



**ROUTE2025**

Horizon Europe

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“Horizon Europe” is the European Union’s ninth framework programme for research and innovation and the main instrument for promoting science and technological development in Europe. With a total budget of €95.5 billion over a period of seven years (2021 – 2027), it is one of the world’s largest public funding programmes for research and innovation.

The new funding programme will adopt many proven programme lines and rules from the predecessor programme “Horizon 2020” and, like its predecessor, offers numerous opportunities for both individual and collaborative funding. The various funding instruments will continue to take into account the entire innovation cycle: from basic research to the development of application-oriented products and services to their successful exploitation and marketing.

The central goal – also of “Horizon Europe” – remains to accelerate the transfer of ground-breaking research results into marketable innovations and services through targeted funding measures, thus making a decisive contribution to Europe’s global competitiveness and economic strength.

Against this backdrop, measures that specifically promote innovation, such as the various funding instruments of the European Innovation Council (EIC) and the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), are given even more weight in the new programme.

### Priorities and Structure

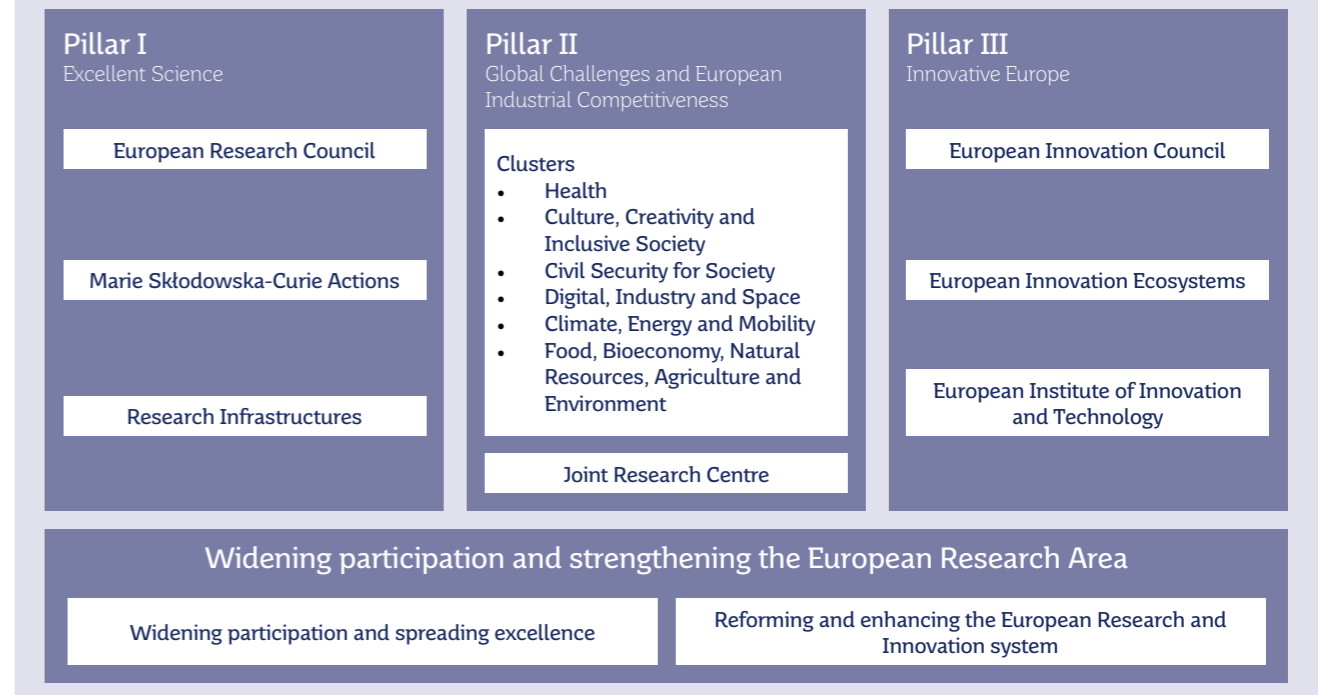
In terms of content, “Horizon Europe” is dedicated to central social issues such as climate change, sustainable development (keyword “Green Deal”), digitalisation and health, and here in particular the ongoing fight against the coronavirus as well as measures for sustainable stabilisation and recovery from the consequences of the global pandemic.

