



Horizon Europe

Call for a prize — Rules of Contest

EU Award for Gender Equality Champions

(HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-Prize)

Version 1.0
19 May 2026

HISTORY OF CHANGES

Version	Publication Date	Change	Page
1.0	19.05.2026	▪ Initial version	
		▪	
		▪	
		▪	



EUROPEAN RESEARCH EXECUTIVE AGENCY (REA)

REA.C - Future Society
 C.4 - Reforming European R&I and Research Infrastructures

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS — RULES OF CONTEST

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. Introduction.....	4
1. Background	5
2. Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities— Expected results	7
Objectives	7
Categories	7
Expected outcomes.....	7
Expected results.....	7
3. Available budget.....	8
4. Timetable and deadlines.....	8
5. Admissibility and documents	8
6. Eligibility	9
Eligible participants (eligible countries).....	9
Eligible activities.....	11
Geographic location (target countries).....	11
Ethics and values.....	11
7. Exclusion	12
8. Evaluation and award procedure.....	13
9. Award criteria	13
1. Category “Sustainable Gender Equality Champions”.....	13
2. Category “Newcomer Gender Equality Champions”	15
3. Category “Inclusive Gender Equality Champions”	16
10. Other conditions	17
Payment arrangements	17
Communication — Dissemination — Visibility of funding	17
IPR — Rights of use	18
Checks, audits and investigations	19
Withdrawal of the prize — Recovery of undue amounts	19
11. How to submit an application	19
12. Help.....	20
13. Important	22

0. Introduction

This is a call (contest)¹ for an EU recognition **prize** in the field of gender equality and inclusiveness under the **Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area Work Programme of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation**.

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))²
- the basic act (Horizon Europe Regulation³)

The call is launched in accordance with the 2026-2027 Work Programme⁴ and will be managed by the **European Research Executive Agency (REA)** ('Agency').

We invite you to read the **call documentation** on the Funding & Tenders Portal Topic page carefully, and in particular these Rules of Contest and the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#).

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the [Call Document](#) (Rules of Contest) outlines the:
 - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
 - available budget and timetable (sections 3 and 4)
 - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
 - criteria for exclusion (section 7)
 - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
 - award criteria (section 9)
 - other conditions (section 10)
 - how to submit an application (section 11)
- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the procedures to register and submit applications online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal').

¹ For ease of reference and consistency on the Funding & Tenders Portal, the terms 'call', 'project' and 'participant' are used as equivalent to 'contest', 'application' or 'contestants/applicants'.

² Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast) ('EU Financial Regulation') (OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024).

³ Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013.

⁴ *Horizon Europe – Work Programme 2026–2027, Part 15: General Annexes* – Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2026-2027/wp-15-general-annexes_horizon-2026-2027_en.pdf

1. Background

The Commission's Communication on a "A new ERA for Research and Innovation" adopted on 30 September 2020⁵ reaffirmed gender equality as one of the priority areas to address for deepening the European Research Area (ERA) and strengthening the European research and innovation (R&I) potential. As this ERA framework underlines, gender equality is also closely related to the development of an enhanced labour market for researchers, of improved research career assessment procedures, and of a transformative agenda for higher education institutions, which will ensure that talents in all their diversity can thrive in gender-equal, inclusive, fair, ethical and safe career environments.

The package adopted by the Council of the European Union on 26 November 2021 further reinforced this priority setting with gender equality and inclusiveness as a principle and value of the ERA⁶. A dedicated action within the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024⁷ focused on promoting gender equality and fostering inclusiveness, among other things through the development of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) and policies that take into account the intersections between gender and other social categorisations, such as racial or ethnic origin, disability, or sexual orientation and gender identity (cf. LGBTIQ⁸). The ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027 takes forward the work on inclusive GEPs, with a particular emphasis on monitoring and evaluation as a crucial aspect enhancing the effectiveness and quality of achieving institutional change⁹.

