TECHNOLOGY CENTRE PRAGUE

INTERNATIONAL EXCELLENCE HUBS INFO DAY

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23 October 2026 (online)

EXCELLENCE HUBS 2022 & 2023

What evaluators look for: lessons from evaluation summary reports

HOW CSA PROPOSALS ARE EVALUATED

1 EXCELLENCE

- **Clarity and pertinence** of the project's objectives
- **Quality of the coordination and support measures**, including the soundness of the methodology

2 IMPACT

- **Credibility of the pathways** to the expected outcomes and impacts set out in the work programme
- **Suitability and quality of the measures** to maximise outcomes and impacts: dissemination, exploitation and communication

3 IMPLEMENTATION

- **Quality and effectiveness of the work plan**, risk assessment, effort, and resources
- **Capacity and role of each participant** and the expertise of the consortium as a whole

0–5

score per criterion
(half points allowed)

3 / 5

threshold for each
individual criterion

10 / 15

overall threshold
(maximum 15 points)



Source: EC standard briefing for evaluators

1
EXCELLENCE

Clear objectives and a sound methodology

WHAT EVALUATORS ASK

1 EXCELLENCE

1 Clarity and pertinence of the objectives

- Are they clear and pertinent to the topic?
- Are they measurable and verifiable?
- Are they realistically achievable?
- Is the proposed work ambitious, and does it go beyond the state of the art?

2 Quality of the coordination & support measures, soundness of methodology

- Is the methodology (concepts, models, assumptions) clear and sound?
- Is the gender dimension in R&I content properly taken into account?
- Are open science practices an integral part of the methodology?
- Is research data management properly addressed?

Mandatory in Horizon Europe

Open science: open access to publications; data management in line with FAIR principles, incl. a data management plan; open research data – “as open as possible, as closed as necessary”. **Gender dimension:** integrated into R&I content (WP Research Component). Ex-aequo proposals: gender balance among the researchers with a leading role (task/work package leader) named in the researchers table in the proposal template Part A.

WHAT EVALUATORS PRAISED

1 EXCELLENCE



1. **SMART objectives with well-defined KPIs**
   each with a baseline, a target and a means of verification
2. **Thorough analysis of the context, needs & state of the art**
   that justifies the thematic focus
3. **Methodology tailored to the local context of each country**
   based on a SWOT analysis; balancing innovation, training, networking and policy
4. **Alignment with RIS3**
   and other national/regional strategies, backed by local R&I authorities
5. **Genuine quadruple helix involvement**
   every actor has concrete tasks, budget & responsibility, and co-creates key outputs

WHAT EVALUATORS CRITICISED

1 EXCELLENCE



1. **KPIs without baselines, targets or means of verification**
   or overly optimistic numbers
2. **Methodology too generic**
   describes concepts, not how they apply in each country
3. **Weak links to RIS3**
   joint R&I strategy postponed until the project is under way
4. **Vague investment plans**
   co-funding and private capital not specified
5. **Open science, DMP and gender merely declared**
   no concrete activities behind the statements, no balance between publishing and protecting IP

+ EXAMPLES OF STRENGTHS

1 EXCELLENCE

> *Objectives are **extremely clear, measurable, verifiable and achievable**, and are very well integrated with other aspects of the proposal. Actions are fully detailed with **precise and well-substantiated KPIs**. The methodology is **sound and based on a SWOT analysis** and offers a solid approach to achieving the project objectives.*

> *__Staff exchanges between research groups and industry organisations__ are a positive element, allowing staff to acquire new competencies and strengthen collaboration between partners. Measures connected with __education for students and young researchers__, as well as __talent retention__ are well addressed.*

> *Gender representation in R&I and decision-making processes is identified as a key challenge and addressed through __a clear gender equality approach__ covering __sector-specific issues, participation in training, education, events,__ and __team composition.__*

Source: Evaluation Summary Reports, Excellence Hubs calls 2022 and 2023 (anonymised, shortened and edited)

– EXAMPLES OF WEAKNESSES

> *The 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.*

> ***The joint R&I strategy is insufficiently described*** *and is declared to be prepared during project execution. R&I investment plans and pilots lack the details required by the programme.*

> ***Co-creation multi-stakeholder engagement activities are not sufficiently outlined*** *in the work plan to guarantee adequate quadruple helix involvement.*

KEY MESSAGE Make every objective SMART – with a KPI, a baseline, a target and a means of verification. Translate the methodology into your own context.