In this context, “Horizon Europe” introduces for the first time so-called “missions” as EU-wide research and development instruments that address ambitious goals to tackle current societal challenges in Europe in an interdisciplinary manner. Thematically, thematic calls within Horizon Europe are bundled into six clusters:

- Health
- Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society
- Civil Security for Society
- Digital, Industry and Space
- Climate, Energy and Mobility
- Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment

The structure of “Horizon Europe” is based on “Horizon 2020” and rests on three central pillars: “Excellent Science”, “Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness” and “Innovative Europe”. These are complemented by the area “Increasing participation and strengthening the European Research Area”, which focuses on the development of the European Research Area as a whole and aims to reduce the gap between EU Member States with strong research capabilities and those with weaker ones.

## Horizon Europe programme structure



- **Excellent Science**
  - Individual promotion of excellent researchers and pioneering research
  - Improving mobility and infrastructure
  - Promoting forward-looking, excellence-oriented research
- **Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness**
  - Broad, interdisciplinary solutions to overarching problems and societal challenges
  - Development of new technologies and innovations “from lab to market”: covering the entire innovation cycle up to Technology Readiness Level 8 (demonstrators, pilot lines)
  - Promotion of application-oriented research in six thematic clusters
- **Innovative Europe**
  - Broad promotion of innovation-related activities
  - Specific funding instruments of the European Innovation Council (EIC) to support radically new technologies (EIC Pathfinder) and to provide targeted support for start-ups and SMEs with innovative products/services and high growth potential (EIC Accelerator, formerly SME Instrument)



## Funding Opportunities for Researchers

From funding for basic research to application- and market-oriented innovation measures, from collaborative research projects to individual funding for excellent scientists: “Horizon Europe” offers researchers at universities and research institutions a broad spectrum of different forms of funding in a variety of scientific research areas.

With the programme area “Excellence in Science” as one of three thematic priorities, “Horizon Europe” strengthens in particular the individual funding of outstanding scientists, the development and improvement of research infrastructures, frontier research, international research in innovative fields of technology as well as the transnational and intersectoral mobility of researchers.

The focus includes the following funding areas:

### **European Research Council (ERC)**

The ERC’s individual awards and funding are primarily aimed at excellent young researchers as well as established researchers with outstanding project ideas from all scientific and thematic fields. The central principle of funding is to guarantee scientific autonomy.

### **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)**

Based on the vision of making Europe an attractive science hub and creating a strong base of first-class researchers, MSCA measures primarily aim to improve transnational and cross-sectoral mobility (i.e. between research institutions and private-sector companies) as well as the career development of researchers and R&I staff. The measures are aimed both at young researchers and their education and training, for example by offering exchange programmes and promoting European networks for doctoral training, and at experienced researchers.

### Research infrastructures

Adequate and efficiently used research infrastructures are the basis for first-class research in Europe and thus of great importance for the research location as a whole. Against this background, the establishment and expansion as well as the integration and networking of existing research infrastructures are the focus of this funding area.

In addition to the funding measures outlined in the programme area “Excellent Science”, researchers in the two other priority areas “Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness” and “Innovative Europe” have a wide range of funding opportunities at their disposal – primarily within the framework of collaborations in key areas such as biomedical, technological, industrial or socio-economic research.

The central forms of funding in this context include the so-called Research and Innovation Actions and the Innovation Actions, which are each implemented in the form of collaborative projects by consortia with several international project partners from science and industry. In addition, the funding instruments of the European Innovation Council (EIC) offer attractive funding opportunities for the development of visionary, high-risk ideas and research projects. The focus here is on technology-intensive innovations that have the potential to be transferred into new business areas and companies.

### Research and innovation measures

Research and innovation measures are primarily aimed at developing new knowledge, technologies and services within the framework of basic and applied research. Market-oriented pilot and demonstration measures play a subordinate role in this context and are only envisaged to a limited extent.

### Innovation measures

Innovation measures focus on the validation of products and services and the verification of their marketability. They include, for example, demonstration and pilot projects for the creation of prototypes and demonstrations, as well as market implementation projects in which innovations, whose market introduction has so far been thwarted due to market failure or barriers to introduction, are applied for the first time.

