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Questions and Answers on "Advancing active and healthy ageing with ICT"

Document history	
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Horizon 2020 – Societal challenge Health, demographic change and wellbeing - **Personalising Health and Care workprogramme 2014-2015** (H2020-PHC-2014-2015) contains the following 4 topics related to active and healthy ageing with ICT:

- PHC-19-2014: Advancing active and healthy ageing with ICT: service robotics within assisted living environments
- PHC-20-2014: Advancing active and healthy ageing with ICT: ICT solutions for independent living with cognitive impairment
- HCO-01-2014: Support for the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing
- HCO-02-2014: Joint programming: Co-ordination action for the joint programming initiative (JPI) 'more years better lives the challenges and opportunities of demographic change'

The questions received by the "Digital Social Platform" unit of DG CONNECT related to these topics will be answered in this document. It will be updated regularly when new questions are received. New or updated questions from previous version of the document are marked [NEW QUESTION] or [UPDATED QUESTION].

Please note, for reasons of equal treatment of all potential applicants, the Commission is not in a position to give individual advice on proposals. This is primarily the task of the national contact points (http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/support/national_contact_points.html) and other regional or institutional support offices.

All proposals will be evaluated by external peer reviewers and not by Commission staff. The Commission cannot interpret the call topic beyond the written text. The final assessment of whether something is considered in the scope is provided exclusively by the evaluators. The evaluation procedure is described in section 'IV.2.2 Evaluation of proposals and operational capacity check' of the 'Grants Manual - Section on: proposal submission and evaluation' (http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/pse/h2020-guide-pse_en.pdf).

European Commission, DG CONNECT
Unit H2 – Digital Social Platforms
http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/policies-ageing-well-ict

Contents

Have the evaluation criteria changed in H2020?
Answer:
Yes, they have changed. They are described in part H of the General Annexes to the Work Programme 2014-2015, with the following exceptions:
For PHC-19-2014: The thresholds for "Excellence" and "Impact" will be 4, and for "Quality and efficiency of the implementation" 3. The cumulative threshold will be 12.
Please also note that PHC-20-2014 is an Innovation action and therefore to determine the ranking, the score for the criterion 'Impact' will be given a weight of 1.5.

Do we submit proposals in one stage or in two stages?
Answer:
Many of the call topics of the Personalising Health and Care Work Programme 2014-2015 indeed have a two stage proposal process, but the four topics concerned by this FAQ (PHC-19-2014, PHC-20-2014, HCO-01-2014 and HCO-02-2014) all have a 1-stage proposal submission with a deadline 15/04/2014.

Can you give a definition of service robotics (related to PHC-19-2014)?
Answer:
We do not give an exact definition of service robotics, but we do specify what type of service robotics we expect: "Proposals should focus on service robotics in assisted living environments which can help an ageing population to remain active and independent for longer. Proposals should build on advances in this domain, and should combine multi-disciplinary research involving behavioural, sociological, health and other relevant disciplines. Characteristics of the solutions developed should be their modularity, cost-effectiveness, reliability, flexibility in being able to meet a range of needs and societal expectations, applicability to realistic settings, safety and acceptability to end-users. Gender and ethical issues should be paid due attention."

Each proposal will be evaluated by independent experts according to the evaluation criteria given in part H of the General Annexes of the General Work Programme. They will judge (among other things):

- Whether the proposed concept is sound, including trans-disciplinary considerations;

- The extent that proposed work is ambitious, has innovation potential, and is beyond the state of the art (e.g. ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts and approaches)

Proposals which are considered sound service robotics proposals by the experts will receive a higher score than the ones which they consider not to be service robotics.

Is a proposal that wants to support the rehabilitation of children using robotics in scope, given the fact that these rehabilitated children in the future will become older adults with an improved quality of life? (related to PHC-19-2014)
Answer:
No, PHC19 is clearly focussed on the needs from an ageing population with expected impact on older people and their carers. Support to children is not in line with this objective.

[NEW QUESTION] Is it necessary to include the Annex "Essential information for clinical trials/studies/investigations" to a proposal for PHC-20-2014?
Answer:
No, this Annex should only be added to proposals for the topics PHC 8 and PHC 15. However, you should describe your proposed pilot methodology within the main proposal (in order to comply with the requirement to "achieve statistical significance in the findings").