Source: Evaluation Summary Reports, Excellence Hubs calls 2022 and 2023 (anonymised, shortened and edited)

2
IMPACT

Credible pathways and measures to maximise impact

WHAT EVALUATORS ASK

1 Pathways towards impact

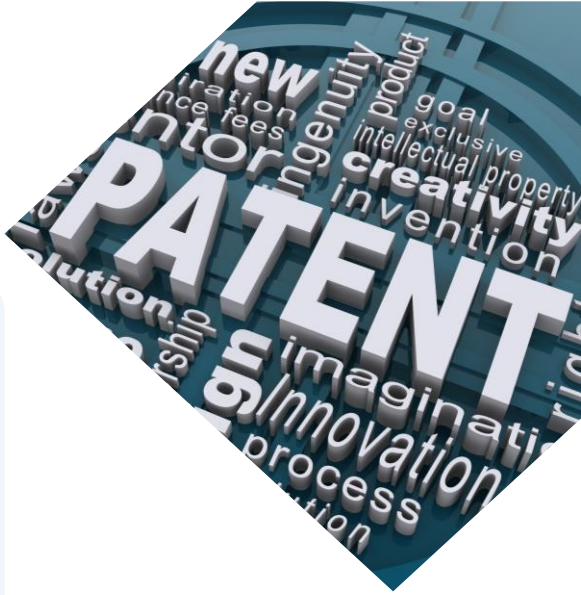
- Is the contribution to the expected outcomes of the topic and to the wider, longer-term impacts in the work programme credible?
- Are potential barriers identified and mitigation measures proposed? Is the management of potential negative impacts described?
- Are the scale and significance of the contribution estimated and quantified, including baselines, benchmarks and assumptions?

2 Measures to maximise impact Dissemination, exploitation, communication (DEC)

- Are the measures suitable, of good quality and proportionate to the project, with concrete actions both during and after the end of the project?
- Are the target groups identified – e.g. the scientific community, end users, financial actors, the public?
- Is an IP management strategy outlined that supports the exploitation of results?

WHAT EVALUATORS PRAISED

2 IMPACT



1. **Impacts quantified**
   measurable KPIs, baselines and benchmarks

2. **Credible pathways backed by concrete actions**
   e.g. a roadmap for cross-regional collaboration after the project

3. **Long-term joint R&I strategy**
   well-defined & strategic investment plans (public & private funding); sustainability beyond the project

4. **Emphasis on science–business links, knowledge transfer & entrepreneurial skills**
   significant potential for creating new business opportunities (especially for SMEs, start-ups, spin-offs)

5. **Robust IP management and a tailored DEC plan**
   e.g. a DESCA-based agreement and a dedicated exploitation committee

WHAT EVALUATORS CRITICISED

2 IMPACT



1. **Impacts too vague**
   no “how much, by when, how measured”

2. **Pathways do not match the expected outcomes of the call & wider impacts**
   sustainability of ecosystems/investments/activities,
   potential barriers & mitigation measures not/insufficiently addressed

3. **Underdeveloped investment plans & mobilisation of national/private funds**
   joint strategy missing, post-project sustainability unclear

4. **IPR & exploitation not managed properly**
   exploitation limited to publications; no partner-specific plans; not all potential end-users engaged

5. **DEC not tailored to target groups**
   no KPIs or means of verification

+ EXAMPLES OF STRENGTHS

2 IMPACT

> *Joint R&I strategies are innovative and well devised, with clear European relevance. Plans for common investment are highly convincing – the partners have already committed resources for project infrastructure.*

> *The draft DEC plan includes proper details about envisaged actions, channels, tools, indicators & the target groups (business & industry, policy makers, research institutions, general public). Plans for exploitation, based on the DESCA model, include a Joint Ownership Agreement signed by all partners and third parties, and a dedicated Exploitation Committee to oversee the protection of new IP.*

> *There is a very convincing strategy to provide new competencies and skills for researchers, entrepreneurs and professionals. The project will significantly strengthen science–business linkages.*

Source: Evaluation Summary Reports, Excellence Hubs calls 2022 and 2023 (anonymised, shortened and edited)

– EXAMPLES OF WEAKNESSES

2 IMPACT

> ***Longer-term impacts are described in general terms.*** *How end users will be engaged in the adoption and transfer of technology is not convincingly addressed.*

> ***Lack of an appropriate exploitation plan and IPR strategy*** *is a major shortcoming, as Excellence Hubs are expected to foster not just innovation, but also its uptake and use.*

> ***Stakeholders affected by the project are not sufficiently described****, and their roles in the dissemination activities are not clear.*

KEY MESSAGE Quantify the expected impacts and describe the pathways to achieve them. Turn investments into a joint strategy and take exploitation beyond publications.

