

Horizon Europe

Global Challenges & European Industrial Competitiveness

Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment

FAQs - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Data aggiornamento: 23/03/2023

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[HORIZON-CL6-2023-BIODIV-01-3: Interdisciplinary assessment of changes affecting terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, building on observation programmes](#)

Question

The scope of topic requires the integration of monitoring and modelling products into EXISTING OBSERVATORIES. What are the observatories that the EC is referring to and what is meant by the integration step?

Answer

Projects should make efforts that the “monitoring and modelling products” it aims developing, which may involve monitoring practices, as well as tools or services based on observation and/or model data, will be integrated into existing ecosystem monitoring systems, stations, platforms, or networks. Integration means that these “observatories” should be enabled to provide named products in an operational or quasi-operational way.

[HORIZON-CL6-2023-BIODIV-01-7: Demonstration of marine and coastal infrastructures as hybrid blue-grey Nature-based Solutions](#)

Question

Is there any limitation on the percentage of eligible costs for infrastructure works related to the deployment/instalment of the hybrid blue-grey NBSs? -The questions comes as in other topics, this kind of limitation appears in the Specific conditions of the topic, e.g.: HORIZON-MISS-2023-CLIMA-CITIES-01-01.

Answer

This topic does not have a specific condition limiting the percentage of eligible costs for demonstration infrastructure-related works. However, all relevant dispositions on eligible costs and innovation actions as defined in the General Annexes do apply.

[HORIZON-CL6-2023-BIODIV-01-8 Addressing biodiversity decline and promoting Nature-based Solutions in higher education](#)

Question

This topic does not have any indications on the expected duration of the project. Would you be able to clarify the expected duration of the project funded under this call?

Answer

The text of this topic does not prescribe the expected duration of the project, hence it is up to the choice of the applicants to assess and propose an appropriate duration depending on the ambitions and complexity of their proposals.

We take the opportunity also to recall that provisions on the duration of projects (in the context of the legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements) are laid down in Annex G of Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024.

HORIZON-CL6-2023-BIODIV-01-16: Valorisation of ecosystem services provided by legumes

Question

“Regarding the title of topic in object, on one hand, the reference to the ecosystem services seems to presume that the main requirement of the call is to find ways to quantify the value of ecosystem services provided by legume crops and to increase such value. On the other hand, it may refer to the possibility that, since ecosystem services occur automatically with the cultivation of legumes, and therefore to the overall chain of legume crops production. Additionally, in the topic text the valorisation of ecosystem services is never specified but appears only in the title. Can you please clarify what is the main interpretation? What is expected to be valorised through the project activities?”

Answer

The aim of this topic is promoting the development of the leguminous crop sector in the EU and Associated Countries given the numerous environmental and economic benefits that protein crops imply to all players of the value chain (from farmers to consumers). Indeed, improving the quantification of the ecosystem services provided by legume crops is one of the main activities that the selected projects would undertake. And this quantification is expected to be expressed not only in environmental terms (e.g. improvement of soil biodiversity, water retention, climate regulation) but also in economic terms (e.g. reduction of fertilizers use, increase of competitiveness of the sector). The concrete benefits and complementarities of legumes from an economical point of view (which are linked to their ecological/environmental benefits), are not well known to farmers as there is still a great barrier to their adoption. Quantifying and valorising these benefits can boost the adoption of more protein crops. In sum, the selected projects are expected to contribute to promoting the development of the leguminous crop sector through an improved valorisation of the environmental and economic benefits derived from their production.

HORIZON-CL6-2023-FARM2FORK-01-10: Eradicate micronutrient deficiencies in the EU

Question 1

Are fatty acids (i.e. Omega 3, omega 6) considered micronutrients?

Answer 1

Fatty acids are not considered as micronutrients in the context of this topic.

Question 2

Is the Commission expecting new nutritional interventions in humans? Or instead, new nutritional recommendations for eradicating micronutrients?

Answer 2

No new nutritional interventions to be implemented are expected from the project, but rather recommendations, tools etc. for policymakers to consider to implement are expected.

Question 3

Which quantitative marker will we use to determine that people are 'socially isolated'?

Answer 3

"Socially isolated" is just mentioned as one example, part of the problem description. This topic is not looking for the use or implementation of any quantitative marker on this respect.

Question 4

Is incorporation of micronutrients in food products fortification?

