

Questions-réponses apportées par les services de la Commission européenne au sujet des appels 2023-24 du Cluster 6

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1. Destination BIODIV

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

Question:

The scope of topic HORIZON-CL6-2023-BIODIV-01-3 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-01-16: Valorisation of ecosystem services provided by legumes crops

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-CL6-2024-BIODIV-01-1: Invasive alien species

Question:

One proposal aims at nature-based and sustainable restoration and enhancement of the ecological integrity of riparian ecosystems and floodplains, while supporting the development of sustainable agricultural, forestry and water sector practices to mitigate biodiversity loss and conserve ecosystem services. They would like to clearly identify the correct classification of their project between the categories "Area A: terrestrial ecosystem" and "Area B: aquatic ecosystem", as distinguished in the call for proposals. Since the project focuses mainly on wetlands, including the combined management of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, they thought that the category "Area B: aquatic ecosystem" would be relevant. Can you please confirm that this interpretation is in line with the application criteria?

Answer:

Given the description, the classification of the proposal under the category "aquatic ecosystem" seems relevant. However, we recommend the applicant to carefully assess whether the proposal addresses the topic on "invasive alien species".

HORIZON-CL6-2024-BIODIV-01-2: Digital for nature

Question:

Is the participation of the JRC possible in both Areas, A and B? If the participation of the JRC is also possible in Area B could you please indicate the possible role of the JRC in Area B?

Answer:

Since the possible JRC participation is mentioned under the call condition of the whole topic, it will be accepted for both areas. If the applicants intend to use the opportunity to work with the JRC, they must include the participation of the JRC in their proposal. Under area A, they will have to base the JRC participation on the information provided in the topic text. Regarding area B, this participation was not anticipated by the Commission but might be possible with the JRC having a similar role as the one described regarding part A.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-BIODIV-01-8: Conservation and protection of carbon-rich and biodiversity-rich forest ecosystems

Question:

Is it mandatory to involve European forests in the project or is it sufficient to focus exclusively on tropical forests? The expected outcomes only mention European forests whereas further in the text it is mentioned that cases should be included on European OR tropical forests. As these types of forest are demanding a different approach (and thus different consortium should be considered), we would like you to clarify.

Answer:

International cooperation is strongly encouraged by this topic, as explicitly stated in its scope. The scope also states that proposals will "set up case studies in European forests or tropical forests" and further specifies the targeted forest types in more detail: "forests of high ecological value, such as primary and old-growth forests, Mediterranean forests, peat swamp forests or mangroves". Nevertheless, proposals are also expected to contribute to "EU biodiversity and climate objectives", an "empirical analysis of the current forest management and conservation practices in European forests of high ecological value" as well as the "strict protection of primary and old-growth forest in Europe by 2030".

HORIZON-CL6-2024-BIODIV-01-09: Selective breeding for organic aquaculture

Questions:

Could you explain what exactly is meant by "develop a breeding programme"? At one point in the topic text (scope) it says that "proposals should plan breeding programmes", whereas a bit later on it sounds more like the breeding programme should not only be planned, but also conducted, e.g. proposals should "breed juveniles under organic production conditions".

In essence, the question is if proposals are expected:

- to come up with a plan for selective breeding programmes for the species indicated that can later on be put into practice by broodfish producers (and which both the low expected TRL and relatively small budget would suggest) OR
- to actually carry out selection and demonstrate selection response in the traits in question. This option seems to be highly challenging in light of the requirement to include at least four different species and the duration of a project of only 4 years, when a generation period for all the fish in question is at least 3 years.

In addition, could you also please specify what exactly is meant by the term "adaptive potential"?

Answers:

- The selected project should deliver a methodology on how to do breeding compatible with organic fish farming.
- The selected project does not necessarily have to do the breeding and see if the progeny develop the desired traits but should demonstrate that such methodology is feasible and has high probability to deliver the desired outcome.
- The adaptive potential, in this frame, means the ability of the farmed fish population to respond to selective breeding by changes in their genotype and/or phenotype.

Horizon-CL6-2024-BIODIV-02-01-two-stage: Demonstrating Nature-based Solutions for the sustainable management of water resources in a changing climate, with special attention to reducing the impacts of extreme droughts

Question:

The call eligibility conditions include : «At least one of the proposed demonstrations must take place in a region eligible to cohesion funds». Could you please specify further which regions are eligible?

Answer:

The proposals must include at least one demonstration in a region eligible for the funds supporting the implementation of the Cohesion Policy. These are the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the Just Transition Fund (JTF). However, for non-Member state regions, the rules of participation and funding will follow those of the HORIZON EUROPE Programme (See the General Annexes A, B, C and F).

HORIZON-CL6-2024-BIODIV-02-2-two-stage Demonstrating the potential of Nature-based Solutions and the New European Bauhaus to contribute to sustainable, inclusive and resilient living spaces and communities

Question 1:

Does the phrasing "most complementary geographical coverage" refer to the internal choice of demonstration activities (i.e. within one submitted project) or the external complementarity of the different submitted proposals?

Answer 1:

The phrasing 'most complementary geographical coverage' in the specific condition on the evaluation procedure of this topic refers to the complementarity of the location of the demonstration activities as foreseen by the different proposals in the ranked list of applications (i.e. external complementarity), rather than to their complementarity within a single proposal.

Question 2:

Given the content of the topic it seems reasonable to include infrastructural works in the proposal. Can you please, specify if the costs of infrastructural works can be covered by the EU contribution of HE?

Answer 2:

There are no specific call conditions on the cost of infrastructure works in topic HORIZON-CL6-2024-BIODIV-02-2-two-stage: Demonstrating the potential of Nature-based Solutions and the New European Bauhaus to contribute to sustainable, inclusive and resilient living spaces and communities. Hence, the general conditions apply (cf. model grant agreement). In this context, it is worth recalling that only depreciation costs are eligible.

Question 3:

Applicants would like to implement a number of pilots in different countries however the EUR 5 Million budget would only cover a limited amount of pilots, the consortium believes that an additional pilot would bring added value to the consortium and the project. However by bringing on board an additional pilot the EUR 5 Million budget expected for this proposal will be exceeded. Would the commission suggest that this additional pilot site is left out for the sake of sticking to the EUR5 Million suggested budget or are they allowed to exceed the budget? And if they are allowed to exceed the budget (given that they proof their added value) would this make their proposal less favourable over other proposals that have abided by the EUR 5 Million limit?

Answer 3:

We would like to draw your attention to the specific call conditions for this topic. Concerning the expected EU contribution per project, they indicate that: *“The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 5.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts”*. Moreover, we would like to draw your attention to what is indicated in the scope of the topic (p. 122): *“Because of the substantial investments that might be necessary for implementing the NBS, additional or follow-up funding (private or public) should be sought, including from relevant regional/national schemes under the Recovery and Resilience Fund, the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), or other relevant funds”*.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-BIODIV-02-3-two-stage: Promoting minor crops in farming systems

Question:

Are truffles considered minor crops in the framework of topic HORIZON-CL6-2024-BIODIV-02-3-two-stage and specially, in Spain and Italy (and probably other countries)?

Answer:

As indicated in the topic text, specifically on footnote 124: the applicants need to explain and justify the choice of crops in relation to the proposal's and topic's ambition.

2. Destination FARM2FORK

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

Question 1:

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

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

Answer 1:

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.

“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 2: Are fatty acids (i.e. Omega 3, Omega 6) considered micronutrients?

Answer 2: Fatty acids are not considered as micronutrients in the context of this topic (FARM2FORK-01-10).

Question 3: Is incorporation of micronutrients in food products fortification?

Answer 3 : Yes. Please consult the legislation, see the following link: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32006R1925>

Question 4 : Are approaches using fortification included or not?

Answer 4 : 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 bacteriocins are considered as part of the microbiome activity.

Question 2: Are fermentates within the scope? Are bacteriocins within the scope?

Answer 2: Yes, the fermentates and bacteriocins 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.

HORIZON-CL6-2023-FARM2FORK-01-16: Microbiomes fighting food waste through applicable solutions in food processing, packaging and shelf life and HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-9: Microbiome for flavour and texture in the organoleptic dietary shift

Question:

The scope of the two topics specify that “In order to achieve expected outcomes international cooperation is strongly encouraged, in particular in the framework of the International Bioeconomy Forum”.

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:

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-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-02: New healthy and sustainable food products and processes

Question 1:

The topic is very much focused on “plant-based food, such as fruits, vegetables, wholegrain cereals, legume and nuts”. Could the seaweeds/macroalgae be considered as “plant-based foods”?