Source: Evaluation Summary Reports, Excellence Hubs calls 2022 and 2023 (anonymised, shortened and edited)

3 IMPLEMENTATION

A realistic work plan and a capable consortium

WHAT EVALUATORS ASK

3 IMPLEMENTATION

1 Work plan, effort and resources

- Is the work plan effective and of good quality?
- Does it include quantified information so that progress can be monitored?
- Is it logically structured, e.g. in the timing of work packages?
- Are resources in line with the objectives and deliverables of each work package?
- Are critical implementation risks identified, with proper mitigation measures?

2 Participants and the consortium

- Does the consortium match the objectives and bring together the necessary knowledge, incl. open science practices and gender aspects of R&I?
- Do partners have access to the critical infrastructure needed?
- Do partners complement one another, each with a valid role and adequate resources?
- Is there industrial/commercial involvement to ensure exploitation of results (if applicable)?

+ WHAT EVALUATORS PRAISED

3 IMPLEMENTATION



1. **Complementary consortium**
   quadruple helix in each country, incl. SSH, open science and gender expertise
2. **Clear, balanced partner roles**
   each partner has a valid role and adequate resources
3. **Coherent work packages**
   covering all core components of the call, incl. a distinct R&I WP
4. **Logical work plan**
   interdependencies explained; milestones and deliverables allow progress control
5. **Justified resources, credible risk mitigation**
   person-months and budget in line with objectives

WHAT EVALUATORS CRITICISED

3 IMPLEMENTATION



1. **Weak representation of some quadruple helix actors**
   partners role & expertise not sufficiently justified; non-academic partners lead no WPs
2. **Vague tasks, confusing Gantt chart**
   no quantities, timing or interdependencies
3. **Few or unverifiable milestones**
   deliverables not aligned with tasks
4. **Unbalanced, poorly justified resources allocation**
   (person-months, budget, staff effort) across partners, WPs or research activities
5. **Too narrow or too generic risks**
   limited to lack of commitment of stakeholders/IPR conflicts between public and private sector; governance, team and technical risks ignored

EXAMPLES OF STRENGTHS

> *__Clear, logical and well-presented work plan__. The description and timing of WPs are comprehensively supported by the __Gantt and PERT charts__. Deliverables and milestones are very well formulated.*

> *The __research component__ is presented through a __distinct WP__ with clear scientific objectives and tasks in line with the budget requirements of the call, suitable to cover development needs and gaps in the chosen domain.*

> *__Critical risks__ (likelihood and severity) and the proposed __mitigation measures are well identified, realistic, and credible__. These include lack of synergies between the joint research activities and management of the FSTP actions, and __are mitigated through adequate monitoring and mentoring measures.__*

> *__Each partner has a valid role and adequate resources__ to fulfil it. The roles are assigned in a __meaningful and balanced way__. The partners __have access to relevant critical infrastructure.__*

Source: Evaluation Summary Reports, Excellence Hubs calls 2022 and 2023 (anonymised, shortened and edited)

EXAMPLES OF WEAKNESSES

> *A 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 planned activities.*

> *The integration of non-academic partners and their contribution to the execution is weakened by their limited involvement in leading work packages.*

> *The number of person-months in the proposed work packages is insufficiently justified.*

KEY MESSAGE: Justify every person-month, align the Gantt chart with milestones and deliverables, and give evidence of each partner's capacity.

Source: Evaluation Summary Reports, Excellence Hubs calls 2022 and 2023 (anonymised, shortened and edited)

TIPS FOR WRITING THE PROPOSAL



1 Content

- **Start from an honest SWOT analysis** and address weaknesses & threats in the work plan
- **Mirror the call text** & **Work Programme** in your objectives
- **Show links to RIS3** and the added value for your region and the EU
- Plan D(E)C activities for **each stakeholder group**, e.g. a press conference alongside the kick-off meeting
- **Respect the formal requirements** – all quadruple helix actors, role of non-Widening partners

2 Style and process

- **Keep the template structure** and use the call's terminology
- **Write clearly and concisely** – short sentences/ paragraphs, no buzzwords, no repetition, few abbreviations
- **This is not a scientific paper** - use an accessible style and cite international sources
- **Use graphics** to explain key aspects of the proposal
- **Start early** and have an outsider (colleague, NCP) read the draft

KEY MESSAGE: Avoid generic statements and be consistent throughout the proposal!

