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Version history

Change Log			
Version	Date	Author(s)	Reason for Change
0.1	2 August 2024	Kvetoslava Papanova	Including in the introduction of each chapter the official evaluation criteria and highlighting that impact section has a higher weighting than excellence in IA type of actions (Aurelia Povilaike)
0.2	12 August 2024	Kvetoslava Papanova	Change the order of the sections, starting with RIA and ending with CSA type of actions (Sigrún Ólafsdóttir)
0.3	27 September 2024	Kvetoslava Papanova	Comments and edits of the coordinator (Maurizio Toscano)
1.0	30 September 2024	Kvetoslava Papanova	Final version

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Executive summary

From the ad hoc analysis of the ESRs of the different calls, differences in the evaluators' comments on the different types of actions can be observed. This was the reason for conducting a more complex ESR analysis. The aim of the analysis is to provide a representative overview for reviewing/pre-screening of proposals containing most of the criteria used by evaluators. In addition to these criteria, specific call criteria have to be taken into consideration.

Methodology

A mixed method utilising the characteristics of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies has been used in this analysis.

This method allowed to validate findings, verifying if the results are observed. Using both methods is complementary, and the results obtained from one method are explained using the other method.

To prepare a representative sample of the analysed ESR, all thematic Slovak national contact points (NCPs) were asked to select 5 evaluation summary reports (ESRs) with the highest rating and 5 ESRs with the lowest rating but from different calls. ESRs were selected from various calls according to the type of activity, to ensure the highest possible diversity of ESRs. Pillar 1, pillar 3 and JRC calls were not analysed.

So, **the first step** was the collection of ESRs:

- different calls in each cluster + Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area,
- each type of action RIA/IA/CSA,
- 5 highest rated and 5 the lowest rated.

The representative sample of analysed ESRs consisted of 130 ESRs in the period of 12/2021 – 3/2024.

The second step was the selection of unusual/untypical/specific comments in the ESRs and their comparison with the official evaluation criteria. Many of the commented aspects in the ESRs are not mentioned in the official evaluation questions but can be found in the annotated application templates. Both the official evaluation questions and the annotated application templates were compared with comments from ESRs, according to the types of actions (RIA/IA/CSA) and chapters of the proposal (Excellence, Impact, Implementation).

Quantitative and qualitative methods were combined with the empiric consideration/assessment of each comment in the selected ESR. This assessment was used to create the recommendation part of the analysis, as it provides a clear picture of the many aspects evaluated by the evaluators.

The findings' part was created taking into account the official evaluation questions, the annotated templates and the comments in the ESR, e.g. as a compilation of all of them.

Discussion

Commonalities in all types of actions proposals:

- Clear Objectives: All activities require clear, measurable, and strategic objectives.
- Impact Pathways: Detailed descriptions of how projects will achieve their intended impacts.
- Work Plans and Implementation: Emphasis on detailed, logical work plans with clear roles and responsibilities.
- Risk Management: Identification and mitigation of risks are critical across all activities.
- Consortium Capacity: Evaluation of the consortium's expertise and balance is a priority.

In all analysed ESRs it was found that if the proposal is written in understandable way, provides a good impression and explains/describes almost all requested aspects, the evaluators are tolerant of some minor shortcomings and can give the highest rating.

Differences

- Novelty and Ground-breaking Approaches: RIAs and IAs place a stronger emphasis on ground-breaking and novel methodologies, whereas CSAs focus more on coordination and support measures and novel innovation is expected.
- Commercialization and Market Uptake: IAs have a stronger focus on commercialization, market uptake, and business planning compared to CSAs and RIAs.
- Interdisciplinarity: While all actions value interdisciplinarity, RIAs and IAs require a more detailed integration of various disciplines.
- Open Science Practices: Although important in all actions, CSAs and RIAs emphasize Open Science and data management more than IAs.
- In the CSA annotated template there is no requirement to provide description on how the proposal goes beyond the state-of-the-art, but in several analysed ESRs it appeared as a comment of the evaluators.
- The Impact section has higher weight than Excellence in IA proposals rather than in RIA or CSA.