If cognitive impairment also causes physical disabilities, can both aspects be addressed in a proposal? (related to PHC-20-2014)
Answer:
Yes, in case of a cognitive impairment which also causes physical disabilities, the solution may address both aspects.

Clarification of the scope of PHC-20-2014
The call text states that four pilots in four different countries are expected, while involving a large enough group of users to ensure statistical significance.
How is this possible with an expected EU budget of 2-3 million EUR.

Answer:
The budget is realistic based on experience from previous projects, since it is expected that the pilot sites build on already planned or existing national/regional deployment plans, which means that not all the costs incurred are expected to be put on the H2020 pilot project.

Examples of previous ICT-PSP pilot projects can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/results-cluster-eu-funded-deployment-projects-area-ict-ageing-well

Scope of PHC-20-2014: Should the pilots be the same at all sites?
Answer:
You should strive to a good degree of commonality across the pilot sites in order to ensure that there is a good chance to aggregate the findings, but as in reality there can also be some specific needs for each site. The proposal should clearly present these aspects and how you will derive common findings across the sites.

Scope of PHC-20-2014: Are four pilots sufficient or would a bid with 5 pilots or 6 pilots gain extra marks and be preferred?
Answer:
The call text states that a minimum four pilots in four different countries are expected, while involving a large enough group of users to ensure statistical significance.
It is up to the consortium to decide if you need more than four pilots to meet the goals of your project.

Scope of PHC-20-2014: An existing EU project could extend some of their results into this call and our particular project. Is this viewed positively? Would this attract extra marks?
Answer:
The scope of PHC20 says that pilots should build on common, flexible and open ICT solutions. This can be anything, but of course also an existing EU project. It is up to the consortium to decide if this project would be a good basis for meeting the goals of the project.

PHC 20: Can a university be the Coordinator of an innovation action or is it better to have a company coordinating the project?
Answer:
There are no legal restrictions to which organisation should coordinate the proposal. You should only ensure that the chosen organisation has the competences, people and resources to do the job.

Scope of PHC 20: I have a question regarding ICT element of the proposal.
Should the proposal

- aim to research into the development of an ICT product or
- develop and test an actual product or
- use an existing ICT product and test an innovative way of using it to boost independent living?

Answer:
This action is about using an existing ICT solution (that is flexible and open), which can be adapted to the specific user needs in your project. The aim will be to test it out on a large scale so that you can get evidence for the expected impacts which are mentioned in the call text:

- Based on quantitative and qualitative output indicators and impact data, each pilot is expected to demonstrate relevant contributions to the following expected impacts:
    - Clear evidence on return of investment, both for the private sector and in terms of societal benefits from ICT based solutions for cognitive impairments of older people;
    - Best practice for viable business and financing models which are scalable across Europe;
    - Clear evidence on the improvements of efficiency of health and care systems

- Clear evidence of improvements to quality of life and active ageing for involved users and carers;

- Contribution to the competitiveness of the European ICT industry in the domain, through enhanced interoperability and scalable markets;

Scope of PHC 20: This action is about using an existing ICT solution (that is flexible and open), which can be adapted to the specific user needs in your project. What bothers us is the word EXISTING. Our project idea is based on an innovative use of existing technologies, but still requires some development. Can it fit?

Answer:
PHC 20 is an innovation action, and in particular a "pilot". From the definition of an innovation action http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/wp/2014_2015/annexes/h2020-wp1415-annex-d-ia_en.pdf please note the following two sentences:

- A 'demonstration or pilot' aims to validate the technical and economic viability of a new or improved technology, product, process, service or solution in an operational (or near to operational) environment, whether industrial or otherwise, involving where appropriate a larger scale prototype or demonstrator.

- Projects may include limited research and development activities.

Hence, the external evaluators evaluating your proposal will judge whether the amount of research and development activities you propose are "limited" in comparison to the validation activities. They will also judge whether you already have sufficient evidence that your approach might be useful in the context of PHC20, because if not, it is not logical to immediately do a large scale validation with minimum 4 pilot sites in 4 countries.

What is an "open ICT solution" (related to PHC-20-2014)?
In the first sentence under scope it says "Pilots should build on common, flexible and open ICT solutions which can be adapted to specific users' needs, allowing them to live independently for longer while experiencing cognitive impairment." What do you mean with " … open ICT solutions …"?

