

## FAQs TEAMING 2022 (HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ACCESS-01-01-two-stage)

### ❖ **Is there a monitoring process at EU level for the complementary funding from the national/regional public authority?**

There will be a monitoring process for complementary funding coming from any financial source and it will be applicable throughout the project's duration. This is particularly important in order to ensure that the project is carried out properly and the ultimate goal/objective of the project is achieved. Being an integral part of the proposal, complementary funding requires that any change related to it is assessed against the impact it may have on the action's overall execution and the expected results.

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### ❖ **How will the joint evaluation of application to call (Teaming stage 2) be implemented?**

Under Horizon Europe for Teaming actions, a complementary funding equal to the Horizon Europe grant is required. The sources for this complementary funding can be different - national and/or regional funding, European funding, such as from Cohesion policy programmes, or private sources. The application form for Teaming stage 2 will include a specific annex where all relevant information on complementary funding needs to be presented, among others on the sources, amounts, timing and the activities to be funded with the complementary funding. It also has to be made clear how these activities will contribute in reaching the main objectives of the proposal requesting funding under Horizon Europe. The amounts secured as complementary funding should be confirmed by a Letter of Commitment for each source of funding, added to the application. Each Letter of Commitment constitutes a formal binding agreement for funding. The Annex specifies also requirements to these letters of commitment. Please note that the Letter(s) of Commitment must be uploaded in the submission system together with the Annex in a single PDF document when submitting the proposal.

The Annex will be evaluated together with the full stage 2 proposal. For this purpose, additional experts with specific knowledge on complementary funding sources may be invited to the evaluation panel.

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### ❖ **Are any costs ineligible? What kind of costs are eligible? What is the reimbursement rate? Can an applicant request an EU contribution from Horizon Europe below €15 million?**

Infrastructure costs are not eligible under the Horizon Europe grant and are expected to be supported by other types of funding, if applicable. An example of an infrastructural costs could be the rent for the premises in which the centre is/will be installed.

The general reimbursement rates (standard Coordination and Support Action: 100%/25%) and the rules for legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements are described in the General Annexes to the Work Programme (Annex G). For further details on the costs expected to be covered by the EU grant (e.g. start-up & implementation, recruitment, etc.), see the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022 for Widening.

It is possible for an applicant to request less than €15 million as stated in the Work Programme.

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### ❖ **What is the page limit for Teaming Stage 1 and Stage 2 applications?**

In the [General Annexes to the Work Programme](#) (Annex A), it is stated that for a Coordination and support action, a general limit is 30 pages and first-stage proposals have a limit of 10 pages.

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❖ **Is there any limitation for the number of Teaming proposals submitted by each country?**

There are no restrictions on the number of Teaming proposals by country, as long as the coordinator is located in a Widening country (the definition of Widening country is given in [Horizon Europe regulation Art. 2 \(17\)](#)).

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❖ **What about the long-term sustainability of the Teaming partnership?**

A Teaming project should be the result of a joint venture with a long-term horizon of cooperation between the relevant partners from both the advanced and widening sides. It is stressed that despite the fact that Horizon Europe funding for the Centre of Excellence will stop after about 6 years, there is an expectation that a lot of effort will need to be placed by the partners in this joint venture to continue supporting the new Centre in view of achieving sustainability in the long run and hopefully eventual financial autonomy after the grant termination with an ability to further develop the partnership and eventually to also successfully compete for European and international funding.

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❖ **Is it possible to add or remove partners between Teaming Stage 1 and Teaming Stage 2 proposals or while the project is running?**

Due to the fact that it impacts the quality of the proposals, removing partners from the consortium is, in principle, not possible, except in “force majeure” cases (e.g. bankruptcy or any other reason of ineligibility occurring between the two stages). In such cases, the change should be communicated to the Research Executive Agency (REA) as soon as possible. However, the addition of new partners is not forbidden, but must be duly justified in the context of the proposal activities.

