European Commission
Research and Innovation

European Partnerships

Frequently Asked Questions

Date: 29-03-21

1. **What are European Partnerships?**

European Partnership are initiatives in which the EU and private and/or public partners, commit to jointly support the development and implementation of a programme of research and innovation activities, including market, regulatory or policy uptake. European Partnerships are defined in the Article 2 of the Horizon Europe regulation. They are set up based on Article 10, and are selected, implemented, monitored and phased out according to the criteria in the Annex III of Horizon Europe Regulation.

2. **Why has the Commission created European Partnerships? What needs do they fulfil?**

The rationale for setting up partnerships, since they were first introduced under the 6th Framework Programme (FP6), is to overcome the fragmentation of research effort in the EU by aligning research and innovation agendas, creating a critical mass of funding in strategic areas and contributing to strengthened European research Area. Since the Lund declaration of 2009, the focus of partnerships has increasingly been to address cross-border societal challenges.

European Partnerships under Horizon Europe set up a more strategic, coherent and impact-oriented approach by focusing partnerships to the delivery of EU priorities and putting increased emphasis on synergies between partnerships, as well as with other initiatives at EU, national or local level.

3. **What is the <u>added-value</u> of European Partnerships compared to other forms of EU support?**

The Framework Programmes has a variety of instruments to support R&I, the most known one being collaborative, competition-based R&I projects funded through Work Programmes. However, some areas of R&I require critical mass and a long-term vision that is agreed and committed to by the respective sectors. For example, the challenges of climate and environmental change, attaining European technological leadership and open strategic autonomy, and ensuring a sustainable and inclusive recovery require directing dispersed research and innovation efforts towards a shared vision on the required transformation process. This is where European Partnerships come into play.

In this context, the core activity of partnerships is to enable the Commission and relevant actors in a priority area to develop a common vision, build a critical mass of investments and implement them through a programme of joint activities.

4. How are the European partnerships **different from the Horizon 2020 partnerships**?

Following the [interim evaluation of Horizon 2020](), the Commission decided to rationalise the European Partnership landscape, improve their openness and transparency, and tie them to future EU policy priorities and EU missions.

With this new approach, the focus shifted from establishing a larger number of small partnerships to fewer and larger ones, capable of making a strong impact on their policy area. The new wave of European Partnerships will mobilise more investments dedicated to EU priorities, such as the Green Deal and Digital Europe, provide a sense of 'directionality' to these investments, engage a broader set of stakeholders across the EU and beyond, and establish closer links with EU and national policies.

5. What priorities and **research themes** will the European Partnerships cover?

The majority of European Partnerships are established under the following thematic clusters of the "Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness" pillar of Horizon Europe":

- Cluster 1 – Health,
- Cluster 4 – Digital, industry and space,
- Cluster 5 – Climate, energy and mobility,
- Cluster 6 – Food, bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture and environment,

At the same time, other partnerships are also found in pillars I (partnerships within research infrastructures) and II (partnerships on innovation ecosystems).

In line with the EU priorities, the majority of the candidate partnerships aim at accelerating the transitions towards a climate neutral and digital economy. As a result, some candidate partnerships aim to involve the private sector to decarbonise the energy, mobility and steel sectors, or Member States to provide solutions for the protection and sustainable management of resources (e.g. water, soil, biodiversity). Others aim at building greater resilience of Europe's health care systems and industry and at ensuring EU's technological leadership and autonomy in critical areas, such as smart networks and services, artificial intelligence, data and robotics, photonics, hydrogen and batteries.

6. How many partnership <u>candidates</u> are there?

There are 49 candidate partnerships:

    i. **11 Institutionalised** partnerships, 10 based on Article 187 (<u>Single Basic Act</u> and <u>EuroHPC</u> proposal) and <u>one on Article 185</u> of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

    ii. **9** <u>EIT-Knowledge and Innovation Communities</u>,

    iii. **12 co-programmed** partnerships, based on a Memorandum of Understanding,

    iv. **16 co-funded** partnerships, based on programme co-fund actions.

Co-programmed and co-funded European Partnerships are listed in the first <u>Horizon Europe Strategic Plan</u>, and their call topics included on the Horizon Europe 'main' work programme.

7. How were the 49 candidate partnerships selected?

The Commission established the initial list of candidates based on the criteria found in <u>Annex III of the Horizon Europe regulation</u>. The provisional list of European Partnerships was then refined and confirmed in close cooperation with Member States as part of the strategic planning of Horizon Europe and the complementary strategic coordinating process for partnerships. Additionally, candidate Institutionalised European Partnerships (based on Article 185 and 187 TFEU) had to go through a detailed impact assessment.

The final list was the result of an extensive reform and rationalisation of the previous partnership landscape, reducing their number from more than 120 partnerships under Horizon 2020 to 49 candidates for European Partnerships.

8. <u>Is the current list of Partnerships final?</u>

The current list of candidate European Partnerships was identified as part of the first strategic planning of Horizon Europe, and the complementary strategic coordinating process for Partnerships[1]. These processes started in 2019 and are now complete, therefore, there will be no other European Partnerships in the period covered by the <u>first Horizon Europe Strategic Plan</u> (2021-2024) beyond the 49 listed in this document.

---

[1] <u>https://www.era-learn.eu/news-events/news/european-partnerships-under-horizon-europe-results-of-the-structured-consultation-of-member-states-1</u>

Any new candidate co-programmed or co-funded European Partnerships will have to be discussed as part of the preparation of the second Strategic Plan of Horizon Europe 2024-2027, in close collaboration with Member States.

9. <u>Who can participate</u> in a European Partnership?

Based on Article 2 of the Horizon Europe regulation – partners can include industry, universities, research organisations, bodies with a public service mission at local, regional, national or international level or civil society organisations including foundations and NGOs. Any such organisation, which is willing to commit to the partnership can discuss joining the partnership with the "lead entity".

The contacts of the lead entities, which prepare partnerships, and a detailed description of the partners needed to achieve the common vision of each partnerships, are listed in their public proposal which can be found <u>here</u>.