

The Role of the Multi-Actor Approach in Horizon Europe: Enhancing Collaboration and Impact

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Overview



1. About Premiere
2. Regulatory Framework for MAA
3. The role of MAA in Cluster 6
4. Evaluation perspective on MAA
5. Involving practice partners
6. Key success factors of MAA project proposal
7. Tools and Resources for working with MAA



About PREMIERE



PREMIERE aims to...

- Contribute to more effective programming and implementation of the multi-actor approach (MAA).
- Provide support to those preparing multi-actor (MA) proposals such as
 - experienced proposal writers and partners with or without MA expertise.
 - newcomers in Horizon MA proposal development.
 - service providers supporting the proposal development.

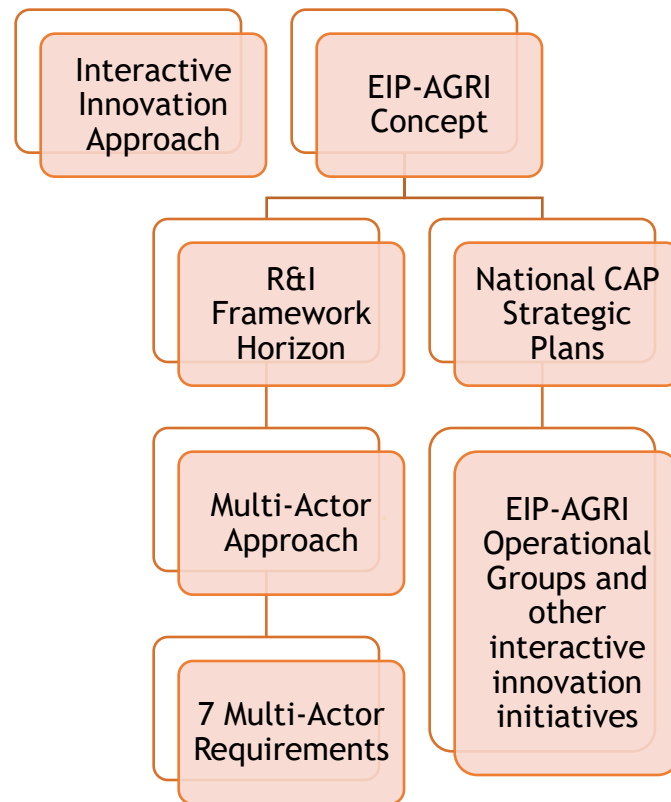


2. Regulatory Framework for MAA



Hierarchy of policy concepts and tools

- The European Commission adopted the **Multi-Actor Approach** (MAA) to operationalise the Interactive Innovation Approach in the Research and Innovation Programmes (Horizon 2020/Europe).
- In 2025, 30 'Horizon Europe' Cluster 6 Call Topics require applicants to show in their proposal document:
 - The actual implementation of the MAA during proposal planning and writing, and
 - The envisaged multi-actor method(s) and co-creative work plan in the planned project.



What is the Multi-Actor Approach?

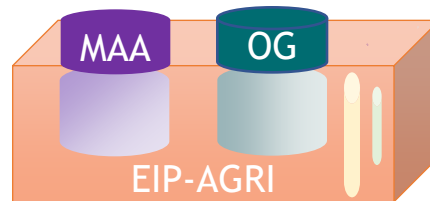


1. An 'Eligibility Criterion' in the Call Topic descriptions of the European 'Research and Innovation Framework Programme'

2. One of several policy approaches that build the **EIP-AGRI*** concept

*EIP-AGRI: European Innovation Partnership for 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability'

3. A project funding approach that consists of a set of elements: **Seven MA Requirements**



Legal request to apply the MAA



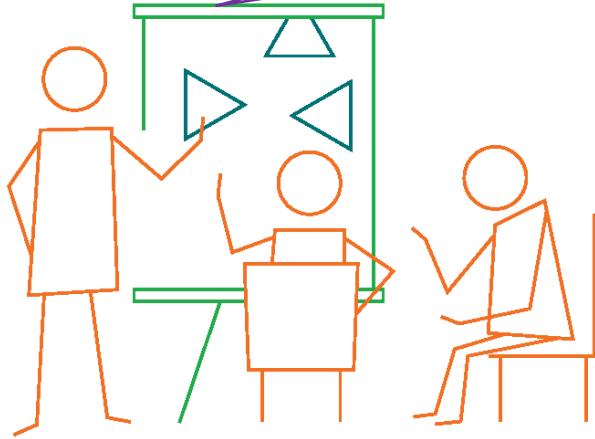
- The MAA represents an Eligibility Criterion in around 1/3 of the Cluster 6 Call Topics of the Work Programme 2025 requiring
 - *Excellence** in underlying MA-specific methods and co-creation activities presented in the proposals,
 - needs-driven pathways to *Impact**, and
 - the *Implementation** of a work plan based on the competencies of actors in the MA consortium.

* Titles of the three chapters in the template of the Horizon Europe application document



Formal multi-actor requirements

„We expect applicants to
comply to all the seven
multi-actor requirements.“



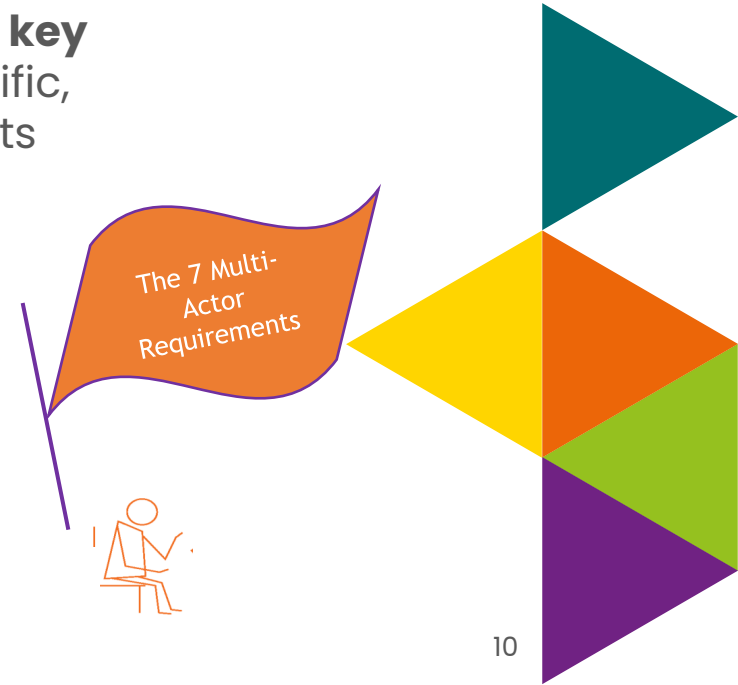
At the Commission's Directorate General for Agriculture





Proposals need to explain how

1. ... the **objectives target the (end)users' needs**, challenges and opportunities of the project results
2. ... the project incl. the composition of the consortium has a **balanced choice of relevant key actors** with complementary knowledge (scientific, practical, etc.) to prepare practice-ready results
3. ... **existing practices** and tacit knowledge will be used with a sufficient number of **knowledge exchange activities**
4. ... the MA engagement process will be **facilitated**



And proposals need to explain how

5. ...the project **complements existing research and best practices**
6. ...activities **result in practical and ready-to-use knowledge**, approaches, tools or products, that are easily accessible
7. ...these outputs will feed into the **existing dissemination channels** most consulted by the (end-)users in countries/regions



The Role of MAA in Cluster 6





EN

Horizon Europe

Work Programme 2025

9. Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment

(European Commission Decision C(2025) 2779 of 14 May 2025)

Specific requirements for multi-actor projects:

Proposals submitted for topics including the eligibility condition to follow the multi-actor approach must meet all of the requirements below. The multi-actor approach is a form of interactive, transdisciplinary and responsible R&I that aims to make the R&I process more co-creative and inclusive, and thereby its outcomes are more co-owned, reliable, demand-driven and relevant to society. It also aims to extensively share these outcomes and to widely use them in practice. This entails more than just widely disseminating the projects' results or listening to the views of a board of stakeholders. A multi-actor project ensures the genuine and sufficient involvement of a targeted array of actors in co-creation, which serves the objectives of the project proposal.