Answer 1:

Seaweed is plant-based food and it can be an interesting supplement in the diets. It can be rich in proteins and fibres and low in fats, but these are of good quality. It seems appropriate to consider that it helps shifting towards more healthy and sustainable diets. However, it should indeed be consumed with care, also taking into account the possible presence of contaminants. Also, often seaweed is very high in substances such as iodine, where there is a public health concern of too low intakes in many EU MS, but where overconsumption could lead to health issues. Therefore, seaweed is fine to include under the scope of a research proposal, but not as the only food category.

Question 2:

The topic mentions that food products should be “minimally processed”. There are different definitions for minimally processed foods. Would the NOVA classification, accepted by the FAO, be the reference for the definition of the minimally processed foods?

Answer 2:

The NOVA classification is widely used and accepted and could be used even if it is not included in any EU food legislation for the time being.

Question 3:

The call mentions “A move to a plant-based diet with less red and processed meat, less salt, sugars, saturated and trans fats and additives, with more whole-grain cereals, fruit and vegetables, legumes and nuts, as well as processing efficiency and reduced losses and wastage along the food supply chains is needed”.

Is the use of seaweed (the full biomass) as new and sustainable ‘raw material’ in the food-industry considered in this call (seaweed not exactly being a plant)?

Answer 3:

Seaweed is plant-based food and it can be an interesting supplement in the diets. It can be rich in proteins and fibres and low in fats, but these are of good quality. It seems appropriate to consider that it helps shifting towards more healthy and sustainable diets. However, it should indeed be consumed with care, also taking into account the possible presence of contaminants. Also, often seaweed is very high in substances such as iodine, where there is a public health concern of too low intakes in many EU MS, but where overconsumption could lead to health issues. Therefore, seaweed is fine to include under the scope of a research proposal, but not as the only food category.

Question 4:

Does the “minimally processed” angle refer to the Health-impact due to the consumption, or is it referring to the environmental impact of the processing itself (waste-streams,...)?

Answer 4:

Yes, the “minimally processed” angle refer to the health-impact.

Question 5:

Could mycoprotein (protein filamentous fungi) be considered as “plant-based foods” in this topic?

Answer 5:

We understand that mycoproteins are proteins that comes from fungi and plant-based protein (plant protein) as “protein obtained from plant”. Nevertheless in the context of this particular research topic mycoproteins can be part of the scope. You can find more standardised information in some parts of the Codex Alimentarius, e.g., CODEX GENERAL STANDARD FOR VEGETABLE PROTEIN PRODUCTS (VPP) CODEX STAN 174-1989: “This standard

applies to vegetable protein products (VPP) intended for use in foods, which are prepared by various separation and extraction processes from proteins from vegetable sources other than single cell protein. The VPP are intended for use in foods requiring further preparation and for use by the food processing industry. This standard does not apply to any vegetable protein product which is the subject of a specific Codex Commodity Standard and is designated by a specific name laid down in such standards." Please consult legal experts if they were part of the consortium.

Question 6:

Could "fermentation" could be considered as a "minimally processed?"

Answer 6:

"There is no EU definition of 'minimally processed' foods. It cannot be assumed that fermentation is being generally considered as "minimally processing", but rather that minimally processed foods should be foods that were not substantially altered. Nevertheless in the context of this particular research topic fermented products can be part of the scope. For related concepts and definitions please consult Regulation (EC) No 852/2004. It is recommended to consult legal experts if they were part of the consortium".

Question 7:

I am contacting you to confirm that clinical trials are not in scope within the topic HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-2 and understand why the document (Tpl_Info on Clinical Studies (HE)) has been included attached.

Answer 7:

The definition of clinical trial in the application form is the following:

"Clinical study means, for the purpose of this document, any systematic prospective or retrospective collection and analysis of health data obtained from individual patients or healthy persons in order to address scientific questions related to the understanding, prevention, diagnosis, monitoring or treatment of a disease, mental illness, or physical condition. It includes but it is not limited to clinical studies as defined by Regulation 536/2014 (on medicinal products), clinical investigation and clinical evaluation as defined by Regulation 2017/745 (on medical devices), performance study and performance evaluation as defined by Regulation 2017/746 (on in vitro diagnostic medical devices)."

This topic requires to:

- Develop new healthy, sustainable, diversified, minimally processed, reformulated, tasty and affordable food products and assess their nutritional, structural, sensorial and functional properties to enhance health and well-being and to improve nutrition status.
- Develop and optimise new efficient methods/processes to reduce costs (e.g. energy, water, food raw materials) and impact on the environment to produce minimally processed functional food ingredients and food products and assess their nutritional, sensorial, structural and functional properties to enhance health and well-being, including the values provided by the plant/produce microbiome for nutritional qualities and its effects on the human gut microbiome.

To address these issues, proposals may carry out clinical studies/trials/investigations.

Therefore, applicants have the opportunity to upload the related Annex, which is mandatory if the applicants propose to carry out this type of studies. From the technical point of view, the Annex is optional.

Question 8:

The question is about the specific point of the topic saying "*Investigate, assess and develop improved predictive realistic models for quantifying effects on human health (risks/benefits) of processing and food ingredients (and/or mixture of them).*" Does this sentence refers to study the effect that the technologies / processes / food products developed within the project may have on human health? Or it refers to a wider study about the effect of food processing / use of ingredients in general may have on human health?

Answer 8:

This sentence at stakes refers to studying the effect that the technologies / processes / food products developed within the project may have on human health.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-5 'Creating smart and attractive tools to enhance healthy and sustainable food provision, eating and treating of food at home'

Question 1:

The topic states as eligibility criteria, the application of 'multi-actor approach' which main intake is that practitioners and (end) users (citizens included) are to be involved. How has to be intended the following sentence: *"Interventions should not target citizens directly, as full alignment with national policies and advice on nutrition and health needs to be ensured."*?

Answer 1:

Multi-actor approach should be applied in line with the requirements specified in the introduction to the Work Programme (p.21-23).

The sentence *"Interventions should not target citizens directly, as full alignment with national policies and advice on nutrition and health needs to be ensured"* implies to first check with national policies and advice and ensure full alignment before targeting citizens directly.

Question 2:

Could you please give us more information on what is precisely expected under the name "sample plan" referred to in the topic text? ("Develop a sample plan to make available to Member State and Associated Countries authorities for several countries on how to enhance uptake of beneficial tools and applications considering different socio-economic characteristics of citizens and national laws").

Answer 2:

The topic text does not indicate how the "sample plan" needs to look like, but it specifies the objectives it should pursue, i.e. to enhance the uptake of beneficial tools and applications (for example: delineate tools, activities, time plans, responsibilities, etc.) for several Member States and Associated Countries, taking into account socio-economic characteristics of citizens and national laws, which might differ across countries. The overall goal of the "sample plan" is therefore to make an impact in several countries, taking into account their specificities.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-6: Citizens' science as an opportunity to foster the transition to sustainable food systems

Question:

Under Scope, in the section "Proposals are expected to address all the following:" the call says "Connect personal data on food to other areas, such as mobility and health and identify synergies;"

The question is: when it comes to mobility, is it understood as in "physical activity" or how "citizens interact with their surroundings"?

Answer:

Mobility is one example to be deployed, as no further description is given, all aspects of mobility can be included.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-07 - Impact of the development of novel foods based on alternative sources of proteins

Question:

The main objective of this topic is the development of novel foods starting from the processing of specific alternative proteins such as: insect protein, micro and macro algae-based products, microbial proteins, food/aquaculture by-products.

What type of novel food is considered eligible within topic's scope?

- is the development of novel foods limited to the alternative proteins mentioned within the topic text?
- can a type of project that involves the development of novel foods starting from the processing of sunflower seed protein considered eligible?

Answer:

There are a lot of sources of alternative proteins, but the knowledge base for some is more developed than for others. There is a need for more research on insect protein, micro and macro algae-based products, microbial proteins, food/aquaculture by-products. That is the reason why these sources of alternative proteins have been specifically mentioned in the topic. Therefore, the applicants are expected to focus mainly on these. However, the applicants are free to develop activities on other sources as well, but those mentioned in the topic call should be prioritised.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-8: Preventing and reducing food waste to reduce environmental impacts and to help reach 2030 climate targets

Question:

Is the technological experimentation for some pathways of food waste prevention/reduction/transformation interventions considered as an eligible activity under this topic?

Answer:

The means via which the objectives of the [Food 2030 Pathways](#) will be ultimately achieved is up to the applicants, and these may include technological experimentation if this is fit for purpose. In all cases, it is expected that the outcomes will deliver or build on relevant EC policies. In terms of scope, it is important to remind that the focus of the Food Waste and Resource Efficiency Pathway of Food 2030 R&I policy, is “on prevention and reduction, followed by redistribution, rather than valorisation of food waste into new bio-based products”. Proposals under this topic are expected to focus on waste prevention and reduction.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-9: Microbiome for flavour and texture in the organoleptic dietary shift

Questions 1:

What is exactly meant by “precision fermentation”? Is it allowed to use also genetically modified microorganisms? Could you specify what kind of microorganisms should be included in precision fermentation? If OGM were allowed, could you please specify whether WILD strains in particular might be included?