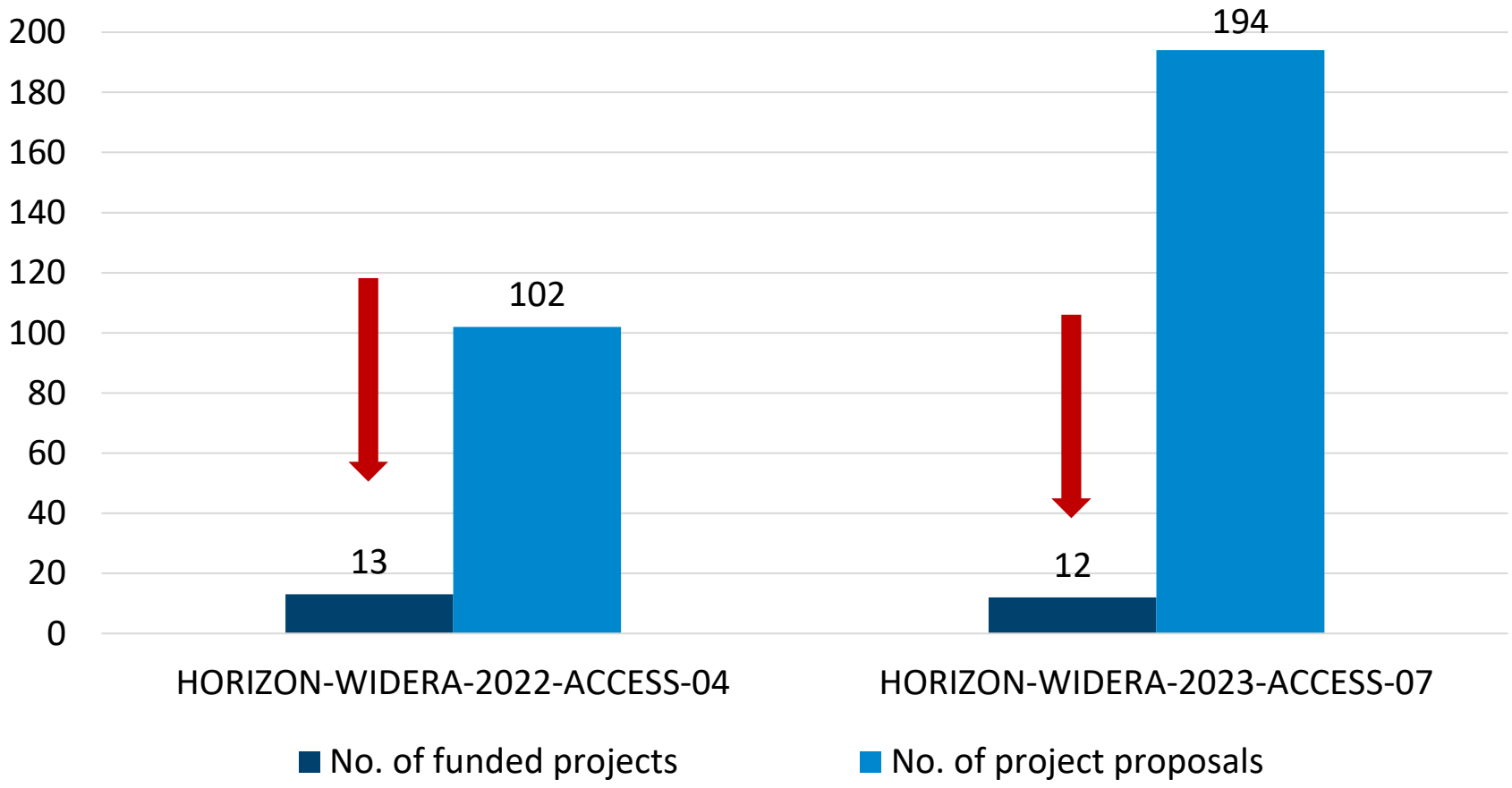
REA RECOMMENDATIONS FOR QUALITY PROPOSAL PREPARATION (INCLUDING THE LINKS TO BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS/WEBINARS) FROM 2026