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Horizon Europe

Work Programme 2025

12. Missions

(European Commission Decision C(2025) 2779 of 14 May 2025)

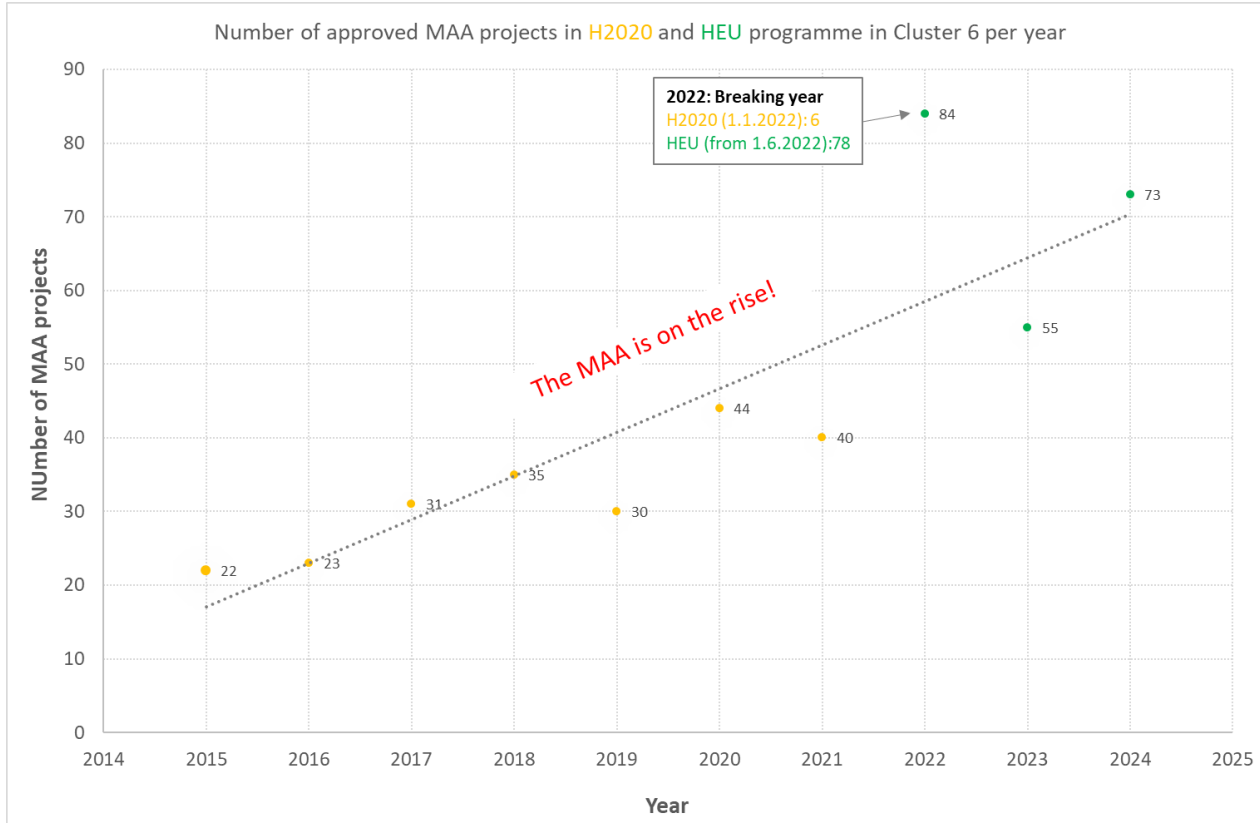
*Horizon Europe - Work Programme 2025
Missions*

A Soil Deal for Europe: Research and Innovation and other actions to support the implementation of Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe'

Specific requirements for multi-actor projects:

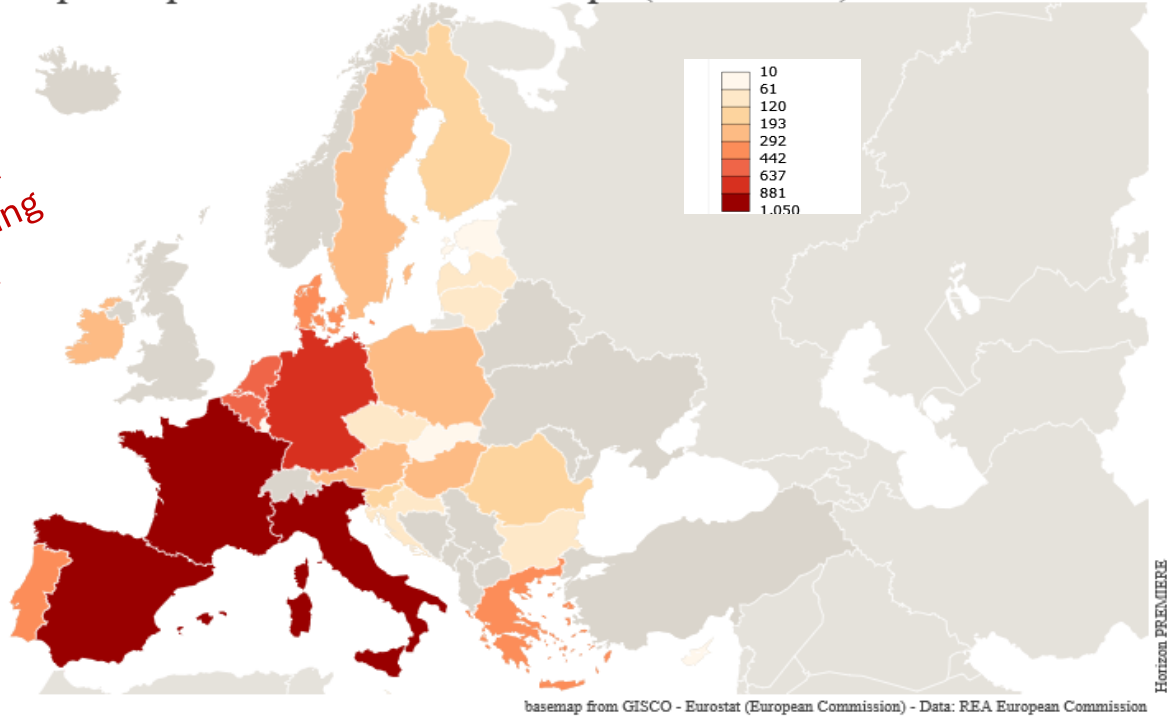
The multi-actor approach described here, which is a form of responsible research and innovation, aims to make the research and innovation process and its outcomes more reliable, demand-driven, shared and relevant to society. A multi-actor project ensures the genuine and





Total MAA project participants in H2020 + HEurope (2014-2024)

Western part of
Europe is winning
the game!



basemap from GISCO - Eurostat (European Commission) - Data: REA European Commission

Horizon PREMIERE

Made with [Khartis](#)



Newcomers in HEU

Table 1: Number of **newcomers** per type of participants in the MAA approved HEU projects (EU+non EU countries)

Type of participant	EU+ non EU	EU
Coordinator	32	29
Participants	1,633	1,275
Total	1,665	1,304

Total number of newcomers from EU countries in the MAA approved HEU projects is **1,304**.

