



**Circular
Bio-based
Europe**
Joint Undertaking

FAQ for applicants

CBE JU Calls for proposals 2023

Version 6 | 10 August 2023

Purpose

In this document, you will find the most frequently asked questions (and answers) from potential applicants and proposal writers. The information in this document is based on the rules and conditions in the CBE JU Annual Work Programme (AWP) 2023 as found on <https://www.cbe.europa.eu/reference-documents>. This FAQ for applicants complements but does not replace the AWP; in the event of different interpretations, the information provided in the AWP always has precedence.

For additional questions, please contact info@cbe.europa.eu.

Version history

Version	Date	Main updates
1.0	13/04/2023	First version
2.0	04/05/2023	New Q 3.2.10 (economic viability vs. business case, model and plan); updated Q1.1 (URL to info day recording and ppts) and section 6 (new topic interpretation Q&A regarding IAFlag-04, IA-02, R-01 and S-02).
3.0	06/06/2023	Updated section 6: peat as feedstock (Q 6.0.4), and new topic interpretation Q&A for topics IAFlag-04, IA-02, R-03, R-04 and S-02
4.0	19/06/2023	Updated section 6: new topic interpretation Q&A for topics IA-03 (point d), IA-04 (points d & e), and R-01 (points c to f).
5.0	25/07/2023	New Q 3.1.10 (quid Swiss entities). Updated header (reference to NEBA Call closure timing). New topic interpretation Q&As for topics R-04 (Q 6.3.4.f and g) and S-02 (Q 6.4.2.e). New section 6.5 (NEBA Call Q&A). Updated Q 6.2.4 c) (IA-04)
6.0	10/08/2023	New Q 6.0.5 (feedstock sourcing eligibility condition vs. (almost) associated countries); new topic interpretation Q&As for topics IA-01 (Q 6.2.1.a), IA-07 (Q 6.2.7.a&b) and R-05 (Q 6.3.5.a)

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1. Overview of information sources

Q 1.1: Where can I find more information about CBE JU rules and regulations?

The most relevant information sources are:

- The [CBE JU website](#), where you can find:
 - [Call-specific information](#) (e.g. Annual Work Plan (incl. topic texts));
 - The [CBE JU networking platform](#) used before, during and after the 20 Apr 2023 info day;
 - Other [CBE JU reference documents](#) (e.g. the Council Regulation establishing CBE JU, the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), etc.);
 - The recording and presentations of the [Call 2023 Brussels info day](#);
- The [Funding & tender opportunities Portal](#) (formerly known as the Participant Portal), where you can find:
 - The CBE JU Call 2023 topics, incl. the Portal's topic-specific [partner search facility](#);
 - The 'Applying for funding' section of the [Horizon Europe online manual](#) (as CBE JU follows most of the Horizon Europe rules, this online manual is also relevant for CBE JU);
 - The list of [National Contact Points](#). The role of these NCPs is to guide potential applicants in choosing relevant topics and types of action, to provide advice on administrative procedures and contractual issues, and to assist in partner search.
- The [European IPR Helpdesk](#) offers free of charge, first-line support on IP and IPR matters to beneficiaries of EU-funded research projects and EU SMEs involved in transnational partnership agreements.
- The [BIC website](#) (Bio-based Industries Consortium, the private partner of the CBE JU), which provides additional services such as partnering opportunities with BIC members.
- The [EEN website](#) (Enterprise Europe Network), which offers networking and other business & research opportunities (mainly) for SMEs.

2. CBE JU specificities

Q 2.1: What are the differences between CBE JU and Horizon Europe rules?

The [Horizon Europe General Annexes](#) apply to CBE JU Call 2023, with the exceptions introduced in section 2.2.3.1 of the AWP 2023. Although the CBE JU operates under Horizon Europe rules, the main differences are:

- The threshold for the evaluation criterion 'impact' is 4/5 for *all* types of actions;
- The threshold for total score is 11/15 for *all* types of actions;
- A CBE JU-specific evaluation subcriterion (i.e. in the 'impact' evaluation criterion of Innovation Actions, evaluators will assess the “Ability to ensure the level of in-kind contribution to operational activities (IKOP)¹ defined in the call/topic as % of total projects eligible costs (IAs 15% and IA-Flagship 20%)”);
- The page limit of the ‘Part B’ part of the proposals is 70 pages for Innovation Actions (incl. flagships), and 50 pages for Research & Innovation Actions (RIAs).

