

Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022:
Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation
Calls: Twinning (HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ACCESS-03)
and
Twining Western Balkans Special (HORIZON-
WIDERA-2021-ACCESS-02-01)
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Version: 10-09-2021

IMPORTANT NOTICE: This document is the result of a compilation of questions received by potential applications prior the deadline and answers provided by the European Commission. Its intention is to help potential applicants. It does not however replace the call text, is the sole legal basis. This is a working document and as such is revised on a regular basis. The latest version however can always be retrieved from the web pages of the Participant Portal. (Source: Horizon Europe - Work Programme 2021-2022 Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area¹)

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¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-11-widening-participation-and-strengthening-the-european-research-area_horizon-2021-2022_en.pdf

1. Introduction: Twinning under Horizon Europe

Under Horizon Europe (HE), there is a general continuation of core widening instruments, i.e.; Teaming, Twinning and ERA Chairs with improvements and new actions in response to lessons learnt. In particular, research costs are now available for CSA eligible under Widening and more emphasis is put on developing management capacities. For Twinning, the novelties under Horizon Europe are listed below:

1. Opening of a new call “*Twining for the Western Balkans Special*”²
2. Research costs now eligible for twinning actions for up to 30% of total requested funding
3. Emphasis on developing management capacities
4. Gender Equality Plan (applicable only from 2022 onwards)

2. Category: General

1. What is the reimbursement rate for a Twinning project?

- The standard 100% for direct eligible costs and a flat-rate (i.e. costs calculated by applying a percentage fixed in advance to other types of eligible costs) for indirect costs (overheads, 25% flat-rate of the total eligible direct costs, excluding eligible direct costs for subcontracting, financial support to third parties and any unit costs or lump sums which include indirect costs).

2. Can a proposal request a contribution below or above € 1 million?

- The expected EU contribution per project is between 0,80 and 1,50 EUR million. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

3. What is the minimum, typical and maximum duration of each project?

- A Twinning project is foreseen to last for up to 3 years. This is an eligibility condition and proposals requiring projects lasting longer will be deemed ineligible. However, projects with a shorter duration are allowed.

4. Can a proposal outline several defined areas of research or is it necessary to outline one defined area of research in one proposal?

- The Work Programme specifies that “*Twining proposals should have to clearly outline the scientific strategy for stepping up and stimulating scientific excellence and innovation*”

² TST-02-01-2021, restricted to the following countries: **Republic of Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo** [This designation is *without prejudice to positions* on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the *Kosovo* declaration of independence], **Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, and Republic of Serbia** are eligible to host the co-ordinator.

capacity in a defined area of research as well as the scientific quality of the partners involved in the twinning exercise.” Thus, a Twinning proposal must outline one defined area of research. However, there is no restriction on the choice of the area of research.

3. Category: Country eligibility

5. Which countries are eligible for hosting the co-ordinator of widening actions?

- According to the Horizon Europe regulation in this programme component the less advanced countries eligible for hosting the co-ordinator of widening actions are **Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and all Associated Countries with equivalent characteristics in terms of R&I performance and the Outermost Regions** (defined in Art. 349 TFEU). Hereinafter, these countries, including the Outermost Regions, will be named 'widening countries' across the work programme³.

6. Are the proposals submitted under call HORIZON-WIDERA-ACCESS-02 Twinning Western Balkans eligible for the call HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ACCESS-03?

- Proposals submitted under call HORIZON-WIDERA-ACCESS-02 Twinning Western Balkans are not eligible for the call HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ACCESS-03 Twinning.

7. Concerning the participating institutions, can there be more than one partner from a Widening Country? If yes, should the ratio of partners from Widening Countries versus non-Widening Countries be of around 50%?

- As long as the minimum eligibility requirements are respected (i.e. one coordinator or Coordinating Legal Entity from a Widening country and two advanced institutions from two different Member States (MS) or Associated Countries (AC)), then additional partners are allowed according to the needs and objectives of each proposal. However, applicants need to bear in mind that as described in the Work Programme text, *“Twinning aims to enhance networking activities between the research institutions of the Widening countries and top-class leading counterparts at EU level by linking it with at least two research institutions from two different Member States or Associated Countries.”*
- There are no conditions or ideal ratio with respect to the balance of partners from Widening vi-à-vis non-Widening Countries.

