Questions & Answers

Call for proposals 2026
HORIZON-ER-JU-2026-01

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Q1	Regarding the dissemination and exploitation plan, is that a separate template that applicants have to complete and attach to in addition to Part A, Part B and the Budget tables?	The dissemination and exploitation plan is not filled in in separate template. A first version of your 'plan for the dissemination and exploitation including communication activities' should be included in your proposal as highlighted in the Application form template: Application form - Part B (HE EU-RAIL, RIA).
Q2	About the self-assessments, if there are none, could we just write that there are none identified?	The ethics and security self-assessments must be completed, i.e. all questions must be replied. You can find more information on how to complete your ethics self-assessment in the following document: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment_en.pdf You can find more information on how to complete your security self-assessment in the following document: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-handle-security-sensitive-projects_en.pdf
Q3	Could you explain why there are no more financial ex-post audits by the EC? Is it thanks to the use of lump sum?	As announced in the EU-RAIL work programme 2026 and in accordance with the European Commission decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme, EU-Rail intends to apply solely the lump sum form of funding. The main difference resulting thereof, in comparison to grants based on actual costs, is that the

		payments will not depend on claiming the costs actually incurred, that beneficiaries will not be obliged to provide EU-RAIL with audit certificates and keep/provide financial records, and that such records may not be requested by the JU during or after the implementation of the action. In addition, for the lump sum actions intended by EU-Rail to be applied as a sole form of grants under Horizon Europe, in the absence of any obligations of beneficiaries to report on costs actually incurred, there will not be any financial ex-post audits conducted by the European Commission Common Audit Service (CAS) for EU-Rail grants, as well as there will not be any error rate calculation. EU-RAIL will be implementing an alternative form of ex-post assurance activities, such as reviews, focused on qualitative/technical assessments of agreed work packages and beneficiaries. Although financial audits are no longer carried out by the Granting Authority (EU-Rail), checks, reviews, audits and investigations - during the action or afterwards- could be carried out any time (ex-ante and ex-post) by the European Commission Audit service (IAS), the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Court of Auditors (ECA) or the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in accordance with their respective missions and mandates and based on their own methodology as applicable to the lump sum form of financing. To this end, the beneficiary concerned must keep all relevant information relating to the action. Concerning record-keeping obligations, beneficiaries are required to retain technical evidence (e.g. deliverables, publications, prototypes, and other technical documents proving that the work was carried out as described in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement. Financial supporting documents (e.g. timesheets, payslips, contracts, travel invoices, actual cost records) are however no longer requested by EU-Rail under the lump-sum approach. Nevertheless, beneficiaries still need to comply with any financial record keeping obligations outside the grant agreement (e.g., under national law or internal procedures). Such financial documents should also be retained in case of OLAF, EPPO and ECA audits and investigations. Further details can be found in Articles 20 and 25 of the Lump sum Model Grant Agreement.
Q4	When is the pre-financing discounted in case of lump-sum model? At the final payment after the end of project, or continuously when particular WP is finished?	The pre-financing is in principle cleared at the final payment; however, it may also be partially cleared during the action if the applicable payment thresholds are reached through interim payments. For each reporting submission, the JU calculates the payment amount on the basis of the lump sums corresponding to the work packages that have been accepted following the assessment of

		the technical report, taking into account the cumulative amount of previous payments and the payment thresholds set out in the Grant Agreement. The clearing of the pre-financing results from this calculation and may therefore start already during the course of the action.
Q5	Some of the macros in the templates expire quickly and cannot be used. Also there are problems with security, meaning macros are blocked by local institutions' IT security departments. This creates a lot of tensions. Could we possibly have an online form instead of Excel spread sheets with macros?	At this stage, there is no online form available that could replace the Excel template with macros. Applicants are required to complete the detailed budget table using the provided Excel file with macros enabled. Once the budget table has been completed, it must be uploaded to the online submission system as an annex to Part B of the proposal. The Excel template is provided in **.xlsm format** as it uses macros and should be saved in this format while being completed. For security reasons, the submission system does not accept macro-enabled files, so the document must be uploaded in **.xlsx or .xls format**. Applicants are strongly advised to always keep a copy of the original **.xlsm** file for their records.
Q6	Is it possible to split transversal WPs...such as Communication and Management WPs?	It is up to the applicant to decide on the number and duration of work packages needed to address the scope and expected outcome of the call text. As a general guidance as many as needed but no more than what is manageable. Please note that a work package (WP) is a major sub-division of the work plan of your project. Although, a single activity is not a WP. A single task is not a WP. A % of progress is not a WP (e.g. 50 % of the tests). A lapse of time is generally not a WP (e.g. activities of year 1). Work packages with a long duration may be split along the reporting periods (e.g., Management, Dissemination and Exploitation, etc.). In this way, the relevant activities can be paid at the end of the reporting period.
Q7	Would participation from companies with automotive lighting experience be considered relevant for railway calls, particularly for projects focusing on passenger safety, visual communication, and human-centered lighting systems?	Participation is open to all eligible entities in accordance with the rules for participation of Horizon Europe, the EU-Rail Work-Programme and the call conditions. Please look also in the call conditions the section "Special skills and/or capabilities expected from the Applicant(s)". Any application should also the scope and expected outcomes of the call topic text.