Top 3 winning EU countries (newcomers):

- Spain (215)
- Italy (137)
- France (108)

Table 2: Total number of **newcomers** in the MAA approved HEU projects (**EU countries**)

EU country name	No of newcomers (only EU)
Spain	215
Italy	137
France	108
Germany	104
Belgium	90
Greece	83
Netherlands	73
Portugal	65
Austria	44
Poland	42
Ireland	41
Romania	38
Finland	34
Sweden	31
Slovenia	31
Denmark	29
Bulgaria	21
Hungary	21
Cyprus	20
Czechia	16
Croatia	14
Lithuania	12
Estonia	11
Slovakia	9
Luxembourg	6
Latvia	5
Malta	4
Total	1,304



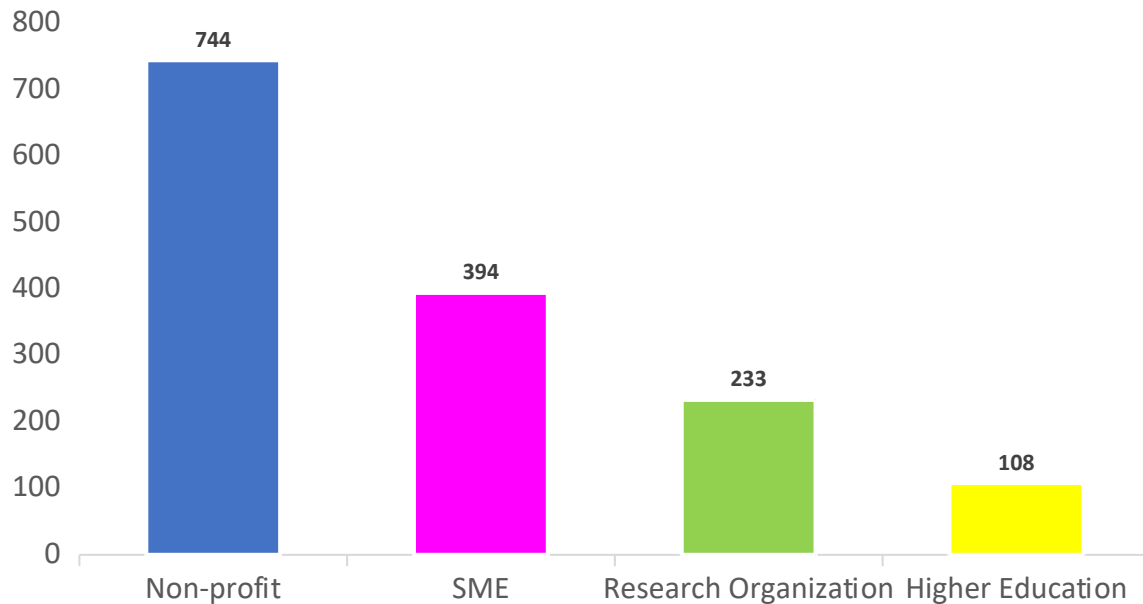
For these statistics, **newcomer organizations** are defined as those participating in the MAA approved HEU projects for the **first time** and did not have any involvement in the MAA approved H2020 projects.

Prior participation in FP7 or earlier programs is also not considered in this definition.

Newcomers in HEU MAA projects



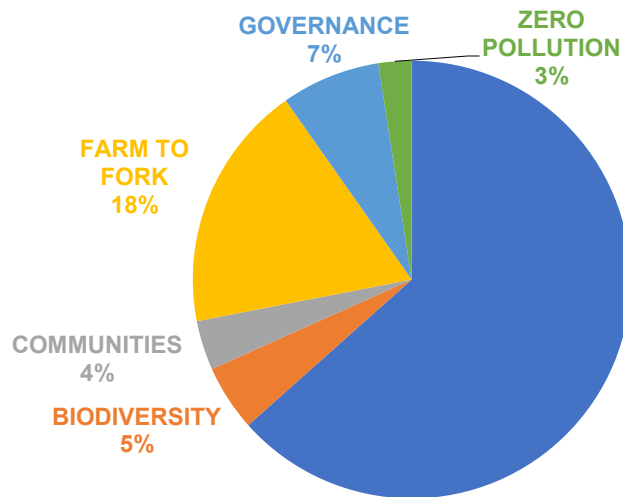
No. of newcomers in the approved MAA HEU projects
per type of participant



Disclaimer: This is the sum of YES answers in the Type category of part A of the project proposal.
The same Institution declared its type more than twice.



Share of topics with mandatory MAA

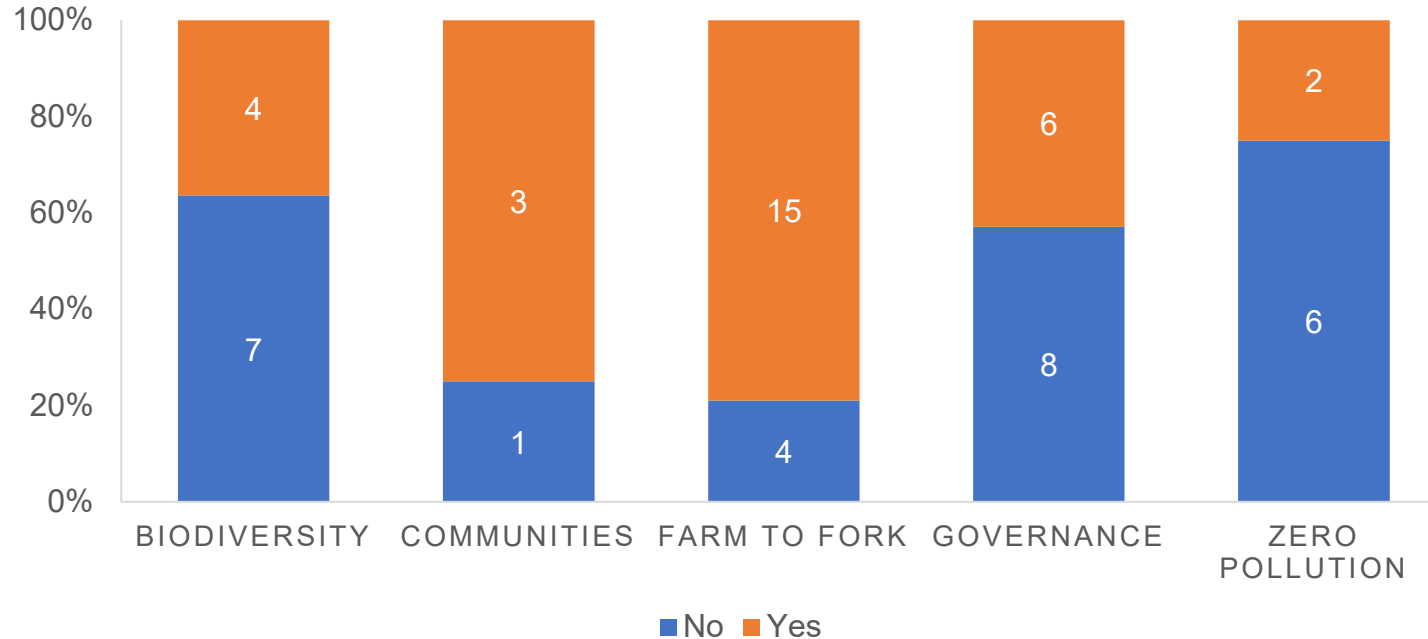


The Work Programme 2025 includes a total of 82 topics:

- **30 topics** require MAA as an eligibility condition
- in other **9 topics** the use of MAA is encouraged



No. of topics with mandatory MAA



- Graph includes only destinations with at least one topic with **mandatory MAA**

MAA across HEU project types



Project types in HEU



HEU calls launched under Cluster 6 and mission "Soil Deal for Europe" generally envisage **four main project [action] types**:

- **Programme Co-fund Actions (CO-FUND)**
- **Research and Innovation Actions (RIA)**
- **Innovation Actions (IA)**
- **Coordination and Support Actions (CSA)**
 - General
 - Thematic Networks to compile and share knowledge ready for practice
 - Thematic Networks to broaden the outcomes of EIP-AGRI Operational Groups across borders
 - EU Advisory Networks



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Horizon Europe

Work Programme 2025

9. Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment

(European Commission Decision C(2025) 2779 of 14 May 2025)

Type of Action	Research and Innovation Actions
Eligibility conditions	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply: Proposals must apply the multi-actor approach. See definition of the multi-actor approach in the introduction to this work programme part.