Q 2.2: What are TRLs (Technology Readiness Levels)?

The technological readiness level scale, defined in the [Horizon Europe General Annexes](#), will be used as reference in the CBE JU call to indicate the appropriate technological context as following:

- Research & Innovation Actions (RIAs) are expected to be at the level of laboratory or simulated environments and expected to deliver mainly TRL 5 at the end of the projects.
- Innovation Actions (IAs) are demonstration activities in relevant and operational environments and expected to deliver TRL 6-8 at the end of the projects. In particular, Flagship projects will need to deliver TRL 8 at the end of the projects.

The expected end TRL is specified in each RIA and IA topic.

Q 2.3: What are CBE JU’s ‘specific requirements’ and ‘cross-cutting elements’?

In addition to the requirements described in each topic text, the proposals must also address specific CBE JU requirements and cross-cutting elements. Rather than repeating these requirements in each topic text, they are presented in sections 2.2.3.1 and 2.2.3.2 of the AWP 2023.

¹ Contributions by private members, constituent entities or the affiliated entities of either, by international organisations and by contributing partners, consisting of the eligible costs incurred by them in implementing indirect actions less the contribution of that joint undertaking and of the participating states of that joint undertaking to those costs

3. Developing consortia / project ideas

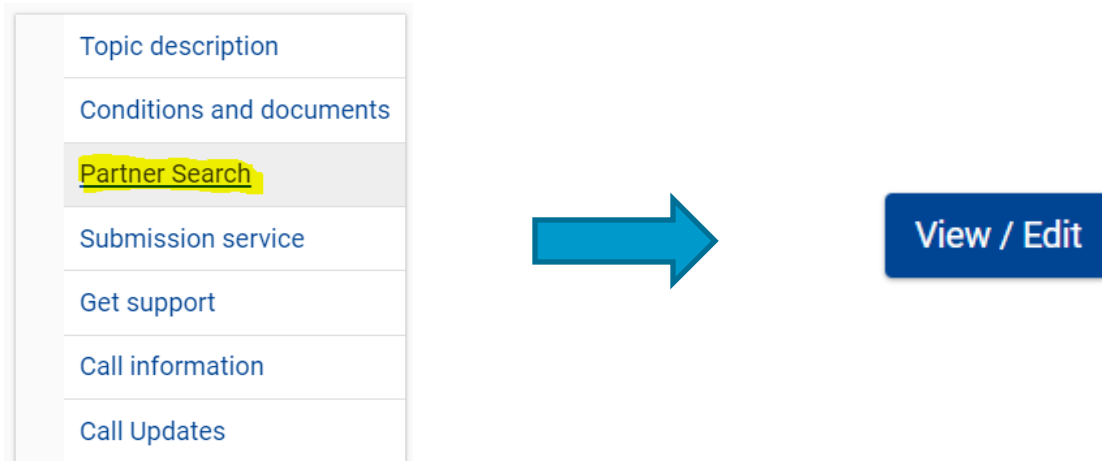
3.1 Consortium building

Q 3.1.1: Where can I find organisations to build a consortium?

The 3 most relevant information sources are the [CBE JU networking platform](#), the (members only) BIC partnering platform, and the partner search section of the Funding & tender opportunities Portal (see below). For more information, please consult Q 1.1.

Via the partner search facility of the Funding & tender opportunities Portal, organisations can find partners for (CBE JU and other) project ideas among the organisations registered in the Portal. This facility can be accessed via:

- A [central page](#)
- Per topic. When opening a topic page on the Portal, organisations can publish partner requests for open and forthcoming topics by logging into the Portal, going to the 'partner' search section (accessible via the menu on the left side of the screen), and clicking on the 'view/edit' button.



Q 3.1.2: How many partners need to be involved in the consortium?

CBE JU follows the same rules as described in section B of the [Horizon Europe General Annexes](#). Specifically:

- Legal entities forming a consortium are eligible to participate in actions provided that the consortium includes:
 - at least one independent legal entity established in a Member State; and
 - at least two other independent legal entities, each established in different Member States or Associated Countries.
- Applications for 'Coordination and support actions' (CSA) may be submitted by one or more legal entities, which may be established in a Member State or Associated Country.