The logic and consistency of the proposal have to be visible especially in following aspects:

**OBJECTIVES – KPIs – METHODOLOGY – IMPACTS – OUTCOMES –
DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES – WORK PACKAGES**

1. Section – Aspects evaluated in RIA projects

1.1. Official evaluation questions in RIA/IA evaluation form¹

Excellence

- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, and goes beyond the state of the art
- Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content, and the quality of open science practices, including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and end users where appropriate.

Impact

- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from to the project
- Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

Implementation

- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall
- Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

In two-stage calls – for stage 1 proposals only the criteria Excellence and Impact will be evaluated².

1.2. Findings from the analysis

Excellence

Objectives

- Have to be clear and pertinent to the strategic documents, working programme, destination and topic/call

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/temp-form/ef/ef_he-ria-ia_en.pdf.

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/temp-form/ef/ef_he-ria-ia-csa-stage-1_en.pdf.

- Have to be measurable and verifiable (SMART) and realistically achievable
- The project goals have to be sufficiently explained and clearly linked to the methodology
- Should be in line with call expected outcomes
- Clear KPIs must be provided to measure the progress in reaching them
- KPIs have to be quantified, and evidence of their calculation must be explained
- The current state-of-the-art should be described.

Methodology

- Should describe any exemption ground-breaking R&I, novel concepts, approaches, new products, services, or business and organisational models
- Has to explain overall methodology, including concepts, models, assumptions and how this will enable to deliver project objectives
- The underlying concepts, assumptions, and hypotheses should be clearly articulated and justified
- The ambition of proposals with potential to go beyond state-of-the-art by applying novel methods and approaches should demonstrate an understanding of the needs or problems of the relevant stakeholders
- Should demonstrate national or international R&I activities/projects whose results will feed into the project and how that link will be established
- Should demonstrate convincing knowledge in relation to previous related EU projects/initiatives
- Refer to any product and service already available on the market
- Refer to any patent or publication search performed
- Has to describe R&I maturity of the proposed work, indicating TRL
- Intention to increase the TRL from 2-4 to higher levels at the end of the project has to be credible and in line with the topic/call requirement
- Has to describe how the experience and methods of different disciplines will be brought together in order to fulfil project 's objectives (provide justification if an interdisciplinary approach is unnecessary)
- Interdisciplinarity has to be considered with areas such as the law, sociology, technology, and policy making of being incorporated into the proposed work
- The proposed description of the R&I have to correspond to a realistic and comprehensive overview of the project objectives and milestones.

Open science practices

- Should be an integral part of the methodology
- Should be addressed adequately.

Gender aspect in research and innovation content

- Careful consideration of gender aspects in many ways throughout R&I should be explained; for instance, sex and gender implications of research hypotheses, questions, and techniques should be considered.

Data management

- Management of research outputs should be well designed, and data management aspects should have an appropriate focus on standards, compatibility, and interoperability
- FAIR principle has to be used for data management.

SSH/engagement of citizens, civil society, and end users

- For topics where the work programme indicates the need for the integration of SSH, their role should be described
- For topics where the work programme does not explicitly indicate SSH integration it is useful to provide justification that SSH are not relevant.

What else?

- Describe how the proposal secures European competitiveness and non-dependence in selected area
- A SWOT analysis at the beginning of the chapter can be provided
- Refer to any important challenges identified in the chosen methodology and how to overcome them
- The scalability of the project to the European level should be sufficiently addressed
- AI robustness of the proposed tools and approaches has to be convincingly demonstrated throughout the proposal.