Answer 1:

There is no EU definition of ‘precision fermentation’ although working definitions in the public domain refer to the production of specific materials by the fermentation activity of genetically modified microorganisms (GMM). There is indeed no EU regulation that forbids precision fermentation, but different regulatory regimes for the market authorisation may apply depending on the type of product. In principle, if the product is intended as food or feed and the GMM itself or its DNA (whether host or recombinant) are present in the final product, the product would most probably be treated under the GMO Regulation (EC) 1829/2003. If the product is intended as food and the GMM itself or its DNA (whether host or recombinant) are absent from the final product, the product would most probably be treated under the Novel Food Regulation (EU) 2015/2283. In each and every case, the regulatory treatment of products derived from precision fermentation is done on a case-by-case basis. Please consult legal experts being part of the consortium for more clarification. Furthermore, on 5 July 2023, the Commission presented a legislative proposal for a regulation on plants obtained by certain new genomic techniques and their food and feed. The proposal is currently debated by the Council and the European Parliament. More information on the proposal is available at https://food.ec.europa.eu/plants/genetically-modified-organisms/new-techniques-biotechnology_en

Questions 2:

- It is not obvious if the “Additional annex with information on clinical trials” is mandatory. I suppose that, since there is no *, it is not mandatory but should be submitted if relevant to the project. Will you please confirm.
- Also in this context, clinical trials are defined as in foot note 1 in the Commission’s template attached? Will you please also confirm this.

- Should the applicants include a fully filled in clinical trial template (in my view, this shouldn't be needed in this case), or is there a way that the flavour and taste intervention can be indicated in a more concise way?

Answer 2:

- The “Annex with information on clinical trials” is not a mandatory Annex (i.e. it does not have an asterisk). However, this Annex is required for the proposals that include clinical trials / studies / investigations, as specified in Part A of the application template.
- As a reminder: *“Clinical study means, for the purpose of this document, any systematic prospective or retrospective collection and analysis of health data obtained from individual patients or healthy persons in order to address scientific questions related to the understanding, prevention, diagnosis, monitoring or treatment of a disease, mental illness, or physical condition. It includes but it is not limited to clinical studies as defined by Regulation 536/2014 (on medicinal products), clinical investigation and clinical evaluation as defined by Regulation 2017/745 (on medical devices), performance study and performance evaluation as defined by Regulation 2017/746 (on in vitro diagnostic medical devices).”*
- Clinical trials/studies/investigations are not explicitly requested in this topic. However, it is not excluded that proposals include clinical trial/studies/investigations to address the requirements of the topic and in this case, the applicants need to have the means to upload the corresponding annex.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-10: EU-African Union cooperation on agroforestry management for climate change adaptation and mitigation

Question 1:

The topic requires the establishment of local agroforestry pilot plots. Are there specific requirements about the geographic location of the plots?

Answer 1:

The topic specifies several aspects that should be addressed by the proposals, including the establishment of local agroforestry pilot plots. There is no specific requirement as regards the geographic location of the plots, provided that this is consistent with the scope and expected outcomes of the topic, and with the objectives of the proposal.

In this topic, “local” refers to the size of the activity, which should be smaller than regional, national or continental.

Question 2:

Is an international research organisation based in Ethiopia eligible to receive funding? What if the international organisation is not research?

Moreover, with regard to this condition “The following additional eligibility criteria apply: the places of establishment of at least two of **these** legal entities must be in the same geographical region of Africa (as defined by the African Union: https://au.int/en/member_states/countryprofiles2)”. To what word “these” is referred?

Answer 2:

Under this topic, international organisations, except those which have a headquarter in an EU Member State or Associated Country and International European research organisations^(*), are not automatically eligible for funding, even if they might have a headquarter or regional office in an African Union member state. However, they could be exceptionally eligible for funding in respect of this topic in case their participation is considered essential for implementing the action by the granting authority. ^(*)An International European research organisation is an international organisation, the majority of whose members are Member States or Associated Countries, and whose principal objective is to promote scientific and technological cooperation in Europe.

For this topic the following additional eligibility criteria apply: “Due to the specific challenge of this topic, in addition to the minimum number of participants set out in the General Annexes, consortia must include at least three independent legal entities established in Africa.” “The places of establishment of at least two of these legal entities must be in the same geographical region of Africa (as defined by the African Union: https://au.int/en/member_states/countryprofiles2).” The word “these” refers to the “three independent legal entities established in Africa”.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-02-4-two-stage: Tackling outbreaks of plant pests

Question 1:

As the project PURPEST focuses on the development of a detection method for several pests, could a proposal target one of the five pests targeted by the project PURPEST, but with a complementary approach, i.e. not focusing on the surveillance methods and strategies for early detection, but on the other objectives detailed in the scope of the call?

Or would the Commission consider that a proposal targeting one of the pests covered by PURPEST, even with a complementary approach, does not fall within the scope of this call because of the exception criteria?

Answer 1:

The text clearly indicates the plant pests that are excluded from the scope: “with the exception of plant pests targeted in Horizon Europe (HORIZON-CL6-2021-FARM2FORK-01-04: Tackling outbreaks of plant pests)”. Therefore, the plant pests covered by the projects: [BEXYL](#), [REACT](#) and [PURPEST](#) are excluded, even with a complementary approach.

Question 2:

Could you please provide guidance on whether a pest categorized as a Protected zone quarantine pest under Annex III of the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2072 is eligible for submission to the topic HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-02-4-two-stage: Tackling outbreaks of plant pest?

Answer 2:

As specified in the topic description, proposals should target one or more plant pest(s) that are:

- either Union quarantine plant pests present in the EU, which are listed in **Part B: Pests known to occur in the Union territory** of Annex II “**List of Union quarantine pests and their respective codes**” of the [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2019/2072](#),
- or Union quarantine pests which are priority pests in the EU, which are listed in Annex “**List of priority pests**” of the [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1702](#),

with the exception of the plant pests targeted in the 3 projects funded under the HORIZON EUROPE topic **HORIZON-CL6-2021-FARM2FORK-01-04: Tackling outbreaks of plant pests**, i.e. [REACT](#), [BeXyl](#) and [PURPEST](#), which are excluded.

The topic text does not explicitly exclude the inclusion of other plant pests such as *Erwinia amylovora* in the proposal. However, the main focus of the proposal must remain the targeted plant pests.

The applicants should also take into account the plant pests already covered by other EU funded projects, such as [PATAFEST](#), to avoid overlaps with on-going projects.

Question 3:

With reference to the topic in object, *Bactrocera dorsalis* (Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/1702 – priority pest) at the moment is carrying out an active infestation in Europe, specifically in Italy. The species has been found infesting various fruits, and more than 4 thousand specimens were trapped in the last two years. According to the “HE Main Work Programme 2023–2024 – 9. Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment,” “proposals should target one or more plant pests that are either Union quarantine plant pests present in the EU or Union quarantine pests that are priority pests in the EU. These pests should be of concern for agriculture and/or forestry, with the exception of plant pests targeted in Horizon Europe (Plant pests of the topic HORIZON-CL6-2021-FARM2FORK-01-04: Tackling outbreaks of plant pests). There is a project funded in 2021 (ID 101059523) that is related to *B. dorsalis* and *Bactrocera zonata*. In this

project, trials were conducted on *Ceratitis capitata* in Europe (since *B. dorsalis* was not present) and on *B. dorsalis* outside Europe. If a proposal on *B. dorsalis* submitted to study the phytophagous insect directly on European territory in an effort to stop the infestation, could this be grounds for exclusion?

Answer 3:

As specified in the topic description, proposals should target one or more plant pest(s) that are:

- either Union quarantine plant pests present in the EU, which are listed in **Part B: Pests known to occur in the Union territory** of Annex II “List of Union quarantine pests and their respective codes” of the [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2019/2072](#),
- or Union quarantine pests which are priority pests in the EU, which are listed in Annex “List of priority pests” of the [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1702](#),

with the exception of the plant pests targeted in the 3 projects funded under the HORIZON EUROPE topic HORIZON-CL6-2021-FARM2FORK-01-04: Tackling outbreaks of plant pests, i.e. [REACT](#), [BeXyl](#) and [PURPEST](#), which are excluded.

The project [REACT](#) targets *Bactrocera dorsalis* (Bd) and *B. zonata* (Bz), therefore these insect pests are excluded.

[HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-02-7-two-stage](#) : Minimising climate impact on aquaculture: mitigation and adaptation solutions for future climate regimes

Question:

One of the Expected Outcomes mentions « Implementation of innovations, such as dietary shifts and aspects of circularity, for a more sustainable and competitive European aquaculture enhancing aquaculture resilience to adverse consequences of climate change”. We interpret the "dietary shifts" part in two possible ways: (i) a change in the food supplied to the production (feed) or (ii) a change in the diets of final consumers of aquaculture products.

