



Horizon Europe proposal evaluation

Evaluation Process

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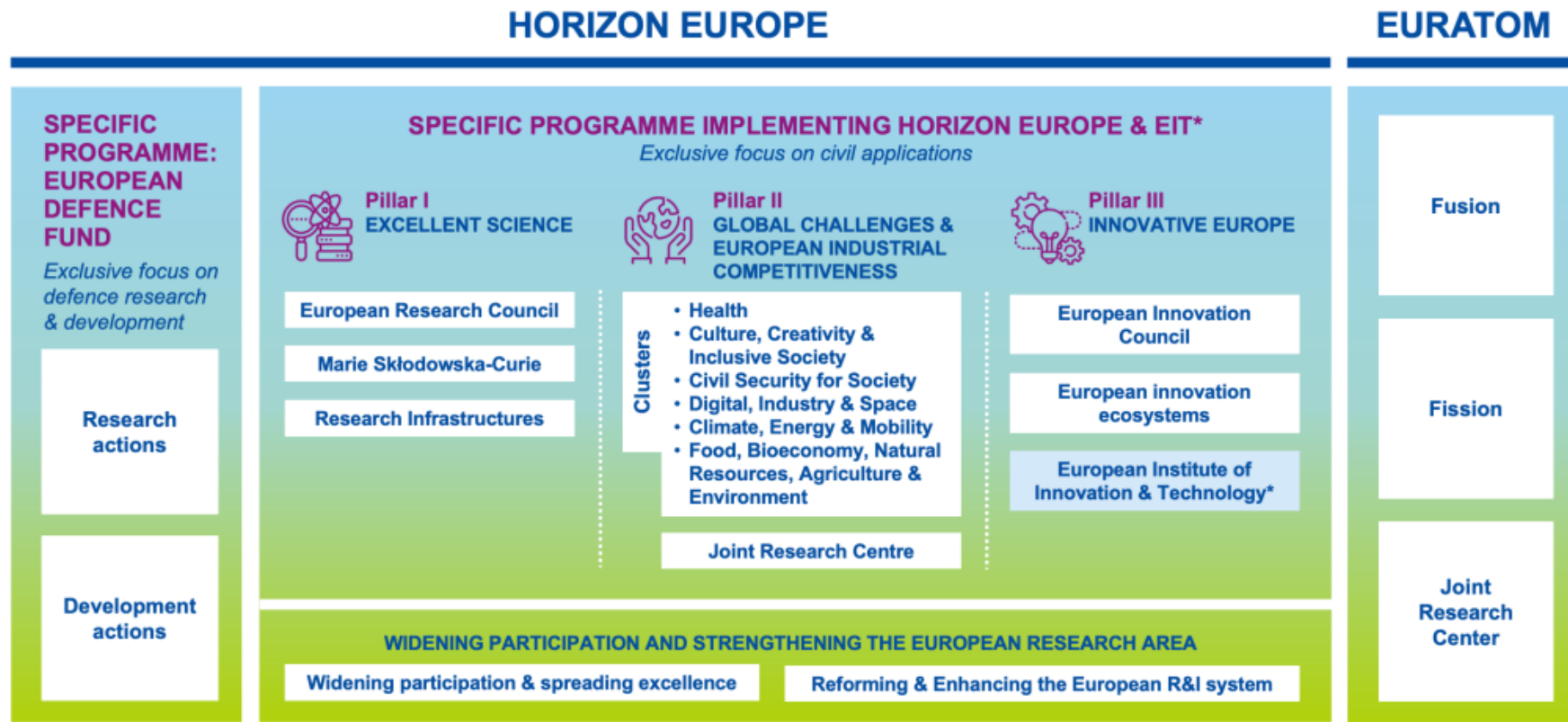
IR0000032 – ITINERIS, Italian Integrated Environmental Research Infrastructures System
(D.D. n. 130/2022 - CUP B53C22002150006) Funded by EU - Next Generation EU PNRR-
Mission 4 “Education and Research” - Component 2: “From research to business” - Investment
3.1: “Fund for the realisation of an integrated system of research and innovation infrastructures”