³ Horizon Europe regulation prescribes that the list of associated widening counties is published in the WP. This list is defined based on an “indicator”. The WP does not provide a list of the associated widening countries. However, given the early stage of Horizon Europe (no association agreement yet finalized in September 2021), a transitional provision is that all widening countries in Horizon 2020 are also widening countries in Horizon Europe. Applicants from those countries are considered eligible for the purpose of the call evaluation. They will be allowed to sign a GAP providing the association agreement is finalized before GAP signature. Applicants are referred to the Horizon Europe programme guide ([programme-guide horizon en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)) for the latest updates on the list of associated countries including widening and non widening countries.

8. Is there a maximum or preferred number of partners in a Twinning proposal?

- There is no maximum number of partners as long as the minimum eligibility requirements are respected. The Commission, however, considers that the number of partners in a Twinning project has to be kept to the minimum possible, in order to have the optimal effect on the low performing partner institution in the Widening Country. The intention of Twinning is not to create large networks, as this would risk diluting the expected effect on the low performing institution.

9. Where should the internationally-leading (advanced) institutions be established? Can the internationally leading institutions be established in the same country as the coordinator from the Widening country?

- The internationally-leading (advanced) institutions can be established in any EU Member State (MS) or Associated Country (AS) to Horizon Europe.
- As long as the minimum eligibility requirements are respected (i.e. there are at least two internationally-leading (advanced) institutions from two different countries other than that of the coordinator), then additional partners established in the same country as the coordinator are allowed.

10. Is there an added value in the consortium to have internationally-leading partners from non-Widening Countries rather than partners from Widening Countries?

- The added-value depends on the quality of the partner organisation itself and not on its location. If an internationally-leading partner happens to be in a Widening Country, this is possible. The qualities of this internationally leading partner should be well elaborated and demonstrated in the proposal.

11. Is there any requirement to "twin" with partners from stronger (or weaker) regions in terms of innovation performance in Widening Countries?

- There is no such requirement foreseen in the Work Programme (WP). The WP text clearly states that the only eligibility criterion is that the coordinating legal entity is established in one of the Widening Countries and that at least 70% of the budget for research activities must be allocated to the coordinator from a widening country.

12. Can an institution in a Widening country participate in two (or more) different Twinning proposals, in the one as a coordinator in order to strengthen their research potential and in the other proposal as an internationally-leading (advanced) institution?

- Yes this is possible. However, it may compromise the credibility of an organisation if it is acting both as a leading institution as well as a coordinator (unless of course the two proposals address different fields of science).

13. What about the participation of Associated Countries (including the UK)?

- For the purposes of the eligibility conditions, applicants established in Horizon 2020 Associated Countries (AC) or in other third countries negotiating association to Horizon Europe will be treated as entities established in an Associated Country (AC), if the Horizon Europe association agreement with the third country concerned applies at the time of signature of the grant agreement⁴.
- The UK is expected to become soon an associated country to Horizon Europe. UK entities can take part in the first calls for proposals of Horizon Europe. The UK is associating to the full Horizon Europe programme with the only exception of the EIC Fund (which is the loan/equity instrument of the EIC).

4. Category: Organisation eligibility

14. Is there any specific requirement on the nature of the organisation acting as the coordinator from the Widening Country?

- As described in the Work Programme, the coordinator should be a public or private research active university or a public or private non-profit research organisation. “Research organisation” is to be understood as a non-profit making organisation, which carries out scientific or technical research as its main objective.

15. Is there any specific requirement on the nature of the organisations acting as internationally-leading (advanced) partners?

- No proposal will be disqualified on grounds of non-eligibility for having an internationally-leading organisation of an incorrect type of organisation. However, the successful Twinning proposals will have to clearly outline the scientific quality and the operational capacity of the partners involved in the twinning exercise.