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Horizon Europe

Work Programme 2025

12. Missions

(European Commission Decision C(2025) 2779 of 14 May 2025)

Type of Action	Innovation Actions
Eligibility conditions	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply: The following additional eligibility criteria apply: the proposals must apply the multi-actor approach. See definition of the multi-actor approach in the introduction to this work programme part.

Type of Action	Coordination and Support Actions
Eligibility conditions	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply: The following additional eligibility criteria apply: the proposals must apply the multi-actor approach. See definition of the multi-actor approach in the introduction to this work programme part.

MAA calls and projects in figures

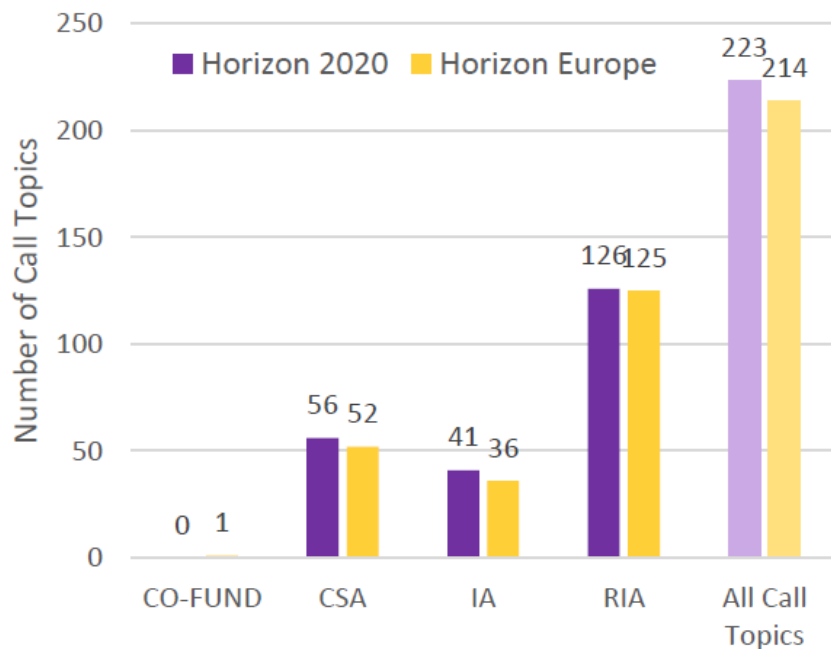


Figure 1: Number of approved MAA projects in H2020 and HEU by project type (status in October 2024).

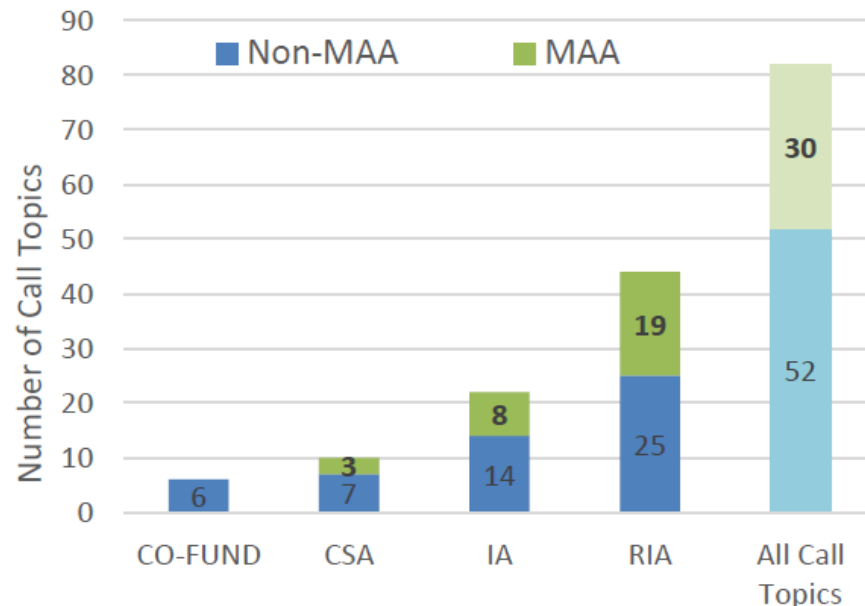


Figure 2: Distribution of Call Topics with the MAA as eligibility criterion by project type in the HEU Cluster 6 in 2025.

MAA differences by project type

Envisaged mission by project type:

RIA – generate new knowledge, improve understanding and explore feasibility

IA - develop, test and scale solutions

CSA – facilitate knowledge exchange, networking and policy impact

Technology readiness level by project type

RIA – TRL 3-7

IA – TRL 6-8

CSA – not applicable

Funding rates by project type

RIA – 100% for all types of actors

IA – 100% for non-profit and 70% for business actors

CSA – 100% for all types of actors

Role of the MAA by project type:

RIA – co-create research questions as well as design and validate findings with users

IA - pilot, test, deploy innovations in real-life settings

CSA – enable good practice sharing and stakeholder dialogue



CSAs



Word clouds based on the text of 2025 CL6 WP calls with MAA as a mandatory requirement, using the phrasing of the MAA requirement and from the scope descripton.

Selected differences in MA motivations

RIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SMEs – unique selling points for their new products. ▪ Researchers – scientific publications and funding for PhD students. ▪ Advisors – first-hand information for clients, sharpened professional profiles, representation of producers' interests. ▪ Sales cooperatives – higher margins, improved market performance. ▪ Environmental NGOs – evidence of protecting natural resources.
IA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SMEs – competitive advantage on the market for the high TRL products. ▪ Researchers – advancement of applied research, development of new products, services or solutions. ▪ Advisors – engagement of clients in the early phase of the product's market introduction, enhanced business support.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Researchers – financial support for ongoing on-farm



concept-of-bad-teamwork-vector-45095888.jpg

Selected MAA challenges



RIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ SMEs vs. Academic partners – data protection vs. open data.▪ Universities vs. Advisors – communication of published results vs. early sharing of insights.▪ Advisors vs. Producer organisations – paid consultancy services vs. optimisation of margins on the product market.▪ NGOs vs. SMEs – engagement in non-profit sustainability solutions vs. commercial solutions.
IA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Private vs. Public actors – business development objectives vs. societal benefits.▪ Researchers vs. SMEs – public demonstration of prototypes vs. market-ready solutions.▪ SMEs vs. Advisors – individual vs. shared ownership of merits for joint product or service.
CSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Researchers vs. Communication partners – prioritisation of scientific publications vs. practice-oriented materials.▪ Advisors vs. Academic and supporting partners – prioritisation of consultancy services vs. project work.




concept-of-bad-teamwork-vector-45095888.jpg

Evaluation perspective on MAA



MAA analysis of evaluation summary reports



Proposal Evaluation Form		
	EUROPEAN COMMISSION Horizon Europe Framework Programme (HORIZON)	Evaluation Summary Report - Coordination and support actions

- Collection of ESRs' statements on the MAA for **67 proposals** (2023 and back) to topics in H2020 / HEU calls participated by PREMIERE partners & associates:
 - 51% - HEU, 49% - H2020
 - 55% - RIA, 12% - IA, 34% - CSA
 - 40% - funded, 60% - not funded
- Qualitative analysis of ESR MAA statements:
 - What do proposal evaluators highlight?