No additional requirements exist regarding consortium size and resource & funding distribution.

Q 3.1.3: Are partners from non-EU countries excluded?

CBE JU follows Horizon Europe's '[global approach](#)', which means that participants from all over the world, regardless of their place of establishment or residence, can *participate* in CBE JU calls. However, only participants from the EU, associated countries, and low- and middle-income countries are automatically *eligible for funding*. For more information, please consult section B of the [Horizon Europe General Annexes](#).

Q. 3.1.4: Is there any legal requirement to build a consortium with BIC and/or private industrial partners?

As CBE JU is an industry-driven programme, many expected impacts listed in the topic texts can only be effectively reached with some form of industrial involvement or support. In addition, the level of in-kind contribution to operational activities (IKOP)² will be taken into account during the evaluation of Innovation Action (incl. Flagships) project proposals (see Q 2.1), and IKOP can only be provided by BIC members.

For IA (incl. Flagships) proposals, certificates of BIC membership should be requested to BIC via <https://bic.elisca.app/membership/certificate/registration>, and have to be uploaded/attached to the proposal as an Annex (one document combining all membership certificates). This means that for Innovation Actions, if organisations want that their IKOP is counted towards the thresholds established for innovation actions, they should be a BIC member or become a BIC member before the call closure date of 20 September 2023, 17:00 Brussels time.

The following information concerning the above-mentioned membership has been provided by BIC³:

- **Companies** in proposal consortia that are not yet a BIC member can become an Industry BIC 'Full' member or a BIC 'Project' member. BIC 'Project member' is a temporary status, at the earliest, from the opening of an annual call, until the results of the evaluation are known and/or the grant agreement has been signed:

- **Universities, research institutes or non-for-profit organisations** that want to contribute with IKOP and that are not yet an 'Associate member' of BIC, can become Associate members before the closure date of the annual call:

More information on how to join BIC can be found on <https://biconsortium.eu/membership/join-us> and <https://biconsortium.eu/membership/frequently-asked-questions>.

² Contributions by private members, constituent entities or the affiliated entities of either, by international organisations and by contributing partners, consisting of the eligible costs incurred by them in implementing indirect actions less the contribution of that joint undertaking and of the participating states of that joint undertaking to those costs.

³ CBE JU is not responsible or involved in the internal BIC procedures.

Q 3.1.5 My company/department is not a BIC member but is linked to a different legal entity that is a BIC Member. Do I need a separate BIC membership certificate to provide IKOP in an IA proposal?

Yes. While BIC membership extends to all legal entities within a group of companies, the name and [PIC number](#) of the legal entity appearing in the proposal need to match the ones on the BIC membership certificate, as only contributions from BIC members can be qualified as KOP. Hence, each legal entity appearing in a proposal and wishing to contribute IKOP must possess a unique BIC membership certificate.

Legal entities linked to current BIC industry members can request a BIC membership certificate by following the steps explained on <https://biconsortium.eu/membership/frequently-asked-questions>, and by using <https://bic.elisca.app/membership/certificate/registration> to request the certificate.

Q 3.1.6 Both my company/department and an affiliated entity are in an IA proposal and want to provide IKOP. Do we both need to apply for BIC membership? Do we need two separate certificates?

Yes to both questions. While BIC membership extends to all legal entities within a group of companies or institution, the name and [PIC number](#) of the legal entity appearing in the proposal need to match the ones on the BIC membership certificate, as only contributions from BIC members can be qualified as IKOP. Hence, each legal entity appearing in a proposal and wishing to contribute IKOP must possess a unique BIC membership certificate.

For more information about specific cases (e.g. what to do if one or none of the 2 entities is a BIC member?), please consult the BIC website on <https://biconsortium.eu/membership/frequently-asked-questions>.

Q 3.1.7: Can one organisation be involved in multiple Call 2023 proposals?

Yes. Every proposal will be evaluated on its own merits, including the expertise and operational capacity of the consortium. However, if the same organisation is involved in multiple proposals that are invited to the Grant Agreement Preparation (GAP) phase, then their operational capacity will need to be reassessed. If deemed insufficient, there is a risk that the organisation will be asked to choose in which project they want to participate in.