The importance of inclusive GEPs in fostering talent development and retention was reaffirmed also by the Council Recommendation of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation, and entrepreneurial talents in Europe¹⁰ and the accompanying Charter for Researchers¹¹, referring to them as adequate mechanisms for promoting gender equality. Similarly, several studies confirm that existing national award and certification schemes for gender equality in research performing organisations, including universities, can be useful tools for advancing gender equality in academic, research and innovation organisations, with some being effectively used as drivers for competition in attracting students and researchers and/or as a prerequisite for having access to funding.¹²

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0628>

⁶ Council Recommendation on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2021.431.01.0001.01.ENG

⁷ See the annex to the Council Conclusions on the future governance of the ERA: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14308-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

⁸ LGBTIQ refers to people identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or other forms of non-binary gender identities and diverse sexual orientations, cf the Commission's LGBTIQ Strategy 2020-2025: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/lgbtiq-equality-strategy-2020-2025_en

⁹ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/news/all-research-and-innovation-news/commission-adopts-proposal-next-european-research-area-policy-agenda-2025-2027-2025-02-28_en

¹⁰ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202301640

¹¹ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15135-2023-ADD-1/en/pdf>

¹² See: Horizon 2020 GENDER-NET Plus project Deliverable D6.1 - National and regional plans and initiatives promoting gender equality and structural change: https://gender-net-plus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/GENDER-NET_Plus_Deliverable_6.1-final.pdf; Horizon 2020 CASPER project Deliverable D3.3- State of the Art Analysis: mapping the awarding certification landscape in Higher Education and Research: https://zenodo.org/record/4561664#.Yk_tpE1BxPY

In this context, an annual Prize has been established in 2022, the **EU Award for Gender Equality Champions**, to recognise the outstanding achievements of academic and research organisations through the implementation of GEPs.

A GEP is a set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in an organisation through institutional and cultural change. A GEP lifecycle, which typically lasts around 3 to 5 years, contains the following phases, as highlighted in the [Horizon Europe guidance on Gender Equality Plans](#)¹³.

- An audit phase (elements of this phase should include the collection of sex-disaggregated and/or gender-disaggregated data and a review of practices to identify gender inequalities and their causes. The audit stage should also include review of relevant national and regional laws, regulations, or funding requirements);
- A planning phase (during this phase, an organisation will set the objectives and targets for the GEP alongside a roadmap of actions and measures. This phase also includes allocating resources and responsibilities for the delivery of the GEP and agreeing timelines for implementation);
- An implementation phase (in which the roadmap of activities is implemented, including, for example, setting up working groups to develop and implement new policies and procedures. This phase should include awareness raising and training efforts to achieve buy-in and build capacity and support for the GEP across the organisation, as well as give visibility internally and externally to the GEP);
- A monitoring and evaluation phase (in which the delivery of the plan and progress against its aims and objectives are regularly assessed. Ongoing review of findings and progress will also provide space for learning and feedback to enable adjustments and improvements to interventions).

In the context of the Horizon Europe GEP eligibility criterion, as laid down in General Annex B of the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026-2027, **the applicants' GEP must meet the four following mandatory process-related requirements**¹⁴:

- publication: a formal document published on the institution's website and signed and/or adopted by the top management;
- dedicated resources: commitment of resources and expertise in gender equality to implement the plan;
- data collection and monitoring: sex/gender disaggregated data on personnel (and students, for the establishments concerned) and reporting at least every two years based on indicators;
- training: awareness raising/training for staff and decision-makers on gender equality, for instance on unconscious gender biases.

Content-wise, it is recommended that the applicants' GEP addresses the following thematic areas, using concrete measures and targets, the coverage of which is evaluated under the award criteria (see section 9 'Award criteria'):

¹³ Horizon Europe guidance on Gender Equality Plans. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d9468388-df75-11f0-8439-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

¹⁴ See General Annex B-Eligibility to the Work Programme 2021-2027, pages 18-19: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2026-2027/wp-15-general-annexes_horizon-2026-2027_en.pdf

- work-life balance and organisational culture;
- gender balance in leadership and decision-making;
- gender equality in recruitment and career progression;
- integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content;
- measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

2. Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities— Expected results

Objectives

The “**EU Award for Gender Equality Champions**” is a recognition prize scheme designed as a booster and complement to the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe, and a tool for advancing inclusive GEPs and policies in the framework of the European Research Area Policy Agenda.

