

Partnership Sustainable Food Systems

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The questions and answers in this document are derived mainly from the FOODPathS Funders Forum on the 29th of November 2022 and from the FOODPathS Funders Forum on the 8th of February 2023 as well as from the information webinar given by ANR on 18th of January 2023. Answers are given to the best of the knowledge of the FOODPathS CSA team and have been reviewed by the EC contact point but are not confirmed by the EC legal service and has no binding nature. The Commission cannot be held liable for any use made of this information or for its accuracy.



1. Partnership participation

Question 1.1: Who can be partner in the Partnership?

Answer 1.1: Everybody who has a legal entity can theoretically join. Even if not being part of the consortium (= signing the Grant Agreement) there are other options to join the partnership, e.g. as an associated partner.

Question 1.2: What type of organisations can join the Partnership?

Answer 1.2: Possible organisations (legal entities) comprise Research Funding Organisations (RFOs), like ministries and other funding institutions (both public and private) but also Research Performing Organisations (RPOs). It is important however, that they will have a clear task in one of the WPs.

Question 1.3: How can partners join the consortium?

Answer 1.3: All the potential partners were asked to fill in a Survey by 28th of February 2023 and partners who would like to be involved in a specific work package need to bring in-kind contribution. Please contact info@foodpaths.eu or n.hassan@fz-juelich.de if you would like to join asap.

Question 1.4: How many RPOs are allowed in the Consortium of the Partnership and is there a certain balance foreseen?

Answer 1.4: No, there is no limit stated.

Question 1.5: How is the geographical balance within the consortium?

Answer 1.5: The building of the consortium is ongoing and there is a clear aim to have a good geographical balance. New members can also get involved over the whole implementation period of the Partnership.

2. Eligibility for joining partnership

Question 2.1: What does it mean to be an eligible partner for the Partnership?

Answer 2.1: That means a legal entity which belongs to the participating countries in Horizon Europe, which includes all EU members and third countries associated to Horizon Europe (see [list](#)). Organisations which fulfill these criteria can be eligible partners in the consortium of the Partnership and thus receive financial support from the EU.

Question 2.2: Can different funders join the Partnership consortium? For example regional funders or public funders (like foundations)?

Answer 2.2: In principle all types of funders can join the Partnership. The combined use of policy cohesion funds (ERDF) is still not fully clear and harmonized and more guidance from the Commission's side is needed. However, regions as well as private funders are considered as highly relevant and can be a strong pillar for the future Partnership for several reasons (e.g. regions as crystallization points for multi-actor initiatives). FOODPathS is working on this diversity of funders to be engaged. For more information, please see also the Commission Notice on synergies between Horizon Europe and ERDF programmes: <https://www.era-learn.eu/news-events/news/eu-commission-published-guidance-synergies-horizon-europe-erdf>

Question 2.3: How to mitigate the contributions/participation (balance) from small and larger countries from EU?

Answer 2.3: Geographical balance is important and every contribution should be considered. It is up to the future Partnership consortium to take care about this and to be inclusive.

Question 2.4: Can non-associated Countries (e.g. Brazil, USA, New Zealand, Canada) participate to the Partnership?

Answer 2.4: Yes, a non-associated country can be part of a partnership if there is added value in their participation. Non-associated countries are not eligible to receive EU money, which means they must bring their own financing.

Question 2.5: Can non-associated countries co-fund external calls?

Answer 2.5: No, in order to be eligible to receive co-funding (=top up from the Commission) it is necessary to be an EU or associated country (including associated 3rd countries: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf). Nevertheless, non-associated countries can still participate with their own funds as „external” funders and support their own researchers in joint projects.

3. Grant Agreement

Question 3.1: The Partnership shall last 7-10 years. How many Grant Agreements are foreseen?

Answer 3.1: A single Grant Agreement is foreseen

Question 3.2: How can Partners join after the Grant Agreement is signed?

Answer 3.2: Partners can join with an amendment to the Grant Agreement.

Question 3.3: When is the Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement likely to be signed for the partnership?