<https://zenodo.org/records/8377184>

Quality ESR statements on MAA



There is a strong emphasis on *user-focused, co-creative work, seeking to explore and find ways to strengthen application* of the Multi-Actor Approach (MAA). (...) The proposal incorporates a *comprehensive range of methods to facilitate a multi-actor engagement process, e.g., stakeholder panels, collection of experiences, brokerage events, and joint development and testing of tools via co-design workshops*. There is also a strong emphasis on *iterative stakeholder dialogue supporting all stakeholders' efforts (including harder to reach groups) to improve the take-up of the MAA in proposals*. [CSA H2020]



It is a significant weakness that the *methodology does not make sufficient provision for wide, multi-actor and representative inclusion, engagement or participation of rural dwellers and stakeholders* as explicitly expected in the topic. [CSA H2020]

Quality ESR statements on MAA



Multi-actor approach is very well demonstrated both theoretically (AKIS concept, systemic analysis, transformative learning, participative approach) and in practice, involving an organic farming sector via a partner, and individual farmers like xxx in international hackathons. [IA HEU]



The multi-actor approach is in general appropriately applied. The use of participatory decision and stakeholder engagement support tools is addressed in line with the requirements of the call. However, the methodology fails to design a comprehensive bottom-up approach that will actively involve rural dwellers and farmers throughout the project. This is a shortcoming. [CSA H2020]



Quality ESR statements on MAA



The composition of the research consortium *involving not only academic partners, but also practitioners and policy makers in all research stages, including analytical work and analysis, makes a model multi-actor approach. The multi-actor approach is used for the creation of bottom-up and top-down initiatives.* [RIA H2020]



The *strong multi-actor and multi-sectoral approach is interdisciplinary, encompasses a wide range of actors and locations and it is generally well developed and clearly described, however a shortcoming is that the proposal does not sufficiently demonstrate how it will engage with smaller farms, the food services sector and consumers.* Social sciences and humanities are insufficiently addressed and lack clear outputs, for example the social aspect of sustainability has a limited focus on localized production and the engagement of local communities. [IA H2020]



Insights by MA proposal evaluators



PREMIERE

Among other things attention is being paid to:

- ✓ **Composition of the consortium** by inspecting the profiles of the partner organisations and their relevance for the call topic;
- ✓ Evidence in the proposal text of how the application of MAA has been implemented already **during the proposal development**;
- ✓ Reflection of the MAA in the project's budget through allocation of designated resources for implementing MAA and **meaningful person months and budget shares for all partners**;
- ✓ Clear identification and justification of the **expected roles of the different partners** (both experienced ones and newcomers);
- ✓ Adjustment of the **MAA application to project type** (RIAs, IAs, CSAs);

• The sixth webinar “Put yourself in the shoes of an evaluator: How to integrate MAA in HE proposals” is available in the video below:



Focus group on MAA evaluation



- A dedicated focus group (n=23) held in 2025.
- Working question: ***How can the implementation (and ultimate impact) of the MAA be strengthened by improving its evaluation?***

Four clusters of specific needs and recommendations identified from the focus group:

1. Better **explanation of the MAA for evaluators and rapporteurs** (taking into account that many have no MAA experience).
2. Clearer **justification of why the MAA requirement** is included in the text.
3. More explicit **guidance on how to evaluate MAA** fairly, effectively and consistently.
- ➡ 4. Broader, more **systemic revision of the MAA**.

Close collaboration with the European Commission to address these needs!

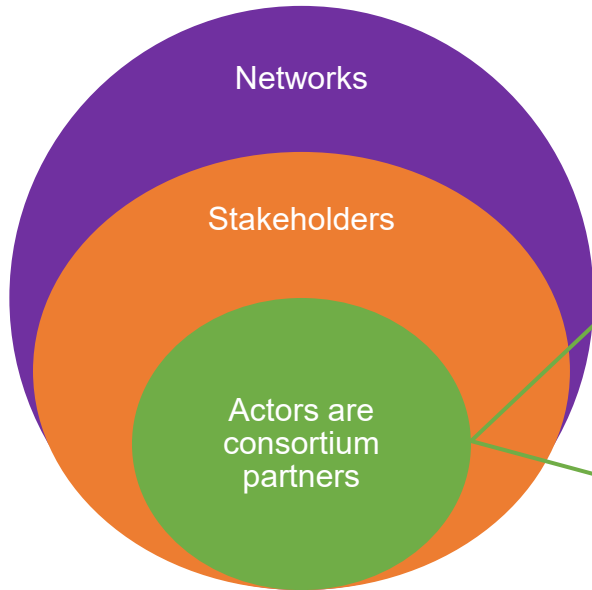


Involving practice partners

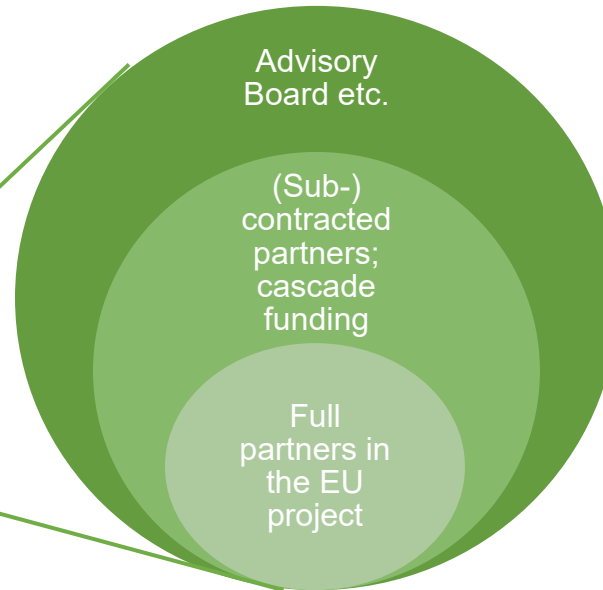


Options for the involvement of actors and stakeholders in the proposal

Actors compared to
(external) stakeholders



Actors



Actors are different from stakeholders

- ▶ Actors have rights and responsibilities
- ▶ Actors being full partners in the consortium
- ▶ Engagement from proposal until the project end
- ▶ Participatory methods needed to ensure all Actors contribute on equal levels
- ▶ Actors need and support each other



