A guide to understanding and assessing the applicability of the Horizon Europe work programme and its calls for proposals

Program: Horizon Europe

Målgruppe: Forskningsrådgivere, forskningsledere og interesserte forskere

Formål: Guiden er ment å skulle hjelpe støtteapparat og ledelse til å bedre kunne forstå utlysninger innen Horizon Europe, og derved kunne vurdere en eventuell deltakelse

Eier: Ekspertgruppen for tematiske prosjekter ved Jørgen Kirksæther (jorgen.kirksather@mn.uio.no)

Historikk: Dokumentet er et resultat av et grunnarbeid gjort ved UV-fakultetet, og påfølgende testing ved flere enheter. Ressursen er publisert på engelsk for å favne bredest mulig.

Versjon: 1.0 (intern v9) **Dato:** 21. mai 2021

Endringslogg:

Dato	Side	Beskrivelse
21.05.21		Dokumentet / ressursen er gjennomgått av UiOs ekspertgruppe for tematiske prosjekter og publisert som et levende dokument

A guide to understanding and assessing the applicability of the Horizon Europe work programme and its calls for proposals
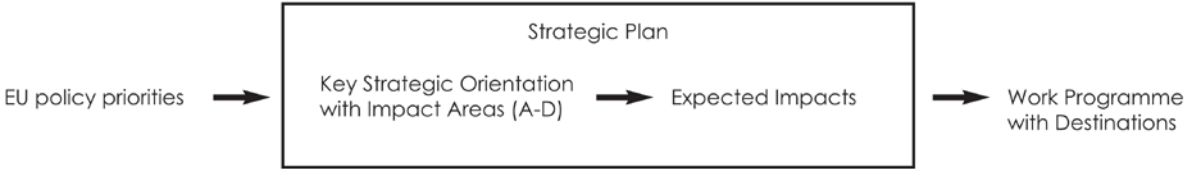
Introductory note: the following is a guide to getting to grips with the seemingly impenetrable EU Framework programme for research. The intended purpose is to help researchers and support staff look for relevant topics to apply to, or to decipher a particular topic description. This is a flexible document, and comments and suggestions are welcome. The information below is based on documents and information available by the date given in the header.

Introduction: The Commission has one *Work Programme* which consists of 13 *parts*. Some of these are either general (Introduction, Missions, General Annexes) or particular (MSCA, Research Infrastructures, Innovation Ecosystems, Widening participation). In addition, there are four separate programmes and plans for: the ERC, Joint Research Centre, Innovation Council, and Insititute of innovation and technology.

The following will describe the structure of the remainder, *WP parts 4-9*. These WP parts, sometimes confusingly also referred to as 'work programmes', cover the thematic, top-down calls in Horizon Europe. Note that the work programme is updated several times throughout the programme period.
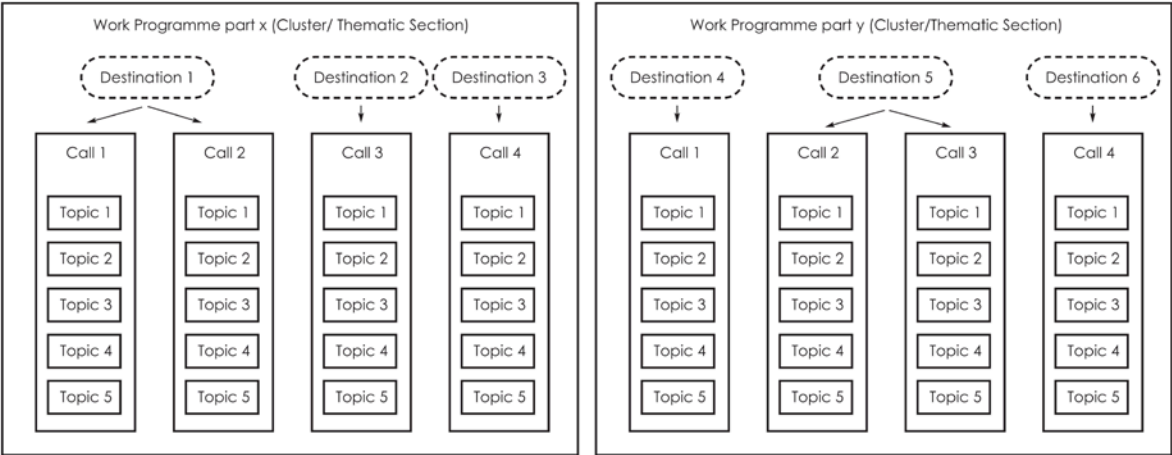
When applying for project funding, one applies to a particular *topic*. However, to maximise the chances of being funded, it is important to understand the factors influencing the topic description. There are many such factors, in a virtual hierarchy. It is not necessary to internalise all EU policies and decisions, but having some knowledge of the underlying intentions and arguments will guide the project description and positioning, to better fit the topic.