Q 3.1.8: What type of organisation should be the project coordinator? Are there differences per type of action?

It is up to the proposal writers to convince the expert-evaluators that the coordinator (COO) has the right expertise to manage the (type and size of the) consortium, that the management structures & procedures are adequate, etc. Therefore, different types (e.g. universities, SMEs, large enterprises,...) of COOs are possible, in all different types of action (CSA, RIA, IA).

Q 3.1.9 How to include UK entities in CBE JU Call 2023 proposals?

UK entities can be added as 'full' beneficiaries (requesting funding) in CBE JU Call 2023 proposals, but their status will be checked at the time of Grant Agreement Preparation.

CBE JU follows the Horizon Europe legal framework, which ensures that UK applicants are treated as if the UK is an associated country, from admissibility and eligibility to evaluation, up until the preparation of grant agreements. However, grant agreements can only be signed if the association of a country to the Horizon Europe programme has entered into force. Currently, the UK's association is pending, and it is unclear if/when the UK will gain 'associated country' status. If by the time of the signature of the Grant Agreement the association agreement has not come into effect, the UK entity will be treated as coming from a third country and will not be eligible for funding, and will not count as a Member State or Associated Country when (re)checking the proposal's eligibility.

Q 3.1.10 How to include Swiss entities in CBE JU Call 2023 proposals?

CBE JU operates within the Horizon Europe framework, and according to the official [list of participating countries in Horizon Europe](#), legal entities (including companies and SMEs) located in Switzerland can participate [in all calls open to non-associated third countries](#) in Horizon Europe, which includes [calls from institutionalised partnerships](#) such as CBE JU. However, according to Horizon Europe rules, Swiss entities are not automatically eligible for CBE JU funding.

In the current non-associated third country mode, researchers and innovators in Switzerland are funded directly by the Swiss Confederation if the complete project proposal has been positively evaluated by the European Commission, its agencies or Joint Undertakings (more information [here](#); the financial guarantee can be found [here](#)). When adding Swiss entities in CBE JU proposals, please ensure that the detailed budget of the Swiss participants is mentioned not only in the project proposal but also in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement. Please follow the [guidelines of the Swiss government](#) to determine how / where to indicate the budget of the Swiss participants in the CBE JU proposal.

Disclaimer: CBE JU is not responsible for the accuracy and reliability of the information provided by the [official website of the Swiss Government](#).

3.2 From idea to proposal evaluation

Q 3.2.1: Can CBE JU provide more information on the interpretation of topic texts, e.g. to check if a proposal idea is in line with the topic text?

No, mainly because of the following reasons:

- CBE JU Calls follow a competitive process, and the programme office cannot provide individual guidance in the interest of transparency and fairness;
- CBE JU proposals are not evaluated by CBE JU staff members, but by external experts with diverse expertise, who evaluate each proposal individually and in a panel setting. It is therefore up to each consortium to clearly describe how their proposal ticks all the boxes described in the topic text, and to convince these external experts (not CBE JU staff) that and how the proposal's objectives, concept, expected impacts and implementation measures are in line with the topic text;
- The CBE JU topic texts are the result of co-creation between the EU/EC and BIC (<http://biconsortium.eu/>), and include the feedback from CBE JU's Scientific Committee and States Representatives Group. Based on these inputs, the topic texts are written in such a way that they clearly explain the problem, yet leave a fair amount of freedom to proposal writers to come up with a suitable solution. It is up to each consortium to convince the external experts if and how the proposal's solution is appropriate to address the challenges and expected impacts described in the topic text.
- Proposal writers have 30-70 pages to develop their idea and to convince expert-evaluators. A 1-page summary of a proposal idea might at first sight be 100% relevant for a topic text, but when described in 30-70 pages, it might NOT be relevant after all (and vice versa).

Any significant topic interpretation issues will be discussed with BIC and/or the EC. If clarifications on a topic (not proposal) level are necessary, they will be added to this FAQ document under heading 6 (Call 2023 topic-specific Q&A), so that this information is publicly available.

Q 3.2.2: Can proposal writers organise a meeting with the CBE JU programme office to discuss proposal ideas?