Answer:

In the context of this topic, ‘Dietary shifts’ can be understood in both ways mentioned in the question, i.e. both as a change in the fish feed and/or as a change in the diets of consumers. Both interpretations are equally valid. Furthermore, ‘Dietary shifts’ are mentioned as indicative possible innovations under this topic and not as a requirement.

3. Destination CIRCBIO

[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 1:

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 1:

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.

Question 2:

Under topic HORIZON-CL6-2022-CIRCBIO-01-04, is it mandatory to involve the forest-based sector in the proposal?

Answer 2:

According to the eligibility conditions, proposals must use the multi-actor approach.

Please note that due to a clerical error in the formulation, the part of the text in the eligibility conditions that reads: "and ensure adequate involvement of the forest-based sector" should be disregarded by applicants. Evaluators will be instructed accordingly.

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 events.

Question 2:

Why do the expected outcomes for HORIZON-CL6-2023-CIRCBIO-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').

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:

The query relates to one of the bullets in the scope, namely: "Develop bio-engineering tools for the use of marine and other aquatic model organisms to improve the availability of metabolites for industrial applications" and entailed two specific questions:

- 1) Do "bio-engineering tools" refer only to genetic engineering tools?
- 2) Do "model organisms" refer to the same organisms developed in other areas of the proposal? Or could bio-engineering tools be applied to existing model organisms not developed in the proposal?

Answer 2:

- 1) "bio-engineering tools" are not restricted to genetic engineering tools. It is up to the applicants to decide what would work best in the context of their proposal.

- 2) Model organisms refer to a species that is extensively studied to understand particular biological phenomena, with the expectation that discoveries made in the model organism will provide insight into the workings of other organisms. Applicants should develop bioengineering tools for the use of any model organism that would be suitable in the context of the topic.

Question 3:

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

Answer 3:

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?

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.

Question 3:

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?

Answer 3:

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.

Question 4:

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 4:

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-CL6-2024-CircBio-01-1: Circular Cities and Regions Initiative's project development assistance \(CCRI-PDA\)](#)

Question 1:

In the topic text, the following is stated: "Indicatively, the CCRI-PDA focuses on small and medium-sized circular economy investments of up to EUR 20 million (for a single proposal or a portfolio of proposals). The EU contribution per proposal should not exceed 10% of the related investment." What is meant by this that the EU contribution should not be more than 10% of the related investment? The footnote does not make it more clear.

Answer 1:

The topic text specifies the following: "Indicatively, the CCRI-PDA focuses on small and medium-sized circular economy investments of up to EUR 20 million (for a single proposal or a portfolio of proposals). The EU contribution per proposal should not exceed 10% of the related investment." (...) "Proposals should justify the budget for the project development assistance needed based on the expected investment portfolio to be set

up. This includes the amount of investments that is expected to be triggered and the respective leverage factors to be achieved.”

The assistance provided under this PDA should trigger real investments, meaning that every euro spent on PDA support (via grant) should lead to at least 10 euros in investment. In other words: project owners (selected for getting project development assistance / advisory services) may receive financial and technical advice for up to 10% of the total investment needs.

Question 2:

At the level of the Specific Conditions, a possible “financial support to third parties” is not indicated but what you can find within the Scope is:

Indicatively, the CCRI-PDA focuses on small and medium-sized circular economy investments of up to EUR 20 million²⁸⁹ (for a single proposal or a portfolio of proposals).

The EU contribution per proposal should not exceed 10% of the related investment.

Proposals should justify the budget for the project development assistance needed based on the expected investment portfolio to be set up. This includes the amount of investments that is expected to be triggered and the respective leverage factors to be achieved.

So, if the contribution should not exceed 10% of the related investment, this could be 2M€ as a maximum. But...this contribution would be a direct budget, (similar to a cascading fund) or in the services of the project?

Answer 2:

- The total indicative budget for this topic is EUR 6.00 million. Only 1 PDA project is expected to be funded under this call. Through this PDA project, several investment projects will be able to get PDA support.
- As the topic budget is EUR 6.00 million and the PDA support per investment is max EUR 2.00 million, the PDA project should lead to a minimum of 3 investment projects.
- The project owners (selected for getting PDA - project development assistance) may receive financial and technical advice for up to 10% of their total investment needs. In other words: every euro spent on PDA support should lead to at least 10 euros in investment.
- The total indicative budget should cover both the operating costs (for providing the PDA advisory services) and the advisory support provided itself.

Question 2:

And about the entities involved in those circular economy projects:

- Should they be part of the consortium?
- Or an open call should be launched (as in the FSTP)?
- Or the identification of the investment projects should be done together with CCRI?

Answer 2:

This is flexible. Proposals may either select the projects that will benefit from the PDA support at the time of their project proposal writing, and in that case, already include the beneficiaries as project partners. The successful proposal may also consider launching (an) open call(s) for proposals at the beginning of the project. Both options are possible.

We would warmly invite you to have a look at the PDA projects selected as part of the previous CCRI-related calls. There have been 7 CCRI-related PDA projects supported from 2020 onwards under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe:

- [HOOP – Hub of circular cities boosting platform to foster investments for the valorisation of urban biowaste and wastewater](#) [2020-2024]
- [BioBoost – Catalysing Investment into Catalan Bioeconomy via One-Stop-Shop Accelerator](#) [2022-2026]
- [RESOURCE – REgional project development aSsistance fOr the Uptake of an aRagonese Circular Economy](#) [2022-2025]

- [CircularInvest - Powering access to investment for next generation circular economy initiatives in cities and regions](#) [2022-2026]
- [DECISO – Developers of Circular Solutions](#) [2022-2025]
- [DEFINITE-CCRI - Deal Engine, with finance, investment and technical expertise for the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative](#) [2022-2025]
- [InvestCEC - Supporting the transition towards circular economy in European cities and regions: Development of a replicable model for local circular economy projects](#) [2022-2025]

If you look for instance at the [DECISO](#) project, you will see that 4 projects were already pre-selected, while the [CircularInvest](#) project just launched its 2nd call for expression of interest.

Question 3:

In the topic text, it is said “Indicatively, the CCRI-PDA focuses on small and medium-sized circular economy investments of up to EUR 20 million (for a single proposal or a portfolio of proposals)”. Is 20M€ the maximum investment that is expected in this PDA or it could be higher, (although the maximum per project would be 20 M€)? To know if there is a maximum to the total investment in the topic is really important in terms of the consortium size and the activities to be develop.

Answer 3:

As hinted in the formulation of the topic text, the given maximum size of the circular economy investment projects supported by this PDA proposal (maximum EUR 20 million) is indicative, and mentioned for the sake of giving an idea of the scope and ambition expected under this call (min. 3 investment projects supported). Previously, we also mentioned that every euro spent on PDA support should lead to at least 10 euros in investment - although supported investment projects may actually lead to a greater return on investment.

Question 4:

Would the 10% spent on PDA support (2M€ in the case of 20M€ of investment project) includes both, the financial and the technical advice?

Answer 4:

The objective of the PDA is to improve investment projects’ maturity through high-quality technical and financial advisory support tailored to the project needs. The topic text mentions several examples of possible forms the PDA support could take: *"The CCRI-PDA should provide support for those activities necessary to prepare and mobilise finance for investment projects, such as feasibility studies, stakeholder and community mobilisation, business plans and preparation for tendering procedures or setting up a specific financing scheme/financial engineering."*

HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-01-3: Innovative circular solutions for furniture

Question:

We have received a request of clarification concerning minor formatting issues in the text of topic HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-01-3: Innovative circular solutions for furniture.

Answer:

1. Bullet points n. 2 and 3 under the expected outcome should be read together (‘Emergence of new value chains using upcycled, recycled and/or biobased resources, e.g. through industrial symbiosis, with particular attention to SMEs’).
2. The ‘**analyses** conducted in the framework of luxury furniture’ showing that ‘the involvement of furniture companies in CE practices (...) still marginal (...)’ and the ‘the **findings** of an EU funded project’ according to which ‘furniture waste in the EU accounts for more than 4% of the total municipal solid waste stream’, both at p. 279, refer respectively to:
 - Silvius, G.; Ismayilova, A.; Sales-Vivó, V.; Costi, M. Exploring Barriers for Circularity in the EU Furniture Industry. Sustainability 2021, 13, 11072. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su131911072>.
 - Project 2017-1-BE01-KA202-024752.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-01-5: Programmed biodegradation capability of bio-based materials and products, validated in specific environments

Question 1:

Does “Select applications for biodegradable **non-single-use/single-use bio-based materials and products**” indicate that the proposal should present both non-single-use **AND** single-use materials **or can it be either or?** For example, is fishing gear considered as a suitable application or do we need to include a single-use item in addition.