Answer 4

Yes. Please consult the legislation, see the following link: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32006R1925b>

Question 5

Are approaches using fortification included or not?

Answer 5

Yes, but fortification would not be the only strategy to follow. Any approach followed should be well justified in the proposal.

[HORIZON-CL6-2023-FARM2FORK-01-16: Microbiomes fighting food waste through applicable solutions in food processing, packaging and shelf life](#)

Question 1

Definition of "microbial preservatives" and "chemical preservatives".

Answer 1

Microbiome is a "characteristic microbial community" including their metabolic activities in a "reasonably well-defined habitat which has distinct physio-chemical properties and as their "theatre of activity ". Under this theatre of activity, range of bioactive products, metabolites and natural products can be produced. In this context the fermentates and bacteriocines are considered as part of the microbiome activity.

Question 2

Are fermentates within the scope? Are bacteriocines within the scope?

Answer 2

Yes, the fermentates and bacteriocines are part of the microbiome as part of the metabolic activities of the microbial community.

Question 3

Are both categories classified as bacterial preservatives or chemical ones?

Answer 3

Both fermentates and bacteriocins are to be considered as bacterial preservatives.

Question 4

Could you please let us know which link should we provide to our stakeholders in order to get more information on the International Bioeconomy Forum?

Answer 4

Information on the International Bioeconomy Forum can be retrieved on the EC webpage on global partnerships for research and innovation: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/environment/bioeconomy/global-partnerships_en

[Horizon-CL6-2023-CircBio-01-4: Land-based bioprospecting and production of the bioactive compounds and functional materials for multiple bio-based value chains](#)

Question

The theme of our project is looking at "unlocking" or "breaking down" biomass to generate bioactive compounds. However, after reading the activities that must be addressed for Horizon-CL6-2023-CircBio-01-4 we deduced that the bioactive compounds must be present in the biomass.

Could you confirm for us if this statement is true, that the bioactive compounds must be present in the biomass rather than "mined" from it? Would our project concept fit into this call?

Answer

The topic text does not prescribe or indicate how the precise structural biomass organisation shall reflect the bioprospecting of bioactivity of interest; thus this is left to the applicants and their proposals. Please consider also the specific aspects listed under scope (and its section 'activities should address') for further guidance.

[HORIZON-CL6-2023-CircBio-01-5 Broadening the spectrum of robust enzymes and microbial hosts in industrial biotechnology](#)

Question

Should synthetic biology be used for optimising a microbial host for higher enzyme production or a microbial host that will be used in a certain bioprocess?

Answer

Firstly, the last part of the 2nd bullet point of the scope does not say that enzymes and microbial hosts should be optimized via Synthetic Biology methodologies. This is given as an example and the methodologies of optimization are open to the proposal as long as they deliver to the scope. Secondly, the optimization rather refers towards achieving improved performance and robustness of the industrial

microbial hosts themselves and/or enzymes against variable bio-based process conditions (i.e., those are explained as physical and/or chemical stressors within the same bullet points). This type of optimization is key as the industrial microbial hosts and/or enzymes will have to be integrated and tested in actual processes (see 3rd and 4th bullet points of the scope as well). Please also consider the 1st bullet point of the expected outcomes referring to 'successful projects will contribute to a paradigm shift from enzymes and industrial microbial hosts processes to evolved microbial hosts and enzymes, for improved (bio-based) process/production robustness and flexibility.' This will also further explain what is the end purpose of optimization in this topic.

HORIZON-CL6-2023-CircBio-01-7: Symbiosis in the bio-based industrial ecosystems

Question

The scope of the topic indicates that proposals should, inter alia, "Individuate high-potential regions/areas, or specific industrial hubs for the demonstration of the developed symbiotic approach. Criteria for the individuation of such sites should focus on process level, symbiosis process implementation, commitment level of the local authorities and communities, regional specificities (business/industrial policy and strategies), additional funding, potential private investors, etc., also taking stock from the EU Hubs for Circularity (H4C) experiences." Considering it's a CSA, should actions demonstrate the developed symbiotic approach in the individuated high-potential regions/areas during the project execution?

Answer

No, one task of the CSA is to individuate sites where the developed symbiotic approach may be demonstrated (i.e., the developed symbiotic approach does not need to be already applied).