Impact

Pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts

- The results of the project should contribute to the expected outcomes set out for the topic over the medium term and to the wider expected impact set out in the destination over the longer term
- Description of the contribution of the project results towards the outcomes specified in the topic/call
- Explanation of how projects are expected to make a difference in terms of impact, beyond the immediate scope and duration of the project
- The proposal should respond to the expected outcomes through specific key outputs, verified by KPIs linked to project objectives that support the credibility of the proposed pathways
- Proposed activities should be scalable and quantifiable
- Economical sustainability of the overall approach has to be consistently demonstrated

- Validation activities have to be explained in detail.

Measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, and the D&E&C plan

- The first version of the D&E&C plan has to be presented
- Describe the D&E&C measures that are planned and the target groups addressed
- In the area of communication activities – their aim is to inform and reach out to society and show the benefits for citizens
- Communication activities have to be strategically planned with clear objectives, start at the outset, and continue through the lifetime of the project
- D&E&C measures should contain a description of the justification of their choosing in relation to the relevant target group
- Where relevant, describe the measures for the plausible path to commercialise the innovations
- Plans for dissemination of the results to different stakeholders should be coherent and include well-specialised measures
- The identification of different steps and strategies to promote and leverage the project outcomes for each project partner is highly appreciated
- The proposal should show clarity on the specific links between the project objectives and the proposed communication activities
- The scope and use of communication channels, such as journal articles, conference papers, and other, should be satisfactorily justified
- Dissemination towards European and international networks should be covered
- Go-to-market strategy should be fully convincing
- The scale and significance of the project contribution to the expected outcomes and impacts (where a meaningful quantification is provided) should be provided
- Appropriate information on market size and expected market penetration should be well presented
- Aspects related to scaling-up, pilot demonstration and competitiveness of EU industry should be explained
- The supply and value chain aspects should be considered
- The target end-user groups should be identified with a description of all stakeholders' engagement, especially industry stakeholders involved in the development of novel technologies.

IPR

- A draft of the IPR strategy must be presented and should be based on previous discussions among the individual project partners

- Outline IPR strategy, foreseen protection measures, and how these would be used to support exploitation
- The presence of an IPR manager working in collaboration with the data manager and interacting with the Industry Advisory Board is highly appreciated by evaluators
- It is positive if project partners have reached a preliminary agreement on the IPR strategy prior to the submission of the proposal.

What else?

- Description of any requirements, threats, risks and potential barriers that may limit the reaching of proposed impacts and outcomes and description of the mitigation measures, which have to be clear, complex, and credible (PESTLE analysis is recommended)
- Analysis of parts of developed/adjusted technologies and whether some of those may be affected by export restrictions is needed. At the same time parts with non-EU export restrictions should be identified and there should be a plan how to replace them
- Description of the positive impact on the local communities in a measurable and quantifiable way is appreciated by evaluators
- A road map for commercialisation should be well presented in order to prepare the next step of the proposed project.

Implementation

Work plan

- The presented work plan has to be detailed, logical, and well structured
- It should illustrate a sequential logic of WPs and tasks tailored to the project requirements, with clear objectives and coherent flow
- The timing of the different work packages and their components have to be detailed and illustrated by Gantt and Perth diagrams
- Milestones should allow monitoring of the project progress.

Implementation risks

- The list has to be complete, taking into account all implementation aspects
- Their identification and mitigation should be based on a wide discussion among the project partners.

Effort assigned to WPs

- Proposals should present information on the individual researchers who will be involved in the implementation
- Open science, SSH, and gender aspects expertise has to be described at consortium level

- Budget and resource attributions should be transparently presented to enable adequacy and sufficiency to be judged
- All project partners must be proportionally involved into the project, to evidence that they can make a significant contribution.

Capacity and role of each participant and consortium quality

- All project partners should have well-defined roles
- Imbalance among partners has to be sufficiently explained
- Involvement of a scientific board is very appreciated by evaluators
- Project partners should represent diverse socioeconomic contexts and have in-depth expertise in required areas
- Partners should offer a strong track record of related publications and participation in relevant previous EU-funded projects.
- The consortium as a whole has to be well balanced and complementary and should have an appropriate geographical representation and composition.