16. Can enterprises (incl. research intensive companies and SMEs) participate in a Twinning proposal? Can they act as coordinators of Twinning proposals?

- According to the Work Programme the main partners of a Twinning proposal shall be universities, research organisations, or private **not for profit** research institutions. However,

⁴ The text of the General Annexes to WP Horizon Europe 2021-2022 specifies that: “At the date of the publication of the work programme, there are no countries associated to Horizon Europe. Considering the Union’s interest to retain, in principle, relations with the countries associated to Horizon 2020, most third countries associated to Horizon 2020 are expected to be associated to Horizon Europe with an intention to secure uninterrupted continuity between Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe. In addition, other third countries can also become associated to Horizon Europe during the programme. For the purposes of the eligibility conditions, applicants established in Horizon 2020 Associated Countries or in other third countries negotiating association to Horizon Europe will be treated as entities established in an Associated Country, if the Horizon Europe association agreement with the third country concerned applies at the time of signature of the grant agreement.” (See [programme-guide horizon en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)).

once the minimum eligibility requirements are met, bringing in a company as an additional partner if properly justified in the proposal is possible.

- Applicants should pay attention to the fact that a private, for profit, company **should not be** the coordinator of a Twinning project.

17. How is a university or research organisation defined?

- Universities are defined by their own statutes and can be public or private legal entities. "Research organisation" for the objectives of this call means a non-profit making organisation, which carries out scientific or technical research as its main objective.
- Having mentioned the above, research should be one of the core activities of institutions applying for the action and this has to be supported by sufficient evidence.

18. Is there any limitation on how many Twinning proposals one institution from a Widening country can coordinate? Is there a limitation in how many proposals an internationally-leading partner can participate in?

- There is no limitation on how many Twinning proposals one institution from a Widening country can coordinate.
- There is no limitation for an internationally-leading partner to be involved in several Twinning proposals.
- However, all partners shall ensure that the principle of no double funding is respected.⁵ This means that the same costs cannot be financed twice by the EU budget. It is also important to note that the entities should have sufficient resources to carry out the tasks envisaged should the proposal(s) be selected for funding.

19. Can an internationally leading (advanced) institution from a third country (e.g. USA) participate as an additional partner?

An internationally leading (advanced) institution from a third country (e.g. USA) can participate as an additional partner. This can be done as long as the minimum requirement of two advanced partners from two Member States (MS) or Associated Countries (AC) is respected, and under the rules governing the participation of third countries in Horizon Europe (i.e. for the case of an institution from the USA, which is classified under the category

⁵ As mentioned in General Annexes HE Work Programme 2021-2022, "No double funding—There is strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget. Any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget(except for EU Synergy grants)and costs may under NO circumstances be declared to two different EU actions" and as specified in **article 130** of the **Financial Regulation 966/2012** (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046&from=EN>)

of "industrialized countries and emerging economies", they would cover their own costs of participation⁶).

20. Could international organisations participate in TWINNING in addition to the minimum conditions? Will they get funded?

- According to the General Annexes of the HE WP 2021-2022 (Annex B): — International European research organisations are eligible to receive funding. Unless their participation is considered essential for implementing the action by the granting authority, **other international organisations** are not eligible to receive funding. International organisations with headquarters in a Member State (MS) or Associated Country (AC) are eligible to receive funding for 'Training and mobility' actions and when provided for in the specific call conditions. This is valid as long as the minimum conditions (1 "widening" + 2 "advanced" partners) as specified in the Work Programme are fulfilled.

5. Category: Cost Eligibility

21. What categories of costs are excluded from Twinning? Do these restrictions also concern research costs?

- As stated in the Work Programme for grants awarded under Twinning the following cost categories will be ineligible costs:
 - infrastructure costs;
 - large equipment.
- A difference from Horizon 2020 is to be noted: Although this action is a Coordination and Support Action (CSA)⁷, research, consumables and small equipment costs are eligible and could constitute up to 30% of the requested funding. The WP states that "*a research component not exceeding 30% of the total Horizon Europe grant may include an exploratory research project.*" This applies to all beneficiaries, i.e. both to costs of beneficiaries which are an internationally-leading (advanced) institution and to costs of the coordinating entity established in the Widening Country. Therefore, consumables and small equipment are eligible for this action under the limits established in the Work Programme but there should be evidence that they were directly linked to the research project(s) established for the execution of the Twinning exercise. The basic rule for existing equipment is that running and