Answer 1:

The proposal should present a selection of non single-use and/or single-use bio-based applications.

Question 2:

Does “products to be **safely re-used and re-manufactured, allowing for high-quality recycling and for biodegradability**” indicate that the selected **applications should have all these properties?**

Answer 2:

Yes, the selected applications should be both biodegradable and recyclable

Question 3:

How broad this ecotoxicity testing /assessment should be, what should it include? Mentioned in the call text: “Develop manufacturing technologies of such bio-based materials and products with targeted performances:

1. decreased carbon footprint (based on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and on the increase of carbon removals) and environmental impacts of the production processes;
2. improved circular life extension through predictive maintenance, suitability to be safely re-used and re-manufactured, allowing for recycling, and programmed integrity/biodegradation in specific environments, depending on the application, either in controlled environment (i.e. aerobic digestion in composting plants, anaerobic digestion producing biogas) and in open environments, including in extreme environments in terms of physical conditions;
3. safe biodegradation in the specific environments as in point ii), especially considering the **eco-toxicity** and any impacts on natural ecosystems from biodegraded materials and from their additives and other components.

Answer 3:

The assessment of eco-toxicity should be defined by applicants, taking into account the requirements/guidelines from REACH and ECHA supporting documents, to the extent decided by applicants and duly justified.

Question 4:

The topic mentions “increasing durability and suitability of products to be safely re-used and re-manufactured, allowing for high quality recycling and for biodegradability”. When you designed a material to be reuse or recycled you are providing high resistance, thus compromising the biodegradation of this material (especially a programmed biodegradation). This means that one of the proposed use cases could be focus on reuse, remanufacture and recycling instead of programmed biodegradation?

Answer 4:

- The topic focusses on programmed biodegradation of bio-based materials and products, as stated in the title.
- Moreover, the scope of the topic includes developing manufacturing technologies of bio-based materials and products with “(...) *improved circular life extension through predictive maintenance, suitability to be safely re-used and re-manufactured, allowing for recycling, and programmed integrity/biodegradation in specific environments, depending on the application, (...)*”.
- This means that the materials/products should be able to biodegrade in specific environments **AND** to be “*safely re-used and re-manufactured, allowing for recycling*”. For example, in case such materials/products do not end in applications in those specific environments where they could biodegrade, they should be suitable for a circular life cycle.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-01-10: Targeting aquatic extremophiles for sourcing novel enzymes, drugs, metabolites and chemicals

Question :

Regarding the outcome "Expansion of bioprospecting from the screening for new chemicals into biological function", should the proposal include research for new bioactive molecules from the marine environment and subsequent bioactivity tests? Or the proposal can fulfil this expected outcome by the investigation of the biological activity of enzymes and their biosynthetic products?

Answer :

The stated outcome does not prescribe neither a precise research path nor specific tests. It is up to the applicant to assess how best to address the outcome and to justify this clearly in the proposal.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-02-1-two-stage: Circular solutions for textile value chains through innovative sorting, recycling, and design for recycling

Question:

"The call is apparently focused on cotton, PET and polycotton blends. However, there are many other natural fibers and synthetic polymers used in the textile sector (e.g. hemp, linen, polypropylene, polyamides...). We wonder if proposals must be limited to cotton, PET and polycotton blends or if applicants are also encouraged to cover other raw materials."

Answer:

With regard to recycling, proposals are expected to focus on cotton, polycotton or PET, which represent the vast majority of materials used in garments and which are explicitly targeted by the topic. In addition, the same technologies for the recycling of these materials should be applied to other types of fibres (natural or synthetic) where applicable and technically suitable as indicated in the scope (i.e. *"the application of these technologies in research and innovation should also be extended to other types of fibres"*).

HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-02-2-two-stage: Increasing the circularity in plastics value chains

Question 1:

Can you please tell me if there is a restriction on the type of plastic in the topic HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-02-2-two-stage: Increasing the circularity in plastics value chains?

Are all types of plastics and all types of polymers in the scope of the topic?

Answer 1:

Neither the scope nor the expected outcomes limit the choice of plastic materials to be addressed under this topic. Applicants are expected to choose a material that is relevant from an environmental and economic perspective. While all plastics are in scope, this is certainly not the case for all polymers as not all polymers are plastics.

Question 2:

We have a question regarding the CircBio-02-2 call text. Within the scope text, it has a short statement that says "Special attention should be given to the increased circularity of critical raw materials¹⁸⁶". The call is on plastics, and there are limited critical raw materials within the scope. There is a similar call, "CircBio-02-3: Increasing circularity in electronics value chains" where the same statement is also present, and we are wondering whether this is a typographical error in the CircBio-02-2 call text? It makes sense in the electronics call, but seems out of place in the plastics call, and there is also no reference attributable to '186' in either call text. Moreover, we also ask if it is an absolute requirement for the call, and if so, which critical raw materials are you referring to beyond phosphate which is used for flame retardants?

Answer 2:

The reference to critical raw materials (CRMs) in the scope of topic HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-02-2-two-stage is an editorial error and number '186' is an artifact that can be ignored. CRMs, which are not mentioned in the expected outcomes of the topic, are only relevant to the extent that they are used in a specific application or product that a proposal might want to target. For information, the most recent list of CRMs is available here: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/57318397-fdd4-11ed-a05c-01aa75ed71a1>.

Question 3:

We would like to know if rubber, as a polymer, is eligible as a material for potential use cases or pilot lines. Some plastics products include a rubber seal for tightness, and they would be the kind of products targeted by the consortium, for which we would like to focus on a holistic recycling possibility. Also, critical raw materials are mentioned in the call text, and natural rubber is one of the materials mentioned.

Answer 3:

In the EU regulatory context, rubber and plastics are considered as two distinct material types despite the fact that they are both polymeric. Certain plastic products indeed do contain rubber seals or gaskets as a functional component of a given product. In specific plastics value chains, such rubber components are a necessary part of a system/product to fulfil its functionality (e.g. bottles, containers, medical devices, etc.). In such value chain(s), it indeed is useful to take the rubber component into account as part of the complete product made of (mainly) plastic. Where such rubber component has a justified function, it therefore can be taken into account for a potential use case. However, such case must be justified in the context of the whole plastics value chain using the rubber component as functional part of its system/final product.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-02-3-two-stage: Increasing the circularity in electronics value chains

Question 1:

Should the recovered materials from recycling after characterized be included in an industrial value chain within the lifetime of the Project? Or the development of roadmaps for inclusion in the industries and business models will be robust enough to demonstrate the future uptake and development of new value chains?

Answer 1:

The expected TRL at the end of this call is 6 to 8. TRL 6 requires the demonstration of the technology in a relevant environment and TRL 8 that the system is complete and qualified. Based on this, the development of roadmaps or similar cannot replace the actual demonstration.

Question 2:

To increase the circularity of the electronic value chains through the means of innovative solutions, should the deployment focus on the extraction and treatment (recycling/upcycling) or rather in adapting or developing technologies that could facilitate recycled material inclusion in new products?

Answer 2:

Both elements are addressed as outcomes and are equally viable. Most importantly, the call asks for an integrated value chain approach that connects upstream and downstream interventions. Note that for this topic, proposal results are expected to contribute to all of the mentioned outcomes.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-02-6-two-stage: From silos to diversity – small-scale biobased demonstration pilots

Question:

The call CL6-2024-CircBio-02-6-two-stage requests to develop small-scale demonstration pilots at TRL 6-7. Does this mean that the call requires necessarily to demonstrate each component of the value chain, including conversion technologies at TRL6-7 in the form of a pilot? Or can the pilots refer to the overall value chain, without the explicit need to include the conversion technology?

Answer:

As indicated in the specific call conditions, activities are expected to achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project. Moreover, with regard to value chain coverage, it should be observed that the topic text includes references, such as “*demonstration of replicable and scalable, innovative bioeconomy-oriented production and business models*”, “*feedstock availability and technology options to better valorise underutilised biomass*” or “*development of new materials, products, and services*”, which indicate that proposals should be based on a sound business case and address the entire value chain. In the scope, proposals are further asked to “*demonstrate suitable processes and technologies to produce high-value bio-based materials and products*”, which would imply the conversion of feedstock.

FAQ on the discontinuation of the EU Technology Verification scheme (ETV) in CIRC BIO topics

Question:

With regards to the topics:

- HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-01-3: Innovative circular solutions for furniture
- HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-02-2-two-stage: Increasing the circularity in plastics value chains
- HORIZON-CL6-2024-CircBio-02-3-two-stage: Increasing the circularity in electronics value chains

Are they affected by the discontinuation of the EU Environmental Technology Verification scheme (ETV)?