While a project is running, in principle, this is possible and would require an amendment of the GA. However, due to the special nature of the Teaming action, amendments regarding termination and addition of partners will be analysed in detail and dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Given the nature of the TEAMING call, it is strongly advised that the coordinator does not change.

It is worth mentioning that according to the [Annotated Model Grant Agreement](#) (Article 39.1): "The Agreement may be amended, **unless the amendment entails changes** to the Agreement which would call into question the decision awarding the grant or breach the principle of equal treatment of applicants."

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❖ **If the Coordinator in Teaming Stage 1 is a national/regional authority, can it withdraw from the project for Teaming Stage 2 as this might provoke a conflict of interest?**

The Coordinator cannot change from Stage 1 to Stage 2. In Horizon Europe, Teaming is being shaped as one call, but in two stages. The consortium and especially the coordinator needs to be fixed from the very beginning in Stage 1, and all possibilities to provoke a conflict of interest need to be well thought through by the applicant before submitting the proposal. This means that if the conflict of interest can potentially arise, in particular for the coordinator, it needs to be eliminated already for the Stage 1 proposal.

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❖ **Is Open science evaluated at Stage 1 of the TEAMING evaluation?**

Yes, open science is one among several aspects to be evaluated under the ‘Excellence’ criteria of the Stage 1 proposals. Applicants should describe how appropriate open science practices are implemented as an integral part of the proposed methodology. The proposal should show how the choice of practices and their implementation are adapted to the nature of the work, in a way that

will increase the chances of the project delivering on its objectives. If applicants believe that none of these practices are appropriate for their project, justification should be provided in the proposal. For specific guidance on open science practices and research data management, please refer to the relevant section of the [Horizon Europe Programme Guide](#). For further details on open science, please consult the [EU's open science policy](#).

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❖ **Is there any geographical or thematic restriction for Teaming proposals?**

No. All proposals are competing against each other on their own merit. The only criterion is the quality of the proposal and there is no country or thematic restrictions.

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❖ **What does the term 'competitive salaries' mean? How should the applicant approach this condition?**

The actual financial expression of a salary and both level and element of competitiveness is up to the applicant to decide. We cannot prescribe any values here, since levels of competitiveness vary very much in different countries. However, it is advisable to respect the national legislation. With the term 'Competitive salaries' we intend to underline that applicants, while looking for the best quality personnel to be employed in the Centre of Excellence, needs to give an appropriate attention to the salaries paid for their future employees. 'Competitive' in this context means that the salary needs to have a certain competitive advantage compared to a chosen bar, which can be an average salary in that country, or a particular value for a certain position or scientific domain or grade.

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❖ **Is a consortium agreement between the beneficiaries required?**

Yes, signing a consortium agreement between all the beneficiaries in the project (i.e. all entities that sign the grant agreement) is required (following standard Horizon Europe rules, see [Annotated Model Grant Agreement](#), article 7). Any other additional internal agreement/arrangement is voluntary and up to the participants themselves.

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❖ **How many proposals are expected to be funded under the first Teaming call?**

Based on the available budget and depending on the requested funding, it is expected that about 12 proposals can be selected for funding under the first Teaming call.

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❖ **What about the partnership and long-term sustainability of Teaming projects?**

A Teaming project should foresee a long-term horizon of cooperation between the relevant partners from both the 'advanced' and 'widening' sides. Despite the fact that Horizon Europe funding for the Centre of Excellence will stop after about 6 years, there is an expectation that a lot of effort will need to be placed by the partners to sustain the Centre of Excellence well beyond that period. Moreover it is expected that the new Centre will be able to achieve the maximum degree of self-sustainability in the long run especially in financial terms after the Horizon Europe grant is over. Concrete measures of how this (financial) self-sustainability of the Centre will be ensured needs to be convincingly elaborated in the proposal.

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❖ **What kind of costs can be covered under complementary funding? Can in-kind contributions or own funding be considered as complementary funding?**

Infrastructure costs as well as the majority of equipment costs and consumables **cannot be funded by the Horizon Europe grant**. Therefore, a considerable amount for these costs needs to be provided from other sources.