⁶https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

⁷ *Coordination and support actions (CSA) — Activities that contribute to the objectives of Horizon Europe. This excludes R&I activities, except those carried out under the 'Widening participation and spreading excellence' component of the programme (part of 'Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area'). Also eligible are bottom-up coordination actions which promote cooperation between legal entities from Member States and Associated Countries to strengthen the European Research Area, and which receive no EU co-funding for research activities (General Annexes HE WP 2021-2022, Annex B Eligibility)*

maintenance costs are only eligible on pro rata basis of their use to the action and possibly as unit costs. The Annotated Grant Agreement of Horizon Europe should be consulted for more detailed information on their eligibility and how to report such costs.

- The research part of the project must be presented by a dedicated work package and plan including the scientific objectives, tasks and roles of the partner. At least 70% of the research budget must be used at the premises of the coordinator. The call topic states that: *"Proposals should also focus on strengthening the research management and administration skills of the coordinating institution from the Widening country. This should take the form of a dedicated work package or task, placing emphasis to specific activities, in view of helping the staff of the coordinating institution to improve their proposal preparation and project management/administration skills. If not yet in place, setting up/upgrading a research management/administration unit within the coordinating institution would be beneficial"*.
- Eligible activities are the ones described in the call conditions. Activities must focus exclusively on civil applications and must comply with ethical requirements under Horizon Europe.

22. Are personnel costs (i.e. salaries) eligible in a Twinning project?

- Twinning is not aimed at hiring new researchers of any category (permanent or temporary), as its objectives, amongst others, is to focus on raising the existing staff's research profile of the coordinating institution from the widening country. The Call Topic reads as follows: *"Twinning actions intend to help raise the research profile of the institution from the Widening country as well as the research profile of its staff including a special focus on strengthening the research management and administrative skills of the coordination institution from the Widening country."*
- However, personnel costs (i.e. salaries) are eligible as follows:
 - for personnel of all beneficiaries (from Widening or non-Widening countries),
 - regardless of their function (researchers, administration, management),
 - regardless of their status at the organizations (permanent or temporary or newly recruited),
 - provided that these personnel costs are directly attributed to the eligible activities (including research) indicated in the Work Programme text,⁸
 - subject to the cost eligibility conditions in Article 6 of the Model Grant Agreement.⁹

23. What are the typical costs in a Twinning project?

⁸ A research component not exceeding 30% of the total Horizon Europe grant may include an exploratory research project. This will open opportunities for integrating smaller research activities and by this strengthening the commitment and the engagement of the twinning partners.

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/agr-contr/general-mga_horizon-atom_en.pdf

- The Work Programme refers to a non-exhaustive list of measures to be supported under Twinning projects: *short term staff exchanges; expert visits and short-term on-site or virtual training; workshops; conference attendance; organisation of joint summer school type activities; dissemination and outreach activities*. In addition, under Horizon Europe, research activities are eligible including consumables and small equipment costs up to 30% of the requested funding (see earlier points on that topic).