What else?

- Justification of the purchase costs for participants, where those costs exceed 15% of personnel costs, has to be detailed, supported by calculation or benchmarks
- The lump sum project may consist of quite a large number of WPs as it makes the project very manageable with clear responsibilities of each project partner and ensure better cash-flow. Fragmentation of WP into numerous tasks is not recommended in lump sum projects
- In lump sum projects, unjustified high person month (PM) costs of specific beneficiary may lead to the reduction of personnel costs
- The necessity of subcontracting is a subject of evaluators' attention, so it has to be well explained
- The proposal should include activities that will be carried out jointly with other relevant projects, in particular those financed under the same topic (if applicable)
- There should be consistency between the various person-months tables and the budget (Excel file) in the part A of the application.

2. Section – Aspects evaluated in IA projects

2.1. Official evaluation questions in RIA/IA evaluation form³

Excellence

- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, and goes beyond the state of the art.
- Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content, and the quality of open science practices, including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and end users where appropriate.

Impact

- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from to the project.
- Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

Implementation

- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.
- Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

In two-stage calls – for stage 1 proposals only the criteria Excellence and Impact will be evaluated⁴.

2.2. Findings from the analysis

Excellence

Objectives

- Have to be clear and pertinent to the strategic documents, working programme destination and topic/call

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/temp-form/ef/ef_he-ria-ia_en.pdf.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/temp-form/ef/ef_he-ria-ia-csa-stage-1_en.pdf.

- Have to be in line with KPIs to monitor their progress, with impact indicators, outcomes, dissemination and communication activities and work packages
- The key scientific challenges should be well identified and appropriately mapped into the objectives
- Should be measurable and verifiable (SMART) and should consist of evidence to justify how the indicators were calculated
- Should be realistically achievable and in line with the expected outcomes
- Clear KPIs must be provided to measure the progress in achieving the planned objectives
- KPIs must be quantified, and evidence of their calculation must be explained
- Description of the current state-of-the-art has to be provided
- The ambition of the proposal, with potential to go beyond the state-of-the-art and beyond the current technological solutions available on the market by applying novel methods and approaches, must be provided.

Methodology

- Describe any exceptional ground-breaking R&I, novel concepts, approaches, new products, services, or business and organisational models
- Describe the overall methodology, incl. concepts, models, assumptions and how this will enable to deliver project objectives
- The underlying concepts, assumptions, and hypotheses should be clearly articulated and justified
- Demonstrate understanding of the needs or problems of the relevant stakeholders
- Describe national or international R&I activities/projects whose results will feed into the project and how that link will be established
- Demonstrate convincing knowledge in relation to previous related EU projects/initiatives
- Refer if the product or service is already available on the market
- Refer to any patent or publication search carried
- Describe R&I maturity of the proposed work, indicating TRL
- Intention to increase the TRL from a certain level to a higher one at the end of the project has to be credible, in line with the topic/call requirement and has to be adequately justified
- Describe how expertise and methods from different disciplines will be brought together in order to fulfil project objectives (provide justification if an inter-disciplinary approach is unnecessary)

- Interdisciplinarity has to be considered, with areas such as law, sociology, technology, and policy-making being incorporated into the proposed work
- The proposed description of the R&I have to correspond to a realistic and comprehensive overview of the project objectives and milestones
- The engagement of citizens and civil society should be sufficiently addressed.

Open science practices

- Should be an integral part of the methodology
- Should be addressed adequately
- Effective data management measures for sharing Open Data and research results should be proposed
- Open access description should relate to the life cycle aspects.

Gender aspect in research and innovation content

- Careful consideration of gender aspects in many ways throughout R&I should be explained, for instance, sex and gender implications of research hypotheses, questions, and techniques should be considered
- The gender dimension in research and innovation content should be appropriately addressed.