Evaluation of Horizon Europe proposals

Source of information: Standard Briefing for Experts

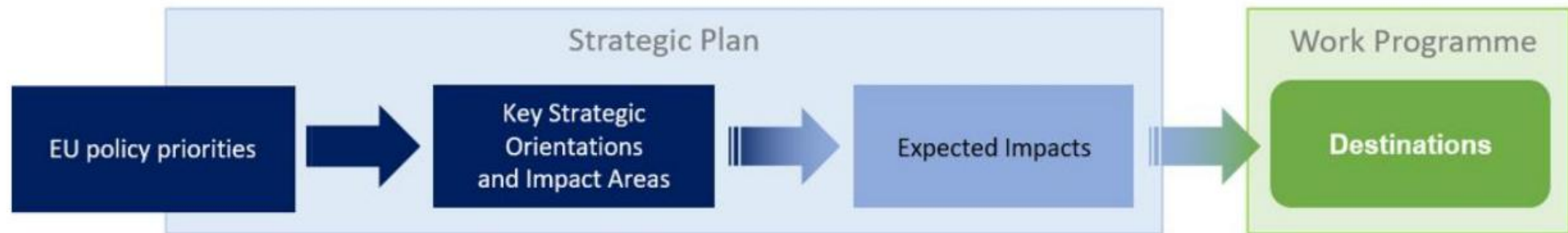
Programme 2021–2027



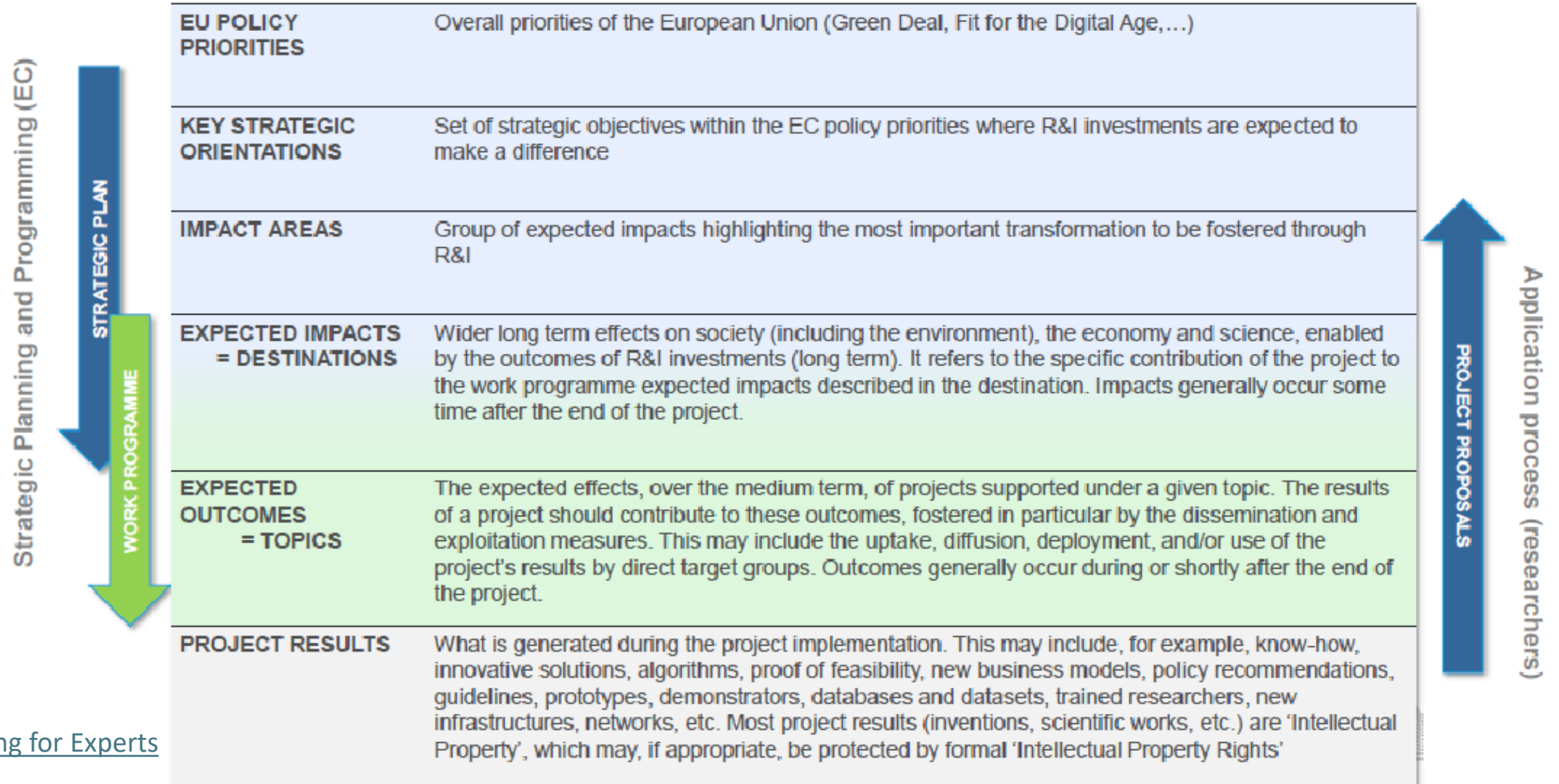
* The European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) is not part of the Specific Programme