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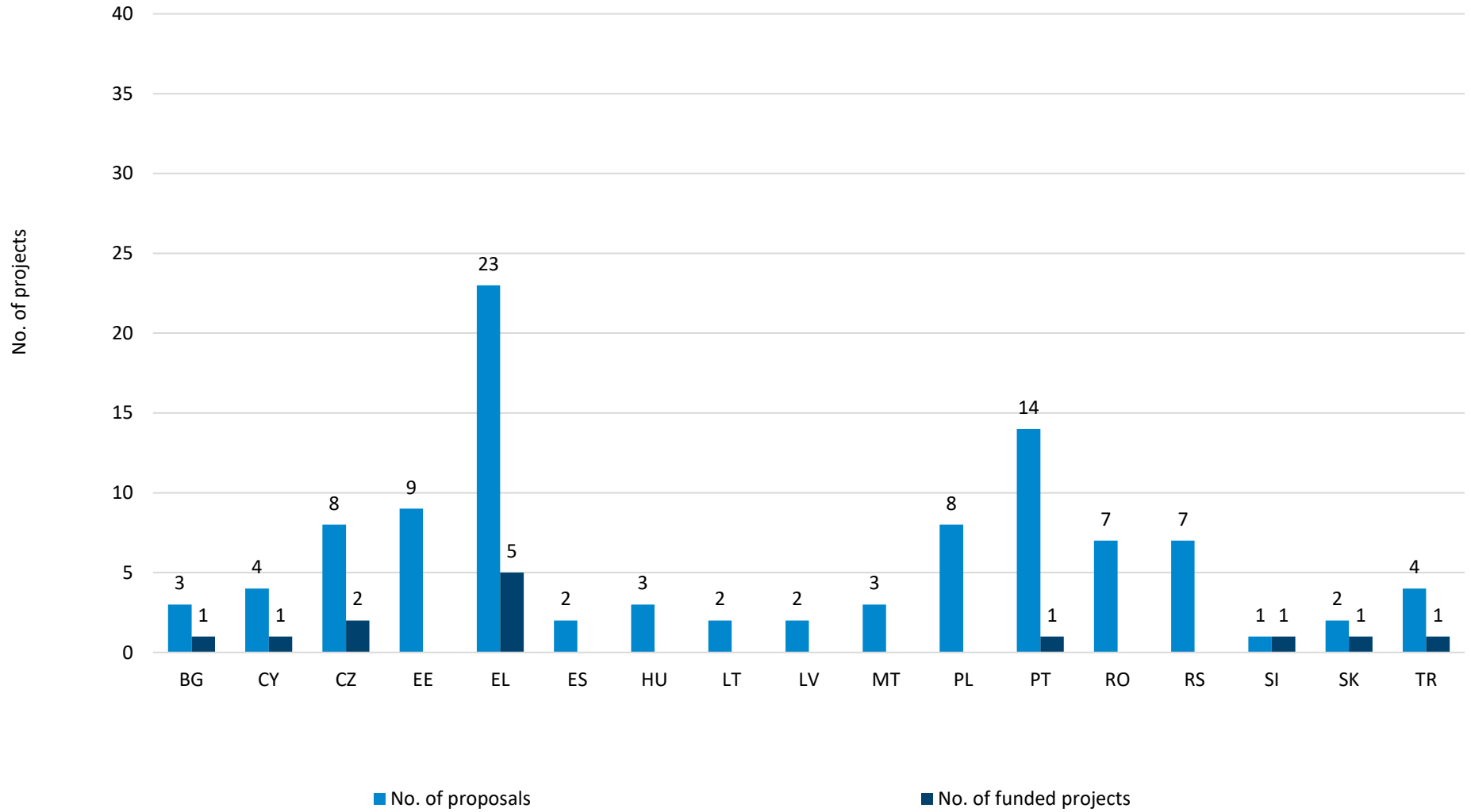
EXCELLENCE HUBS CALLS: 2022 AND 2023 OUTCOMES

PARTICIPATION IN 2022 & 2023 EH CALLS IN TOTAL (COORDINATORS)



