UKRO Horizon 2020 Condensed

Building a Consortium

Most applications to Horizon 2020 calls are collaborative in nature. The purpose of this factsheet is to provide guidance on points to consider when building a consortium.

Basic set-up

For most projects (or ‘types of action’) the minimum requirement is to have at least three legal entities, each of which is established in a different Member State or Associated Country. Typically though, projects can have many more partners, though this will depend on the requirements of the project and the available budget. Some call topics will also indicate specific requirement where these differ from the general rule (e.g. by indicating that a partner from a third country should participate).

Our Factsheet on ‘The Legal and Financial Basics’ contains more information on funding rules for different types of organisation and from different countries.

Coordinator/ Project partner roles

Project consortia must decide who will lead (coordinate) the application. The coordinator will typically take a leading role in preparing and submitting the proposal, representing the Consortium vis-à-vis the Commission, monitor compliance on the project, and be responsible for the distribution of project finances, record keeping and reporting. Many of the practical arrangements are laid down in a Consortium Agreement (see also the UKRO Factsheet on ‘The Legal and Financial Basics’). Normally, evaluators will be looking for experience of managing large-scale grants from the Co-ordinator, which is something to bear in mind when making the decision as to who should act as Coordinator.

Project partners will usually work on their assigned work package(s), submit input (e.g. reports) to the Coordinator, both at application stage and during the lifetime of the project, and generally contribute to the “smooth and successful implementation of the grant”, i.e. support the Coordinator in their obligations.

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

Finding partners

The most obvious starting point is to think about people with whom you already have direct or indirect connections. People with whom you or other partners have already worked are the safest bet. Think broadly about institutional links as well as your own personal ones. While the first choice will almost invariably lie with partners you have already worked with, Horizon 2020 calls often require an interdisciplinary and/or intersectoral approach for a challenge to be addressed appropriately. As a result, it may become necessary to look for partners outside the usual circle of contacts. In what follows, we offer suggested starting points for your search.

Another good idea is to look at the CORDIS database of previously-funded projects. This should be done in any case to gain an idea of the projects that have already been funded in each area; but in addition, each project description lists a named Coordinator and list of partner
institutions on each project, which can give you an idea of the people who have already experienced success within your field.

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

European Technology Platforms are industry-led stakeholder groups who help to shape the European research and innovation agenda in their respective areas of expertise. Reading their strategic agendas can help to inform bids in the more industrial sections of Horizon 2020, and they can provide valuable networking opportunities and enable the identification of potential industrial partners. Also useful in this respect are European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs), which aim to bring together all relevant actors working in a particular area.

Also useful in terms of connecting with industry is the European Enterprise Network; universities can use this to find companies for their Horizon 2020 bids; at the same time companies often use the network to find universities to join/coordinate their projects. This matchmaking is done through a partner search database featuring projects and technologies that need partners; the EEN can also occasionally contact potential partners in other countries directly.

Partner searches are also available through various NCP groupings, for example in the areas of ICT; nanosciences and nanotechnologies, materials and new production technologies; health; smart green and integrated transport; energy; climate action, environment, resource efficiency and raw materials; and social sciences and humanities. CORDIS also provides a partner search facility. We do advise applicants, however, to use these sparingly and with caution, and to ensure that any potential partners recruited in this way are clear of what is expected of them.

Meeting with partners to discuss the proposal

It can be invaluable to meet in person with potential collaborators to discuss what the different expectations are, issues around budget, IPR, and consortium governance. This may require resources (e.g. travel funds). The obvious source for these are your own institutional budgets, but external funders may also be able to help. For example, BBSRC offer ‘European Partnering Awards’ for existing BBSRC grant holders to cover travel and subsistence costs with the aim of developing and submitting Horizon 2020 bids. Moreover, you may wish to use UKRO’s meeting room in central Brussels, available free of charge to staff from subscribing institutions.
More information:

- Enterprise Europe Network: [http://een.ec.europa.eu/tools/services/SearchCenter/Search/ProfileSimpleSearch](http://een.ec.europa.eu/tools/services/SearchCenter/Search/ProfileSimpleSearch)
- Partner search services linked to NCP networks: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/applying-for-funding/find-partners_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/applying-for-funding/find-partners_en.htm)
- Sign up to the UKRO Portal to stay up to date on Horizon 2020 general developments, calls, events and results: [ukro.ac.uk](http://ukro.ac.uk)
- For specific questions, contact your UKRO European Advisor.