Horizon Europe at a glance

- 🌐 EU's R&I Programme (2021–2027)
- 🌐 Strategic Plan designed every 4 years in supports EU priorities: Green Deal, Digital Transition, etc.
- 🌐 Funded via bi-annual Work Programmes (WPs)
- 🌐 Structured around policy-driven Destinations and Expected Impacts



Link between policy priorities and project results



[See: Briefing for Experts](#)



Glossary of terms

A [further useful glossary](#) has been produced by the BRIDGE2HE project

Impacts	Wider long-term effects on society (including the environment), the economy and science, enabled by the outcomes of R&I investments (long term). It refers to the specific contribution of the project to the work programme expected impacts described in the destination. Impacts generally occur some time after the end of the project.
Objectives	The goals of the work performed within the project, in terms of its research and innovation content. This will be translated into the project's results. These may range from tackling specific research questions, demonstrating the feasibility of an innovation, sharing knowledge among stakeholders on specific issues. The nature of the objectives will depend on the type of action, and the scope of the topic.
Outcomes	The expected effects, over the medium term, of projects supported under a given topic. The results of a project should contribute to these outcomes, fostered in particular by the dissemination and exploitation measures. This may include the uptake, diffusion, deployment, and/or use of the project's results by direct target groups. Outcomes generally occur during or shortly after the end of the project.
Pathway to impact	Logical steps towards the achievement of the expected impacts of the project over time, in particular beyond the duration of a project. A pathway begins with the projects' results, to their dissemination, exploitation and communication, contributing to the expected outcomes in the work programme topic, and ultimately to the wider scientific, economic and societal impacts of the work programme destination.
Research output	Results generated by the action to which access can be given in the form of scientific publications, data or other engineered outcomes and processes such as software, algorithms, protocols and electronic notebooks.
Results	What is generated during the project implementation. This may include, for example, know-how, innovative solutions, algorithms, proof of feasibility, new business models, policy recommendations, guidelines, prototypes, demonstrators, databases and datasets, trained researchers, new infrastructures, networks, etc. Most project results (inventions, scientific works, etc.) are 'Intellectual Property', which may, if appropriate, be protected by formal 'Intellectual Property Rights'.

HE Work Programme

Horizon Europe is delivered through dedicated work programmes that define funding opportunities, primarily via calls for proposals.

Each call typically includes one or more topics with a shared deadline. The total budget for a call is allocated across its topics. If multiple topics share a common budget envelope, submitted proposals will compete directly and be ranked together in a single list. Applicants must submit their proposals under a specific call and topic.

Every topic description will detail:

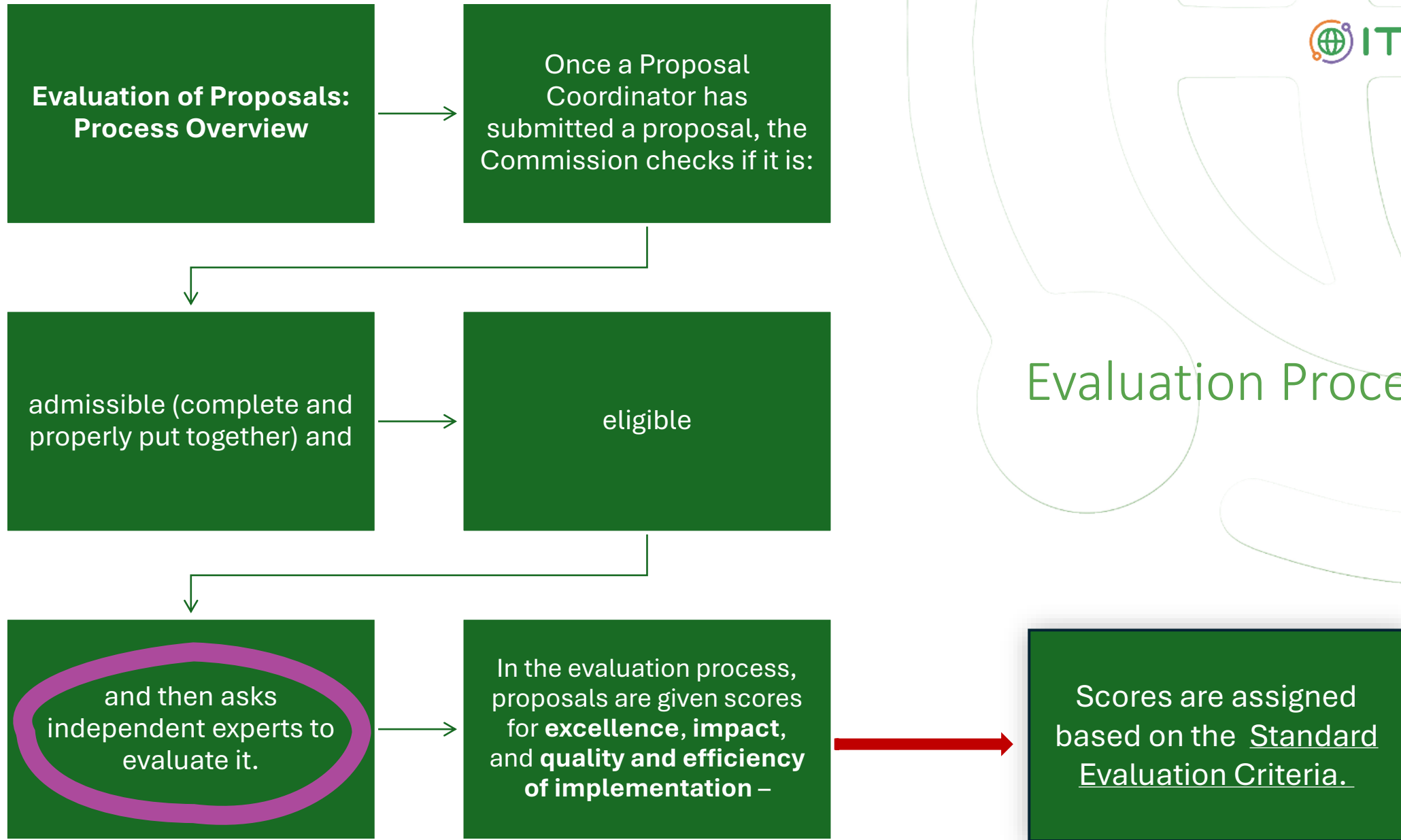
The scope of the topic

The expected outcomes

The anticipated impact within the broader destination

The type of action (e.g., RIA, IA, CSA)

The allocated budget or shared budget across related topics



Evaluation Process

Who are the experts?

European Commission | EU F&T Portal

Home > Work as an expert

Work as an expert

We need experts for:

- Assessing applications for EU funding (including prizes and tenders),
- Monitoring of EU funded projects and contracts,
- Giving your advice on specific issues.

Experts act in their individual capacity to assist the EU services with the implementation of EU funding & tenders managed through the Portal.

Do you have an extensive professional experience & proven domain-knowledge?

[Register as expert](#)

As new expert, you will be first requested to create your EU login account and register your profile.

Registered experts can update the profile via the 'Expert profile' once [signed in](#).

Find out more about the evaluation and monitoring objectives and scope in the [terms of reference](#).

If you need further guidance, access the [key steps for experts](#).