Data management

- Management of research outputs should be well designed, and data management aspects should have an appropriate focus on standards, compatibility, and interoperability
- Including the data management plan as a live document in the specific task is useful
- Data management has to follow FAIR principles.

SSH, engagement of citizens, civil society, and end users

- For topics where the work programme indicates the need for the integration of SSH, their role should be described
- For topics where the work programme does not explicitly indicate SSH integration it is useful to provide justification that SSH are not relevant
- Social science and Humanities researchers and their methodologies should be well integrated in the proposal.

What else?

- If there is a pilot in the proposal, the proposed locations and specificities of it should be present in detail
- Long-term outcomes should not be simply copied from the call description

- The project's goals must be sufficiently explained and clearly linked to the methodology
- Describe how the proposal secures European competitiveness and non-dependence in selected area
- The development of a business plan and models to facilitate the market uptake of the key exploitable result is highly appreciated by evaluators
- The selection of demonstration cases and the results from previous projects and initiatives may provide a strong foundation for the proposal's objectives and principles
- The proposal may adequately describe how the consortium would access the necessary data sources (repositories, national and European databases, etc.) used in the project
- Refer to any important challenges or risks identified in the chosen methodology and describe the way to overcome them
- Explanation of how focus groups would be organised and how legal and ethical aspects would be integrated
- The scalability of the project to the European level should be sufficiently addressed
- AI robustness of the proposed tools and approaches has to be convincingly demonstrated throughout the proposal.

Impact

Pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts

- The results of the project should contribute to the expected outcomes set out for the topic over the medium term and to the wider expected impact set out in the destination over the longer term
- Explanation of how project impacts are expected to make a difference in terms of impact, beyond the immediate scope and duration of the project
- SWOT analysis at the beginning of the chapter is well evaluated
- Numerical evidence of the business perspective can be provided
- Use cases and feedback from end users and stakeholders are also relevant pathways to achieve the expected impacts; these should be presented to key target groups
- The proposal should respond to the expected outcomes through specific key outputs, verified by KPIs linked to project objectives, which support the credibility of the proposed pathways
- Activities should be scalable and quantifiable
- The economic sustainability of the overall approach has to be consistently demonstrated
- Validation activities have to be explained in detail
- Description of the measures for a plausible path to commercialise the innovation should be presented.

Measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts and D&E&C plan

- To verify the achievement of the target TRL at the system and at the component level, an appropriate set of demonstrations and tests can be presented
- The draft of the D&E&C plan has to be outlined
- Describe the D&E&C measures that are planned and the target groups addressed
- D&E&C measures must contain a description of the justification of their choice in relation to the relevant target group
- In the area of communication activities – their aim is to inform and reach out to society and show the benefits for citizens
- Communication activities have to be strategically planned with clear objectives, start at the outset, and continue through the lifetime of the projects
- Where relevant, describe the measures for the plausible path to commercialize the innovations
- Plans for dissemination of the results to different stakeholders should be coherent and include well-specialised measures
- The proposal should show clarity on the specific links between the project objectives and the proposed communication activities
- Scope and use of communication channels, such as journal articles, conference papers, and other, should be satisfactorily justified
- Dissemination towards European and international networks should be covered
- Go-to-market strategy should be fully convincing
- The scale and significance of the project contribution to the expected outcomes and impacts (where a meaningful quantification is provided) must be explained
- Key exploitation results (KER) have to be well articulated and supported by individual exploitation plans of the partners
- Appropriate information on market size and expected market penetration should be well presented
- Aspects related to scaling-up, pilot demonstration and competitiveness of EU industry should be explained
- The supply and value chain aspects should be considered
- Target end-users' groups should be identified with the description of all stakeholders' engagement, especially industry stakeholders involved in the development of novel technologies.