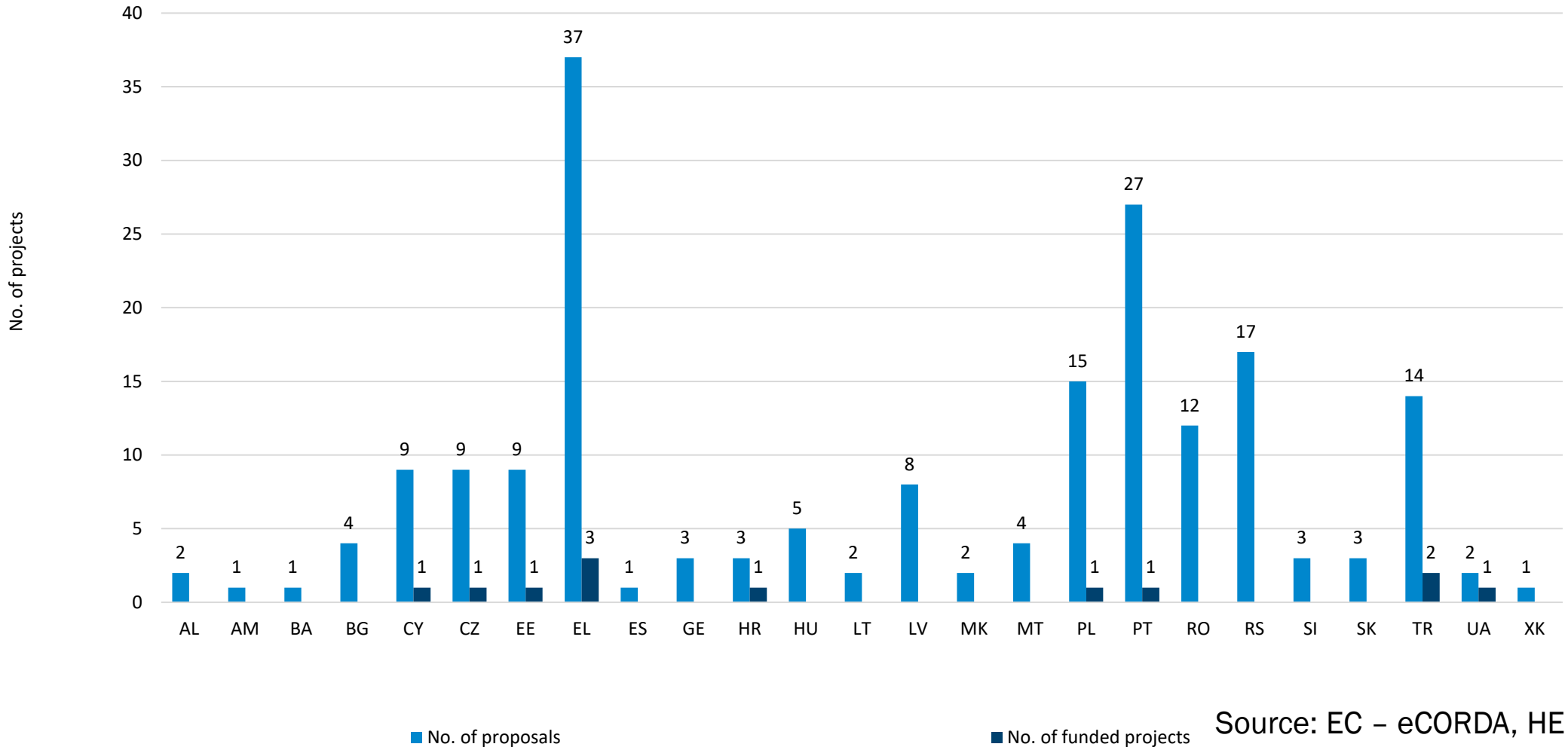
Source: EC – eCORDA, HE – 18/08/2026

HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ACCESS-04 (COORDINATORS, IN ALPHABETIC ORDER)