24. Are the costs related to Open Access eligible?

- Open science is an approach based on open cooperative work and systematic sharing of knowledge and tools as early and widely as possible in the process, including active engagement of society. Mandatory immediate Open Access to publications: beneficiaries must retain sufficient IPRs to comply with open access requirements. Data sharing as 'open as possible, as closed as necessary': mandatory **Data Management Plan** for FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) research data. Work Programmes may incentivize or oblige to adhere to open science practices, such as involvement of citizens, or to use the European Open Science Cloud.
- In terms of costs eligibility for Open Access, general references to Open Science as a concept mainstreamed are mentioned in Horizon Europe. The OA is (in comparison to H2020) required under HE as 'immediate'. For instance, for Horizon 2020, it is stated for the APCs for GOLD OA: *"As indicated in the [FAQ](#), In the case of Open Access publishing ('Gold' open access), APCs and other processing charges to provide open access (such as book processing charges) are eligible charges, provided the general eligibility criteria for costs declared under the grant in question are met (for example, the expense must be related to the project, no reckless expenditure, etc.). In order to be eligible for EU funding, costs must in particular be reasonable, justified and comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency. Any costs for OA fall under the category of Other Direct Costs – in particular under: "other goods and services". Please also refer to the relevant HE Article 17: COMMUNICATION, DISSEMINATION, OPEN SCIENCE AND VISIBILITY: "Only publication fees in full open access venues for peer-reviewed scientific publications are eligible for reimbursement"¹⁰.*
- Assessment of open science practices through the excellence award criteria for proposal evaluation. Under quality of participants, previous experience on open sciences practices will be evaluated positively.
- Open access is the practice of providing online access to scientific information that is free of charge to the user and is reusable (Open Research Europe publishing platform¹¹ and ¹²).

25. Will personnel costs be eligible for the internationally-leading (advanced) institutions?

¹⁰ [general-mga_horizon- Euratom_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹¹ <https://open-research-europe.ec.europa.eu/>

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/our-digital-future/open-science/open-access_en

- The hours that the employees of all types (i.e. researchers, administrators, or managers) of both the coordinating institution from the Widening country and the internationally-leading (advanced) partner address to project activities are eligible costs under this programme.
- As provided in Article 6 of the Annotated Model Grant Agreement¹³ (AGA), only the hours worked on the action can be taken into consideration to calculate personnel costs. According to Article 18 AGA, for people not working exclusively for the action, the beneficiary must show the actual hours worked with reliable time records¹⁴.

26. Will hiring PhD students be eligible since they are not considered as “permanent” staff?

- Twinning should not be used as a vehicle for increasing the population of PhD students of the coordinating institution. Twinning does not aim to fund PhD programs. However, PhD students’ participation to Twinning is possible and highly desirable. Costs of students that work for the beneficiary can be accepted, if the agreement is work-oriented (not training-oriented: i.e. not aimed at helping the student to acquire professional skills). PhD agreements will be considered work-oriented. However, time for training, if any, may NOT be charged to the action. Fellowships/scholarships/stipends — Can be charged to the action (as personnel costs), if they fulfil the conditions set out in Article 6.1 and 6.2.A.2 of the AGA, and in particular:
 - the remuneration complies with the applicable national law on taxes, labour and social security;
 - the assignment of tasks respects the laws in force in the country of the beneficiary;
 - the students have the necessary qualifications to carry out the tasks allocated to them under the action.

27. What sort of costs could be charged to a project by an internationally-leading (advanced) partner?

- Costs for exchanges of personnel, travel allowances and costs associated with the provision of expertise and to some extent costs for research (see earlier points) are some of the typical costs related to the set of activities to be supported by the action that could be claimed by internationally-leading (advanced) partners under a Twinning project.

28. Can the internationally-leading (advanced) institutions receive EU contribution from a Twinning project? If yes, what is the ideal ratio of budget allocated to the advanced institutions compared to the coordinator from the Widening Country?

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf

¹⁴ AGA version 1.0 available online: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/agr-contr/general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

- Yes, as this is a multi-beneficiary action. This means that all beneficiaries, including the coordinating institution from the Widening country and the internationally-leading (advanced) institutions will sign/accede to the grant agreement and receive project funding.
- There is no ideal ratio regarding the allocation of funding between the advanced institutions and the coordinator in the Widening country. Of course, it has to be kept in mind that the objectives of Twinning are focused towards strengthening the coordinating institution in the Widening country.

29. Is subcontracting allowed in Twinning projects?

- The general rule applicable to Horizon Europe projects is that beneficiaries must have the appropriate resources to implement the action. However, if necessary to implement the action, subcontracting is allowed as outlined in the General Annexes of HE WP 2021-2022¹⁵ and according to Article 9 of the MGA. Subcontracting may cover only a limited part of the action. The phrase "*limited part of the action*" is not pre-defined, but core tasks/activities of the project should not be subcontracted.