Calls for expressions of interest for experts

[Call for expressions of interest for experts \(2021-2027\)](#)

Useful links

- [Helpdesk and Support Services](#)
- [FAQ for Experts](#)
- [Experts dashboard](#)
- [List of contracted experts](#)

Contracts & remuneration

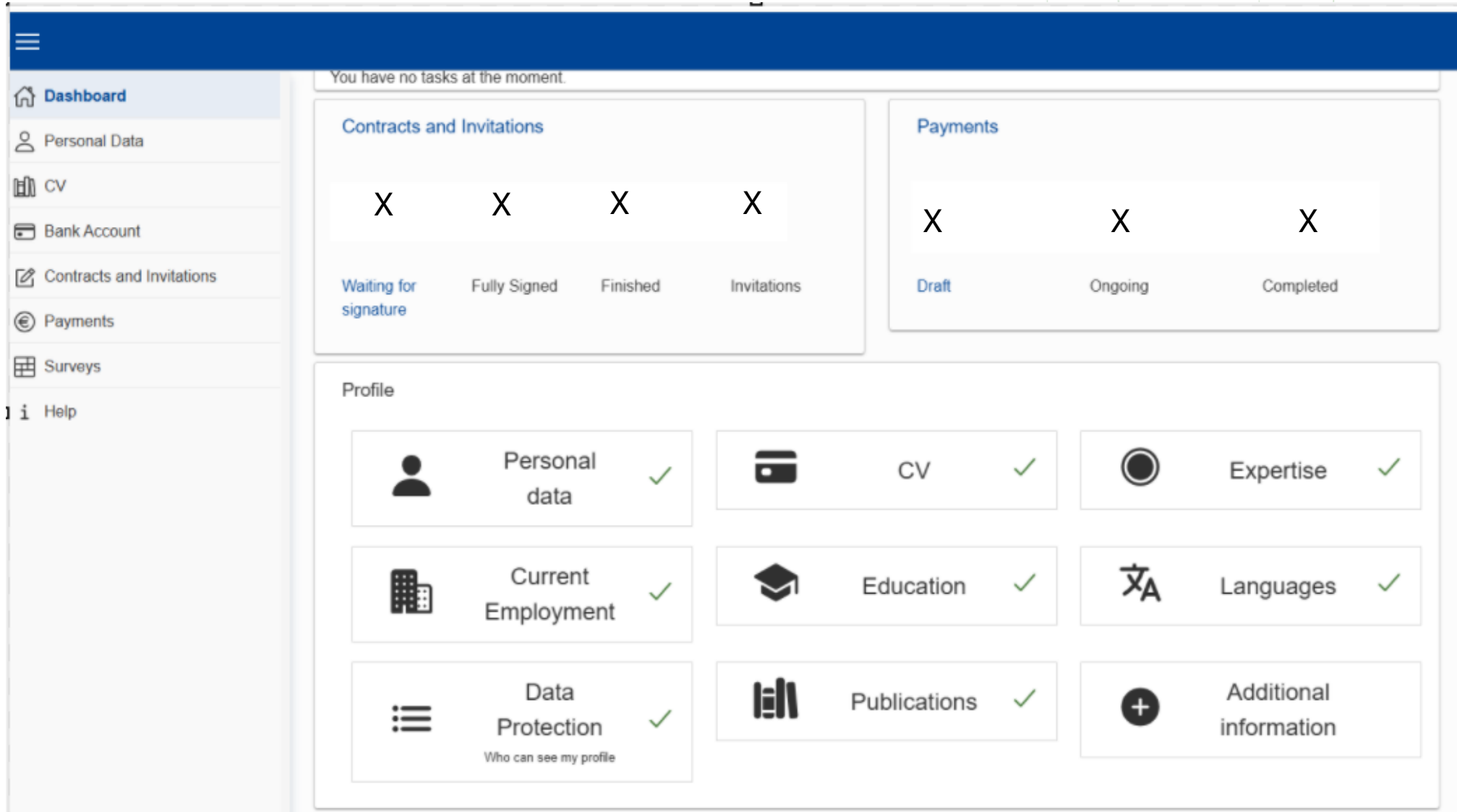
- [Model contract for experts](#)

Tasks may include evaluation, monitoring and advice of all types (such as evaluation of applications, observing evaluation procedures, project reviews, coaching activities, ethics reviews including checks and audits, etc).

The EC welcomes experts with a high level of expertise and professional experience in all fields of EU action and policy.

This call for expression of interest is permanently open for the entire duration of the EU Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) period 2021-2027.