IPR

- The draft of the IPR strategy has to be presented and should be based on previous discussion among the individual project partners

- Outline IPR strategy, foreseen protection measures, and how these would be used to support exploitation
- The presence of an IPR manager working in collaboration with the data manager and interacting with the Industry Advisory Board is highly appreciated by evaluators
- It is positive if project partners have achieved a preliminary agreement on the IPR strategy before the proposal submission.

What else?

- Description of any requirements, threats, risks and potential barriers that may affect reaching the proposed impacts and outcomes and description of the mitigation measures, which have to be clear, complex, and credible (PESTLE analysis can be used)
- Analysis of parts and whether some of those may be affected by export restrictions is required. At the same time, parts with non-EU export restrictions should be identified and there should be a plan on how to replace them
- Description of the positive impact on the local communities in a measurable and quantifiable way is appreciated by evaluators
- The identification of distinct steps and strategies to promote and leverage the project outcomes for each project partner is highly appreciated
- Expansion in new markets or the hiring of top employees for strategic positions should be described in detail
- A road map for commercialisation should be well presented in order to prepare the next step of the proposed project
- Expected turnover in the short and medium term should be projected in detail.

Implementation

Work plan

- Presented work plan has to be detailed, logical, and well structured
- Work plan should illustrate a sequential logic of WPs and tasks tailored to the project requirements, with clear objectives and coherent flow
- Timing of the different WPs and their components have to be detailed and illustrated by Gantt and Perth diagrams
- Explanation of how the new solution will be integrated into existing end-user systems should be presented
- Milestones should allow monitoring of the project progress.

Implementation risks

- List has to be complete taking into the consideration all implementation aspects, e.g. operational, managerial, and technological
- Their identification and mitigation measures should be based on a wide discussion among the project´s partners.

Effort assigned to WPs

- Proposals should present information on the individual researchers who will be involved in the implementation
- Open science, SSH, and gender aspects expertise has to be presented
- Budget and resource attributions should be transparently presented to enable adequacy and sufficiency to be judged
- All project partners have to be involved into the project proportionally to make it clear that they can make a significant contribution to the proposal
- All project partners should have well-defined roles
- Imbalance among partners has to be explained and sufficiently justified.

Capacity and role of each participant and consortium quality

- Involvement of the scientific board is very appreciated by evaluators
- Project partners should represent diverse socioeconomic contexts and have in-depth expertise in required areas
- Partners should offer a strong track record of related publications and participation in relevant previous EU-funded projects
- The consortium as a whole has to be well balanced and complementary and should have an appropriate geographical representation and composition.

What else?

- Justification of the purchase costs for participants where those costs exceed 15% of personnel costs has to be detailed, supported by calculation or benchmarks
- Sustainability should be demonstrated by systematically examining concrete impacts on the outputs of the proposal
- A world-class consortium with an excellent track record and a strong industrial background ready for the implementation of the full scale of the proposed work is highly rated by evaluators
- The necessity of subcontracting is a subject of evaluators attention, so it has to be explained in detail
- The description of the risk management strategy is highly appreciated by evaluators
- The proposal should include activities that will be carried out jointly with other relevant projects

- There should be consistency between the various person-month tables and the budget (excel) in the part A of the application
- Collaborative contracts between partners exceeding the period of the project are highly evaluated by evaluators
- The participation of SME partners has to be sufficiently outlined in terms of available human resources and technical excellence
- The expertise in SSH and gender aspects should be well presented.

3. Section – Aspects evaluated in CSA projects

3.1. Official evaluation questions in CSA evaluation form⁵

Excellence

- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives.
- Quality of the proposed coordination and/or support measures including soundness of methodology.

Impact

- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions due to the project.
- Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

Implementation

- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.
- Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

In two-stage calls - for stage 1 proposals, only the criteria Excellence and Impact will be evaluated⁶.