No, mainly because of the reasons described in Q 3.2.1, but also to ensure equal treatment of all proposals and consortia (as not all proposal writers / consortia have the resources to organise a meeting with CBE JU). However, please consult your [National Contact Points](#) to obtain idea-specific feedback.

Q 3.2.3: Since our project idea is very confidential, what measures are taken by CBE JU to ensure confidentiality?

Expert-evaluators and CBE JU staff are bound by a confidentiality agreement and will incur serious sanctions in case of violations. Furthermore, CBE JU services will verify that no conflicts of interest could occur before a proposal is allocated to expert-evaluators.

Q 3.2.4: Which Annexes should be added to proposals?

The only mandatory annex is the [‘part B’ of the proposal](#) (= the descriptive / narrative part of your application). In Call 2023, the following annexes should be added to your proposal (only) if applicable:

- **IAs incl. Flagships:**
 - BIC membership certificate
 - ICAA Annex (optional and indicative Annex during submission and evaluation; see Q 4.2.4)
- **Flagships:** Business plan
- **CSAs:** ‘Financial Support to Third parties’, if applicable.

All Annexes should be uploaded via the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal. CBE JU-specific ‘Part B’ and other annex templates are found under each topic in the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal but also on <https://www.cbe.europa.eu/open-calls-proposals>. The BIC membership certificate should be requested directly to BIC.

Q 3.2.5 How are the CBE JU KPIs taken into account during the evaluation?

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are indicators to be used to monitor the progress of the CBE programme vis-à-vis its objectives. By fulfilling the requirements under the expected outcomes described in the topic text, the proposal, if selected for funding, is implicitly expected to contribute to these KPIs.

Therefore, when evaluating the impact criterion, the focus will be on how the proposal contributes to the expected outcomes listed in the topic text, not on the related (sub)KPIs referred to in the topic text; the latter will become relevant during the Grant Agreement Preparation (GAP) and the subsequent project implementation. Specifically: if a proposal is invited to the GAP, annual deliverables on KPI reporting will be included in the Grant Agreement. This way, how a project contributes to the CBE JU KPIs will be monitored in a more explicit way throughout the project’s duration. More info can be found in the KPI handbook, published on <https://www.cbe.europa.eu/strategic-research-and-innovation-agenda-sria>.

Q 3.2.6 How should ‘wider impacts’ be understood and described in the proposal?

Section 2.1 of the proposal template asks to “Describe the unique contribution your project results would make towards (1) the outcomes specified in this topic, and (2) the wider impacts, in the longer term, specified in the CBE JU annual work programme and Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) (<https://www.cbe.europa.eu/reference-documents>).”

The wider impacts are those expected to be generated by the CBE JU initiative by reaching its objectives, as set in the Council Regulation (EU) 2021/2085 of 19 November 2021 establishing the Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe. The CBE JU generic and specific objectives are reported in the AWP 2023 in section 1.1. ‘Mission statement of the CBE JU’, and have been used as bases to identify the strategic priorities in the SRIA, which are clearly identified in each topic. By contributing to these strategic priorities and their related CBE JU objectives, the applicants/or selected projects are expected to contribute to wider impacts that will be generated by the CBE JU. Therefore, please refer to the CBE JU specific objectives and the link to CBE JU SRIA strategic priorities identified per topic to describe how your proposal will contribute to attain the ‘wider impacts’ of the CBE initiative.

Q 3.2.7 How are proposals with a similar score ranked?

CBE JU uses the same 'priority order' principles (no derogation) as described on p. 26-27 of the [Horizon Europe General Annexes](#).

Q. 3.2.8 What if the project goes beyond the end TRL envisaged in the topic text?

The expected technological maturity at the end of each project is clearly defined in each topic text. If some of the activities described in a proposal would result in a higher (than the one(s) described in the topic text) end TRL, then it needs to be very clear that only a limited part (both in activities as spent resources) of the project goes beyond the topic's envisaged end TRL. This is particularly sensitive for RIAs that propose activities that go beyond TRL 5, as different funding rates and requirements are set for IA proposals. Therefore, it is essential to clearly describe the starting **and** envisaged end TRLs of all components of your project, so that external expert-evaluators can clearly assess if and how much of the proposal's activities fall within the topic's TRL scope.