HORIZON-CL6-2023-CircBio-01-10: Supporting the fair and just transition from GHG-intensive economies facing challenges towards circular bioeconomy model regions

Question 1

- What does "logistic support" under the 4th bullet in the scope of the topic mean?
- What does this entail in practical terms?

Answer 1

Logistical support to be provided to the project funded under HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio01-07: Demonstrating the fair and just transition from GHG-intensive economies facing challenges towards circular bioeconomy model regions refers e.g., to:

- *establishing a communication channel with the demonstration regions;*
- *functioning as knowledge broker between relevant projects, including outside of Horizon Europe (e.g. national and regional projects);*
- *supporting demonstration action in building up a network of interested regions facing the same issues;*
- *organising meetings and event.*

Question 2

Why do the expected outcomes for HORIZON-CL6-2023-CIRC BIO-01-10 make a reference to Destination 7 ('Innovative governance, environmental observations and digital solutions in support of the Green Deal')?

Answer 2

This is due to a clerical error in the initial topic description. Successful proposals are NOT expected to contribute to the expected impacts of Destination 7 ('Innovative governance, environmental observations and digital solutions in support of the Green Deal'). This reference is outdated and derives from a previous version of the text. Instead, successful proposals should aim to contribute to the expected impacts of the Destination 3 ('Circular economy and biobased sectors').

Topic Update

Please note that, due to a clerical error in the initial topic description, successful proposals are NOT expected to contribute to the expected impacts of Destination 7 ('Innovative governance, environmental observations and digital solutions in support of the Green Deal'). This reference is outdated and derives from a previous version of the text of the Work Programme. Instead, successful proposals should aim to contribute to the expected impacts of the Destination 3 ('Circular economy and biobased sectors').

[HORIZON-CL6-2023-CircBio-01-11: Novel culturing of aquatic organisms for blue biotechnology applications](#)

Question 1

- **Is it possible to get to know a bit more about the background for the call text?**
- **Are there certain research environments that work in biological systems that this call is intended for?**

Answer 1

- *The scope of the topic covers several options in relation to the development of novel culturing methods of marine organisms: mixed cultures, culture of invertebrate/vertebrate cell lines and culture methods based on co-metabolism between community members. It is for the applicants to select among these options and justify the choice or choices.*
- *The scope of the topic covers also the development of bio-engineering tools and the optimisation of the culturing conditions. The applicants should decide to which degree the proposal is to cover each of these aspects. In case that the proposed concept requires no or little focus in some of these aspects, this should be clearly justified in the proposal.*
- *The topic does not pre-empt the use of any specific research environment or biological system. This is for the applicants to decide upon.*

Question 2

Applicant wants to develop culturing methods for seaweed, is that within the scope of the topic call?

Answer 2

We would like to inform you that it is up to the applicants to decide the content of their proposals. Moreover, for a matter of transparency, we cannot give this kind of assessment, as it is the responsibility of the evaluators to assess whether a given concept is in scope of the topic. A proposal will be assessed positively as long as it

responds to the scope description in the topic call text, including with regard to the first bullet “Develop culturing methods (including for mixed cultures) for vertebrate and invertebrate cell lines for the production of active compounds particularly based on co-metabolism between community members that represent a radical change from the conventional “isolate and enrich” approach to cell culture”.

HORIZON-CL6-2023-CircBio-02-1-two-stage: Circular Cities and Regions Initiative (CCRI)’s circular systemic solutions

Question 1

In the scope of the topic there is the following sentence: “Proposals are expected to implement and demonstrate at large scale circular systemic solutions for the deployment of the circular economy (including the circular bioeconomy) in cities and regions or their groupings”. Is there any definition or criteria for what is considered as “large scale” in the context of this topic?

Answer 1

Large scale’ refers to the demonstration of systemic solutions at the level of cities, regions or their groupings, involving all relevant actors in them and potentially more than one level of government and governance, and addressing ideally more than one key product value chain.