Answer 3.3: The deadline for the call is 12/04/2023. After proposal submission, there will be a phase of evaluation (~4 months). Thereafter, as soon as the project is accepted, it will enter in the Grant Agreement Preparation (GAP) phase with several exchanges with the EC/REA (~3 months). The Consortium Agreement negotiation will start during the GAP and is expected to be signed by the end of the year in order to launch the first calls in 2024.

4. Cofunding

Question 4.1: Can you please define more precisely the meaning of the word "funder"? Is it merely a money provider or is it more than that?

Answer 4.1: A funder is clearly defined for Horizon Europe as an organisation that can provide funding to third parties. The Partnership will be open to public as well as private funders (e.g. foundations). But funders are not purely organisations that give money. A lot of effort will go into the alignment of research strategies, shaping of the funding programmes and support schemes funding..

Question 4.2: What is meant with the cofunding rate of 30%? Is a higher rate possible?

Answer 4.2: The co-funding rate set by the Commission is 30% overall for this Partnership. It cannot be increased. This means that, e.g. funding that is committed by eligible funders to their researchers (third parties) will be co-funded with EU-money by 30%. The EU money is transferred to the Partnership coordinator, who’s responsibility is to forward the EU money to the respective funders (it is not directly payed by the Commission to each funder). Nevertheless, the 30% is an overall rate and there is flexibility in using/ distributing the funds. Such an internal arrangement needs to be settled in the Consortium Agreement and is neither included in the proposal, grant agreement nor in the financial statements (that also means that for the EC, each beneficiary receives 30% of the amount claimed in the financial statements, and they are liable for that amount, independently of the amount they actually receive).

Question 4.3: How is work payed that is performed in the Partnership?

Answer 4.3: Management and other work performed within the Partnership (in the work packages) is reimbursed by the overall rate of 30% as well (funding rate applied to the total eligible costs as described in the HE MGA). The remaining 70% need to be provided in-kind. Any deviation from this reimbursement of costs needs to be discussed and decided internally by the consortium (“use of an internal black box”).

5. External and internal calls

Question 5.1: What is meant by external and internal calls? Are the external calls and internal calls the same as they were for the European Joint Programmes (e.g. EJP Soil) or European Research Area (ERA) NETs (for external calls)?

Answer 5.1: External calls are classical competitive transnational calls for research proposals which are jointly funded by the funders of the Partnership and the Commission (with 30% co-funding), external calls are based on the ERA-Net Cofund model. Internal calls are targeting consortium partners of the Partnership, meaning that only consortium partners can apply to these calls, like in EJP. Any internal call will need in-kind contributions from the applicants. There is no clear definition nor guideline about internal calls and the details are up to the Partnership consortium.

Question 5.2: When do you think the first external call can be scheduled?

Answer 5.2: Depending on the starting date of the Partnership (not before end of 2023), a first external call might be launched from 2024 onwards.

6. Relationship FOODPathS and SFS Partnership

Question 6.1: What is the relation between the FOODPathS CSA and the Partnership from the EC's point of view?

Answer 6.1: The FOODPathS CSA is a preparatory support action to the Partnership and plays a crucial role in setting up the partnership. The FOODPathS CSA will overlap with the start of the Partnership and will continue to support until end of 2025.

7. Relation with other initiatives

Question 7.1: Other existing Horizon projects such as FEAST, FoodSDSHIFT2030 and CLEVERFOOD are building up networks and Communities of Practice - how will these networks link up with the FS Partnership?

Answer 7.1: The exact strategy for linking up will be worked out by the future SFS consortium. The CSA FOODPathS will support with suggestions.

Question 7.2: How does the EC support the interaction and connection among the Partnerships (i.e. combining activities for added value)?

Question 7.2: Creating synergies is a major objective by the EC. Interaction among Partnerships will be supported by The Partnership Knowledge Hub and ERA-LEARN (e.g. the ERA-LEARN yearly workshop on partnerships and missions). Besides, most Partnerships are integrating tasks in their workplans in order to use potential synergies with other Partnerships and initiatives in general. Options for joint activities that bring added value will be considered, e.g. coordinated calls or alignment of themes, whereas joint calls between partnerships might be challenging due to administrative constraints.

