for the development of R&amp;I strategies depending on the R&amp;I domain chosen by the project, technology transfer and IPR management as well as linking up to regional smart specialisation strategy.</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following rules for dealing with ex-aequo applications apply: in the first place, ex-aequo proposals will be prioritised according to geographical diversity criteria, defined as proposals with coordinators established in a Widening Country, not otherwise represented as coordinator higher up the ranking list (and if equal in number, then by</p>

	budget). The method described in Points 1), 2), 3) and 5) of General Annexes Part F (Procedure/Evaluation procedure and ranking) will then be applied to the remaining equally ranking proposals in the group. This rule establishing the priority order serves to better spread the impact of the action and to strengthen the efficiency of the ‘Widening participation and spreading excellence’ programme.
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Expected Outcome: Synergies between Horizon Europe and the cohesion policy programmes, mainly the European Fund for Regional Development (ERDF) but also INTERREG and the Resilience and Recovery Fund (RRF), are instrumental for widening countries to catch up in their R&I performance and to reduce the innovation divide in Europe. Although such synergies are already addressed in the Teaming and Excellence Hubs actions under this work programme these instruments do not capture the full range of possible synergies and need to be complemented by a dedicated scheme. The Draft COMMISSION NOTICE Synergies between Horizon Europe and ERDF <sup>20</sup> presents the new opportunities for achieving operational synergies between Horizon Europe and the ERDF, including for Seal of Excellence, transfer, cumulative funding, combined funding (Co-funded and Institutionalised Partnerships), Teaming, and upstream/downstream synergies. This pilot call offers opportunities to incentivise the concrete realisation of particularly promising sequential synergies in two different pathways either supporting the upstream synergy mode (a) or downstream synergy mode (b) where the former is focusing on human resources development and internationalisation and the latter on valorisation and upscaling of research results towards marketable solutions.

The following overall outcome is expected:

- Improved and more systematic synergies between Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020, and ERDF, IPA (instrument for pre-accession assistance), RRF, INTERREG or similar funding instruments through internationalisation, valorisation and technology uptake;
- Strengthened competitiveness of R&I actors in Widening countries;
- Accelerated knowledge transfer and innovation cycle for beneficiaries from ERDF and Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe;
- Strengthened innovation capacity and competitiveness of less R&I performing regions.

For actions opting for pathway a) on upstream synergies the following specific outcome is expected:

- Joint internationalisation strategy for R&I;
- Human resources development strategy;
- Improved access to excellent European R&I networks and communities;

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<sup>20</sup> C(2022) 4747 final, Brussels, 5.7.2022

- Increased competitiveness and reputation in applications for European and international research funding;
- Overcoming locked-in effects for former mono-beneficiaries funded under ERDF;
- Acquisition of new transferable skills for R&I staff notably in the fields of knowledge transfer, R&I management and communication;
- Better use of R&I infrastructure funded under ERDF.

For actions opting for pathway b) on downstream synergies the following specific output is expected:

- Valorisation of results generated in Horizon Europe or Horizon 2020 projects in a regional context;
- Improved knowledge transfer and technology uptake in less R&I performing regions;
- Exploitation and diffusion of R&I results into the market in line with national/regional smart specialisation priorities;
- Preparation of pilots and demonstrators in the chosen R&I domain for funding under ERDF;
- Improved intellectual asset management and technology uptake.

Scope: The purpose of this action is to provide support for additional efforts required for setting up the interfaces between two different funding systems where major barriers still occur due to the mismatches of regional versus European approach, consortium vs single beneficiary funding and Horizon thematic priorities vs national/regional smart specialisation. Consortia should decide at proposal level which of the two aforementioned pathways is applicable for their needs. This will also influence the composition of the applicant consortium and the choice of funded activities.

More specifically, consortia applying for funding under pathway a) should be composed of a core group of at least three different public or private research entities established in at least two different Widening countries that were beneficiaries from ERDF, RRF or similar investments for R&I including infrastructure in the current or previous programming period. These applicants should provide evidence for (e.g., contract numbers) and a short description of the investment. In addition to this core group other participants also from non-Widening countries may join if their roles are duly explained and justified e.g., by providing training, coaching, strategic advice, knowledge transfer, hosting staff secondments etc. as long as the EU contribution to these participants does not exceed 30% of the total EU contribution.

The main goal of the pathway a) is to move formerly single beneficiaries of regional funding programmes out of isolation via cross-border collaboration and to prepare them for successful participation in Horizon Europe calls by strengthening their competitiveness by means of a customised bunch of activities. Therefore, proposals should present a coherent and

strategically convincing package of activities with a particular focus on internationalisation strategies and human resources development. The latter may include training and coaching on non-scientific skills such as management of international R&I projects, knowledge transfer and science communication. HR capacity building may be complemented by suitable study visits and short-term secondments to partners. Communication activities including social media should contribute to raising the reputation and visibility of the members of the core group. This may include advertising their technical infrastructure (funded under ERDF) to potential partners in future competitive calls. Early-stage co-operation with NCP organisations is strongly encouraged.

Consortia applying for funding under pathway b) on downstream synergies should be members of a consortium of one or two completed or ongoing projects (in the same domain) RIA(s) funded under Horizon Europe or Horizon 2020 that has already generated validated (e.g., evidenced by approved deliverables, final or periodic reports, peer reviewed publications) research results to be valorised by support from ERDF, IPA, RFF funds or EIC financial instruments. The Horizon consortium should not necessarily participate in its full extent and can be represented by a core group of participants benefitting from valorisation.

For both pathways, participants from non-Widening countries may join the consortium, e.g., for the purpose of knowledge transfer as long as the majority of participants are from Widening countries and EU contribution to widening participants is at least at the level of 70% of the total EU contribution. For the valorisation activities the consortium should identify at proposal stage up to three focus regions located in Widening countries where the implementation of downstream synergies actually should take place. Additional partners without contractual relationship especially from the focus regions may be associated, notably regional authorities in charge of managing the ERDF or similar funds and SMEs are especially encouraged and may serve as catalysts for the uptake of R&I results generated under Horizon. Activities, supported under this CSA may include identification and mapping of specific research results for valorisation generated in Horizon projects with a potential for valorisation, matchmaking between HE beneficiaries and ERDF project partners around regional/national S3 priorities, analysis on how existing Horizon project outputs and results can be exploited in line with the territorial needs described in the ERDF/RRF or similar programmes, workshops with management authorities and local business, specification of demonstrators and pilots, IPR management and technology uptake. Special attention should be paid to the preparation of applications to calls under regional programmes. Communication and dissemination activities should contribute to raising the reputation and visibility of EU funded activities in the focus regions. The funding is considered seed funding and no guarantee for the actual acquisition of synergetic funding needs to be given at the level of the proposal.

### **Call - Dissemination and Exploitation Support Facility**

***HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-05***