Expert's page



The screenshot shows the ITINERIS Expert's page dashboard. It features a blue navigation bar at the top with a hamburger menu icon. On the left is a sidebar with navigation items: Dashboard, Personal Data, CV, Bank Account, Contracts and Invitations, Payments, Surveys, and Help. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Task Status:** A message at the top states "You have no tasks at the moment."
- Contracts and Invitations:** A table showing the status of contracts and invitations. Each cell contains an 'X' and a label below it.
- Payments:** A table showing the status of payments. Each cell contains an 'X' and a label below it.
- Profile:** A section containing nine profile completion cards, each with an icon, a label, and a green checkmark.

X	X	X	X
Waiting for signature	Fully Signed	Finished	Invitations

X	X	X
Draft	Ongoing	Completed

Personal data	CV	Expertise
Current Employment	Education	Languages
Data Protection	Publications	Additional information




Admissibility, eligibility checks and additional requirements

Admissibility is checked by EU staff.

- Applications must be **complete** and contain all parts and mandatory annexes and supporting documents.
- Applications must be **readable, accessible and printable**.
- Applications must include a **plan for the exploitation and dissemination of results including communication activities** (n/a for applications at the first stage of two-stage procedures or unless otherwise provided in the specific call conditions).
- Specific **page limits** per type of action normally apply (specified in the topic conditions and controlled by IT tool).

Eligibility is checked by EU staff. If you spot an issue, please inform the EU staff.

- Eligible activities are the ones described in the call conditions.
- Minimum number of partners as set out in the call conditions (at least one independent legal entity established in a MS, and, at least two other independent legal entities established either in a MS or AC).
- For calls with deadlines in 2022 and onwards participants that are public bodies, research organisations or higher education establishments from Members States and Associated countries must have a gender equality plan (GEP) in place.
-  The GEP is not part of the evaluation criteria, evaluators should not look into it. The existence of a GEP is checked internally by staff.
- Other criteria may apply on a call-by-call basis as set out in the call conditions. In few cases, the call conditions in the topic can modify the interpretation of criteria.

What happens next?

- 🌐 Experts are invited to participate in the evaluation of proposals for a specific call
- 🌐 The invited experts are granted access to a dashboard set up for the evaluation
- 🌐 The experts should declare possible conflicts of interest before starting the evaluation
- 🌐 A panel is formed with min. 3 experts
- 🌐 A number of proposals is assigned to the panel and each experts makes an individual evaluation of the assigned proposals in a fixed amount of time
- 🌐 Before starting the process the experts are instructed about what is expected (briefings)
- 🌐 For each proposal there is a consensus group discussion with a moderator and a rapporteur
- 🌐 Panel review (ranks, resolves ties)
- 🌐 Finalisation by EU Commission

- 🌐 Admissibility and eligibility are not part of the expert evaluation although if the expert notices something wrong, the issue can be reported to the EU staff
- 🌐 Ethics should not be evaluated by the experts because as proposals that are **successful** in the scientific evaluation will undergo an ethics **review**.
- 🌐 Experts should maintain confidentiality about the whole process and the use of generative AI in the process might be considered a breach of confidentiality



Use of generative AI tools

For proposal preparation

- Applicants:
 - **may use generative AI tools** when preparing proposals
 - **must be fully transparent** towards the granting authority and disclose which AI tools were used and how they were utilized;
 - must **exercise caution** and careful consideration while using generative AI tools;
 - must **review and validate** thoroughly any AI-generated content to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations;
 - remain **fully responsible for the content of the proposal** (including the parts produced by the AI tool);
- The use of generative AI tools in drafting proposals **may not be considered** by expert evaluators **as a reason to penalize a proposal**.

For proposal evaluation

- Experts / Evaluators:
 - only for side tasks (e.g. to collect background information)
 - should consider the use of AI tools only if the **confidentiality** of all the proposal information and the protection of **personal data** is ensured.
 - **are responsible** for keeping the **confidentiality** of the proposal information and ensuring its adequate protection.
 - **are responsible** for adopting appropriate measures to ensure the protection of **personal data**.
 - should be **aware of the risk of breaching confidentiality** obligations, which may be subject to the measures outlined in their contract.
 - should **avoid over-reliance on AI tools** and acknowledge its potential limitations (hallucinations and biases).