Q 3.2.9 How should synergies with other (non-EU-) funded projects be described?

In section 1.2 Methodology, all proposals should describe 'synergies and complementarities' with relevant national or international research and innovation activities, including ongoing or finalised BBI/CBE JU projects. In some topic texts, additional requirements to describe 'synergies and complementarities with results of *specific* past and ongoing EU-funded projects' may be also included. In addition, clearly explaining how exactly your proposal idea relates to past and ongoing projects can add significant value, since:

- This is a practical way to convince expert-evaluators that you are aware of the state of the art in your scientific field;
- It can be a part of your communications and/or exploitation strategy, since 'freedom to operate' and future collaborations can thus be identified;
- It reduces the risk of (the appearance of) double funding. In order to limit such appearances, it is advised to not just mention a list of project acronyms, but to clearly describe how exactly your proposal will build on / collaborate with past and ongoing projects.

Q 3.2.10 What is the difference between an economic viability check, a business case, business model, and business plan?

In all **Research & Innovation Actions (RIAs)**, the economic viability of the products and processes to be developed (including an analysis of the value chain and potential market for the envisaged products) should be described in part B of the proposal. Ideally, focus on the potential market of the products and/or processes to be developed including some quantitative information for example on the market size and trends. If possible, please include project projections / estimates of costs of production/revenues of products or technologies.

In all **Innovation Actions (IA) including Flagships (IA-Flags)**, both a business case **and** business model need to be presented in part B of the proposal. The definitions of the business case and business model in the CBE JU context are provided in the glossary (section 4.2) of the [AWP 2023](#). The business case should be sound and clearly presented, based on an appropriate study of the market opportunity. The business model should be robust, well-described and detailed; it should clearly define revenue and

costs streams for the actors involved and demonstrate a good understanding of target markets with an analysis of future market competitors.

In all **Flagships (IA-Flags)**, a business plan should be added as a separate annex to the proposal (not described in part B), *on top of* the description of the business case and business model in part B of the proposal (the business plan does not replace the business case and model). The definition of the business plan in the CBE JU context is provided in the glossary (section 4.2) of the [AWP 2023](#). Some additional elements to consider when creating a business plan include:

- All elements mentioned in the definitions including forecasts of production ramp-up, product sales prices, CAPEX, OPEX, revenues, profit potential, financial parameters etc. should be based on realistic estimates/assumptions and convincing evidence;
- The proposal should include a solid financing plan, providing an adequate basis to demonstrate the viability of the project in the relevant market. It should be convincing that the necessary levels of funding can be achieved;
- Potential risks should be clearly considered and addressed. For example, the business plan should adequately consider the risks arising from the end-consumers' perception of products and elaborate on how the proposed work is differentiated from potential competing solutions;
- Potential barriers should cover factors beyond the scope and duration of the project, covering market, economic, social, environmental and regulatory aspects and actions to overcome them.

4. Financial / budget-related Q&A

4.1 Cost eligibility

Q 4.1.1: Which costs are eligible for CBE JU funding?

All types of eligible costs for CBE JU funding are described in the article 6 of the Grant Agreement (GA). The [Horizon Europe Annotated model GA \(AGA\)](#) provides more concrete examples. Ineligible costs are detailed under Article 6.3.

As a basic rule, to be eligible, costs must be:

- Actual and incurred by the beneficiary
- Incurred during the project duration (except for costs of the final report)
- Indicated in the estimated budget in Annex 2 (budget of the action)
- Incurred in connection with the action as described in Annex 1 (proposal description)
- Identifiable and verifiable, in particular recorded in the beneficiary's accounts (according to accounting standards of the beneficiary's country and to usual cost accounting practices)
- Compliant with the applicable national law on taxes, labour and social security
- Reasonable and justified, and compliant with the principle of sound financial management

Five cost categories are considered:

- A. Personnel costs
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs (incl. Travel and Subsistence, Equipment and Other goods, works & services)
- D. Other cost categories
- E. Indirect costs

Q 4.1.2: What are the different types of participants in a consortium?