Question 2

- **If the names of the cities are mentioned, some of the actors can be inferred (e.g., municipalities). How can these be presented in the context of the blind evaluation? As it is a rather important element of the proposal, should a rough description of each city/municipality/region be given? We also assume that it’s important for the evaluation if the pilot is in a city of central Europe or in a village in the north Europe. Can the demonstrators be named and some characteristics for them be given?**
- **In the case that the proposal is a continuation of past projects combining several partners of these consortia, can these past project names (not the organisations) be mentioned?**
- **In the template of the proposal it is requested to mention ... Any national or international research and innovation activities whose results will feed into the project, and how that link will be established. Although the mention will be very brief, specific projects will be named (not organisations). However, if we name X projects, it is common logic that the consortium will have partners originating from these X projects (although we will not state that, we will just mention the projects). Is that reason for flagging the proposal inadmissible?**

Answer 2

- *The name of the city and its characteristics can be mentioned, provided that there is no explicit indication in the proposal, that any of the applicants are from this location (even if this would be in reality the case). Otherwise, if the participant wants to mention that one of project partners is coming from/ is closely connected with the given city, then the city name should not be mentioned and the city should be only vaguely described by its characteristics, which would not allow for its identification.*
- *Yes, the names of past projects can be mentioned, but it cannot be explicitly indicated that the proposal is a continuation of these projects or that the partners from the past projects overlap with project partners of the current proposal.*

- *No - if it will not be explicitly mentioned in the proposal, that the consortium includes partners who participated in the mentioned past projects, the proposal will not be declared inadmissible for this reason.*

[HORIZON-CL6-2023-CircBio-02-3-two-stage:Non-plant biomass feedstock for industrial applications: technologies and processes to convert non-lignocellulosic biomass and waste into bio-based chemicals, materials and products, improving the cascading valorisation of biomass](#)

Question 1

Is brewers spent grain / bagasse, a vegetable by-product of beer production, excluded from the topic (such as non-lignocellulosic (NLBM), non-plant biomass & NLBM waste)? Or, on the contrary, it could be addressed since it is an Agri-food residues and waste (incl. food waste) that is in the scope

Answer 1

To our knowledge brewers' spent grain (BSG) is a purely lignocellulosic material and it does not appear to be in the main scope of the topic which indeed is focusing on non-lignocellulosic (NLBM), non-plant biomass & NLBM waste. Inside the work programme, there is a footnote stating 'note 1: for waste or mixed feedstock (e.g. food waste) where lignocellulose can be a minor/small fraction', this can be in scope – but it does not seem to be the case for the application provided in your question.

Question 2

We intend to use as feedstock 3 types of wastes (mixed altogether): agri-food residues, municipal solid waste (organic fraction) and paper industry sludge. Since the latter has a high content of cellulose, would this kind of waste (paper industry sludge) be within the scope of the topic?

Answer 2

From the question, it is understood there will be one waste stream combining all of the 3 streams mentioned above, and that those will be present always and at more or less stable ratio. This could be in scope, provided that the predominant and most significant stream in the mix is municipal solid waste (i.e., organic fraction), which is one of the main examples in the scope of the topic.

[HORIZON-CL6-2023-ZEROPOLLUTION-02-2-two-stage: Safe-and-sustainable-by-design bio-based platform chemicals, additives, materials or products as alternatives](#)

Question 1

“We would like to know if the Biorefinery aspect and/or notion is present and/or expected for this topic. Because this is not clearly stated nor denied.”

Answer 1

In addition to the scoping exercise, the topic is also addressing the actual pilot-level development of SSbD bio-based chemicals (including additives) and bio-based materials. The development includes both design aspects (see especially 3rd and 4th bp of the scope) but also the production processes (see 2nd bp of the scope). More specifically, the 2nd scope bullet point addresses: process design, process development and testing of these processes to produce the ‘under testing’ ssbd bio-based chemicals or materials (end TRL=5). Bio-based chemicals and materials are biorefinery processes’ outputs; hence the involvement and relevance of biorefineries in future projects is in a way implied and relevant.

Question 2

This Topic is clearly oriented towards the substitution of Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC). A first possibility is to answer this Topic by identifying and substituting some SVHC. Another one is to identify materials, which contain these SVHC, and then substitute these materials with biobased and safe alternatives, e.g.: when substituting plastic such as PE and/or PP, all SVCH present inside are de facto substituted. I would be pleased when you confirm or infirm if the second approach is in line or not with the Topic.

Answer 2

The topic has a focus on SVHC but not only, substances of concern are also in the scope. A scoping exercise needs to be performed first to propose and justify priority areas where bio-based solutions (chemicals but also materials) could offer safer and sustainable substitutes. One can indeed start either from SVHCs and SOCs and analyse where bio-based solutions can be developed or one can start at applications (material/product) level and list the relevant SVHCs and possibly also SOCs. The solution(s) is/are not limited to chemical by chemical substitution, the future projects can also work on materials innovation which could lead to avoid the use of hazardous chemicals. That is why the second bullet point of the scope refers to working on chosen chemicals/group of chemicals/materials/products, developing and testing the bio-based alternative at TRL 4-5 but also assess safety and sustainability via the ssbd framework. The second approach is possible as explained before, but to avoid regrettable substitution, any novel chemical or material-level solution will still need to be assessed for its safety and sustainability.

