

# Horizon Europe – International Research and Innovation with Development Goals

## What is Horizon Europe?

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation with a budget of €95.5 billion for the period 2021-2027. It tackles climate change, helps to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts Europe's competitiveness and growth.

The programme facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges. It supports the creation and better sharing of knowledge and technologies.

It also creates jobs, fully engages Europe's talent pool, boosts economic growth, promotes industrial competitiveness and optimises investment impact within a strengthened European Research Area.

For information on UK participation in the programme see UKRO's [dedicated factsheet](#).

## Policy Background for International Research with Development Goals in Horizon Europe

The European Commission's [Strategy for International Cooperation in Research & Innovation](#) underpins the international dimension of Horizon Europe. With this new strategy, the EU plans to take a leading role in supporting international research and innovation partnerships and in delivering innovative solutions to green, digital, health and innovation challenges. The strategy reflects four main policy priorities that Horizon Europe will contribute to – [European Green Deal](#), post-COVID recovery, Digitization and Innovation.

Particular focus is placed on scaling up partnerships at the multilateral level, for example, through the [All-Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance](#) or [Mission Innovation](#), to tackle urgent global challenges. It also calls for the EU to rebalance its cooperation with other countries with more reciprocity and ensure a level playing field at the international level.

A key European Union priority is to contribute to the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(UN SDGs\)](#). Therefore, European Commission programmes including Horizon Europe are aligned with this global agenda. This is explicit in the [Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2021-2024](#), which sets key strategic objectives for [Pillar II 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness'](#) under which Work Programmes containing funding opportunities often include specific references to UN SDGs that applicants should aim to address in their consortium building, proposals and grant implementation. A key mechanism that allows for such global collaboration is the automatic funding eligibility for participants from low- to middle-income countries listed in the [Programme Guide](#).

Finally, the European Commission has developed research & innovation partnerships with other regions around the world to complement the multilateral and global levels of international cooperation.

The most prominent of these is the deepening partnership between the EU and the African Union which, in 2022, led to the publication of the [EU-AU Innovation Agenda](#). The agenda sets out shared priorities of public health, green transition, innovation & technology and capacities for science. These co-created priorities instigate the development of funding opportunities under Horizon Europe which specify requirements to address topics of relevance to Africa and to integrate African researchers, stakeholders and end users in the consortium and project design.

The [Africa Initiative in Horizon Europe](#) is a key set of research funding opportunities that have sprung from this EU-AU agenda, including 25 calls with deadlines in 2023/2024 which cut across many parts of the programme.

While the Africa Initiative continues from 2021/22, a new 'Mediterranean Initiative' has been introduced in the 2023/2024 Work Programme, with approximately **40 funding opportunities flagged**, responding to the **new R&I agenda for the region** developed under the auspices of the **Union for the Mediterranean**.

Other regions such as the **Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)** or the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** have established relationships with the EU to facilitate research and innovation cooperation, albeit not to the extent and degree as that between the EU and African Union. Research and innovation cooperation is also facilitated by **bilateral agreements** between the EU and specific third countries such as China, India, Chile, or Mexico. These bilateral agreements tend to be limited to a smaller number of call topics.

## International Cooperation in Horizon Europe – the basics

### General openness

In principle, any legal entity, established in any country in the world (except for Russia and Belarus, which are subject to **EU sanctions**) will be able to participate in collaborative projects funded under Horizon Europe. Within these entities, researchers and innovators who make up the research team on these projects can be of any nationality.

In the context of Horizon Europe, international cooperation refers to collaboration with any legal entity based in the so-called 'third countries' that are neither EU Member States nor Associated Countries.

### Which organisations are eligible for funding?

When considering this general openness to the world, it is important to make a distinction between eligibility to participate in projects and receiving funding from Horizon Europe.

Not all countries will be automatically eligible to obtain funds from the programme. However, a collaboration involving partners from low- and middle-income countries is facilitated by automatic eligibility for receiving Horizon Europe funds. The reference document for this third country participation is the **List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe** whereas other research and innovation funders including UKRI have referred to the **OECD DAC-list of Official Development Aid** recipients in their guidance.

Furthermore, individual topic descriptions on the Funding & Tenders Portal can list exceptional conditions for third-country participation. Such exceptional conditions may allow organisations from countries not automatically eligible for funding to receive financial support from Horizon Europe.

In practice, the country status of each participant (eligible/non-eligible) will be reflected in the budget table in part A of the application form. Beneficiaries from countries automatically eligible for funding will need to have their share of the budget indicated in the relevant columns (in accordance with the budget categories of Horizon Europe) and with the requested EU contribution indicated in the correct cell. Organisations from non-eligible countries, on the other hand, should identify their costs in the relevant columns whilst usually requesting no EU contribution. Exceptional requests for EU funding should first be specifically envisaged in the call-specific guidance and flagged in the proposal.