### Funding instruments of the European Innovation Council (EIC)

Mit dem EIC verfolgt die Europäische Kommission das Ziel visionäre, radikal neue, risikoreiche Ideen aller Art mit einem nachhaltigen Veränderungspotential zu entwickeln und in den Markt einzuführen. With the EIC, the European Commission aims to develop visionary, radically new, high-risk ideas of all kinds with a sustainable potential for change and to introduce them to the market.

The EIC funding opportunities relevant to researchers are the so-called “EIC Pathfinder” measures on the one hand and the “EIC Transitions” on the other. The “EIC Pathfinder” promotes interdisciplinary research and development, especially research work in the early phases of technological development. The “EIC Transition” measures aim to mature both the technology and the business idea, i.e. to support further development and initial commercialisation steps. They can be seen as a link between the “EIC Pathfinder” and the “EIC Accelerator”, which is aimed specifically at start-ups, spin-offs and other highly innovative SMEs, and supports innovation and market launch measures as well as company growth.



## Funding Opportunities for SMEs and Start-ups

“Horizon Europe” offers small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) a wide range of participation opportunities: from individual funding to classic collaborative research by consortia with several partners.

### **Funding instruments of the European Innovation Council (EIC)**

The EIC offers attractive participation opportunities for SMEs, especially for start-ups and spin-offs. A special feature is the individual funding of companies through the “EIC Accelerator”.

The “EIC Accelerator”, which follows on from the SME instrument in “Horizon 2020”, supports innovation and market launch measures as well as company growth – both through grants and through mixed financing from grants and loans.

The “EIC Accelerator” is aimed at existing SMEs, including start-ups and spin-outs, but also at applicants who intend to establish an SME. It supports innovation activities (from a technology maturity level of 5/6) as well as market launch and growth of the company. The focus of the funding is on innovations with high European and international market potential and the need for venture capital financing.

A special feature of the “EIC Accelerator” is that the funding is provided in the form of mixed financing consisting of a grant component and an equity capital component. The grant component subsidises innovation activities and reimburses 70% of their costs up to a maximum of EUR 2.5 million. The equity component consists of a long-term provision of venture capital from the EIC Fund of up to EUR 15 million.

### **Funding within the framework of collaborative projects**

SMEs can also participate in “collaborative projects”. In these projects, SMEs contribute their entrepreneurial knowledge, ensure proximity to application and play a central role in the commercial exploitation of research results. In return, by being involved in international project consortia with partners from science and industry, companies gain access to the latest scientific findings, innovative technologies and potential new markets and can thus gain a clear competitive advantage.

“Horizon Europe” opens up the possibility for SMEs to participate in projects at different stages of technology development.

#### Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA)

SMEs can also benefit from a direct transfer of knowledge within the framework of mobility funding (MSCA) through the exchange of personnel or hosting of researchers. This enables the recruitment of highly qualified new employees (international academic specialists and managers) and offers 100% funding for the assignment of a scientist to carry out a research and innovation project in the company.

Other specific funding instruments (including information and advisory services) support SMEs in accessing finance and improve market access. The European IP Helpdesk offers support with questions on intellectual property - also in the context of “Horizon Europe”.

#### SME Definition in “Horizon Europe”

“Horizon Europe” distinguishes between micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. These are determined on the basis of three factors: number of employees, annual turnover and annual balance sheet total. The upper limit is formed by medium-sized enterprises with fewer than 250 employees that either generate an annual turnover of no more than 50 million euros or achieve an annual balance sheet total of no more than 43 million euros.

| Size         | Employees | Turnover       | Annual Balance Sheet Total |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|----------------------------|
| medium-sized | < 250     | ≤ € 50 million | or ≤ € 43 million          |
| small        | < 50      | ≤ € 10 million | or ≤ € 10 million          |
| micro        | < 10      | ≤ € 2 million  | or ≤ € 2 million           |





## Rules for Participation

### Eligibility

In principle, participation in “Horizon Europe” projects is open to researchers and institutions from all over the world. Whether an institution also receives a financial grant from “Horizon Europe” depends, however, on the country in which it is located. In this respect, a distinction is made between EU member states, associated states and third countries.

The contractual partner of the European Commission is always the respective institution (e.g. university, higher education institution, research institution or company). This also applies to individual funding measures. Here, the applicants submit their documents together with the host institution.