A clear description of the project part supported by a complementary funding must be included in the proposal, where relevant including the eligible category of research and development, technical specifications of infrastructure, preliminary planning for building and installations, cost-benefit analysis, etc. Awards from competitive funding applications cannot be considered as complementary funding as this is not a guaranteed source of funding.

Whatever the funding source, the principle of avoiding **double funding** applies as stated in the [General Annexes](#) to the Work Programme (Annex G) and as specified in article 130 of the [Financial Regulation 966/2012](#), meaning that cost items reimbursed from other sources shall be different from cost items supported under Horizon Europe.- In-kind contributions cannot be considered as complementary funding.

Own funding in principle can be eligible as a source of the complementary funding. However, the Teaming action is flagged to be a synergy grant and it needs to facilitate synergies between different funding systems in practise, building bridges particularly between smart specialisation strategies established for the regional funds and excellence in R&I. Therefore, the evaluators will closely examine this aspect of the application with respect to the chosen complementary funding and the letter(s) for its commitment.

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❖ **For smaller countries it can be more difficult to get complementary funding to cover infrastructure costs from other sources. Is this taken into account?**

The source for the complementary funding can be very diverse (e.g. national and/or regional funding, European funding such as from Cohesion policy programmes, or private sources), with no obligation for any particular source to be used. A combination of several of them can be contributing to the requested amount. It is very clearly acknowledged that the 'one size fits all' principle cannot be applied, but the country size does not matter.

As specified in the Work Programme, the total amount of the complementary funding must be at least equal to the total requested Horizon Europe contribution. This feature is very specific to Teaming calls; therefore, Teaming is called a synergy grant.

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❖ **What is the ideal ratio of budget allocated to the advanced institution(s) compared to the coordinator (and partners) from the Widening Country?**

There is no ideal ratio regarding the allocation of funding between the advanced institution(s) and the coordinator (and partners) in the Widening country. Nevertheless, the main reasoning for the budget needs to correspond to the objectives of Teaming that are mainly focused on the partner(s) in the Widening country, especially in advancing the region/country where the Centre of Excellence is/will be established or is/will be upgraded/modernised.

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❖ **Can the coordinating organisation from the Widening country be either public or private?**

According to the [Work Programme](#), the coordinator will be a university or a research organisation, a national or regional authority or a research funding agency, i.e. with a public or private legal status.

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❖ **What is the key role and expected activity of the leading institution ("advanced" partner)?**

The key role of the 'advanced' partner organisation will be to contribute to the nurturing and development of the research and innovation potential of the widening partner through sharing its own accumulated expertise, reputation, access to international networks, and its experience in management and administration in a specific area of research and innovation. This role will be exercised through the direct partnering and involvement in the setting up of a new or upgrading an existing Centre of Excellence in the Widening country. It is essentially up to the project partnership to propose diverse activities and ways of involvement of the "advanced" partner, which will meet the objectives mentioned above.

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❖ **How should the financial commitment for the complementary funding to the project be demonstrated?**

We advise that the letter of commitment contains some background information, i.e.:

- the role, if any, of the committing entity during the project,
- identity of the committing entity (i.e. national ministry, regional/local authority, funding agency, private sector, European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), Managing Authority, etc.)
- and relationship, if any, with recipient entity.

For specific details on the nature, amounts and timeline of the funding sources and concrete assurances for the long term availability of funding, please see the [Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022 for Widening](#).

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❖ **Is alignment with the national/regional Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) required? How will this be evaluated?**

As specified in the Work Programme, coordinating applicants in the Widening country must demonstrate how the proposed project is relevant to the Smart Specialisation Strategy of the country or the region in which it is/will be established (or upgraded/modernised). It is important not only when Cohesion policy funding is mobilised with respect to enabling conditions on governance of smart specialisation introduced under cohesion policy programmes, but also in more general terms: 'The implementation of Teaming action is expected to become an influential and meaningful bridge particularly between smart specialisation strategies and excellence in R&I with the aim of strengthening the European Research Area and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals.' In case of Associated countries or Outermost regions, the notion of the Smart specialisation strategy can be replaced by an equivalent national or regional R&I strategy.