### Targeted international cooperation actions

Some call topics state that the funded action will be relevant for international cooperation and are thus targeted with varying degrees of flexibility.

The form of this targeting at the topic description level can include specific requirements to:

- work with technologies or address particular societal challenges at a local or global level;
- include consortium members from specific places; and/or
- carry out activities that will lead to expected outcomes.

Call topics may also set out qualitative criteria beyond an application's research and innovation quality. Thus, in the context of projects with development goals, excellent approaches to collaboration and project implementation may indicate that a call is targeted at international cooperation. These could include establishing equitable partnerships with collaborators in low- and middle-income countries or managing specific challenges and risks for data management to ensure that projects are feasible and fair.

## ODA-type projects funded by Horizon 2020

The Horizon 2020 Framework Programme ran from 2014 until 2020, although projects are ongoing from those calls. The participation data below comes from the [Horizon Dashboard](#) for projects involving entities from countries automatically eligible for funding (data extracted on 27 July 2022).



Top five Horizon 2020 programmes or thematic priorities involving entities from countries automatically eligible for funding, measured by number of grant agreements:

1. **Marie-Sklódowska Curie Actions**  
(388 projects)
2. **Climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials**  
(110 projects)
3. **Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research and the bioeconomy**  
(95 projects)
4. **Health, demographic change and wellbeing**  
(80 projects)
5. **Europe in a changing world - Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies**  
(47 projects)

## Similarities and differences with ODA-compliant research funding

### What is the Horizon Europe definition of international research with development goals?

There is no distinct form of Horizon Europe action dedicated to international research with development goals. Neither is there a type of action underpinned by any externally recognised definition, such as that provided by the OECD Official Development Aid (ODA).

Nevertheless, types of research and innovation can be set out in more detail or with variation at the level of specific Work Programmes and call topics. Flexible definitions of international research with development goals emerge from call-by-call guidance, at times with exceptional legal and finance rules.

Despite Horizon Europe not having calls or programmes explicitly linked to ODA, an applicant's capabilities and track records demonstrated by ODA-compliant research and innovation activities is likely to be recognised by expert evaluators and could add to their competitiveness in funding calls if they are relevant to the call topic guidance.

## Similarities

- Both Horizon Europe and ODA-compliant research funding have strong tendencies towards evaluation and reporting criteria that demonstrate contributions to [UN SDGs](#).
- Horizon Europe's list of participating countries with automatic funding is practically equivalent to the OECD DAC-list of Official Development Aid Recipients in terms of which countries are included, however, the methodology and process for updating the lists differ.

## Differences

- Horizon Europe projects with collaborators based in low- and middle-income countries can also include collaborators in EU Member States and/or [Associated Countries](#). ODA-compliant research funding from UKRI often included UK entities partnering with [organisations in low- and middle-income countries exclusively](#) and in principle had predominant funding flows towards organisations and activities in DAC-listed countries.
- Compliance with the OECD definition of ODA is not a factor for eligibility or evaluation criteria in Horizon Europe proposals.

## Applying for funding with International Research with Development Goals

In Horizon Europe, collaborative projects involving international partners are encouraged across the programme. There is no specific part dedicated to international cooperation, as was the case with previous EU Framework Programmes (e.g. FP7).

Any call topic guidance that specifies requirements for international cooperation or addressing global challenges must be fully addressed by applicants in the submitted proposal. This guidance is also a comprehensive reference for experts evaluating submitted proposals. The Funding & Tenders Portal search function can be used by applicants to filter lists of upcoming calls for specific priority tags like [‘International Cooperation’](#), [‘Mediterranean’](#), or [‘Africa’](#).

Other Horizon Europe funding opportunities may not be targeted for international cooperation but entities from low- and middle-income countries listed as automatically eligible for funding may be included in an application. As long as the minimum eligibility conditions for the consortium have been satisfied, the participation of entities from third countries in applications will be evaluated along with all other consortium members according to the criteria set out in the call topic description.

Further opportunities for collaboration with low- and middle-income countries are available in the [‘Excellent Science’ Pillar](#), in particular the [Marie-Skłodowska Curie Actions](#) - for which international mobility is a key feature - and the [European Research Council](#), which gives Principal Investigators the freedom to have project team members who can be hosted by additional partner organisations. Unlike the designated Host Institution, these additional entities may be established anywhere and receive EU funding, including outside the European Union/Associated Countries.

UKRO explains how to understand Horizon Europe guidance in general terms in the dedicated [Factsheet on Applying for Funding](#).

## More information

- [Horizon Europe website](#)
- [European Commission Factsheet: Global Approach to Research & Innovation](#)
- [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Horizon Europe's legal basis:

- [Regulation establishing Horizon Europe](#)
- [Decision establishing the Specific Programme of Horizon Europe](#)
- [First Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe \(2021-2024\)](#)

UKRO Portal

- [UKRO Portal](#) (subscriber access required)