30. Can experts outside the consortium participate in trainings as trainers?

- Training may be subcontracted to a third party expert, subject to the Rules in Article 9 of the Model Grant Agreement (MGA). Alternatively, the travel and related subsistence allowances of the third party expert may be eligible, as explained in the Annotated MGA under Article 6.2.C.1. entitled, "*Travel costs and related subsistence allowances*"¹⁶.

31. Is it possible to include persons (who are not our employees) as collaborators in the Twinning programme?

- The general rule applicable to Horizon Europe projects is that beneficiaries must have the appropriate resources to implement the action according with Article 6.2.C.1 Travel and subsistence Article 7 of the Model Grant Agreement (MGA¹⁷). However, if necessary to implement the action, beneficiaries may use in-kind contributions, including seconded personnel provided by third parties, subject to the rules in Article 9 of the MGA.

¹⁵ Budget categories: – actual costs (i.e. costs which are real and not estimated or budgeted) for: - personnel costs (unless declared as a unit cost; see below); - subcontracting costs; - purchase costs (unless declared as a unit cost; see below); and - costs of providing financial support to third parties (if provided for in the specific call conditions), source: General > Article 6.2.B Subcontracting costs B. Subcontracting costs (all Programmes, [aga_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#) PRE-DRAFT (HE) 23 July 2021.

¹⁶ Article 6.2.C.1 Travel and subsistence (https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/agr-contr/general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf)

¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/agr-contr/general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

32. Regarding "short-term expert visits and on-site or virtual training" - The visits and lectures can be held only by the professors from the institutions within the consortium? Or may one invite also professors from other prestigious institutions that are not in the consortium?

- Invitation of professors from non-partner institutions might be considered as subcontracting (see earlier points on purchase of goods, works and services) as the advanced partner should have the necessary capacities to provide in-house expertise. Therefore, it is only allowed on a small scale and when the expertise cannot be provided by the internationally-leading (advanced) partners.
- For small visits and events with external people beneficial for the action, being part of the 'philosophy' of the call and up to certain amount this can be accepted under other direct costs if well justified in Annex 1.

33. Cost of experiments performed at third party laboratories. Is it possible to get financing for experiments that should be performed in specialized laboratories?

- Research costs, consumables and small equipment costs become eligible and could constitute up to 30% of the requested funding.

34. If a researcher from the coordinating institution in the Widening Country stays for a month or two at the internationally-leading (advanced) partner institution, or vice versa, is it possible to cover the costs?

- Costs for the exchange are eligible both for the coordinator as well as for the internationally-leading (advanced) partner. This means that travel, subsistence and to some extent research costs for these researchers (posted for a period to a partner institution) will be eligible for reimbursement. However, it must be ensured that there is no double funding as the same costs cannot be financed twice by the EU budget¹⁸.

35. In case several beneficiaries organise jointly seminars and summer schools, is it possible to get financing for all beneficiaries that would be involved in the organization of the event?

- Yes, this is possible. However, it must be ensured that there is no double funding as the same costs cannot be financed twice by the EU budget¹⁹. Each beneficiary has to charge the costs

¹⁸ As mentioned in General Annexes HE Work Programme 2021-2022, "No double funding—There is strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget. Any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget(except for EU Synergy grants)and costs may under NO circumstances be declared to two different EU actions" and as specified in **article 130** of the **Financial Regulation 966/2012** (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046&from=EN>)

¹⁹ As mentioned in General Annexes HE Work Programme 2021-2022, "No double funding—There is strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget. Any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget(except for EU Synergy grants)and costs may under NO circumstances be declared to two different EU actions" and as specified in **article 130** of the **Financial Regulation 966/2012** (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046&from=EN>)

that it has incurred. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that among costs eligibility conditions in Article 6 MGA, costs must be necessary for the implementation of the action and must be **reasonable** and compliant with **the principle of sound financial management in particular economy and efficiency**.

6. Category: Other

36. Is a consortium agreement between the beneficiaries required? What other kind of internal arrangements/partnerships/agreements need to be made between the beneficiaries themselves?

