

# Horizon Europe – Finding Partners and Building a Consortium

Winning a Horizon Europe grant is a great opportunity and achievement. For most Horizon grants, applicants will be required to collaborate with others to meet the relevant eligibility criteria and achieve the objectives of their project. This factsheet outlines various ways that organisations (or individuals) can identify partners and increase their ‘visibility’ to others who may be doing the same.

## Building a Consortium

Success at the application stage depends to a large extent on the quality of the project consortium. For most projects (or ‘types of action’) the minimum requirement is to have at least three legal entities, independent of each other and each established in a different EU Member State or Associated Country. **As a novelty in Horizon Europe, at least one of the three partners must be based in a Member State.** Some topics may have different eligibility conditions and require the participation of more, or specific types of participants (e.g. organisations based in non-EU countries in areas where international cooperation is mandatory).

However, most projects in Horizon Europe will have more than the minimum number of partners required. What the right number is will depend on the requirements of the project topic, the expected outcomes/impacts, the activities proposed and the available budget.

### What are the rules in Horizon Europe?

Our dedicated factsheet on the [legal and financial basics in Horizon Europe](#) contains more information on funding rules for different types of organisations and from different countries.

### Work with those you know and trust

Often, the best starting point is to think about **colleagues and peers with whom you already have direct or indirect links**. People with whom you or other partners have already worked are the safest bet, provided they help you build a convincing consortium that will impress the evaluators at the same time.

So, think broadly about institutional links as well as personal ones. While the first choice will almost invariably lie with partners you have already worked with, Horizon Europe calls will often require an interdisciplinary and/or inter-sectoral approach and a proposal must show that the consortium is well-equipped to meet the expected impacts as well as the scientific criteria.

### Meet the scientific and impact and implementation criteria

While there are no geographical evaluation criteria as such, topics might specify certain priority areas or even specific countries (within or outside the EU). This will not always require including a partner from that country or region, but the proposed project will be evaluated on how it will address the requirements. Under the evaluation criterion “Quality and efficiency of the implementation” the role of participants and capacity of the consortium are specifically evaluated: *“Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise”*.

### Joining consortia and finding new partners

Is it possible to find out which consortia are already forming for a particular call topic?

Sometimes, but it is not easy as it is not necessarily in the public domain unless a consortium advertises for partners at brokerage events or on partner search platforms. A researcher might be able to find out that consortia for a particular call are forming via their contacts or networks in their area of research.

The European Commission offers a [partner search tool on the Funding & Tenders Portal](#). This allows you to launch a partnership request related to a specific call for proposals and publish the research profiles of individual researchers and organisations. It can also be used to search for partners who have expressed an interest in a particular call or area.

### **My Person Profile**

In early 2021, the Commission introduced a new optional '[My Person Profile](#)' functionality on its Funding & Tenders Portal. It allows any user to create a public profile to advertise their expertise among potential project collaborators using the partner search tool. Thanks to this function of the Portal, researchers can create their public profiles and post expertise offers/requests under the Horizon Europe topics that they are interested in.

### **Other approaches and resources:**

Applicants can find data on who was successful in the past by consulting the [CORDIS database of previously funded projects](#): Doing this is always a good idea, as it helps to understand what work has been previously undertaken and funded under FP7 or Horizon 2020. The database provides information about projects by area but also includes who coordinated or was a partner on a given project. If you reach out to the consortium lead, they may even share their proposal with you!

**Events, conferences and workshops** can be invaluable for building connections, as can the [official European Commission information days](#) relating to the calls, which often include brokerage sessions in which those intending to submit projects make presentations in the hope of finding additional partners. Even if you cannot attend these in person, event websites will often publish lists of attendees/project presentations, which can be a valuable resource. For early information and updates on relevant events, sign up to receive email alerts from the [UKRO Portal](#).

**European Technology Platforms** are industry-led stakeholder groups that help to shape the European research and innovation agenda in their respective areas of expertise. Reading their strategic agendas can help to inform bids in the more industrial sections of Horizon Europe, and they can provide valuable networking opportunities and enable the identification of potential industrial partners. Also useful in this respect are **European Innovation Partnerships** (EIPs), which aim to bring together all relevant actors working in a particular area.

Also useful in terms of connecting with industry is the [Enterprise Europe Network](#); universities can use this to find companies for their Horizon Europe bids; at the same time, companies often use the network to find universities to join/coordinate their projects. This matchmaking is done through a partner search database featuring projects and technologies that need partners, the EEN can also occasionally contact potential partners in other countries directly.

### **Coordinator/Project partner roles**

Project consortia must decide who will lead (coordinate) the project. The coordinator will typically take a leading role in preparing and submitting the proposal, representing the consortium vis-à-vis the Commission, monitoring compliance on the project, and being responsible for the distribution of project finances, record keeping and reporting. Many of the practical arrangements are laid down in a Consortium Agreement. Normally, evaluators will be looking for the experience of managing large-scale grants and capacity, which is something to bear in mind when deciding as to which institution should act as the project coordinator.

Project partners will usually work on their assigned work package(s), submit input (e.g. reports) to the coordinator, both at the application stage and during the lifetime of the project, and generally contribute

to the smooth and successful implementation of the grant (i.e. support the coordinator in fulfilling their obligations).

Beyond that, it is possible to involve organisations in less formal ways, for example by including them in project advisory groups, stakeholder fora, dissemination and impact networks, etc.

## Meeting with partners to discuss the proposal

We recommend meeting with potential collaborators to discuss what the different expectations are and ensure every partner understands the budget and how Horizon Europe can be used, as well as intellectual property rights (IPR) arrangements and consortium governance. This may require resources (e.g. travel funds). The obvious source for these is your institutional budget, but external funders may also be able to help.

## Consortium composition on lump sum projects

Building a consortium for Horizon Europe [lump sum projects](#) is no different to creating one for projects using actual costs. However, having the right type of consortium partners for lump sum projects is of particular importance since the EC makes payments only upon the completion of the individual work packages (WP). This is different from how the EC has made payments on Horizon projects using actual costs until now and will become even more important as lump sums are rolled out more widely across Horizon Europe.

## European and Domestic ‘Brokerage’ events

Partner searches are also available through various networks of National Contact Points (NCPs) as well as ‘brokerage’ sessions hosted by the European Commission itself as part of their [information events](#) in each area of Horizon Europe. These sessions utilise a specific platform where organisations can present their project ideas to potential partners, discuss with others via the messaging function and even arrange virtual meetings with others within the space. These brokerage sessions are useful ‘shop windows’ for projects and it is advised that those looking for partners register and join the platform early to get a full overview of who else is operating in the chosen area. You can find an example of how this works [online here](#).

NCPs are dedicated members of staff who provide support to applicants applying to specific areas of Horizon Europe. Their details can be found on the [UK government website](#) but both the UK and other countries’ NCPs are listed on the [Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal \(FTOP\)](#). The other non-UK NCPs are a useful first point of contact if you are looking for partners within their country.

UK NCPs often host their [own information events](#), another opportunity to identify partners locally/domestically who may be interested in collaborating. Applicants can also contact the NCP directly to enquire if they know of other consortia thinking of submitting and who may be looking for additional partners.

## UK Devolved Administrations

For those applicants based in one of the UK’s Devolved Administrations (DAs), there are also physical offices based in Brussels that can help broker relationships and identify partners for Horizon Europe. The [Northern Ireland Contact Point \(NICP\) Network](#) for example, offers guidance and help for Northern Irish applicants. Each network member has expert knowledge in a specific area of funding.

There is specific guidance and help for Scottish applicants, who can contact Anne Marie Reid at [Scotland Europa](#). There is similar support available for Welsh applicants via the [Welsh Horizon Europe Unit](#).

## More information

### Useful websites and resources

- [Partner search facility on the Funding & Tenders Portal](#)
- [My Person Profile guidance on the Funding & Tenders Portal](#)
- [Horizon Europe NCPs](#)
- [UK NCPs](#)
- [European Technology Platforms](#)
- [European Innovation Partnerships](#)
- [Enterprise Europe Network](#)
- [ERRIN network](#) - Space for connecting members and external organisations interested in applying to a call under European R&I programmes.