This aspect will be evaluated as a sub-criterion under the Excellence criterion.

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❖ **Is an institution from a Widening country that is still holding a Horizon 2020 Teaming grant as coordinator at the moment of application eligible to become an advanced partner?**

In principle, advanced and established partners are scientific institutions that have developed an outstanding reputation in research and innovation excellence in the chosen scientific domain and established in another than a coordinator Member State or Associated Country.

Institutions that are still in the process of development or modernisation, e.g. those that are still receiving support as coordinators from widening actions under Horizon 2020, are normally not considered leading institutions, unless a proper justification is provided in the proposal.

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❖ **Is there any limitation as to how many partners can participate from a "Widening" country or as "advanced" partners?**

There is no limitation on how many partners can participate from the Widening country neither from the "advanced" partner's side. The minimum requirement is 1 Widening partner (the coordinator) and 1 "advanced" partner. However, it is crucial that the partnership does not become too complicated and remains operational according to the needs and specificities of the proposed project. A Teaming project must involve at least two beneficiaries; the coordinator from a Widening country and at least one leading university or research organisation established in another Member State or Associated Country as an advanced partner. Partners from outside the EU are not excluded, but the proposal must convincingly demonstrate their contribution and added value to the project. There is also no requirement for partners to "team up" with stronger or weaker regions in terms of research innovation performance.

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❖ **Are the costs which can be claimed by the "advanced partner" limited in any way? Can the advanced partner provide any financial contribution and what kinds of research costs can be claimed?**

Eligible expenses that can be claimed by the 'advanced' partner are identical to those of the partner(s) from the Widening Country in accordance with the Annotated Model Grant Agreement (article 6). Regarding possible financial contributions from the 'advanced' partner, it is up to the partnership to decide if it is needed and how it would be elaborated in the proposal. As far as such a contribution would reinforce the long-term financial aspect of the partnership, applicants could elaborate it in the proposal.

Regarding the research costs, the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022 for Widening specifies that a minor research component can be accepted. The minor research component may include necessary consumables, small equipment and personnel costs for a preparatory research project. Please see the Work Programme for further details.

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❖ **How is the complementary funding ensured from the first stage if a binding letter is not necessary to be included at the first stage of proposal?**

If applicants do not manage to submit a binding commitment at stage 2, they will be down-scored. Therefore, applicants need to carefully explore already before submitting a proposal at stage 1, and decide if there is a realistic chance for getting the commitment.

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❖ **What are the benefits for the "advanced" partner in participating in Teaming projects?**

A non-exhaustive list includes access to:

- world-class research infrastructures (most often) that are frequently to be found in the Widening countries (often supported and built through the European Structural and Investment Funds)
  - talent, as the Widening countries' institutions have a large pool of unexploited talented scientists
  - future markets, as the Widening countries' institutions are emerging leaders in their respective fields
  - bigger opportunities to future quality research and innovation partnerships.
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❖ **Is it mandatory to establish the Centre of Excellence as a separate legal entity with a VAT number and what would be the human resources strategy to adopt?**

It is not mandatory to constitute the centre of excellence as a legal entity and the centre does not need to have a VAT number.

Regarding the human resources strategy, the Commission expects that the Centres of Excellence to be created (or significantly upgraded/modernised) through the Teaming projects will become drivers for change in the Widening countries. That is why it is indispensable that the Centres have the highest degree of autonomy possible in every aspect of decision-making, including recruitment. Therefore, it is crucial – as specified under the Special Conditions – Procedure of the Call Topic – that the Centres ensure that all recruitments follow a transparent, merit-based and open recruitment procedure for all staff, including management positions.

As mentioned in the Work Programme, a robust human resource strategy needs also to address gender equality (in line with the research institutions respective gender equality plans, mandatory for all proposals submitted as of 2022) and international component, ensuring appropriate management capacities for the effective and efficient running of the Centre of Excellence.