Use of generative AI in proposal preparation

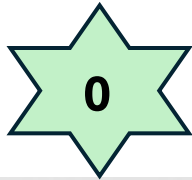
Disclaimer included in Application Forms (Part B)

*“When considering the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the preparation of the proposal, it is imperative to exercise caution and careful consideration. The AI-generated content should be thoroughly reviewed and validated by the applicants to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations. **Applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal** (even those parts produced by the AI tool) and must be transparent in disclosing which AI tools were used and how they were utilised”.*

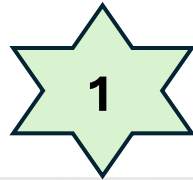
Specifically, **applicants are required** to:

- **Verify the accuracy, validity, and appropriateness** of the content and any citations generated by the AI tool and correct any errors or inconsistencies.
- **Provide a list of sources used to generate content and citations**, including those generated by the AI tool. Double-check citations to ensure they are accurate and properly referenced.
- **Be conscious of the potential for plagiarism** where the AI tool may have reproduced substantial text from other sources. Check the original sources to be sure you are not plagiarising someone else’s work.
- **Acknowledge the limitations of the AI tool** in the proposal preparation, including the potential for bias, errors, and gaps in knowledge”.

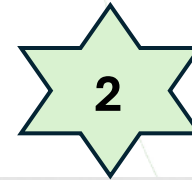
Interpretation of the score



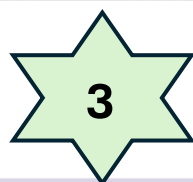
The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.



Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.



Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.



Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.



Very Good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present. 5



Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

Score descriptors

- ❖ A ‘minor shortcoming’ is an issue that relates only to a marginal aspect of the proposal with respect to the criterion and/or can easily be rectified (it will not impact the scoring).
- ❖ A ‘shortcoming’ is a problem that relates to an important aspect of the proposal. It impacts the scoring but does not render the proposal inappropriate for funding, i.e. the proposal is still expected to lead to useful results with positive impact.
- ❖ A ‘significant weakness’ means that the proposal addresses the criterion in a limited and/or not sufficiently effective way (will lower the score below threshold). This can also be the case when the proposal includes a large number of shortcomings, each one of them not rendering the proposal inappropriate for funding, though all together make the proposal not addressing the criterion sufficiently in an effective way.

Evaluation of the excellence

- 🌐 Refer to the [briefing for experts](#) for general criteria to evaluate the excellence
- 🌐 Among the questions to be answered: gender dimension, open science, data management
- 🌐 If required by the call the integration of social sciences and humanities has to be evaluated (e.g in case of co-design and involvement of stakeholders): **Economics and political science** are major components of projects focusing on socio-economic evaluation of climate-change impact
- 🌐 When required in the call/topic conditions, applicants **must refer to the DNSH principle** when presenting their research methodology and the expected impacts of the project,



Do no significant harm principle (DNSH)

Check [support video](#) on the Portal!

European Green Deal

In line with the European Green Deal objectives, economic activities should not make a significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives (EU Taxonomy Regulation)

- When required in the call/topic conditions, applicants **must refer to the DNSH principle** when presenting their research methodology and the expected impacts of the project, to show that their project will not carry out activities that make a significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives of the EU Taxonomy Regulation.

NEW! Simplification of proposal template from WP2025 onwards: Aspects related to the DNSH principle must only be included in proposals when required to in the topic conditions (currently only in the EIC Accelerator topics).

Nonetheless, possible environmental consequences should still be considered under excellence and impact criteria as appropriate.

The six environmental objectives :



Climate change mitigation



Sustainable use & protection of water & marine resources



Pollution prevention & control



Climate change adaptation



Transition to a circular economy



Protection and restoration of biodiversity & ecosystems

Evaluation of the impact

- 🌐 Refer to the [briefing for experts](#) for general criteria to evaluate the impact
- 🌐 Relevant question: are the scale and significance of the project's contribution to the expected outcomes and impacts estimated and quantified (including baselines, benchmarks and assumptions used for those estimates)?
 - 'Scale' refers to how widespread the outcomes and impacts are likely to be. For example, in terms of the size of the target group, or the proportion of that group, that should benefit over time;
 - 'Significance' refers to the importance, or value, of those benefits. For example, number of additional healthy life years; efficiency savings in energy supply.