[HORIZON-CL6-2023-CLIMATE-01-2: Improve the reliability and effectiveness of alternative water resources supply systems and technologies](#)

Question

- **What exactly is meant by the requirement that “Proposals should cover various regions with a balanced coverage reflecting the various biogeographical and climate zones in Europe in a representative way”?**
- **How many different regions (or alternative water resources?) are expected in the relatively small projects?**

Answer

The number of regions expected to be considered in the context of this topic to address the requirement “Proposals should cover various regions with a balanced coverage reflecting the various biogeographical and climate zones in Europe in a representative way” , depends indeed on the choice of the consortium in connection with the overall methodological approach of the project. This requirement is in relation with the

following bullet point of the topic, i.e. “Develop a comprehensive framework or guidance tool for selecting specific technologies and management strategies for **different water scarcity situations**.”

SSH in Cluster 6

Question

In the WP several topics have the following sentence: “This topic should involve the effective contribution of social sciences and humanities (SSH) disciplines”. Does this mean that the effective contribution from SSH is expected? If there is no contribution, will the proposal be penalised? The question arises because in other Clusters the sentence appears with different wording: This topic requires the effective contribution of social sciences and humanities (SSH) disciplines and the involvement of SSH experts, institutions as well as the inclusion of relevant SSH expertise, in order to produce meaningful and significant effects enhancing the societal impact of the related research/innovation activities.

Answer

When SSH are the **main focus of a topic**, the **standard sentence** is used, i.e. ‘This topic requires the effective contribution of social sciences and humanities (SSH) disciplines and the involvement of SSH experts, institutions as well as the inclusion of relevant SSH expertise, in order to produce meaningful and significant effects enhancing the societal impact of the related research/innovation activities’, thereby putting a **specific requirement for SSH expertise** in the consortium to be presented in section 3.2 of the implementation part of the proposal (in addition to the integration of SSH in the scientific methodology).

When in the scope of a topic it is specified that ‘This topic should involve the effective contribution of social sciences and humanities (SSH) disciplines’, an effective contribution from SSH is also expected, like any other elements preceded in the scope by the verb “should”. Proposals not having SSH involved, under topics with the sentence may be considered admissible but risk being penalised since **SSH will be part of the scientific methodology assessed under the ‘excellence’ criterion**. However the requirement is more limited, as for instance such proposals do not have to demonstrate the involvement of SSH institutions.

Please also see slide 34 of the general expert briefing: [PowerPoint Presentation \(europa.eu\)](#) and to watch the video on how to evaluate SSH in Horizon Europe: [Funding & tenders \(europa.eu\)](#)

Blind evaluation and 1st stage application form

Question 1

How can all this (i.e., elements of Part B of the template on ‘excellence’ and ‘impact’) be answered in a “general” way that does not indirectly potentially reveal a certain hint to the identities?

Answer 1

It is difficult to reply to this question, as it is exactly the purpose of the pilot on blind evaluation to examine whether blind evaluations are feasible given the legal and operational setting. It is certain that participants must not disclose applicants’ organisation names, acronyms, logos nor names of personnel in the Part B of the application. Other situations, where the identity might be disclosed indirectly, have to be examined on a case-by-case basis. We will also take into account the intentionality of the participant behind such potential

indirect exposure of the identity. In the guidance included in the 1st stage application form, you will find examples of statements resulting in inadmissible proposals.

Question 2

How can evaluators fully judge the credibility and excellence of the proposed work if everything is generic?

Answer 2

The blind evaluation concerns only the 1st stage application of the participants. Therefore, evaluators will have the chance to assess the proposals after the second stage of the submission process. Furthermore, not exposing the identity of the participant does not necessary lead to a generic proposal.

Question 3

Can applicants still include literature references to their own work, or is this forbidden?

Answer 3

The proposal can include references to participants' own publications if there is no emphasis that the publication is authored by one or more of the proposers. More information and examples on this can be found in the guidance in the 1st stage application form.