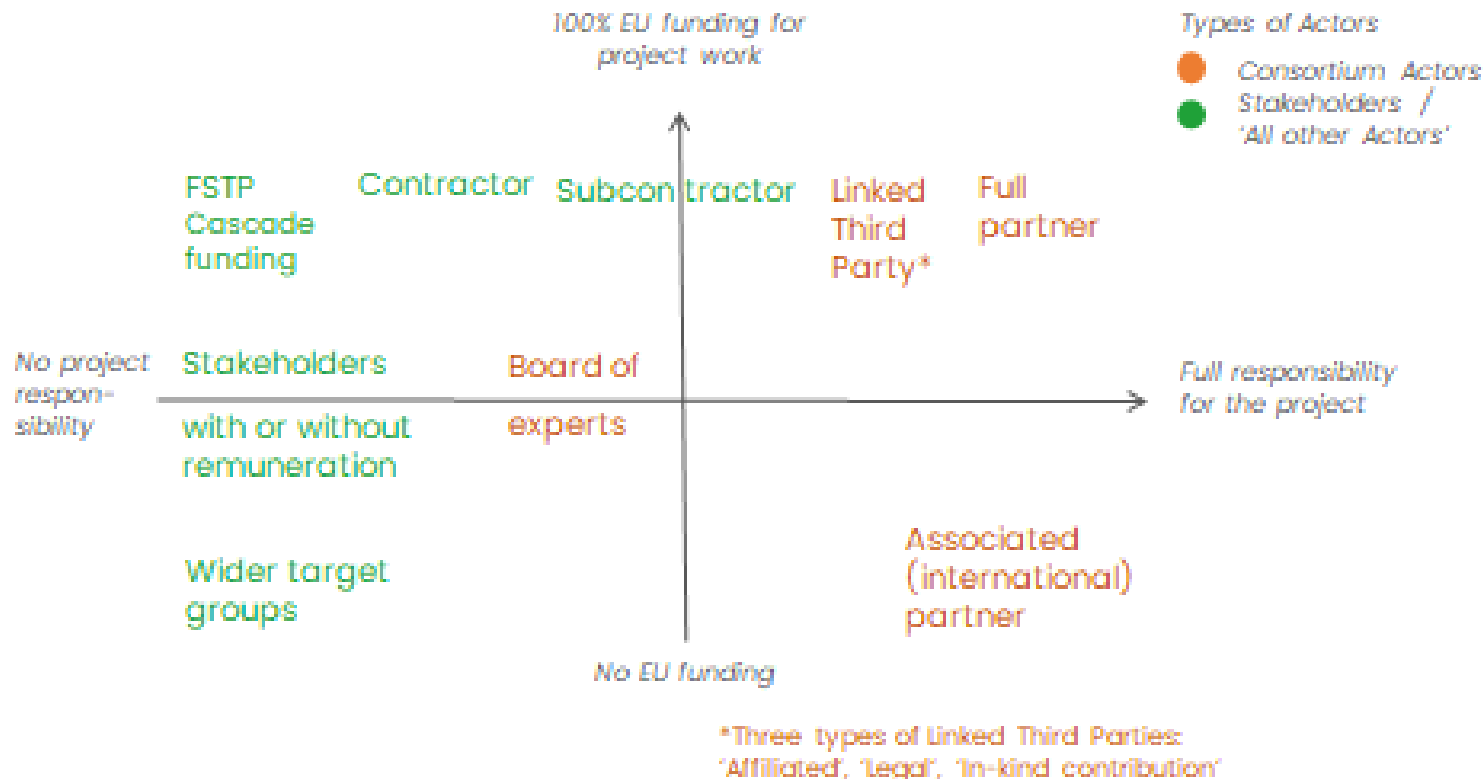
Distinguishing 'Space 1 and 2 Actors'

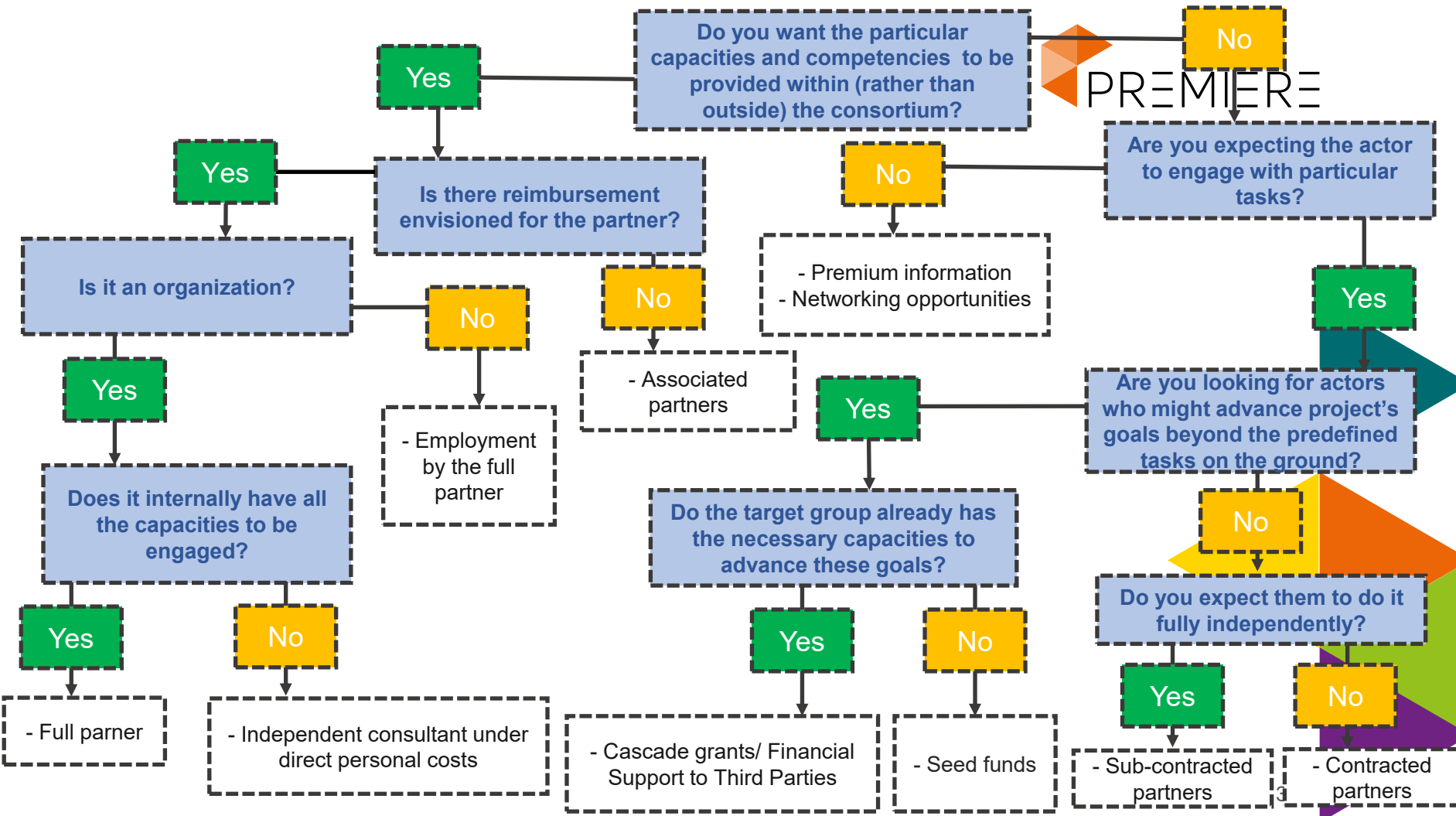
Project element	Space 1 Consortium actors	Space 2 Other relevant actors
Purpose	Co-creation of practical solutions	Consultation, validation, wider dissemination and exploitation of project results
Participation level	Interactive participation, acting and deciding together	Consultative, informing
Frequency	Throughout the project	Periodical, at a certain moment in time
Outcome	Ownership of project results	Wider adaptation and adaptation of project results