Answer:
"Open" is meant to indicate that the solution is based on open standards, allows for multi-vendor implementations and promotes interoperability of software and data as far as possible. This is part of the innovation expected compared to current state of the art, because it will then be possible to add the specific functionality to the solution that the user needs or to adapt a products or service to specific regional needs. In case there is an alternative for the solution that is based on the same standards, it is also possible to replace the original solution by the alternative. In other words, the solution is interoperable and does not cause a lock-in. In case there is no solution based on open standards, it is required that the proposed solution uses publicly available API's in order to keep the solution as open and interoperable as possible. The use of open source is not mandatory, but it is welcomed. In that case it is also important that there is a community around the open source.

Expected Impact of PHC-20-2014: Are the Commission seeking a single Business Model, and Return on Investment etc. or multiple Business Models?
Answer:
The text under the Expected impact section in the workprogramme states that each pilot is expected to demonstrate relevant contributions to (among other things) the following expected impacts:

- Evidence on the return of investment, both for the private sector and in terms of societal benefits
- Best practice for viable business and financing models which are scalable across Europe

So please note that "scalability across Europe" is expected.

Expected Impact of PHC-20-2014: We hope to build a connection with large companies that can be aware of our project and guide us to commercialisation, but the IPR remains with the consortium. Is this the right approach?
Answer:
Contribution to the competiveness of the European ICT industry in the domain is one of the expected impacts. Hence the consortium should choose an approach on how to manage the IPR's resulting from the project in such a way that this expected impact will be achieved, and describe this in the proposal. The external reviewers will judge as one of the subcriteria of the impact criterion " Effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results (including management of IPR), to communicate the project, and to manage research data where relevant".

Subcontracting in the case of PHC-20
What kind of tasks can be subcontracted? How is an “essential task” (one that cannot be subcontracted) defined? What percentage of overall budget can be subcontracted? What is the maximum percentage of subcontracted tasks? Are there any other conditions that have to be met? Can the fieldwork part of the surveys be subcontracted? By fieldwork we mean the administrative work with recruiting and managing experiment participants and venues. Do all 4 pilot studies need to be implemented with the same methodological approach? Can we conduct a pilot study in a country that is not a project partner?

Answer:
Please see also the specific question on subcontracting in this FAQ. The rules governing subcontracting are set out in Art. 13 of the model grant agreement available on the H2020 participant portal: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/mga/gga/h2020-mga-gga-multi_en.pdf. The definition of an essential task is associated to whether it is critical for the success of the proposed project and requires special skills. It is up to you to justify your proposed subcontracting in the proposal.

The methodology for impact assessment of the pilots should allow for aggregating the findings across all the sites involved. This does not mean that there could not be some variations as long as the previous condition is met.

Regarding the last subquestion, the call text states that a minimum of four pilot sites in 4 countries should be included. It is up to you in the proposal to describe how you will convincingly ensure the availability of these sites as required during the project.

What type of "evidence" is requested to comply with the impact requirements of PHC-19-2014 and PHC-20-2014?
Answer:
PHC-19-2014 requests for evidence for the benefits of service robotics developed, based on proof of concept and involvement of relevant stakeholders. It doesn't give any numbers on how many trials or how many stakeholders. However, it also requests that the service robotics solution contributes to a reduction of admissions and days spent in care institutions, and prolongation of time spent living in own home when ageing with emerging functional impairments, and improvement in quality of life of older persons and of their carers.

Therefore, every proposal should include sufficient user involvement, clear indicators and a realistic trial activity to be able to conclude on the likely impact in line with expected impact in the call text.
In PHC-20-2014, where the overall aim is to do large scale validation of already existing solutions, numbers are mentioned: The number of users involved should be sufficient, combined with the appropriate methodology, to ensure statistical significance in impact analysis, with a minimum of 4 pilot sites in 4 countries. It is thus not mandatory to do randomised control trials of the scale that the pharmaceutical industry needs to do before drugs will be admitted to the market.

Are there requirements regarding the length of projects funded under PHC-19-2014 or PHC-20-2014?
Answer:
There is no fixed project duration set out for PHC19 and PHC 20. It is up to you to propose a duration which matches the activities and objectives of the proposal, taking into account the available resources. For innovation actions (PHC20), the duration of trials may depend on your method for ensuring significance in the trial findings.