8. SRIA

Question 8.1: Where can I find the SRIA for this Partnership?

Answer 8.1: The SRIA was elaborated under the SCAR (Standing Committee on Agricultural Research) Strategic Working Group on Food Systems including many experts, stakeholders and also results of an open consultation. The SRIA will serve as a basis for the future consortium and will be an evolving document throughout the runtime. The latest version of the [SRIA](https://scar-europe.org/food-main-actions/food-systems-partnership), which serves as guiding document for the Partnership proposal can be found here: <https://scar-europe.org/food-main-actions/food-systems-partnership>

9. Overview of important links

- SFS Partnership Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA): https://scar-europe.org/images/FOOD/Main_actions/SFS_Partnership_SRIA_31012023.pdf
- SFS partnership narrative and fact sheet: <https://scar-europe.org/index.php/food-main-actions/food-systems-partnership> and <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ca9da79e-df96-11eb-895a-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>
- SFS Partnership template: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-04/ec_rtd_he-partnership-sustainable-food-systems-april_2022.pdf
- The official pre-publication of the work programmes: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/horizon-europe-work-programmes_en

10. Notes on categories of countries and partners

Categories of countries:

- Automatically eligible for EU funding: Low and middle income countries (see [list](#)).
- Countries associated to Horizon Europe
- Non associated third countries not eligible for EU funding
- Exceptions on a case-by-case basis + specified in topic calls
- Co funding mechanisms (e.g. Canada, Monaco, China, Switzerland. For further information please see: [complementary-funding-mechanisms-in-third-countries_he_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#))

General information:

Becoming a partner: Co-funded partnerships are implemented through a Horizon Europe Programme Co-fund Action. This means that all partners are members of successful consortia implementing a Horizon Europe grant agreement. To become a partner, a country (generally represented by a Ministry or research agency) needs to be listed as a beneficiary in the proposal submitted to the Commission in response to the open calls for proposals that will lead to a co-funded partnership. If a country is not part of the selected consortia at the launch of a partnership (for instance if association of a third country to Horizon Europe is not yet complete), it can still join the consortium at a later stage, with the agreement of the consortium coordinator, by requesting an amendment of the grant agreement.

Participating in the partnership's activities: The only way of participating in the activities of a co-funded partnership without being a partner is to apply to the **transnational calls** that most of those partnerships will launch. As the consortium members that will receive cascading grants at national level will be selected based on national rules, this means that in most cases only beneficiaries based in partner countries will be able to apply.

Receiving funding: Entities established in Member States and Associated Countries that are part of the consortia implementing the co-funded partnerships (i.e. those signing the grant agreement with the Commission) will be able to receive EU funding in these partnerships

Different types of partners

Associated partner: their activities and what they commit to do can be described as part of the action; they do not sign the GA and do not have all the obligations of being a GA beneficiary, but do not get EU co-funding. This is a flexibility of co-funded partnerships that are programmes, not typical projects. It is also possible to amend the GA to have them as beneficiaries at a later stage and can then get EU co-funding. So they could start as associated partners and then eventually change category. For an associated partner there is no need for a formal link to a GA beneficiary, they generate their own costs.

These costs are not eligible to EU co-funding, as the associated partner is not a GA beneficiary, but it is a way for the associated partners to be involved in the consortium, and to possibly contribute resources. There is no requirement to describe the expected volume of activities to be performed by associated partners.

Affiliated partner: it is what was defined as 'linked third party' under H2020. In this case, there must be a pre-existing legal link with a GA beneficiary, and it cannot be created only for the sole purpose of the partnership. Affiliated partners usually generate eligible costs.

If the private partner is **neither a beneficiary nor an affiliated entity**, the costs it generates does not count for the EU contribution; it can be in kind contribution, but because they cannot claim it and cannot receive EU contribution, it is not something that needs to be transmitted to the EC because it will not make a practical difference, at least for EU funding.