→ It's about depth and frequency of the co-creation work



Options for project participation

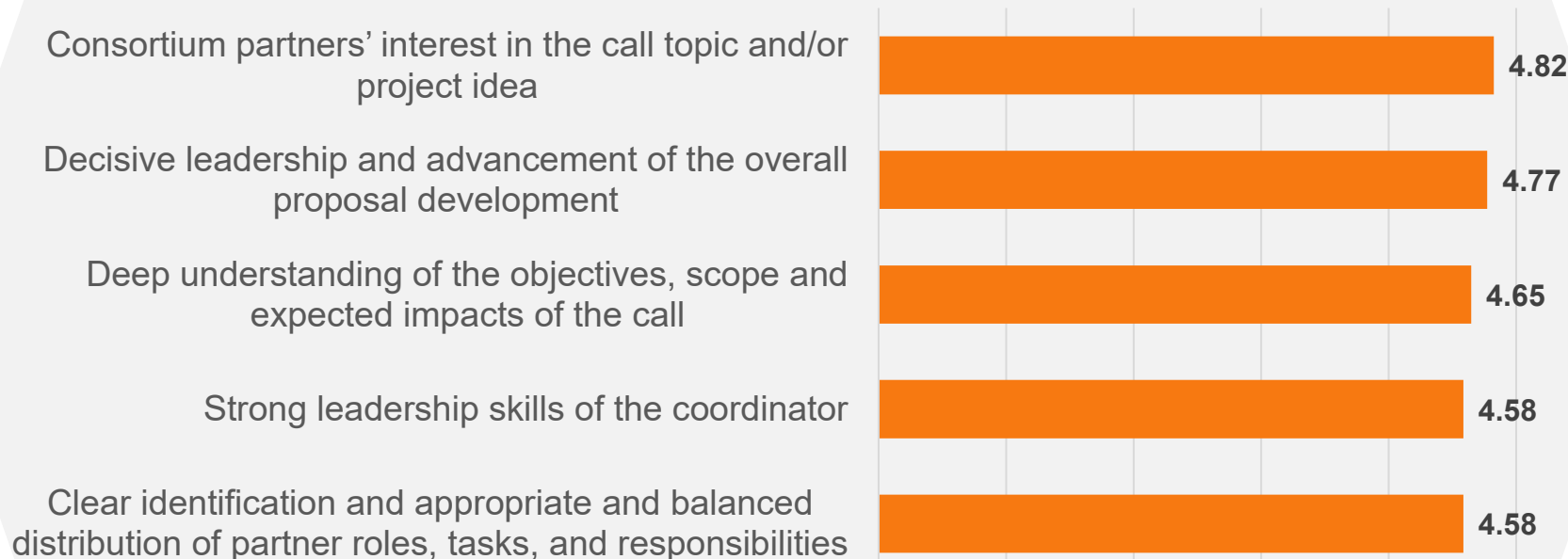




Key Success Factors for MAA proposals



The most relevant factors based on the survey

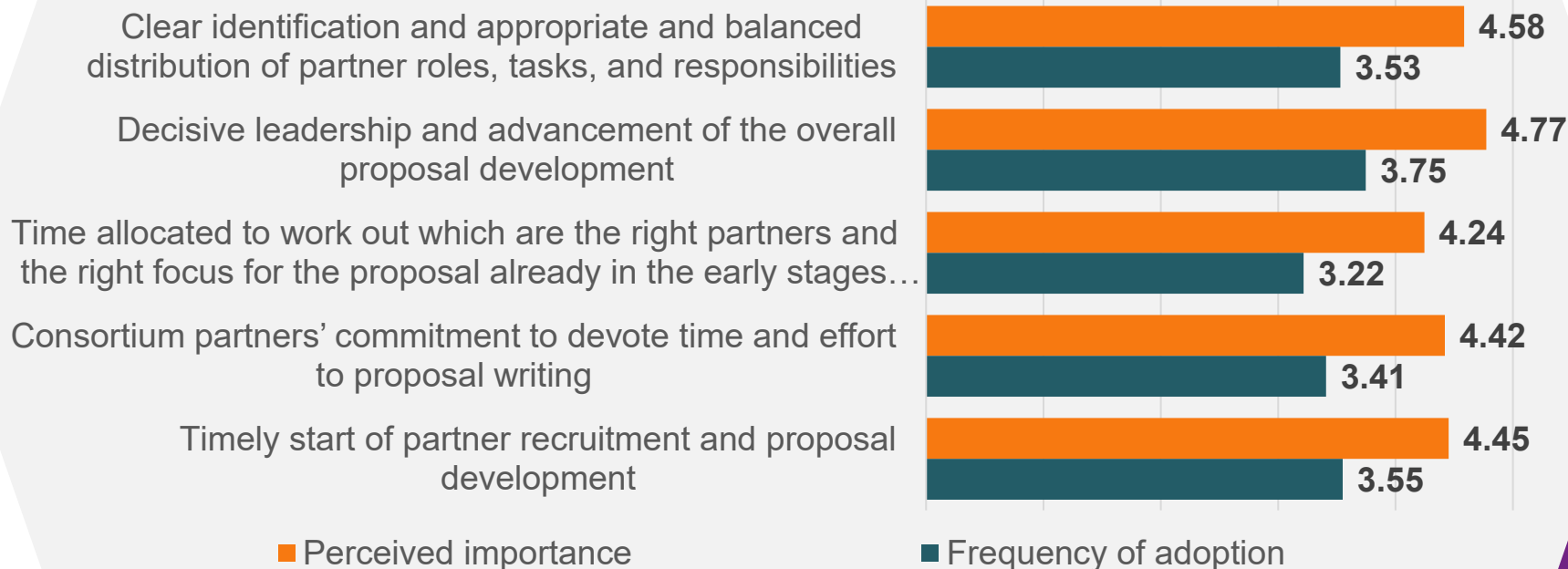


► For the assessment respondents were asked to use the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is “Not at all important” and 5 is “Extremely important”.

Split between relevance and presence

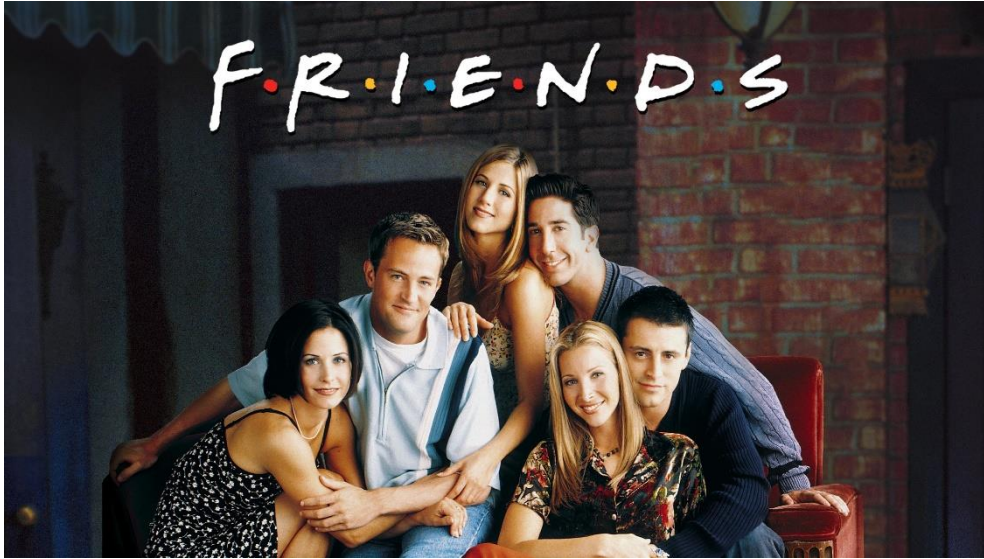


Difference between the **perceived importance** (measured using a scale from 1 to 5) and the **frequency of adoption** (measured using a scale from 1 to 5).



Some thought-provoking observations

- ▶ Having the **right friends** is important. Still, sometimes you need new friends to see what you are missing out.