Categories

The Prize will be awarded to four academic or research organisations, and contestants can apply to one among the following three prize categories:

- **Sustainable Gender Equality Champions:** Organisations that can demonstrate a significant and sustained record of activity and a high level of achievement through the implementation of their GEP(s);
- **Newcomer Gender Equality Champions:** Organisations without a sustained record of activity in gender equality that have recently completed the implementation of their first GEP and can demonstrate the most progress achieved through its implementation;
- **Inclusive Gender Equality Champions:** Organisations that have developed the most innovative inclusive GEP – namely a GEP addressing intersectionality, meaning links between gender and at least two other social categories, including for example racial or ethnic origin, social origin, sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTIQ) or disability – and can demonstrate concrete results obtained through its implementation.

Expected outcomes

- Recognition of organisations with the most significant impact resulting from the implementation of their GEP, serving as role models for others;
- Strengthened gender equality and inclusiveness in the European Research Area.

Expected results

The prizes will increase public awareness of the importance of addressing gender equality and inclusiveness in organisations applying for Horizon Europe funding, including academic and research organisations. They will promote institutional change and incentivise a high degree of commitment to the implementation of inclusive GEPs. In

addition, they will help create a community of champions inspiring other organisations to become gender equality champions themselves.

3. Available budget

Each prize winner will receive EUR 0.1 million from a total prize budget of EUR 0.4 million. There will be one winner in the prize category “Sustainable Gender Equality Champions”, two winners in the prize category “Newcomer Gender Equality Champions”, and one winner in the prize category “Inclusive Gender Equality Champions”. In case there is/are no winner(s) in one or more categories, the corresponding prize amount will be reallocated to the highest-ranking proposal(s) in another category/ies according to the order below.

In the absence of a winner in category 1 “Sustainable Gender Equality Champions”, the prize amount will be reallocated to the next highest-ranking proposal(s) submitted in category 2 “Newcomer Gender Equality Champions”. In the absence of such submitted proposal in category 2, the prize amount will be reallocated to the next highest-ranking proposal(s) submitted in category 3 “Inclusive Gender Equality Champions”.

In the absence of a winner in category 3 “Inclusive Gender Equality Champions”, the prize amount will be reallocated to the next highest-ranking proposal(s) submitted in category 2 “Newcomer Gender Equality Champions”. In the absence of such submitted proposal in category 2, the prize amount will be reallocated to the next highest-ranking proposal(s) submitted in category 1 “Sustainable Gender Equality Champions”.

In the absence of a winner in category 2 “Newcomer Gender Equality Champions”, the prize amount will be reallocated to the next highest-ranking proposal(s) submitted in category 3 “Inclusive Gender Equality Champion”. In the absence of such submitted proposal in category 3, the prize amount will be reallocated to the next highest-ranking proposal(s) submitted in category 1 “Sustainable Gender Equality Champions”.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines	
Call opening:	16 June 2026
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	29 September 2026 – 17:00:00 CET (Brussels)
Evaluation:	October 2026 - January 2027
Information on evaluation results / award:	January-March 2027

5. Admissibility and documents

Applications must be submitted before the **call deadline** (see *timetable* section 4).

Applications must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Applications (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠ NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

Applications must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the applicant organisations (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the application (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*). In the relevant field, applicants must provide the weblink to where the Gender Equality Plan on which the application is based has been published and can be accessed as a publicly available document signed by the top management.
- Mandatory annex: Gender Equality Plan (GEP) as defined in the General Annexes of the Horizon Europe Work Programme and meeting all mandatory process-related requirements laid down in Section 1 Background on which the application is based (*in English if available, to be uploaded as a PDF file*).

Your application must be **readable, accessible, printable**.

Applications are limited to maximum **15 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, bank account validation, ethics review, declaration of honour, etc*) or for a short video message on your achievements in the chosen Prize category. This video will be used for communication purposes only.