Answer:

No, the topics at hand do not require proposals to use the ETV. ETV was only mentioned as a possible option (at the time of topic drafting) for assessment. Other options can be explored.

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq/31460>

4. Destination ZERO POLLUTION

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 bullet point of the scope) but also the production processes (see 2nd bullet point 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 bio-based and safe alternatives, e.g.: when substituting plastic such as PE and/or PP, all SVHC present inside are de facto substituted. I would be pleased when you confirm or inform 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-CL6-2024-ZEROPOLLUTION-01-1: Demonstrating how regions can operate within safe ecological and regional nitrogen and phosphorus boundaries

Question 1:

Does the given region need to come from the Mediterranean lighthouse countries?

Answer 1:

No. This is not mentioned in the topic.

Question 2:

Can projects focus on the Baltic Sea macro region and its neighbouring water basins? Yes.

Answer 2:

Yes.

However, please consider the last requirement: "The topic will be part of the demonstration projects for the European Commission's Circular Cities and Regions Initiative (CCRI) and must be carried out in close cooperation with it".

Question 3:

The topic text states that "the aim is to show how N/P-relevant sectors [...] in a given region can limit N/P emissions to air, water and soil from their activities by respecting pre-established regional N/P budgets and applying N/P balancing practices". The applicant's question is if there is a requirement to involve more than one region in the proposal. It seems that the formulation could be interpreted as it being sufficient that only one region is looked at in a project (of course as long as actors from at least three countries participate in the proposal).

Answer 3:

There is no requirement to involve more than one region. It is sufficient to have just one region.

Question 4:

The other question is about a possible definition for the term "region". Do you have a definition you could share? Region could e.g. be understood in an administrative way, but also in a functional way such as in a river catchment area.

Answer 4:

A region, within the scope of this topic, is an area defined either on an administrative basis, or on a functional basis. All NUTS levels can be considered, but also any other options. The proposal shall duly justify the selected option.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-ZEROPOLLUTION-01-2: best available techniques to recover or recycle fertilising products from secondary raw materials

Question 1:

Must proposals address all the indicated flows of secondary raw materials (urban and industrial waste water and sewage sludge, bio-waste, digestate, treated manure, others..) or may they be dedicated only to one or two of the reported flows?

Answer 1:

Proposals should address as many secondary raw materials as possible, at least all those mentioned in the scope of the topic, i.e. urban and industrial waste water and sewage sludge, bio-waste, digestate, treated manure.

Question 2: Could a proposal address only bio-waste?

Answer 2:

Limiting a proposal to bio-waste would be not acceptable in light of the scope of the topic, which indicates that many secondary raw materials should be included and that the goal is to collect a set of case studies as broad as possible, encompassing as many different technologies and sizes of plants (converting secondary raw materials into fertilisers) as possible.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-ZEROPOLLUTION-02-1-two-stage: Holistic approaches for effective monitoring of water quality in urban areas

Question 1:

Based on the current scientific practices and the limited budget foreseen for the projects funded within this topic, it is technically not feasible to monitor all types of pollutants. Can applicants focus on specific pollutants? Is there a specific focus on pollutants that applicants should address?

Answer 1:

The topic is asking proposals to “develop an integrated and harmonised approach to monitor all sources of surface and groundwater pollution and their impact” and not to monitor all type of pollutants. In this context we considered that the indicative budget for proposals is sufficient to address (as much as possible) all type of pollutants.

Question 2:

An expected outcome of the project should be "Sound, safer and risk-based urban water quality management plans". The terminology "risk-based" is not defined in the topic text or in the destination introduction. Could you please provide a clear definition on how a "risk-based" approach should look like in the context of the topic?

Answer 2:

“Risk-based approach” in water has been defined in several state of the art publications available in the open literature, as well as, in EU water related policies. For instance the revised Drinking Water Directive includes a dedicated article on risk-based approach to water safety which provides information of the specific elements of such a risk-based approach (Article 7). The recently proposed recast of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive also propose a methodology to identify risks on a catchment (Article 18). These pieces of legislations can be taken as example to justify the approach retained by the applicants.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-ZEROPOLLUTION-02-2-two-stage: Innovative technologies for zero pollution, zero-waste biorefineries

Question 1:

It is mandatory to include as a case study a biorefinery operating? If yes, which might be the TRL of this biorefinery at the start of the project?

Answer 1:

It is mandatory to include a case-study in a selected biorefinery. The TRL of the biorefinery is not defined in the topic. However, in order to develop a case study, the biorefinery should be operating. The (ending) TRL defined in the topic refers to the “integrated zero-pollution technical solutions” as described in the scope (Design integrated technical solutions reducing exhaust flows from bio-based processes through innovative

technologies of extraction, recirculation, fractionation and conversion of such flows, to reach the zero-pollution ambition...)

Question 2:

Concerning the integrated monitoring systems, it is needed collection of data in a biorefinery operating or it might be enough with virtual validation, it means results are obtaining by modelling?

Answer 2:

As the effective reduction of pollutant emissions, affecting soil, water and air quality, noise levels and waste production, should be developed and validated through an integrated monitoring systems, operated by the industry at the level of the biorefinery, this task should be better performed in an existing and operating biorefinery. Basically, the one of the above-mentioned case-study.

This is well explained in the topic's text, also reported by the applicant 'Develop and validate integrated monitoring systems, operated by the industry at the level of the biorefinery, of the effective reduction of pollutant emissions, affecting soil, water and air quality, noise levels and waste production from biorefineries.'

The use of the digital tools, mentioned in the task 'Pilot and validate digital innovation for bio-based processes enabling the zero-pollution and zero-waste biorefinery ambition. Digital tools may include data sharing platforms for the management of supply and value chains, as well as industrial symbiosis operations between biorefineries, industrial hubs, etc.', is not referred to a specific (existing) biorefinery. Piloting and validation may be performed with results obtained by modelling.

Question 3:

Since a biorefinery has to be included, we were wondering whether we need to develop a biorefinery or we can use a existing biorefinery for the case study. In the later case, we have a biorefinery in mind, which is the biorefinery developed for the XX Project. However, this biorefinery is not placed entirely in a single site, as there are two distant places where the main parts are operating. Is this a problem?

Answer 3:

No.

5. Destination CLIMATE

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

Questions:

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...**".

HORIZON-CL6-2024-CLIMATE-01-3 : Paludiculture: large-scale demonstrations

Question:

In the call text section Scope it says: “Establish large-scale paludiculture demonstration in 3 areas of at least 50 hectares each”. Is there any guidance on how paludiculture is defined here? What should the demonstration site cover: peatlands and/or wetlands?

In more detail, does this mean that the entirety of the 50 hectares or more should be converted to paludiculture? Or could this apply to the catchment area, for example smaller sites which are linked in one 50 ha catchment area and together form a demonstration site? E.g. peatland with surrounding wetlands?

Answer:

Neither the topic nor the relevant Work Programme provide for a specific definition of paludiculture. It is up to the applicants to explain their own understanding of the concept of paludiculture, the land uses to which it can be applied and the focus of work.

The topic asks to establish at least three demonstration sites, each having a minimum size of at least 50ha. As no further requirements are set, applicants are free to propose to work on any type of paludiculture, and (combinations) of management practices that would contribute to the objectives of the topic.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-CLIMATE-01-5: Climate-smart use of wood in the construction sector to support the New European Bauhaus

Question 1:

New buildings : One of the Expected Outcomes of the topic HORIZON-CL6-2024-CLIMATE-01-5 states the objective of “making the construction sector more renewable and circular especially for existing buildings” but no reference on new buildings/constructions is made on the whole topic. Could solutions proposed be addressed exclusively or partially to new buildings?

Answer 1:

The topic does not exclude new buildings. However, proposals are expected to contribute to the renovation wave strategy. In addition, the scope also includes a reference to the “refurbishment of buildings”.

Question 2:

Low-quality wood : In the list of “wills” of the topic within the Scope, the first bullet point refers to the utilization of low-quality wood among other wood sources/types. What this low-quality wood refers to, could it be e.g., small diameter wood, short logs, curved logs, wood from bushes, others or it refers to something different?

Answer 2:

The topic encourages the use of underused primary and secondary wood resources in the construction sector, which includes unspecified types of “low-quality wood”. Depending on the particular characteristics and use, all of the mentioned examples may refer to low-quality wood. References to environmental considerations in the expected outcomes, such as “long-term carbon storage” or “increased resource efficiency and minimisation of environmental footprint” can serve as a further guidance in this context.

Question 3:

In this topic we are having both Lump Sum and Financial Support to Third Parties. The question has to do with the WP including the cascading fund and when this WP would be considered as finalized, either when the cascading funds have been assigned to the third parties or when the third parties have concluded their activities. This is important in relation with the design/structure of the work plan of the project. Thanks in advance for your support.