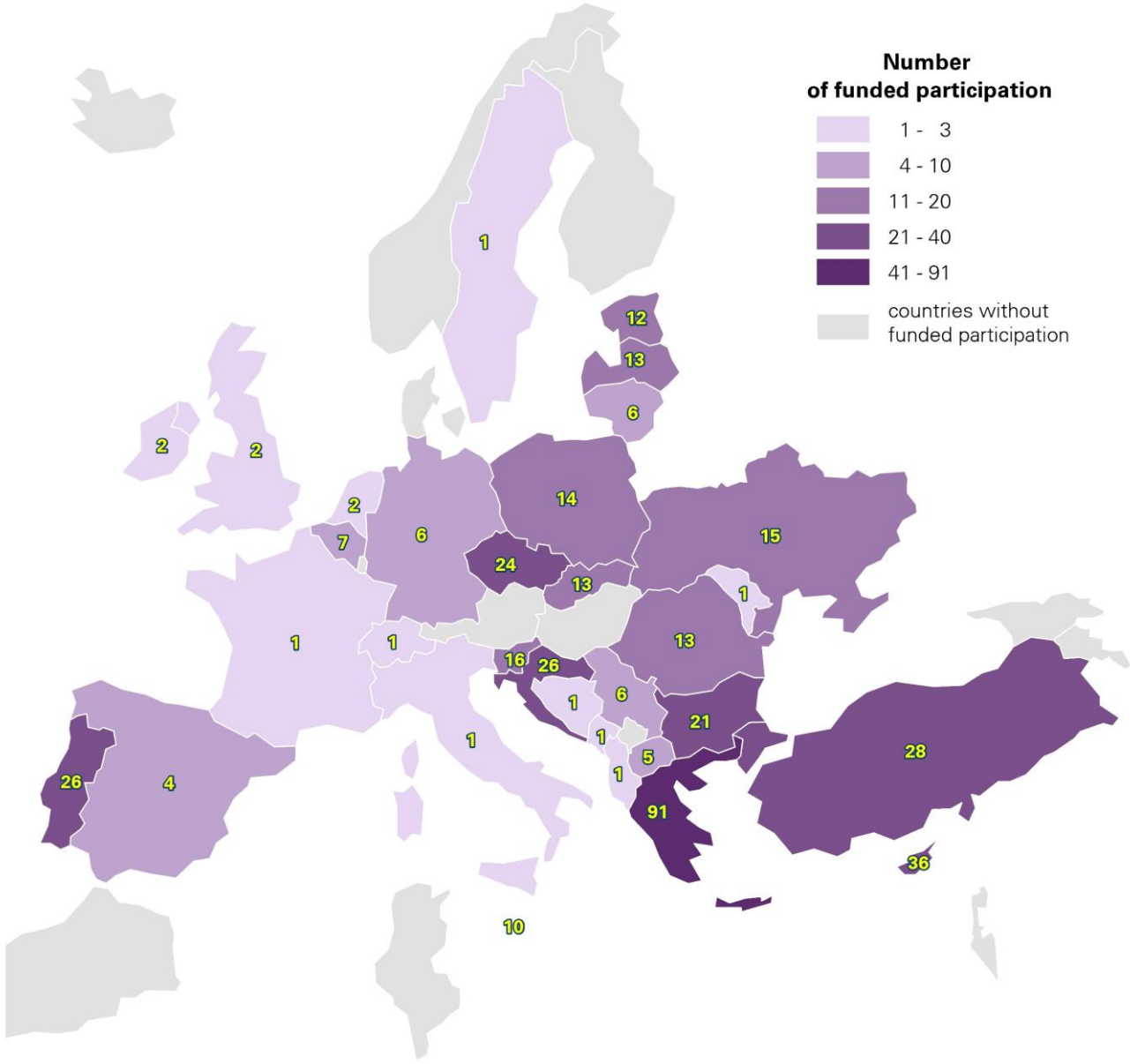
Source: EC – eCORDA, HE – 18/08/2026

HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-07 (COORDINATORS, IN ALPHABETIC ORDER)



Source: EC – eCORDA, HE – 18/08/2026

NO. OF PARTICIPATIONS IN FUNDED PROPOSALS PER COUNTRY



Source: EC – eCORDA, HE – 18/08/2026, Vladimír Vojtěch, TC Prague

SOME DATA ABOUT THE CONSORTIA SIZE

Excellence Hubs Call	2022	2023
Average consortia size	15	17
Minimum no. of partners	8	13
Maximum no. of partners	21	24

Source: EC – eCORDA, HE – 18/08/2026

HIGHEST TOTAL EU CONTRIBUTIONS PER FUNDED PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

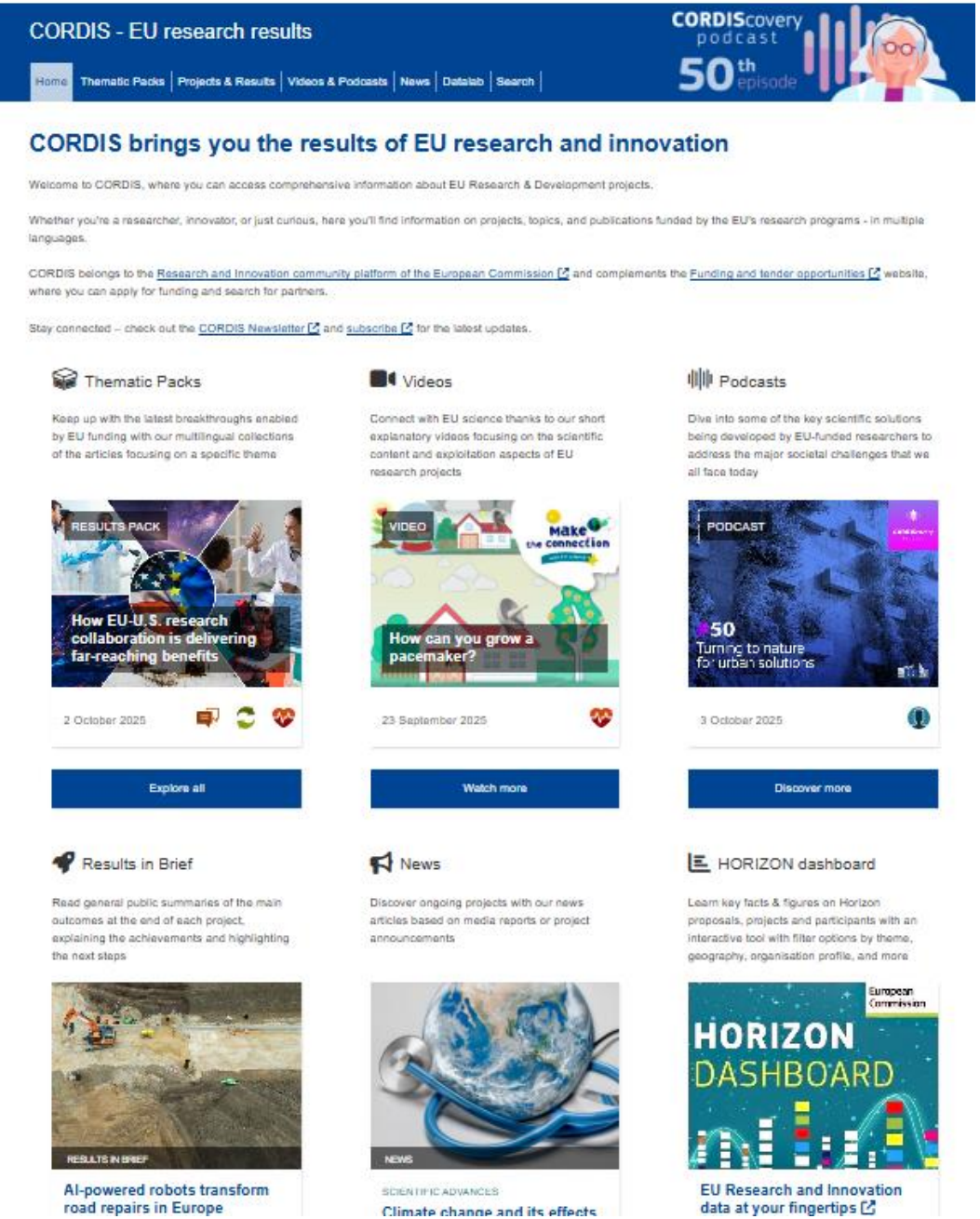
HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ACCESS-04