 For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

6. Eligibility

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible, the applicants must:

- be a legal entity (private entity or public body, including research organisations and higher education establishments¹⁵)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - o EU Member State (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
 - o non-EU country associated to the Horizon Europe ([associated countries](#))
 - o [candidate country](#)¹⁶ for the accession to the EU
- have attached the current GEP, as well as the GEP on which the application is based (if these are different) that comply with the minimum process-related

¹⁵ For the legal definition, see Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Management; https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/rules-lev-lear-fca_en.pdf

¹⁶ https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/eu-enlargement_en.

requirements set for GEPs in Horizon Europe Work Programme General Annexes¹⁷ and quoted above in section 1 Background, signed and/or adopted.

- for Category 2, applicants must have finalised the implementation phase of their first GEP at the latest at the call closure date, i.e. must have completed at least the audit, planning and implementation phases of a GEP lifecycle and reached the monitoring and evaluation phase¹⁸ by the call closure date. Applicants must have no prior sustained activity in gender equality, such as prior systematic institutional strategies or policies dedicated to gender equality.

Applicants that have already received an EU or Euratom prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.

Winners of any category of the previous editions of EU Award for Gender Equality Champions are not eligible for any category of this prize.

For all three categories, to be considered as complying with the Horizon Europe GEP eligibility criterion for the currently implemented GEP, the applicant must have filled in accordingly the corresponding self-declaration GEP questionnaire featured under the Legal Information tab of the Participant Register, accessible through the [Funding and Tenders Portal](#)¹⁹. The relevant cut-off date is the day of the call closure.

Only applications submitted by a single legal entity will be allowed. Joint applications will not be allowed.

Applicants must register in the [Participant Register](#) — before the call deadline — and will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, you will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

Specific cases

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons²⁰.

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Applicants from countries with ongoing negotiations (see above) may participate in the call and can receive a prize if the negotiations are concluded before the award decision is taken (see General Annex B to Horizon Europe Work programme 2026-2027).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of

¹⁷ See General Annex B-Eligibility to the Work Programme 2026-2027, pages 18-19: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2026-2027/wp-15-general-annexes_horizon-2026-2027_en.pdf

¹⁸ See GEP lifecycle definition in Section 1. Background.

¹⁹ To access the GEP questionnaire, please consult the GEP FAQs (Q&A No. 4): [Gender equality plans \(GEPs\) - Publications Office of the EU](#)

²⁰ See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)²¹. Such entities are not eligible to participate and can NOT receive a prize.

EU conditionality measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092²². Such entities are not eligible to participate and can NOT receive a prize. Currently such measures are in place for Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain (see [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/2506](#), as of 16 December 2022).

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above.

Geographic location (target countries)

Applications must relate to activities in EU Member State (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs)), non-EU country associated to the Horizon Europe (associated countries) or candidate country for the accession to the EU.

Ethics and values

Activities must comply with the highest ethical standards and the applicable EU, international and national law on ethical principles.

Moreover, they must respect basic EU values (such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities).

The activities must comply with:

- ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity) and
- applicable international, EU and national law

and may not:

- aim at human cloning for reproductive purposes
- intend to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such changes heritable (with the exception of research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads, which may be financed), or
- intend to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer.

²¹ Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

²² Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget (OJ L 325, 20.12.2022, p. 94).

Moreover, activities must have an exclusive focus on civil applications and no prize can be awarded for activities carried out outside the EU, if they are prohibited in all Member States.

Applications involving ethics issues will have to undergo an ethics review to authorise funding. Applications that did not respect the above ethical principles and standards cannot be awarded a prize.

7. Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate²³:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct²⁴ (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that²⁵:

²³ See Articles 138 and 143 EU Financial Regulation [2024/2509](#).

²⁴ Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

²⁵ See Article 141(1) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

8. Evaluation and award procedure

Applications will be subject to a formal evaluation by a **jury**.

If there are more than 40 applications per category, there will be a **pre-selection** to select the best 20 to pass to jury review. Otherwise, all applications will pass directly to jury review.

The pre-selection panel and jury usually have a different composition, but jury members may participate in the pre-selection panel.

The pre-selection panel/jury will evaluate each application against the award criteria.

For applications with the same score, in each of the three prize categories, the pre-selection panel/jury will determine a **priority order** according to the following approach: The score for the **criterion N°1 will be given a weight of 2**.

If two or more applications **in category 1 and 2 tie (ex aequo)**, the proposal with the most optimal incorporation of an **intersectional approach**, i.e. addressing intersections between gender and at least two other social categories, such as racial or ethnic origin, social origin, sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTIQ), or disability, will be prioritised.

If two or more applications in any category (still) share the same score, the prize will be equally divided and awarded to all applications with the same score, while dividing equally the prize budget of the allocated award (see section 3. Available budget).

On the basis of the evaluation by the jury (and after the mandatory checks: *ethics review, security scrutiny, legal entity validation, non-exclusion, double funding and plagiarism, etc*), the awarding authority will decide on the award of the prize.

All applications will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful applications will be awarded the prize; the unsuccessful ones will be rejected.

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications are deemed to have been accessed (and received) 10 days after sending and that deadlines will be counted from then (see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)).

9. Award criteria

If admissible and eligible, the applications will be evaluated and ranked against the following **award criteria**:

1. **Category “Sustainable Gender Equality Champions”**

Organisations that can demonstrate a significant and sustained record of activity and a high level of concrete achievement through the implementation of their GEPS.

Award criterion 1: Sustainable Impact – The applicant should demonstrate internal sustainable impact through:

- **Comprehensive action**, including a consistent track record of activities over time **and coverage of all five thematic areas** for GEPs outlined in the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026–2027 (General Annexes)²⁶ and in Section 1 Background;
- **Demonstrable achievements and impact**, evidenced by measurable progress towards gender equality, supported by qualitative and quantitative data (such as baselines, indicators, performance measures);
- **Sustainability and durability of results**, showing that the changes achieved are long-lasting and to continue beyond the GEP implementation period;
- **Compliance, clarity of life-cycle completeness and institutionalisation of the GEP**, showing compliance with Horizon Europe GEP requirements, covering all key GEP phases (audit, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation), including their timing, as well as demonstrating structural embedding within the organisation.

Award criterion 2: Inspirational Model – The applicant should demonstrate external efforts and impact:

- **Outreach and knowledge-sharing efforts**, including concrete actions to share experience, practices, or results from the GEP(s) with external stakeholders (such as peer learning, mentoring, dissemination, collaboration), proportionate to the organisation's size and context;
- **External influence and uptake**, showing how the organisation's GEP(s) or related practices have informed, inspired, or been taken up by other organisations, networks, or stakeholders and/or how organisation influenced policy making.

Intersectionality will be used as an *ex aequo* criterion when two applications receive the same score.

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Sustainable Impact	7.5	10.0
Inspirational Model	3.5	5.0
Overall (pass)scores	11.0	15.0

Maximum points: 15 points. Individual thresholds:

Sustainable Impact: 7.5/10 points. Inspirational Model: 3.5/5 points.

Overall threshold: 11 points.

²⁶ Horizon Work Programme 2026-2027. General Annexes, page 18-19 https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2026-2027/wp-15-general-annexes_horizon-2026-2027_en.pdf

2. **Category “Newcomer Gender Equality Champions”**

Organisations that have recently finalised the implementation of their first GEP and can demonstrate the most progress achieved through its implementation.

Award criterion 1: Progress Achieved - The applicant should demonstrate:

- **Thematic coverage**, showing that the GEP addresses at least **four of the five thematic areas for GEPs** recommended in the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026–2027 (General Annex B)²⁷ and Section 1 Background;
- **Qualitative progress**, with concrete examples of positive institutional change achieved through the GEP, illustrating improvements in structures, processes, or organisational culture;
- **Quantitative progress**, evidenced by measurable improvements towards gender equality, supported by robust quantitative data (e.g. baselines, indicators, performance measures);
- **Contextualised ambition and achievement**, demonstrating how the progress achieved through the GEP reflects the level of ambition and effort in light of the organisation’s starting point, available resources, and operating environment (e.g. socio-political context and any external support received).

Award criterion 2: Stakeholder engagement – The applicant should demonstrate:

- **Level of internal stakeholder engagement**, showing involvement of the diverse organisation’s internal stakeholders (e.g., women and men from different staff categories, and, where relevant, students), **and how this engagement has contributed to the quality, relevance, or uptake of the measures/GEP**;
- **Scope of internal stakeholder engagement**, demonstrating stakeholders’ involvement in each of the GEP life-cycle phase implemented so far, **and how this engagement has contributed to the quality, relevance, or uptake of the measures/GEP**.

Incorporation of intersectionality will be used as an *ex aequo* criterion when two applications receive the same score.

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Progress Achieved	7.5	10.0
Stakeholder engagement	3.0	5.0
Overall (pass) scores	10.0	15.0

Maximum points: 15 points. Individual thresholds:

Progress Achieved: 7.5/10 points.

²⁷ Horizon Work Programme 2026-2027. General Annexes, page 18-19 https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2026-2027/wp-15-general-annexes_horizon-2026-2027_en.pdf

Stakeholder engagement: 3/5 points.

Overall threshold: 10 points.

3. Category “Inclusive Gender Equality Champions”

Organisations that have developed the most innovative inclusive GEP – i.e. a GEP addressing intersections between gender and at least two other social categories, such as racial or ethnic origin, social origin, sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTIQ), or disability, - and can demonstrate concrete results obtained through its implementation.

Award criterion 1: Progress achieved - The applicant should demonstrate:

- **Thematic coverage**, showing that the GEP addresses at least three of the five thematic areas recommended for GEPs in the Horizon Europe Work Programme General Annexes²⁸ and quoted above in section 1 Background;
- **Demonstrable progress**, evidenced by concrete examples of positive institutional change achieved through the inclusive GEP, supported by **quantitative data** (e.g., baselines, indicators, performance measures) **and qualitative data**, demonstrating improvements in structures, processes, or organisational culture;
- **Intersectional approach and implementation**, showing how intersectionality is integrated into the GEP and applied, including addressing intersections between gender and at least two other social categories, such as racial or ethnic origin, social origin, sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTIQ), or disability;
- **Compliance and life-cycle clarity**, showing compliance with Horizon Europe GEP requirements and covering all key GEP phases (audit, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation), with a clear description of their timing.

Award criterion 2: Innovative Inclusiveness – The applicant should demonstrate:

- **Innovative approaches to inclusive gender equality**, demonstrating what is new or significantly improved in the organisation's way of addressing intersectionality and why it is considered innovative in the organisational or contextual setting; approaches can include novel measures, tools, partnerships, or institutional methods;
- **Added value and impact of innovation**, evidenced by concrete results, demonstrating how the organisation contributes to advancing inclusive gender equality beyond standard approaches, supported by qualitative and quantitative data where available.

²⁸ See General Annex B-Eligibility to the Work Programme 2026-2027, pages 18-19: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2026-2027/wp-15-general-annexes_horizon-2026-2027_en.pdf

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Progress Achieved	7.5	10.0
Innovative Inclusiveness	3.5	5.0
Overall (pass) scores	12.0	15.0

Maximum points: 15 points. Individual thresholds:

Progress Achieved: 7.5/10 points. Innovative Inclusiveness: 3.5/5 points.

Overall threshold: 11 points.

In each of the three prize categories, applications must pass both the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold. Evaluation scores will be given for each of the criteria relevant for a given category. Scores will be given with a resolution of one decimal place.

In each category, the prize will be awarded to the application(s) with the best score(s). Other applications will be rejected.

10. Other conditions

Payment arrangements

The prize money will be paid to the prize winners after the award ceremony, provided all the requested documents have been submitted.

Communication — Dissemination — Visibility of funding

Prize winners must promote the prize and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner.

Communication activities related to the prize (*including media interviews, press statements, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.*), must acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement (translated into local languages, where appropriate):



Funded by the
European Union



Co-funded by the
European Union



Funded by the
European Union



Co-funded by the
European Union

The emblem must remain distinct and separate and cannot be modified by adding other visual marks, brands or text.

Apart from the emblem, no other visual identity or logo may be used to highlight the EU support.

When displayed in association with other logos (*e.g. of winners or sponsors*), the emblem must be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos.

For the purposes of these obligations, the winners may use the emblem without first obtaining approval from the awarding authority. This does not, however, give them the right to exclusive use. Moreover, they may not appropriate the emblem or any similar trademark or logo, either by registration or by any other means.

Any communication or dissemination activity related to the prize must use factually accurate information.

Moreover, it must indicate the following disclaimer (translated into local languages where appropriate):

“Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the awarding authority can be held responsible for them.”

IPR — Rights of use

The awarding authority does not obtain ownership of the results produced in the context of the prize.

The awarding authority has the right to use non-sensitive information relating to the prize and materials and documents received from the winners (*such as pictures or audio-visual material, in paper or electronic form*) for information, communication, dissemination and publicity purposes.

Photos and videos taken by the awarding authority either in preparation of the award ceremony or during the award ceremony are the sole property of the awarding authority.

Checks, audits and investigations

The awarding authority, the European Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the European Court of Auditors (ECA) may carry out checks, audits and investigations in relation to the prize.²⁹

Withdrawal of the prize — Recovery of undue amounts

The awarding authority may withdraw the prize after its award and recover all payments made, if it finds out that:

- false information, fraud or corruption was used to obtain it
- the prize winners were not eligible or should have been excluded or
- the prize winners are in serious breach of their obligations under these Rules of Contest.

11. How to submit an application

All applications must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

You can access the Portal [here](#), or by clicking 'Apply now' on the official prize webpage.

Submission is a **2-step** process:

a) create a user account and register your organisation

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EU Login user account](#).

Once you have an EULogin account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

b) submit the application

²⁹ For the powers of OLAF, EPPO and ECA, see Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 883/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 September 2013 concerning investigations conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1073/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (Euratom) No 1074/1999 (OJ L 248, 18/09/2013, p. 1), Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/1996 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities (OJ L 292, 15/11/1996, p. 2), Council Regulation (EU) 2017/1939 of 12 October 2017 implementing enhanced cooperation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office ('the EPPO') and Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) and Article 257 of EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section.

Submit your application in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the application. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Annexes (if any; see *section 5*). Upload them as PDF files (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The application must keep to the **page limits** (see *section 5*); excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System otherwise the application might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The application must be submitted **before the call deadline** (see *section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed and applications can no longer be submitted.

Once the application is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your application has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the application (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the [Online Manual](#). The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

12. Help

Additional information can be found:

- [Online Manual](#)
- [Prize website](#)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates.

Contact

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the [IT Helpdesk](#).

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: [Research Enquiry Service](#).

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates
(see *cover page*).

13. Important



IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc.*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all applicants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all applicants must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per applicant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget. Applications that have already received an EU prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.
- **Resubmission** — Applications may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission. For first past the post prizes with cut-off dates, applications can be changed and re-submitted until the cut-off date; the re-submission may however let you use your position as first in place.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in these Rules of Contest (and the documents they refer to). Applications that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire application will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — The awarding authority may cancel the contest or decide not to award the prize — without any obligation to compensate participants (*e.g. no applications, jury cannot determine winner, winner is not eligible or must be excluded, objectives have already been achieved, etc.*). In this case, you will be informed via a call update.
- **Language** — You can submit your application in any official EU language. However, for reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, see *section 12*).
- **Transparency** — In accordance with Article 38 of the [EU Financial Regulation](#), information about EU prizes awarded and the winners (name, address and amount awarded) is published each year on the [Europa website](#).

The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.
- **Data protection** — Any processing of personal data in the context of this prize will be done in accordance with Regulation [2018/1725](#). It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your application (and subsequent management of your prize and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication). Details are explained in the [Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement](#).

By submitting the application, all applicants accept that the awarding authority will publish information on the finalists and winners.