### Project consortium

Consortia consisting of at least three institutions from different EU member states or associated states are eligible to participate. At least one institution of the consortium must be located in an EU member state. Exceptions to this rule will be mentioned in the work programme, if applicable. In addition, institutions from other countries may participate in the projects.

However, the actual size of the respective consortia as well as their internal organisation strongly depend on the respective research field and subject to be addressed. Hence, relatively small research projects up to large project consortia are possible. In most cases, the number of partner institutions is even far above the minimum requirement.

There are areas in “Horizon Europe” where it is possible for institutions to apply for funding as individual partners. This is the case, for example, with the “EIC Accelerator” and individual funding measures.

### Reimbursement of costs

The type and amount of funding is defined in the respective work programme and in the call for proposals. Basically, a distinction must be made between non-profit institutions (universities and public research institutions) and profit-oriented institutions. In addition, a distinction is made between direct and indirect costs in terms of eligible costs.

- **Direct costs** are all eligible costs that can be directly attributed to the project (e.g. personnel costs, travel costs and consumables). Only costs actually incurred will be reimbursed. They must be shown in the budget planning and must have been incurred during the project period. For the project types “Research and Innovation Action” and “Innovation Action”, non-profit organisations receive funding of 100% of their eligible direct costs. In turn, for-profit institutions receive only 70% of their eligible direct costs under “Innovation Actions”.
- **Indirect costs** (also known as overheads) are reimbursed as a lump sum in “Horizon Europe”. When settling project accounts, 25% of the directly eligible costs can be used for this purpose, both by non-profit and profit-oriented institutions.

In projects of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) and in calls for proposals for which lump-sum funding is envisaged, funding is provided in the form of lump sums per researcher month or per completed work package.

#### Dissemination and exploitation of research results

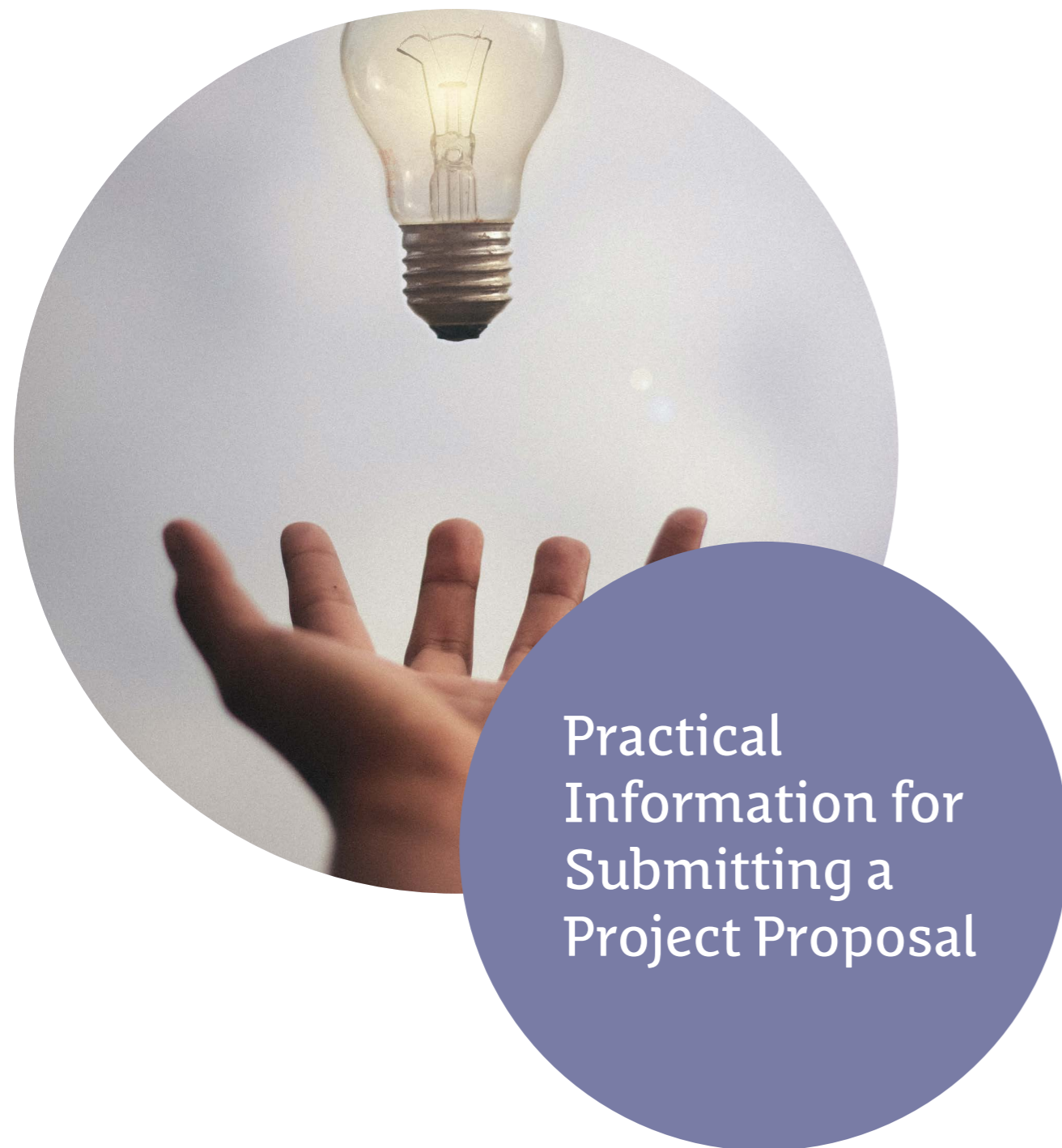
The dissemination and exploitation of research results are key activities in “Horizon Europe” projects. It is a fundamental concern of the European Commission that research results from EU-funded projects are quickly made available to the scientific community as well as to the broader public. In addition to the classic forms of publication (e.g. through publications in scientific journals), the dissemination of research results via so-called Open Access (i.e. free online access to publications) is firmly anchored in “Horizon Europe”. In addition, requirements are set with regard to making research data accessible and managing it.