- Yes, signing a consortium agreement between all the beneficiaries in the project (i.e. all entities that sign the grant agreement) is recommended by the Commission services²⁰. Any other internal agreements/arrangements are voluntary and up to the participants themselves. Costs related to drafting the consortium agreement — Are not eligible because the consortium agreement should be signed before the action starts²¹

37. Is there an indication on what profile the evaluators of the Twinning proposals will have? What are the evaluation criteria and their relative weighting?

- The Commission will apply the appropriate expert selection and standard evaluation procedures in an open and transparent manner, according to the Commission's highest quality standards and known evaluation criteria (no hidden weightings).

38. Are ongoing ERA Chairs or Teaming 2 projects compatible with funding under twinning in order to cover for complementary widening activities?

- Yes, that is possible, however double funding is not allowed (see earlier point), so it should be clear which costs will be covered by which project and the complementarity between the actions needs to be clearly outlined in the Twinning proposal.

39. What kind of main project outputs does the Commission expect from a Twinning action?

- The main idea of this call as explained in the work programme is to enhance the R&I capacity and to raise the research profile of the staff of the applicant entity.²² This is done through

²⁰ [aga_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#) PRE-DRAFT (HE) 23 July 2021, ARTICLE 7 — BENEFICIARIES. 4. Internal arrangements between beneficiaries — Consortium agreement: The participants **should conclude a consortium agreement to ensure a smooth and successful project implementation** (— mandatory if required in the call conditions).

²² Expected outcomes are: • Improved excellence capacity and resources in Widening countries enabling to close the still apparent research and innovation gap within Europe. • Enhanced strategic networking activities between the research institutions of the Widening countries and at least two internationally-leading counterparts at EU level. • Raised reputation, research profile and attractiveness of the coordinating institution from the Widening country and the research profile of its staff. • Strengthened research management capacities and administrative skills of the staff working in institutions from the Widening country. • Improved

interaction of the institution located in the Widening country with the internationally leading partners through conferences, workshops, seminars, exchange of best practices and research activities.

40. What is the expected duration of short-term staff exchanges and/or expert visits? Are they limited to a few weeks? A few months?

- There is no pre-defined duration for short-term staff exchanges or expert visits. They should, however, add value to the project and they should last for a reasonable timeframe of a few weeks or a few months; more than 9 months would probably be considered as too long.

41. What about the mandatory request for a new item on Gender Equality Plan?

- As new item under Horizon Europe, a Gender Equality Plan will be mandatory for all Twinning calls. However, before 2020, only a draft will be required. Applicants will have until 2022 to finalise it. This requirement will be applicable only as from 2022 onwards. Participants that are public bodies, research organisations or higher education establishments from Member States (MS) and Associated countries (AC) must have a gender equality plan, covering minimum process-related requirements. A self-declaration will be requested at proposal stage (for all types of participants). The self-declaration will be included in the entity validation process. Having a gender equality plan is an eligibility criterion for Public bodies, Higher education establishments and Research organisations from Member States (MS) and Associated Countries (AC). Be aware that if the proposal is selected, having a Gender Equality Plan will be necessary before grant agreement signature (applicable on calls with deadlines in 2022 and beyond). Support to draft the gender equality plan can be requested at: European Institute for Gender Equality.²³

7. Category: Twinning for the Western Balkans Special

Under Horizon Europe, a new call for Twinning for the Western Balkans has been created. It is restricted to the following countries: Republic of Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo²⁴, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, and Republic of Serbia, which are eligible to host the co-ordinator. Except for the geographic restriction, all the other conditions for Twinning are the same and apply to the Twinning for the Western Balkans. However, the same or an equivalent proposal cannot be submitted twice to Twinning and Twinning for the Western Balkans. In other words, different and clearly distinguishable project ideas can be submitted to the two calls, Twinning and Twinning for the Western Balkans.

creativity supported by development of new approaches in R&I collaboration, increased mobility (inwards and outwards) of qualified scientists.

²³ www.eige.europa.eu

²⁴ This designation is *without prejudice to positions* on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the *Kosovo* declaration of independence