Answer 3:

The requirements for proper implementation are the same for all types of grants. This includes proper implementation of projects/activities funded in cascade (FSTP) as described in Annex I of the Grant Agreement (GA).

In this regard, the payment of lump sum shares in relation to FSTP-related activities will depend on:

- How exactly these FSTP-related activities are described in the proposal/Annex I of the GA (e.g., defined as a specific work package with specific activities spelled out, which will facilitate the assessment of the degree of completion of this work package and the related activities)

- To which extent these activities, as described in the Annex I, have been completed.
- The information provided in the specific reporting tab for FSTP, which must be completed in the same way in all grants using FSTP (N.B.: this includes the amounts awarded and paid).

To sum up, declaring an FSTP work package as completed (or claiming the costs for FSTP in an actual cost grant) must be in line with and supported by the actual implementation of these FSTP activities as described in Annex 1. The selection and assignment of funds to the third parties is only a first step. The FSTP tasks, and therefore the corresponding work package(s), can be considered completed when all activities of the FSTP work package(s) have been completed. Our understanding is that this includes:

- that the sub-projects have been carried out satisfactorily by the third parties,
- that this was verified by the beneficiary,
- that the beneficiary paid the third parties,
- that the beneficiary reported these activities in the technical report (including the dedicated tab for FSTP under continuous reporting).

This is not different to the requirements of proper implementation in actual cost grants under Horizon Europe.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-CLIMATE-01-6: Ocean models for seasonal to decadal regional climate impacts and feedbacks

Question 1:

With regard to HORIZON-CL6-2024-CLIMATE-01-6, different timescales are referred to in the topic (seasonal, decadal, centennial). Which timescale should be addressed by the ocean models in the research proposals?

Answer 2:

The overall description describes the expected outcomes for the development of marine and climate services that support EU policies in terms of climate action and sustainable blue economy. There is a need to have access to a continuum of marine predictions capacities at geographical scale, from global to regional to coastal scales. At a temporal scale, there is a range from daily, seasonal, decadal and up to centennial. Finally, the various components of the ocean from physics to biogeochemistry and biology should be taken into account.

Some of these capacities are already partly available at some scales, eg. with Copernicus services, but need to be enhanced in some of the dimensions.

As described in the scope of the topic, the proposal shall focus on the research and development of modelling capacities addressing in priority the decadal / multi decadal dimension and the approach to regional marine climate modelling for physics and biogeochemistry. It should not address centennial projections already provided by projects supporting the Climate Change service or by Destination Earth. The term seasonal should therefore be understood as inter-seasonal over several years (decadal to multidecadal).

Question 2:

The text of the topic mentions that: *"Methodology and developments should be benchmarked with two relevant use cases, to be showcased in three different European regional seas and coastal areas involving both scientists and end users: - Development and demonstration of regional ocean climate risk services in coastal areas, due to sea level rise, waves, surges, or any other extreme event; - Development and demonstration of regional ocean climate services in coastal areas supporting the blue economy (e.g. aquaculture, marine renewal energies, tourism)." Could you please clarify if:*

- use cases shall be developed for each benchmark in each of the 3 different regional seas and coastal scales, meaning 6 use cases;
- or if we should at least have 1 benchmark in each of the 3 different regional seas, resulting in a minimum of 3 use cases but with at least 1 use case covering each benchmark (for instance, 2 use cases covering "regional ocean climate risk services" over 2 different EU seas, and 1 use case covering "regional ocean climate services for the blue economy" in a 3rd EU sea)?

Answer 2:

The topic requires that methodology and developments are assessed with two relevant use cases, i.e. usage **scenarios** on how a user interacts with a system or product, to be tested in three different **locations**. One use

case should focus on the development and demonstration of regional ocean climate risk services in coastal areas, due to sea level rise, waves, surges, or any other extreme event. While the second use case should focus on development and demonstration of regional ocean climate services in coastal areas supporting the blue economy (e.g. aquaculture, marine renewable energies, tourism). The 2 use cases should be demonstrated in 3 different European regional seas and coastal areas involving both scientists and end users. The topic text does not require that each use-case is demonstrated in three different European regional sea/coastal areas. Therefore, in principle, the applicants could propose one use-case tested in one location, and another use-case tested in other 2 different locations. However, the applicants need to consider what would be the most relevant and impactful set-up for the use cases.

6. Destination COMMUNITIES

HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01-1: Unlock the potential of the New European Bauhaus in urban food system transformation

Question:

What is the significance of the reference to geographical areas and NUTS levels in the topic text? In the context of this topic, geographical areas of the European Union and Associated Countries are NUTS level 1 regions of European Union Member States and of Associated Countries for which they are defined. There is no further reference to geographical areas in the topic otherwise and as the topic is focused around urban and peri-urban food systems, it is difficult to understand how this can be solved at NUTS 1 level.

Answer:

The reference to “geographical areas of the European Union and Associated Countries are NUTS level 1 regions [...]” is only relevant for the ‘evaluation procedure’ that is going to be used for this topic as specified under the ‘specific conditions’ of the topic, namely: *“To ensure a balanced portfolio covering demonstration activities in diverse geographical areas of the European Union and Associated Countries, grants will be awarded first to the highest ranked application according to the standard procedure described in Horizon Europe General Annexes D and F, followed by other applications that are the highest ranked among those that ensure the most complementary geographical coverage, provided that the applications attain all thresholds. [...]”*.

As specified in the topic, the proposals should demonstrate place-based solutions considering their specific resource pool and place. However, when assessing geographical coverage (as provided by the evaluation procedure under “specific conditions”), the evaluation will take into account the location of the demonstration activities by looking at the NUTS level 1 regions where these activities take place, and ensure complementarity of the locations, at NUTS level 1, between the different proposals.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01-3: Participation and empowerment of Arctic coastal, local, and indigenous communities in environmental decision-making

Question 1:

Does the title of the call “Participation and empowerment of Arctic coastal, local, and indigenous communities in environmental decision-making” and the call text mean that the local AND indigenous Arctic communities need to be also coastal?

Answer 1:

The topic refers to Arctic coastal, local and indigenous communities.

Question 2:

Further, does “coastal” here mean only Atlantic or marine, or could Arctic communities along rivers and lakes be included?

Answer 2:

While there is a marine coastal dimension that proposals need to take into account, they can also have in scope Arctic local and indigenous communities living by inland waters, such as rivers and lakes.

Question 3:

Could you please clarify? Saami communities in Finland would be excluded from participating this call if “coastal” was considered as a strict requirement for the indigenous communities.

Answer 3:

Therefore, ‘coastal’ refers also to inland waters, not only to seas and ocean. In addition, it should be noted that the adjective ‘local’ encompasses ‘indigenous communities’, which means that non-indigenous people living in an area in scope of a proposal can also be covered.

Question 4:

It is currently unclear from the topic text which topics and approaches must be covered/used and which are optional. For instance, it says that proposals must address at least two out of four matters of concern (adaptation and mitigation; socio-economic changes; health and well-being; gender aspects). Yet, later it says that proposals should explore how different ways of knowing [...] to enhance understanding and to better respond to the impacts of climate [...] changes. Therefore, is climate adaptation an optional theme or do proposals have to include this theme?

Answer 4:

Please notice that this topic invites for multi-actor approach projects, see Introduction of the HE Cluster 6 WP: “The genuine and sufficient involvement of key actors should take place **all over the whole course of the project: from participation in development of the project idea**, planning and experiments to implementation, communication and dissemination of results ...”. Four European Green Deal (EGD) priorities (see topic text) need to be considered for the development of the project ideas with the Arctic key actors. **In dialogue with them, at least two (or more) most relevant ones can be chosen that are most significantly going to contribute to EGD objectives** by addressing the most important and/or urgent local needs and challenges according to the Arctic coastal, local and indigenous communities, as it is **not the intention to force them to work on a priority that is not of a highest priority related to the EGD in their local context**. Still, **scientists would need to ensure through their scientific knowledge that the added value of all four matters of concern are made clear to the key actors**, in such a way that an informed decision can be taken through co-creation. Please also notice that the **integration of the gender dimension** (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is a **mandatory requirement** for this topic, as applicable to all topics, unless it has been specified in the topic text that it is not mandatory. Therefore, an appropriate level of attention to gender aspects is required anyway. It needs to be clear and sufficiently justified to the evaluation panel why specific matters of concern have been selected or receive more attention than others in the co-created proposal.

Question 5:

The call text says: “Several potential coastal sectors can be addressed, however the proposal will ensure inclusion of marine protection, food security, climate adaptation and resilience strategies, but also other activities such as leisure activities and eco-socio-compatible tourism development in coastal areas.” Does this mean that all of these themes have to be included in the proposal?