With regard to the potential commercialisation and marketing of results, participants are encouraged to develop well-founded exploitation strategies as early as the application phase. In particular, these should take into account the handling of intellectual property rights as the basis for a possible commercial exploitation of research results. Depending on the funding measure, priority area, concrete call for proposal and project type, the requirements regarding the exploitation strategies and instruments to be presented may vary. Information on this can be found in supporting documents that are published

by the European Commission together with the call in the Funding & Tenders Portal.

With the [Horizon Results Platform](#) the European Commission has created a central platform on which projects can, depending on their degree of maturity, make their results available for further exploitation by researchers, potential users, investors or possible other stakeholders. Under certain circumstances, in case no own exploitation strategies can be presented after the end of a project, participants are even bound to publish their results on the platform.

Given the growing importance of dissemination and exploitation activities in Horizon projects, the European Commission also offers a range of support services to help researchers and SMEs plan and implement targeted activities free of charge.



## Practical Information for Submitting a Project Proposal

### How can I submit my project proposal and where can I find current calls for proposals?

Project proposals must be submitted in the context of an open call for proposals. Calls for proposals in “Horizon Europe” are based on a work programme at the suggestion of the European Commission that has been developed and agreed with the participation of the EU member states. The coordinating institution is responsible for submitting the proposal, but the preparation is a team effort of the entire consortium.

The European Commission’s [Funding & Tenders Portal](#) is the central access point of “Horizon Europe”. Here you will find the calls for proposals, official documents and up-to-date information. In addition, applications and reports are submitted online here. Applications and projects can be managed via a personal account.

In addition, the “[Strategic Plan](#)”, introduced for the first time with “Horizon Europe”, provides an early insight into the call topics as a basis for the work programmes, especially in the pillar “Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness”. The Strategic Plan 2021-2024 for the first four years is already accessible, and there will be another Strategic Plan for the remaining three years.

### How much time should I allow for a project proposal?

Writing a convincing proposal is time-consuming and requires some preparation. Therefore, ideally you should start before the call for proposals opens. The two-year work programmes in “Horizon Europe” facilitate forward planning. In addition, efficient time management based on an agreed timeline with all partners is necessary.

In “Horizon Europe”, there are one- and two-stage application procedures: In the one-step procedure, the full proposal is submitted to the Funding & Tenders Portal by the stated deadline. The two-stage procedure first requires the submission of a short proposal by the stated deadline and, after positive evaluation, the submission of the full proposal again by a defined deadline. Furthermore, some call areas also envisage an additional interview.