ORGANISATION	COUNTRY	No. of participa-tions	€ NET EU Contribution
Masarykova univerzita	CZ	2	3 091 753
VYSOKE UCENI TECHNICKE V BRNE	CZ	2	2 641 614
TRENCIANSKA UNIVERZITA ALEXANDRA DUBCEKA V TRENCINE	SK	1	2 231 925
IDRYMA TECHNOLOGIAS KAI EREVNAS	EL	1	1 720 000
ETHNIKO KENTRO EREVNAS KAI TECHNOLOGIKIS ANAPTYXIS	EL	3	1 633 638
UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA	PT	1	1 457 281
TARTU ULIKOOL	EE	1	1 067 275
CMMI CYPRUS MARINE AND MARITIME INSTITUTE	CY	1	937 300
REFRAME FOOD ASTIKI MI KERDOSKOPIKI ETAIRIA	EL	1	907 163
ODTU GUNES ENERJISI UYGULAMA VE ARA STIRMA MERKEZI	TR	1	890 625
SVEUCILISTE U ZAGREBU FAKULTET ELEKTROTEHNIKE I RACUNARSTVA	HR	1	870 410
NEUROIMUNOLOGICKY USTAV SLOVENSKEJ AKADEMIE VIED, v. v. i.	SK	1	823 978

Source: EC – eCORDA, HE – 18/08/2026

HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-07

ORGANISATION	COUNTRY	No. of participa-tions	€ NET EU Contribution
TURKIYE BILIMSEL VE TEKNOLOJIK ARASTIRMA KURUMU	TR	2	1 796 250
UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA	PT	1	1 793 286
ETHNICON METSOVION POLYTECHNION	EL	2	1 690 625
FYZIKALNI USTAV AV CR, VVI	CZ	1	1 630 625
UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS	CY	2	1 510 000
UNIVERSIDADE NOVA DE LISBOA	PT	2	1 363 500
INSTYTUT CHEMII BIOORGANICZNEJ POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK	PL	1	1 062 500
INSTITUT ZA MOLEKULARNU GENETIKU I GENETICKO INZENJERSTVO	RS	1	1 058 900
LVIV POLYTECHNIC NATIONAL UNIVERSITY	UA	2	1 056 978
IDRYMA TECHNOLOGIAS KAI EREVNAS	EL	1	1 055 000
VALSTYBINIS MOKSLINIU TYRIMU INSTITUTAS FIZINIU IR TECHNOLOGIJOS MOKSLU CENTRAS	LT	1	1 020 975
SIHTASUTUS KESKKONNAINVESTEERINGUTEKESKUS	EE	1	1 004 450



FUNDED PROJECTS

CORDIS

- Projects´ basic data including abstracts and objectives, reporting and results

2022 Excellent Hubs projects

2023 Excellent Hubs projects

QUESTIONS? DON´T HESITATE TO CONTACT ME!

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