Some thought-provoking observations

- Professionally – **we all act the same**... but a party organized by German team will differ from a party thrown by Latvians. You must attend both to feel the vibe.



Some thought-provoking observations

- **Age and project experience** can transform one into a *cynic*. This is not a good starting point for an impactful project.



Tools and resources for working with MAA



Multi-Actor Q&A



Premiere Q&A section answers the most common questions about the Multi-Actor Eligibility Condition in the Horizon Europe programme. Updating the Q&A regarding the MAA is a recurring activity of the PREMIERE team. This version of the Q&A was reviewed by Commission staff and has been available since October 2024.

The questions are grouped into four categories:

- a) The MAA in general
- b) The role of EIP-AGRI Operational Groups
- c) Financial aspects of actor and stakeholder involvement
- d) Evaluating MA project proposals

[Q&A | PREMIERE MULTIACTOR](#)



Cartoons

PATHWAY I

Pathways to developing an EU Horizon Europe multi-actor (MA) project proposal:

ONE PERSON SHOW

AT THE INFO DAY



MEETING WITH NCP*



*NCP = National Contact Point



THE FINAL DAY



*NCP = Find your NCP (National Contact Point): <https://horizon.europa.eu/ncp-networks/cluster-6/find-your-ncp>

This is a short story with selected reflections on one of the possible pathways of MA proposal development. The majority of the text is based on actual statements compiled during the PREMIERE project from various sources, but all cartoon characters are fictional. For more information visit <https://premiere-multiactor.eu>

Multi-Actor siMulation playY



Multi-Actor Tool Factsheet

MAMY Game

What?

The MAMY Game workshop is a structured facilitation tool to immerse participants in the complexities of co-innovation within a multi-actor approach (MAA). By adopting different stakeholder perspectives, through assigned roles, - academic and non-academic- participants engage in collaborative problem-solving, negotiation, and project development. This enhances understanding of diverse interests, conflict resolution, and synergies in proposal design.

It is ideal for preparing for real-world multi-actor initiatives.

All needed materials are freely downloadable (premiere-multiactor.eu)

Possible to play in real life or online.

Short Guide

Introduction (15 min)

Explain the role-playing game and its purpose.

Brief participants on the MAA project call and game rules.

Round 1 - Character Development (30 min)

Participants study their assigned role and collaborate with others in the same role.

Identify key interests (green sticky note), activities (yellow sticky note), and red lines (pink sticky note).

Round 2 - Stakeholder Interactions (30 min)

Groups are mixed to represent different stakeholders.

Participants share key interests and red lines.

Facilitators guide discussions to identify synergies and conflicts.

Round 3 - Project Design (25 min)

Develop three work packages, assign leadership, and identify missing partners.

Round 4 - Reflection (20 min)

Participants compare their experiences and reflect on learnings.

Discussion bridges the workshop experience with real-world applications.

Credit

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Main target group



Main MA Skill(s) supported

Transparent communication about agendas, expectations and results.

Able to work with a diversity of backgrounds

Able to work with different organisations

If you are looking to play a simulation game with your consortium team to build the capacity of your prospective consortium to develop a MAA proposal and get to know each other better we have developed and make available here all the materials to run the Multi-Actor siMulation playY (MAMY).

[Multi-actor Roleplay Workshop materials \(MAMY GAME\)](https://premiere-multiactor.eu/)



<https://premiere-multiactor.eu/>



Consortium Builder



Purpose

When you are building a consortium and aren't sure whether you have all the right organisations, all the right people for the job, or whether they are capable of working in multi-actor context.

The Excel template tool helps you step-by-step to gather the right data and turn it into useful feedback information about the levels of competence of your consortium.

Benefits

The tool helps you perform a gap analysis on your proposed team, helps you find strengths and weaknesses, and build a more stable consortium.

Practical recommendations

Step 1 - Completing the 'Skill Catalogue' (30 min)

In the Excel file, enter the tab "Skill Catalogue". You will find a template with skills and competences. These are designed with multi-actor collaborations in mind, towards submitting a proposal. Here you will find example skills and white spaces. Delete irrelevant, and fill in any relevant skills for your proposal, alone or in team.

Step 2 - Organisation Matrix (60 min)

Go to the tab "Organisation matrix". Enter organisations that you may potentially want to collaborate with. Now you or an organisation representative can score the org. from 0-4 based on the competence criteria defined in Step 1.

Step 3 - Role matrix (60 min)

Move over to the tab "Role Matrix". Adjust, add, or even remove roles to fit your multi-actor consortium needs. With each role belong certain competences and skills. Score each role from 0-4 based on the relevant skills as defined in Step 1.

Step 4 - Allocation matrix and Gap Analysis (60 min)

Move to the tab "Allocation Matrix" to divide the roles among the partners. Have partners score their skills. You can also do this yourself on your best judgement. Now assign them to tasks to see how well they match. In the next tab "Gap Analysis" you will find the initial results of your matchmaking!

Step 5 - Adjust! (60 min)

Now you can play around with the consortium composition. Return to the previous tabs to adjust required skills, partners, roles, and people to optimize and create the most stable consortium you can!

Applicability box

Main MA Skills supported

Supports the recognition of, and work with, the limitations of different organisations

Supports work with a diversity of professional backgrounds

Relevant Target groups



Useful link(s)

[Link to download the materials](#)



Figure 1: Screenshot example Gap Analysis

When you are building a consortium and aren't sure whether you have all the right organisations, all the right people for the job, or whether they are capable of working in multi-actor context.

[Consortium Builder Tool](#)

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www.premiere-multiactor.eu/

Rubrics are an education assessment format for which standards of performance against the criterion are described on a table along a gradation from:

Excellent MAA performance



Poor MAA performance



Describing at different quality levels – **exemplary, great, good, routine, insufficient** – the characteristics of 9 different components or criteria of the MAA definition used in HEU Cluster 6.

CRITERIA TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN WRITING / EVALUATING MULTI-ACTOR APPROACH PROPOSALS					
Criteria	Exemplary / 5 Best of best means:	Great / 4 Best means:	Good / 2 Correct means:	Routine / 1 Minimum means:	Insufficient/0 Below threshold
Objectives and planning of the proposal target needs / problems / challenges of, and opportunities for, the (end-users of the project results	Takes a large-scale approach to complex challenges / opportunities at multi-actor level. Clearly shows a co-creative ongoing analysis (started at proposal preparation stage or before) with users involved, to solve multiple challenges simultaneously (wicked solutions = related to wicked problem, that is difficult to solve because it is complex and contradictory, in need of very diverse groups of people to change their mindset).	Addresses a significant need of high multi-actor value. A co-creative process of connection between objectives and planning of the proposal and the users of the project is presented specifying the needs, problems, challenges and opportunities, and how these will be jointly co-created to deliver a successful solution.	The focus of the proposal is partial, marginal or has a limited multi-actor value. There is a clear connection between objectives and planning of the proposal and the users of the project results specifying the needs, problems, challenges and opportunities addressed toward a solution or partial solution.	The focus of the proposal is unclear or it responds to an interest of a limited group of actors. Needs / problems / challenges of and opportunities for the (end-users of the project results) are partially or briefly addressed creating limited and or decontextualized knowledge.	There is no focus for the proposal or it is clearly not well formulated. Needs / problems / challenges of and opportunities for the (end-users of the project results) are insufficiently or incorrectly addressed in the objectives and planning of the proposal

See the full rubric in <https://zenodo.org/records/8377184>

Thanks!

Any questions or comments ?

Information and material available in the
PREMIERE Online Academy: [www.premiere-
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