Answer 5:

Just as for the matters of concern, all the potential coastal sectors need to be considered for dialogue with Arctic key actors in the multi-actor approach to develop the project idea and proposal. The weight given to each of them in the proposal would be a result of this dialogue, of which marine protection is an indispensable cross-cutting aspect, combined with a specifically defined level of activity concerning food security, climate adaptation and resilience and eco-socio-compatible tourism and leisure activities, for which latter there is no obligation to develop this, but depending on the local needs and challenges towards significant ecological transition that Arctic key actors want to be fully part of.

Question 6:

Similarly, the call text says: “The project should include representation from multiple disciplines of research, including environmental, marine, social, cultural, health, design.” Does this mean that all of these disciplines have to be included?

Answer 6:

According to the expected outcomes of the topic, it is obvious that environmental, marine, social and cultural are indispensable to be included, while health and design would need to be considered as well and given an appropriate weight, in relation to the relative attention paid to the matters of concern being addressed in the topic.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01-03: Participation and empowerment of Arctic coastal, local, and indigenous communities in environmental decision-making.

Questions:

Could you indicate what are the eligible Arctic coastal, local and indigenous communities? Are they only Danish, Finnish and/or Swedish? Or does it go wider? What are the options for communities outside these member states to participate? What geographical areas are encompassed in the 'Arctic coastal, local and indigenous communities'?

Answer:

In line with the "openness" principle of Horizon Europe beyond EU, there is no geographical limitation within the Arctic coastal, local and indigenous communities to be eligible. However, due to Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, legal entities established in Russia are currently not eligible to participate in any capacity as indicated in the General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-13-general-annexes_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf (see General Annex B, p. 13).

HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-02-2-two-stage: New sustainable business and production models for farmers and rural communities

Questions:

- What is the consequence of not having a confirmation / agreement with MOST at the time the project is selected for funding?
- Do the applicants need a confirmation from MOST when submitting the first stage of the proposal?

Answers:

- The call conditions of this topic do not require to have the confirmation /agreement of co-funding from MOST. Therefore, this is not checked at the time of the selection of the proposals and/or signature of the grant agreement. However, the consortium needs to ensure that the Chinese participants are able to implement the action tasks assigned to them in the proposal, even if they do not receive funding from MOST.
- The call conditions of this topic do not require to have the confirmation /agreement of co-funding from MOST. Therefore this is not required for the evaluation of the proposals submitted to call HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-02-2-two-stage.

7. Destination GOVERNANCE

HORIZON-CL6-2024-GOVERNANCE-01-6: Develop innovative applications to support the European Green Deal, building on meteorological satellite data

Question 1:

One of the outcome mentioned in the topic is “Demonstrated use of these applications for Earth Systems predictions, long-term climate monitoring (i.e., re-analysis within the Copernicus climate services context) and disaster risk prediction and reduction (e.g., within the framework of the Copernicus Emergency Management service).” A mandatory input for the “re-analysis” is a full access to the underlying models and algorithms of the existing Copernicus climate services.

- Since these models are under control of ECMWF and their source-codes are not publicly accessible (available), does this mean that ECMWF should be a mandatory partner of any consortium? What exactly is meant here by the term "re-analysis"?

Answer 1:

The text contains a clerical error. The re-analysis mentioned is mentioned as an example “e.g.”. Please note that by no means the topic should be interpreted to stipulate the inclusion any legal entities in the consortium. What is meant under this outcome is that the data products developed should be usable for long-term monitoring purposes in an operational environment.

Question 2:

Both the Copernicus Climate Service and the Copernicus Emergency Service need to be addressed. Is it possible to place a clear focus on one of the two services and subordinate the other service?

Answer 2:

Yes.

Question 3:

The scope of the topic specifics that “The tools and services developed under the successful applications should be made available for future integration in the Copernicus programme and in the common topical European open infrastructure, Destination Earth. Open-source data/information requires open access to data that is associated with important benefits for the society and economy when reused.” The advanced tools and services that are to be developed should be made available open-source and free-of-charge, for instance, for their potential integration into the Copernicus programme and Destination Earth.

- What are the applicable IPR rules here?
- If the services developed are made available in the Copernicus service after the end of the project, will there be funding for the data storage, data servers, data maintenance, data monitoring..., Is there funding available specifically to cover these costs, or will they be expected to be covered by the consortium of the (former) project?

Answer 3:

It is up to the consortium to define the IPR rules and to plan for the use of appropriate licenses (i.e., creative commons open source licences). They need to be foreseen in a way that the products can be re-used in the named programmes without raising IPR issues.

There will not be any funding available for this purpose after the end of the project under its Grant Agreement, in line with the provisions of the Horizon Europe legal base. It is up to the consortium to plan for the sustainability of services developed, which should be implemented with an operational or commercial service provider.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-GOVERNANCE-01-7: Enhancing working conditions and strengthening the work force through digital and data technologies – the potential of robotics and augmented reality in agriculture

Question 1:

The type of action funded under this topic is a Research and Innovation Action and activities should reach TRL 7-8. That is contradictory. At this high TRL, activities cover the implementation and testing of technologies in the field and there is not much room for research and development as it would be expected in a RIA. Could you please comment on that; How should applicants deal with this contradiction?

Answer 1:

In the call table it reads “Activities are expected to achieve TRL 7-8 (according to the activity) by the end of the project –“. In the section “Scope” the activities are listed, and the activities, for which achieving TRL 7-8 is expected, are clearly identified through the addition of “(TRL 7-8)” at the end of description of the activities concerned. Thus, there are activities, which are more research-oriented, and other more innovation-oriented. The research-oriented may inform the more innovation oriented. Please, note that the projects supported under this call are expected to also cover social sciences.

Question 2:

From the topic text, it is not clear whether it is expected that projects should cover robotics and augmented reality or either robotics or augmented reality. Could you please clarify that?

Answer 2:

Overall projects should address both – augmented reality and robotics. For the points listed under scope, which are to be addressed by the project, one can see that some of the activities have to be addressed through at least one of them (robotics or augmented reality).

Question 3:

The wording in the scope is not clear: “Development of augmented-reality based solutions to improve working conditions, safety and failure avoidance, and to further increase robotic performance.” Is it expected that robotic performance is increased with the help of augmented-reality?

Answer 3:

No, it is not expected that robotic performance is increased through augmented reality. Robotic performance should increase. Augmented reality and robotics may well complement each other, but it is not pre-defined that the increase in robotic performance has to be achieved through augmented reality.

Question 4:

Is it required to cover a project period of 60 months?

Answer 4:

No, a project period of 60 months is not required. Project proposers have the opportunity and are encouraged to consider a longer project duration up to 60 months, for instance, to achieve the higher TRLs for parts of the project.

Question 5:

From the topic text, it is not clear whether it is expected that projects should cover robotics and augmented reality or either robotics or augmented reality. Could you please clarify this?

Answer 5:

Overall projects should address both – augmented reality and robotics. The call text should be read carefully. The bullet points listed under scope, which are to be addressed by the project, clearly indicate that **some of the activities** have to be addressed through at least one of them (robotics **or** augmented reality). Both augmented reality and robotics **may** complement each other but this is not predefined.

HORIZON-CL6-2024-GOVERNANCE-01-9: Thematic networks to compile and share knowledge ready for practice

Question:

One of our clients would like to participating in the „HORIZON-CL6-2024-GOVERNANCE-01-9: Thematic networks to compile and share knowledge ready for practice” call, but they’re not sure if aquaculture is included as a part of agriculture in the call text, or excluded from this topic.

I have been asked by a stakeholder whether a partner focusing on aquaculture could be involved in a project answering to the topic HORIZON-CL6-2024-GOVERNANCE-01-9, or is aquaculture completely excluded ?

Answer:

Although aquaculture is not explicitly excluded form the topic, the focus of the topic is on agriculture and forestry, i.e., land-based primary production.

8. Contribution des disciplines SHS dans le 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 \(europa.eu\)](#)

9. FAQ Partenariat CBE JU

Deux Foires Aux Questions dédiées au partenariat CBE JU (Circular Bio-Based Europe – Joint Undertaking) ont été mises en ligne :

- FAQ CBE JU Appel 2023 – FAQ pour les déposants : <https://www.cbe.europa.eu/open-calls-proposals>
- FAQ CBE JU pour les coordinateurs: <https://www.cbe.europa.eu/cbe-ju-funded-projects>

10. Evaluation à l'aveugle

We received three questions concerning the blind evaluation procedure and we were informed about difficulties with the application form to be used for the submission of 1st stage proposals (due to a mismatch of the form between the F&T portal and the submission tool).

Please find below the Q&As and a clarification on the 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.

With regard to the 1st stage application form, we would like to inform you that this has been updated with more specific guidance on blind evaluations. The updated version of the application form is available in the F&T portal under the 'Reference documents' tab and in the submission tool. All applicants who have already started their proposals have been promptly informed.