3.2. Findings from the analysis

Excellence

Objectives

- Have to be clear and pertinent to the strategies, working programme, destination and call
- The project goals have to be in line with the scope of the call
- Have to be aligned and clearly traceable and coherent with outcomes - impact indicators – KPIs – work packages
- Must be measurable and verifiable (SMART) and realistically achievable
- Must meet with call's set outcomes and address all or several expected outputs named in the call
- Synergies between objectives must be clear.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/temp-form/ef/ef_he-csa_en.pdf.

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/temp-form/ef/ef_he-ria-ia-csa-stage-1_en.pdf.

Quality of the proposed coordination and/or support measures

- The document must contain quantified targets for all key activities
- Have to present understanding of the specific needs, habits and practices present in different stakeholders ´ communities that the proposal shall address
- Clear description of policy priorities, and related EU projects and initiatives
- Coordination and support measures proposed should be various and of very good quality, based on current knowledge and results from European projects and initiatives
- Referring to other EU projects the proposal shall contain, in addition to the list of them, also information on how they will contribute to the proposal.

Methodology

- The set of multilateral activities should describe how they will achieve the proposed objectives
- SWOT analysis should be provided prior to the methodology description
- The methodological framework should start from an assessment of needs and engage very appropriately with insights from different disciplines, to produce a nuanced analysis at the beginning
- Should consist of technical and non-technical approaches
- Should be well-linked to the existing policy framework
- Can be based on combining bottom-up tools and methods with top-down research, implementation approaches and a combination of interconnected measures, each of which is linked to one of the main objectives
- Should describe methods for impact evaluation
- Provided concepts, models, and assumptions have to be supported by facts
- The proposed approach should present a multidisciplinary of avenues and describe how the expertise and methods from different disciplines will be brought together
- Analysis of the current state-of-the-art should be based on rigorous analysis
- Describe how the project goes beyond the state-of-the-art.

Open science

- Open science practices should be integrated throughout the methodology and the inclusion of citizen science activities
- Addressing open science practices and presenting clear and valid measures on how to implement them

- Open science practices should demonstrate a strong dedication to guaranteeing free access to project results.

Research data management

- FAIR principles have to be used
- Data management has to be integrated into the work plan.

What else?

- A “Why now” section is highly appreciated by evaluators
- The strategic vision and ambition of the proposal must be described
- Information about how different findings and research streams will be bridged with the policy world
- The proposed project´s results should target a wide and cross-sectorial audience
- For proposals with research component eligible, description of the strategy how to develop excellence with a clear potential for significant improvement and how the proposal will produce novel research and concrete applications is recommended
- Replicability of business models (if relevant)
- The description of SSH aspects should be adequately covered in the proposal
- Gender equality in activities should be taken into account and appropriate actions and initiatives to address these aspects should be foreseen
- Multi-actor approach description is appreciated by evaluators
- The analysis of the AI technical robustness should be conducted (if relevant) and the level of AI and its current maturity degree should be explained in detail (if relevant).

Impact

Pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts

- The description of the pathways should be based on the identification of the key impact areas
- Description of how each identified impact will support the fulfilment of the objectives outlined in the WPs
- Described project outcomes and impacts have to be highly significant economically, and socio-environmentally
- For the proposals were scientific component eligible, the project´s outcomes and impacts have to be significant also scientifically
- A detailed and credible description of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes has to be provided
- Explanation of the contribution of the project results towards the outcomes in the call topic and wider impact in the longer term

specified in the destination of the working programme (quantified estimation is necessary where possible)

- Description of how the project's results are expected to make a difference in terms of impact, beyond the scope and duration of the project
- Explanation of the baselines, benchmarks, and assumptions used for those estimations
- Description of how the outputs will deliver the expected impact and how the resources will be mobilised to drive forward
- Description of any requirements, risks, and potential barriers that may affect reaching of the proposed impacts and outcomes, and description of mitigation measures which have to be clear and complex (PESTLE analysis is recommended).

Measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts and D&E&C plan

- Should contain a draft description of the initial D&E&C plan and target groups, including the third sector
- Set measures have to be proportionate to the duration and the budget allocation of the project
- Concrete actions to be implemented during and after the end of the project
- Explain why each proposed measure is the best suited to reach the target group addressed
- D&E&C plan should be organised, intelligently assigning different objectives to different stages of the project, identifying a wide range of stakeholders, including citizens and linking them to appropriate channels and tools
- D&E&C plan can combine various media-based and face-to-face formats
- A well-organised exploitation strategy to uptake of the proposal results is required
- Description of how the results will be shared among the consortium partners
- Explanation of the exploitation strategy at the international level with potential outreach at the national level and overall geographic coverage
- Measures for the replication of the project results should be provided
- D&E&C plan should be achievable taking into account the composition of the consortium.

IPR

- Outline the strategy for the management of IP and foreseen protection measures

- The description of how the IPR strategy will be integrated into the consortium agreement is well accepted by evaluators
- Plan how ownership of IPR will be foreseen for each of the involved partners is recommended.

What else?

- Identification of impacts also at European level
- How are the project results in line with the destination impacts
- Impacts should be divided into short-term, mid-term, and long-term
- Description of the assessment of the impacts (environmental, social, economic)
- Mobilising a quadruple helix stakeholder approach can be a convincing pathway to establishing a coalition for the future implementation of the project's outputs
- The impact of communication activities has to be clear and measurable.

Implementation

Work plan

- The work plan must be very detailed; each work package described in substantial detail, offering a clear overview of its expected deliverables
- Overall structure of the work plan has to be presented with logical inter-relations among the work packages and their components
- Appropriate timing of the different work packages has to be clear, with deliverables and milestones
- The Gantt chart and the Perth diagram to visualize the work plan should be presented
- The work plan must demonstrate the planning of tasks, the distribution of responsibilities of the consortium partners, and the balanced engagement of each consortium partner
- The work plan should map the objectives of the proposal.

Implementation risks

- Risks should be well identified, described and considered with realistic mitigating strategies and assessment of risk level
- Risk mitigation has to be concrete and detailed, not just tautological.

Effort assigned to work packages

- Each partner should have a valid role in the project and adequate resources
- Large disparities have to be explained/justified
- All PMs have to be allocated with an adequate explanation

- Effort assigned to the individual work packages has to be appropriate, making the work plan achievable
- The amount of work planned to realize specific objectives has to be sufficiently described.

Capacity and role of each participant and consortium quality

- The consortium has to present the necessary expertise to implement all proposed tasks (like capacity building, mentoring, dissemination activities, technical skills...), but also expertise in areas of SSH, open science practices, gender aspects
- The consortium should provide assurance of its interdisciplinarity
- Each project partner has to provide enough information about their competences related to the project
- Describe how the coordination among project partners will be assured
- The coordinator has to present its previous experience and capability to manage, coordinate, and monitor the project.

What else?

- All tables (PM, list of deliverables, list of milestones, list of work packages...) have to be in line with the text of the proposal and with the overall budget (Excel file) in the part A of the application
- It should be clearly possible to evidence the effectiveness of achieving the targets from the work plan
- Justification for purchase costs for participants, if they for the part that exceeds 15% of the personnel costs, has to be provided in a detail manner and supported by calculation to present that the budget allocation has been set appropriately
- The list of milestones should not look like a list of risks
- Deliverables and milestones should provide the means to monitor the progress and final outcomes of the project
- If relevant, the proposal should also describe the involvement of industrial and commercial partners
- There should be tasks where all project partners participate. If not, the reasons for this should be presented
- It is useful to present a brief risk management procedure in the proposal
- The budget for subcontractors is very carefully evaluated by evaluators

If the project plans to hire experts for missing expertise, it should be presented how the hiring process will look like and how their expertise will be assessed.

Disclaimer

The document is considered as complementary/support to other study documents related to the part B – technical proposal.

The above listed points reflect the views of the evaluators on specific projects and are therefore not necessarily binding for all project applications.