Do you expect to fund one project to support the whole EIP-AHA or one project per action group? (related to HCO-01-2014)
Answer:
The call text states "Proposals should provide coordinated support to the activities of the EIP-AHA as follows: Support the existing action groups in implementing their action plans….". Therefore, it is intended that a proposal should cover support to all action groups under the EIP-AHA.
The call text mentions that the Commission considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the EU of between EUR 1 and 2 million would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts. Given the scope of activities that the proposals are asked to pursue and that the indicative EU budget for HCO-01-2014 is EUR 2 million, it is not unlikely that only one project will be funded.

Are the actions related to HCO-01-2014 meant mainly to support the existing EIP-AHA action groups? Can support to the EIP-AHA Reference Sites be addressed?
Answer:
The call text requires the Coordination and support actions in HCO-01-2014 to pursue a variety of activities in support of the EIP-AHA. Supporting the existing action groups of EIP-AHA in implementing their action plans is indeed one of these activities, but not the only one. On the other hand, support to the EIP-AHA Reference Sites is not in scope of the actions related to HCO-01-2014.

What period is the coordination concerned by HCO-01-2014 meant to cover? The period 2014-2020 or a shorter period of time?
Answer:
There is no formal minimum or maximum duration for the Coordination and support actions in HCO-01-2014. Proposers can choose any duration they deem suitable for the purpose of the action they propose, taking into account the proposed scope and available budget.

Is it necessary to be a member of the EIP-AHA in order to submit a proposal towards HCO-01-2014?
Answer:
It is not required to be a member of the EIP-AHA in order to submit a proposal towards HCO-01-2014. But proposers need to demonstrate in their proposal their ability to carry out the proposed work and the methodology to effectively execute the tasks, based on competences and experiences relevant to the scope and expected impact of HCO-01-2014.

Where can I find additional documents related to the topic of HCO-01-2014?
Answer:
Information about the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP-AHA) can be found on the website:
http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?section=active-healthy-ageing

The Strategic Implementation Plan and the Operational Plan of the EIP-AHA, with the priority action areas and specific actions can be found on:
http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?section=active-healthy-ageing&pg=implementation-plan

The Action Plans of the 6 existing Actions Groups can be found on:
http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?section=active-healthy-ageing&pg=commitment#action_plans

It is necessary to form a consortium to submit proposals to HCO-01-2014 or HCO-02-2014, or can single partner proposals be submitted?
Answer:
According to the General Annex C of the H2020 work programme, there is no legal requirement for forming a consortium for a Coordination and support action (CSA). CSA proposals can be submitted by a single legal entity established in a Member State or associated country.

Does the consortium need a binding mandate from the JPI General Assembly for HCO-02-2014?
Answer:
No binding mandate is required. Please note that proposals will be evaluated by external experts who will take into consideration the dimension of "effective governance of the JPI" as mentioned in the call text.

How is the governance structure between the CSA (HCO-02-2014) and the JPI defined? Can the CSA produce documents or decisions that are not in the interest of the JPI's General Assembly?
Answer:
The European Commission does not prescribe a governance structure. However, "effective governance and support to the implementation of the JPI MYBL" is an expected impact of the call topic. Evaluators will assess if this is reflected in the tasks and working methods as described in the proposal.

If a proposal is selected, its content will be the basis for the project's Description of Work. The Commission will use this Description of Work as the baseline for the monitoring of the CSA's performance.

The coordinator of the CSA in HCO-02-2014 is responsible for the performance of the CSA (legally binding relationship with the European Commission) whereas the responsibility for the JPI lies with its leadership (i.e. the Troika and the General Assembly). Please confirm.
Answer:
This is correct.

In the declaration section of the CSA proposal form it states: "The coordinator declares to have the explicit consent of all applicants on their participation and on the content of this proposal." Is it enough to click the box next to it or do we also need signed declarations on paper and if so who needs to sign?
Answer:
This is indeed a declaration on the part of the coordinator. Written and signed accession forms will only be required at the grant signature phase. So ticking the box is sufficient at this stage.

Please be aware that, if requested, you should be able to prove that other applicants were in agreement with the proposal (e.g. by e-mails, meeting minutes, letters etc.)

What are the conditions of participation of Canadian partners in H2020?
Answer:
The rules for participation for third countries are explained here: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/international-cooperation_en.htm

Entities established in industrialised countries (as well as those from China, Russia, India, Brazil and Mexico under the H2020 rules) may participate (using their own national funding). However, they can also be eligible for EC funding in exceptional cases, e.g. if their participation is deemed essential for carrying out the project or if provided for under a bilateral scientific and technological agreement or any other agreement.