Structure and topic background: The overall direction of the whole work programme is described in the *Strategic Plan*, which is based on the EU policy priorities. The priorities have been routed through the four (A-D) Key Strategic Orientations (KSOs) and their subsequent Impact Areas, which in turn have crystallised into the Expected Impacts. These overarching Impacts are to be fulfilled by sc. *Destinations*. In many cases, destinations correspond directly to an expected impact identified in the Horizon Europe strategic plan, so in practice a destination can be viewed as a 'big' impact.

In an effort to thematically group the destinations, *Clusters* have been created.

A Work programme *part* (4-9) ('Thematic Section' in some documents), is built around a cluster (with the same name) and a collection of destinations. These destinations are to be reached through a number of *Calls*, which in turn are dynamically split into singular *Topics* (described in detail below). These topics describe the framework for and expected outcomes of the *research projects* that are to be funded. These topics have one or more *expected outcomes*.

In other words, the hierarchy is:

EU policy > KSO > Expected Impact(s) > Destination > Call > Topic > Expected Outcome(s)

Some (all?) WP parts (Cluster descriptions) will list these connections in a table in the introducion.

Note that clusters do not have a part in this hierarchy, as they are a structuring aid and not a content descriptor. They are, however, as shown above, headers for the WP parts.

A **Call** consists of one or more **Topics**, and its function is to *contribute* to a given **destination**. The destination description will list one or more **Expected impacts** (ref. the hierarchy above).

It is in the topic description we find the framework for the actual work that is to be performed:

A Topic description consists of:

Conditions:	The total budget per project, the total budget for all projects (in this topic), the type of action (Research and innovation, Innovation, Coordination and support), eligibility criteria, and, if relevant, exceptions to the standard selection procedures
Expected outcome:	The medium-term consequence(s) of the project results
Scope:	Overarching background for the topic and concrete expected results, in addition to other mandatory aspects, in some cases including sub-topics and other special criteria

Suggested strategies for evaluating the relevance of a given topic

Evaluating a topic against a given researcher, group or environment can be difficult. It is not always clear whether the expected results can be delivered, or if the work involved is of interest. We therefore, based on our experience with topic descriptions, suggest approaching any topic and call in a structured manner, to minimise the risk of either missing out on exciting opportunities or spending resources on ideas that in fact cannot respond to the topic's expectations.

The first questions one should ask are:

What is/are the expected outcome(s)? When this is known, one can answer the first gatekeeper: do we have or can we come up with an idea that can reach these outcomes, partly or in full? Are we able to construct a project whose concrete results will generate the listed outcomes?

What are the conditions? Can the project be run within these boundaries (time, resources, type of action)? Are there any eligiblity criteria that need to be considered?

and

What is the scope? Can we — *and do we want to* — provide the specified results?

> *If the answer to the three questions is 'yes', we can start planning a project.*

Project planning is a long process, but it should always start with a basic question: Do we have the knowledge, personnel, facilities and resources to perform the necessary work? If not, who can provide the rest? They will then be your prospective partners. In other words: what is needed to reach the project's goals, and where can we find this? When this is known, the actual planning begins. For help with that, please contact your local project support team. They want to help