### How do I put together a convincing consortium?

The composition of a convincing consortium is crucial for a successful project proposal. In addition to qualifications and experience in the respective field, the complementary competencies of the partners are what counts in the review process. Furthermore, a good consortium is characterised by efficient and transparent cooperation. Coordinating the partners in the application phase is a first challenge for those involved. If cooperation is already difficult at this stage (e.g. because contributions are not delivered on time or are incomplete), the composition of the consortium should be reviewed if necessary.

### What should I consider regarding the project content and its presentation?

The following essential points should be observed:

- The project content should be closely aligned with the objectives of the call for proposals. The central subject of the project should be clearly defined and the innovation-related aspects should be emphasised. It is helpful to have a detailed work plan outlining the distribution of tasks and the interaction between the individual partner institutions (e.g. using diagrams or graphics).
- Concrete expected project results must be presented (e.g. products, processes, services, patents, prototypes, methods, scientific data, publications, etc.).
- Project proposals must be submitted in English. In the introduction of the proposal, the special nature of the project should be emphasised and a meaningful naming of the project (title and acronym) is also important.
- In addition to highlighting scientific excellence, a convincing presentation of the measures accompanying the research plays a decisive role in the evaluation of project proposals. These include, for example, measures for the dissemination and exploitation of research results as well as data management and open access strategies. For collaborative projects, there is also the new requirement to submit an initial dissemination and exploitation plan after the first six months.

### How do I submit the proposal?

Applications in “Horizon Europe” are submitted exclusively electronically via the Funding & Tender Portal. Before using it, all project participants must register with the European Commission via a “Participant Identification Code (PIC)”. Institutions that already have a PIC from participations in previous EU Framework Programmes (e.g. “Horizon 2020”) can continue to use it. The application is submitted in two parts: basic information on the project is requested via online forms, the actual application consists of a free text, but its structure is predefined.

### How are the proposals evaluated/reviewed?

In order for a proposal to be evaluated by independent peer reviewers, it must be submitted within the application deadline, meet the eligibility requirements, be complete and legible, and correspond to the topic of the respective call. The reviewers usually evaluate the project proposal with regard to three criteria: Excellence, Impact and Quality and Efficiency of Implementation. An exception is the European Research Council (ERC). Here, project proposals are evaluated exclusively on the basis of the criterion of excellence.

### How long does the review process take?

Like its predecessor programme “Horizon 2020”, “Horizon Europe” aims for rapid processing of proposals: A first positive decision should be available after five months, followed by the signed contract documents after a further three months. This standard procedure is shortened considerably in specific programme areas, e.g. the “EIC Accelerator”.

### Who can I turn to for help with my proposal?

Discussions with experts are highly advisable and can make a decisive contribution to the success of your project idea. The [National Contact Points \(NCPs\)](#) are the main points of contact for support in the application process and beyond.

For advice to SMEs, the experts of the [Enterprise Europe Network](#) are your professional contacts.

Scientists at universities, universities of applied sciences and research institutions can contact the [EU advisors](#) at their institution. Furthermore, the [European Liaison Office of the German Research Organisations](#), as a joint service platform of the major German research organisations, offers a wide range of information and advice.

## More Information & Support

### [Horizon Results Booster](#)

Supports consortia of “Horizon 2020” and “Horizon Europe” projects in developing basic dissemination and exploitation strategies as well as business plans or targeted commercialisation concepts.

### [Horizon IP Scan](#)

Supports European start-ups and other SMEs involved in collaborative research projects in the development of tailor-made concepts for the management and protection of intellectual property and also helps with the individual, project-specific planning of shared exploitation strategies for joint project results.

### [European IP Helpdesk](#)

Supports European SMEs and researchers as well as potential project applicants in all matters relating to the management and exploitation of intellectual property in EU-funded collaborative research projects with an individual helpline service, comprehensive training offer and a large number of publications.

### [Supporting Documents](#)

An overview of the most important guidelines and reference documents on “Horizon Europe” is provided by the EU Commission under [“Guidance and Manuals”](#).



### **About Route 2025**

“Route2025” is a project of Saarland University funded by the State Chancellery with funds from the Saarland and by the European Union under the “European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)” programme. In the implementation of the various Route2025 measures, Saar University is supported by the established EU project management office Eurice.

Further information and the project database on Saarland’s participation in “Horizon 2020” can be found at: [www.route2025.eu](http://www.route2025.eu)

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