In case a proposal wants to include a Canadian partner and ask for funding from H2020, the respective proposal will have to provide sufficient evidence that the participation of the partner (in this case from Canada) will be essential for the project. The funding decision will be made on a case by case basis at the evaluation stage. It will be based on the assessment of independent experts.

What are the conditions of participation of partners of the United States of America in H2020?
Answer:
In recognition of the opening of the US National Institutes of Health's programmes to European researchers, any legal entity established in the United States of America is eligible to receive Union funding to support its participation in projects supported under all topics in calls under the Societal Challenge 'Health, demographic change and well-being'.

One of our partners in the consortium has good contacts with a US organisation. Does it make sense to formally involve them in the proposal? The same happens with some Brazilian contacts. Do you think it is wiser to include support letters and specific business/impact references? Is it better/possible to include some as partners? Is there any other role they can play?
Answer:
It is possible to have international participants, you just have to make sure that they add value in comparison with the objectives and the complexity of their involvement. They can also have budget if they are eligible (see the two questions above).

Is it possible to know if there are any consortia being created for the above topics and it is possible to know how to find European partners?
Answer:
The Commission services cannot provide any information on whether consortia are formed for any of the topics addressed by this FAQ. Networks and facilities for partner search can be found on the pages of the Research & Innovation Participant Portal:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/calls/h2020-phc-2014-single-stage.html#tab3

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/calls/h2020-hco-2014.html#tab3

What about ethical issues?
Answer:
These topics are dealing with people. Careful attention therefore needs to be paid to privacy, safety, security, informed consent and other ethical issues that are important when dealing with sensitive information and (sometimes frail) people. Also any ethical approvals required at national level when implementing pilots should be duly taken into account in the project plans. Proposers should consider these aspects as an integral part of the proposal. Proposers should submit "ethics ready" proposals supplying all relevant background needed for the evaluation of this aspect.

As we want to collect, analyse and process data that are anonymous, are we concerned by the ethic point 4 "Protection of Personal Data" as mentioned in page 8 of the document "h2020-call-pt-ria-ia_en.pdf"?
Answer:
The call requires you to respect ethical issues, typically in line with the ethical guidelines of the countries where the data will be collected and processed. You should outline your approach in the proposal and if you feel that there are no issues you can use the forms accordingly.

We are planning to subcontract services within a task. How does this subcontracting have to be included in the proposal?
Answer:
As a general principle beneficiaries must be able to carry out the works with their own resources, but subcontracting of tasks could be allowed under certain conditions described in article 13 of the Model Grant Agreement.

If necessary to implement the action, the beneficiaries may award subcontracts covering the implementation of certain tasks which should in general be described in Annex 1 and 2 .

So the proposal should contain enough information that -if selected- will be part of annex 1 and 2:

- the work (the tasks) to be performed by a subcontractor which may cover only a limited part of the action;

- explanation of the need for a subcontract, taking into account the specific characteristics of the action;

- an estimation of the cost for each subcontract

In principle, the identity of the subcontractors does not need to be indicated. The beneficiaries must select the subcontracts ensuring the best value for money or, if appropriate, the lowest price. In doing so, they must avoid any conflict of interests.

Only in some specific cases the name should be indicated like for already existing framework contracts or subcontracts. But also in this case, even if the name of the subcontractor is mentioned in the proposal and later on in annex 1, the beneficiary must be able to show if requested that also these (sub)contracts must have complied with the two conditions (best value for money and absence of conflict of interests) at the time of their award.

Beyond these minimal obligations, a beneficiary that is a 'contracting authority' within the meaning of the EU Directive 2004/18/EC or a 'contracting entity' as described in Directive 2004/17/EC must moreover comply with the applicable national law on public procurement. These rules normally provide for a special procurement procedure for the types of contracts they cover.

Costs for subcontracts not set out in Annex 1 and 2 are in principle not eligible. If the need for a subcontract is not foreseen at the moment of the signature of the GA, the coordinator must request an amendment of the GA in order to introduce it in Annex 1 and 2. Exceptionally, the Commission/Agency may approve costs related to subcontracts not included in Annex 1 and 2 without formally amending the GA (under the conditions set out in Article 13).

Specific annotations on subcontracting article 13 is available in the participant portal http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf