



ECCC 
EUROPEAN CYBERSECURITY
COMPETENCE CENTRE

Writing a DEP/HE Cybersecurity proposal

Tips & Tricks

#DigitalEU
#ECCC

Overview

- Horizon Europe vs. Digital Europe (Cyber) calls
- Getting ready to apply for EU funding
- Horizon vs. Digital Europe Cyber calls – Award criteria
- DEP Cybersecurity – How to address the criteria & Frequent mistakes
 - Criterion 1. RELEVANCE
 - Criterion 2. IMPLEMENTATION
 - Criterion 3. IMPACT

Horizon vs. Digital Europe Cyber calls (non exhaustive list)

	Horizon	DEP
Objective	Research / Innovation	Uptake and Deployment
Main Type of action (funding rate)	RIA (100%) IA (70% / 100%) CSA (100%)	Simple (50%) SME support action (50%/75%) CSA (100%) FSTP (up to 100%)
Pre-financing rate	variable	Usually 80%
Consortium composition	Minim 3 beneficiaries from 3 eligible countries	Mono-beneficiaries allowed
Geographic coverage		Security restrictions apply
Evaluation criteria	Excellence Impact Quality and efficiency of Implementation	Relevance Implementation Impact
Exploitation plan	Yes (IA action)	Yes

Getting ready to apply for EU funding

- Carefully read the **Work Programme/Call document** applicable to the topic you are interested in, to understand the objectives and specific guidelines.
- Familiarize yourself with the **EU policy objectives** to put your proposal into perspective.
- Take the time to carefully review and understand the **evaluation criteria** for the specific call you would like to apply for. This can help you identify potential weaknesses in your proposal and address them before submission.
- Check whether the call/topic you are applying for is a 'lump sum' call or an 'actual costs' call, as this has different implications in terms of **eligibility/admissibility conditions**. Also check the **type of action** foreseen.
- Check the **CORDIS website** for past and ongoing EU-funded projects to get insights into how these projects have been designed and partnerships established.
- Attend **Info Days** on the specific call for proposals you would like to apply for.
- Contact your **National Coordination Centre** for support.

Getting ready to apply for EU funding

Check the specific requirements of the call and of the topic

- Subject in scope of the Call & Topic
- Eligibility of participants (country, type of beneficiary)
- Security restrictions
 - Ownership Control Declaration;
 - Country restrictions for subcontracting;
 - Country restrictions for eligible costs
 - IPR restrictions
- Ethics & security self-assessment
- Gender dimension, when required
- Page limit for part B
- Costs of equipment (depreciation, full cost)
- Mandatory requirements for deliverables (ex. communication, dissemination & exploitation – month 6)
- Annexes

[guidance-participation-in-dep-he-edf-cef-dig-restricted-calls_dep-he-edf-cef-dig_en.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

Do NOT repeat ad-litteram what is contained in the Call document. Tell your story!

Do NOT oversell your idea with too many or too ambitious objectives.

Do NOT 'overwrite' your proposal - try to remain simple and straightforward.

Horizon vs. Digital Europe Cyber calls – Award criteria

Horizon	DEP
<p>Excellence:</p> <p>1- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives, and the extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, and goes beyond the state of the art</p> <p>2 - Soundness of the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, inter-disciplinary approaches, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content, and the quality of open science practices, including sharing and management of research outputs and engagement of citizens, civil society and end users where appropriate.</p>	<p>Relevance:</p> <p>1 - Alignment with the objectives and activities as described in the Call document</p> <p>2 - Contribution to long-term policy objectives, relevant policies and strategies, and synergies with activities at European and national level</p> <p>3 - Extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the EU implementation</p> <p>4. Extent to which the project can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance</p>
<p>Implementation:</p> <p>1 - Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.</p> <p>2 - Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.</p>	<p>Implementation:</p> <p>1 - Maturity of the project</p> <p>2 - Soundness of the implementation plan and efficient use of resources</p> <p>3 - Capacity of the applicants, and when applicable the consortium as a whole, to carry out the proposed work</p>
<p>Impact:</p> <p>1 - Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions from to the project.</p> <p>2- Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.</p>	<p>Impact:</p> <p>1 - Extent to which the project will achieve the expected outcomes and deliverables referred to in the call for proposals and, where relevant, the plans to disseminate and communicate project achievements</p> <p>2 - Extent to which the project will strengthen competitiveness and bring important benefits for society</p>

Criterion 1. RELEVANCE – How to address the criterion

1. Alignment with the objectives and activities as described in the Call document:

- Proposal in line with the call objectives
- Proposal's objectives - clearly defined, justified/demonstrated, aligned with the objectives of the specific topic, with relevant measurable KPIs and target values

3. Extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the EU

- Proposals should help strengthen the EU cybersecurity supply chain, for example by using or promoting trusted EU providers, open-source tools, or standards-based solutions.
- Applicants should explain how the action helps reduce dependence on non-EU technologies.
- Not checked for all topics

2. Contribution to long-term policy objectives, relevant policies and strategies, and synergies with activities at European and national level:

- Sufficiently explained and substantiated, proposals should explain how they support relevant EU policies
- Provide clear references to specific initiatives in terms of synergies and don't stay general
- Explain how the action complements or extends existing efforts, rather than duplicating them.

4. Extent to which the project can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance

- Not checked for all topics

Criterion 1. RELEVANCE – Frequent mistakes

1. Alignment with the objectives and activities as described in the Call document:

- project objectives are often too broadly formulated, lacking specific, measurable KPIs and clear baselines, which makes it difficult to assess their alignment with the Call's requirements and to monitor progress effectively.
- many proposals only partially meet the SMART criteria, with insufficient detail on how objectives will be achieved, measured, and substantiated, resulting in a weak connection between planned activities and the expected outcomes described in the Call.

3. Extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the EU

- Proposals generally lack sufficient detail on how they will address technology supply chain challenges, such as reducing dependencies on external providers.
- The reinforcement of digital supply chains is often only mentioned, without some concrete actions or KPIs and with little explanation of how the project's outcomes will contribute to EU operational sovereignty or supply chain security.

2. Contribution to long-term policy objectives, relevant policies and strategies, and synergies with activities at European and national level:

- While proposals frequently reference EU and national strategies, they rarely provide explicit examples, limiting to the demonstration of their contribution to long-term policy goals and synergies at both European and national levels.
- Synergies with other initiatives and activities are often mentioned superficially, without sufficient elaboration or evidence of how the project will build on top of existing efforts

4. Extent to which the project can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance

- Not checked for all topics

Criterion 2. IMPLEMENTATION – How to address the criterion

1 - Maturity of the project

- Ensure the right maturity of the proposal with respect to the requirements of the call; maturity can touch upon tools, technology, and services, the experience of partners, standards, etc.
- Provide details on the involvement of the beneficiaries in the actions, the advancement compared to the current state of the art, and the topics to be addressed
- Applicants should reference previous testing, pilots or operational trials that have validated the approach.

2 - Soundness of the implementation plan and efficient use of resources

- Applicants must provide a coherent and realistic implementation plan, with defined tasks, deliverables, partners, and milestones.
- Work plan must provide sufficient explanation about each WP, the connection between WPs, how the activities outlined in each WP will contribute to achieving the proposal's goal.
- Budgets should be justified, proportional, and aligned with the work described. Use of resources – realistic and detailed allocation per WP per partner, both in terms of workload but also of competencies required.
- Proposals should include a detailed risk assessment, identifying potential challenges and mitigation strategies (technical, legal, organisational).

3 - Capacity of the applicants, and when applicable the consortium as a whole, to carry out the proposed work

- Description of the consortium participants
- Sufficient information on the background and specific expertise of team members
- Adequate experience to be sufficiently demonstrated (eg. List of previous projects relevant to the topic)
- By the time of the submission, all entities participating in a proposal should be fully operational

Criterion 2. IMPLEMENTATION - Frequent mistakes

1 - Maturity of the project

- The technical maturity of key components or pre-existing solutions is often not sufficiently described, making it unclear whether the project is ready or not for implementation
- Unclear justification for the timing of major deliverables, milestones, and integration steps, with some critical activities scheduled late in the project, introducing risks to validation or demonstration

2 - Soundness of the implementation plan and efficient use of resources

- Resource allocation is unrealistic — either underestimating effort or inflating costs.
- Risk management is superficial, particularly for cybersecurity-relevant risks (e.g. data sensitivity, regulatory dependencies).
- Implementation plans frequently lack sufficient detail on IT architecture, resource allocation, or the alignment of tasks and deliverables with project objectives, resulting in unclear or generic work packages .
- Monitoring and evaluation methods, including KPIs, are often inadequately defined, with missing baselines or insufficient linkage between KPIs and specific WP.
- The efficient use of resources is not convincingly demonstrated, with overestimated or poorly justified costs (e.g., travel, equipment).

3 - Capacity of the applicants, and when applicable the consortium as a whole, to carry out the proposed work

- The roles, expertise, and contributions of consortium partners are often not clearly defined, missing critical expertise
- Roles and contributions of partners are vague or overlapping.
- One partner dominates the budget and work, while others appear underutilised.
- There is a heavy reliance on subcontracts for critical implementation tasks.
- Risk management is generally focused on technical risks, mitigation strategies often lacking detail or justification.

Criterion 3. IMPACT - How to address the criterion

1 - Extent to which the project will achieve the expected outcomes and deliverables referred to in the call for proposals and, where relevant, the plans to disseminate and communicate project achievements

- elaborate clearly the scale and significance, make clear how the project intends to improve with respect to current baselines.
- KPIs well defined (clear baseline, aligned to the project goals, ambitious)
- target audience, key messages, communication channels - well identified and defined; tailored to identified wider audience; credible and ambitious dissemination strategy

2 - Extent to which the project will strengthen competitiveness and bring important benefits for society

- Applicants should explain how the project strengthens EU cybersecurity competitiveness and supports EU-based technologies.
- Proposals should describe societal benefits, such as increasing digital trust, improving resilience, or enabling secure services for public bodies.
- Consider including long-term impacts such as boosting SME readiness or workforce skills.



IMPACT criterion will be considered in case of ties after RELEVANCE

Criterion 3. IMPACT - Frequent mistakes

1 - Extent to which the project will achieve the expected outcomes and deliverables referred to in the call for proposals and, where relevant, the plans to disseminate and communicate project achievements

- Impact is vaguely described or unlinked to call outcomes.
- Dissemination plans are limited to generic publications or website updates.
- Dissemination and communication strategies are often generic, lacking detailed activities or schedules
- Measurable and/or ambitious KPIs for monitoring outreach and impact are frequently missing or insufficiently defined.
- The rationale for chosen communication channels is rarely explained, reducing the clarity and effectiveness of the dissemination plan.
- Quantitative targets for key outcomes are often absent or not ambitious enough, making it difficult to assess the project's impact.

2 - Extent to which the project will strengthen competitiveness and bring important benefits for society

- Proposals generally address competitiveness and societal benefits at a high level, but lack concrete examples and targets to demonstrate how the project will enhance EU industry or deliver tangible value to citizens.
- The added value and broader societal impact of project outputs are not sufficiently articulated
- Engagement with key groups such as SMEs, end-users, and supply chain partners is often not specifically targeted or described in detail

Questions?

1. Your NCC
2. Funding and Tender portal

General FAQ [\[link\]](#);

EU F&T Portal EN

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

For questions related to specific calls or topics, please refer to the Topic Q&A section on the topic pages (search for the appropriate topic)

Filters

Quick search

Select...

☒ Match whole words only

Type ▾

Programming period ▾

Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL) ▾

Active ▾

Topic Q&A [example [link](#)]

Topic Q&As

7 item(s) found

General FAQ

We are interested in applying as a consortium with a privately owned company registered in another EU country. Could you elaborate if this fulfils the eligibility criteria for the call DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-06?

Asindicated in the Digital Europe Cybersecurity Work Programme 2023 - 2024, if justified for securi...

Is the budget fixed for proposals to DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-06? What is the maximum allowable budget?

Please refer to the call document, and more specifically to the allocated budget to each topic (p. 22...

Could you explain the funding model in more details for Grants for Support to Third Parties for the topic DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-06-STRENGTHENCRA?

Grantsfor Financial Support (GIS) type of actions have a particular focus on cascading grants. It m...

Are there any restrictions on the composition of the consortium under topic DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-06-STRENGTHENCRA?

Althoughno specific restrictions are in place regarding the Consortium compositions, it is mentione...

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