Evaluating the Quality of implementation (1/2)

Following questions are adapted to RIA and IA type of actions (ToA). Similar questions will be asked for other ToAs, in line with the instructions in the specific applications forms.

Assess the proposed work plan, and the effort and resources:

- Is the work plan of good quality and effective?
- Does it include quantified information so that progress can be monitored?
- Does it follow a logic structure (for example regarding the timing of work packages)?
- Are the resources allocated to the work packages in line with their objectives and deliverables?
- Are critical risks, relating to project implementation, identified and proper risk mitigation measures proposed?

Always provide well-supported reasons to justify your evaluation. For instance, if you think that the work plan is (or is not) of good quality and effective, **add always the rationale behind your opinion.**

Do not penalize applicants that did not provide detailed breakdown of costs as they are not required.
Exception: In the case of lumps sums, there is a requirement of a detailed budget table.



Evaluating the Quality of implementation (2/2)

Following questions are adapted to RIA and IA type of actions (ToA). Similar questions will be asked for other ToAs, in line with the instructions in the specific applications forms.

Assess the quality of participants and the consortium as a whole:

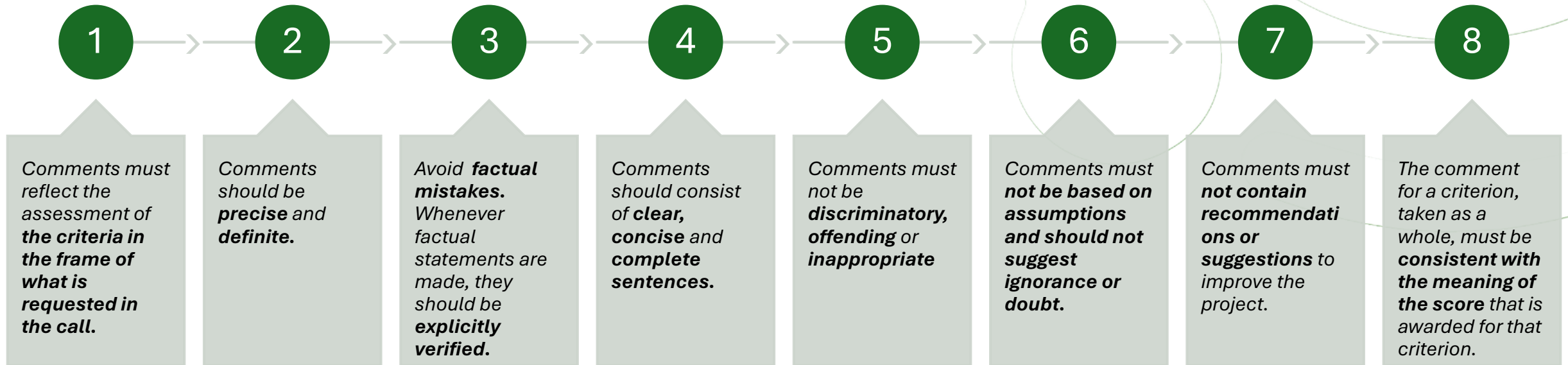
(Note that important information on role of individual participants and previous experience is included in part A of proposal)

- Does the consortium match the project's objectives and bring together the necessary disciplinary and inter-disciplinary knowledge?
- Does the consortium include expertise in open science practices, and gender aspects of R&I, as appropriate?
- For topics flagged as SSH relevant, does the consortium include expertise in social sciences and humanities?
- Do the partners have access to critical infrastructure needed to carry out the project activities?
- Are the participants complementing one another (and cover the value chain, where appropriate)?
- In what way does each of them contribute to the project? Does each of them have a valid role, and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role (so they have sufficient operational capacity)?
- Is there industrial/commercial involvement in the project to ensure exploitation of the results?

Always provide well-supported reasons to justify your evaluation. For instance, if you think that the consortium brings (or doesn't bring) together the necessary expertise, **add always the rationale behind your opinion.**

Participants' previous publications, in particular journal articles, are expected to be open access and existing datasets FAIR and 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary'. Evaluate positively if this is sufficiently addressed.

Recommendations to the experts





THANKS!

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