The [Horizon Europe Annotated model GA \(AGA\)](#) provides an overview of the different types in its introduction (heading "General > How to set up your project — Consortium composition and roles and responsibilities"), and in art. 8 and 9. In these AGA parts, more information, definitions and examples are provided about:

- the role of the coordinator compared to other beneficiaries;
- the difference between beneficiaries and 'affiliated entities' (in previous programmes often called 'linked third parties');
- associated partners
- subcontractors vs suppliers of goods, works and services;
- subcontractors and purchases vs affiliated entities.

Q 4.1.3: In general, what type of costs can be subcontracted?

As a general rule, work can be subcontracted in line with the ‘best-value-for-money’ principle, and provided that conflicts of interest are avoided. In addition, subcontracting may only cover ‘a limited part of the action’. For more information, please consult the [AGA](#), specifically the introduction (p. 7-8), art. 6.2B, and art. 9.3.

Q 4.1.4: Can engineering costs linked to an IA be subcontracted?

If the purpose of the action is to carry out the demonstration of a process and test different e.g. fermentation conditions (the innovation lays in the micro-organism and conditions), then the engineering of the demo plant could be considered as ‘non-core’ activities and carried out under a subcontract. However, if the purpose of the action is to design a specific (e.g. a purification) process and improve it at a big(ger)scale, then the plant engineering would be a core activity and should be carried out by a beneficiary.

In industry practice, the plant engineering and equipment purchase is often done through a subcontractor. Those are usually included in CAPEX (capital expenditure) and depreciated. In this case, engineering costs would be charged to the CBE JU project as depreciation costs of equipment, infrastructure and assets.

Q 4.1.5: What if only one subcontractor is able to provide the tasks requested?

Article 6.2 of the [AGA](#) indicates that subcontractors must be identified according to best value for money rule and absence of conflict of interests. To do so, beneficiaries must follow their internal rules for awarding contracts and be able to demonstrate that the choice of subcontractor follows these rules. There are specific national laws and requirements on public procurement for public bodies and contracting authorities.

If an adequate procedure has been followed to select subcontractors, it might be acceptable that only one company is able to respond to the quality requirements. In such a case, the contractor should make sure that costs charged by the subcontractor are ‘reasonable, justified and comply with the principle of sound financial management’.

Q 4.1.6 Do beneficiaries in CBE JU projects need to contribute to the administrative costs of the CBE JU?

As per Council Regulation (EU) No 2021/0048 of 19 November 2021 establishing the Horizon Europe joint undertakings and, in particular, the CBE Joint Undertaking, the CBE Programme Office is to be financed equally by the Commission and BIC. BIC has established a ‘project contribution’ for its members. This project contribution is solely managed by BIC (not by CBE JU). For more information, please consult <https://biconsortium.eu/membership/frequently-asked-questions>.

These project contributions are not eligible costs because they are not incurred in connection with the project (action) as described in the Grant Agreement, and are not necessary for its implementation. Furthermore, these contributions may not be deducted from any amounts received by the coordinator as pre-financing.

4.2 Project funding

Q 4.2.1: How many proposals will be funded per topic?

In Call 2023, a budget line has been assigned *per topic*, and the Annual Work Programme (AWP) 2023 provides per topic the average EU Contribution expected per project. Therefore, depending on the budget available and the requested EU contribution of the proposal(s) retained for funding, more than one project could be funded per topic.

Q 4.2.2: Which funding rates are applicable to CBE JU projects?

CBE JU uses the same funding rates as Horizon Europe, with one exception: the standard funding rate for Innovation Actions (IAs) is 60% of the eligible costs (except for non-profit legal entities, where the funding rate is up to 100% of the total eligible costs).

Q 4.2.3: Why should Innovation Action (IA) participants request less than the maximum funding rate?

To increase their 'IKOP' contribution to the project, BIC Members participating in IAs may decide to use a lower funding rate than the maximum applicable funding rate (100% or 60%; see above). A reason for using this lower funding rate could be to fulfil the IA evaluation subcriterion 'Ability to ensure the level of in-kind contribution to operational activities (IKOP) defined in the call/topic as % of total projects eligible costs (IAs 15% and IA-Flagship 20%)'. To reach this threshold, only the IKOP from BIC consortium members can be taken into account.

Q 4.2.4 How should IKAA and IKOP be taken into account when creating the project budget?

'**Additional Activities (IKAA)**' are described in Section 4.1 of the Call 2023 Annual Work Programme (as found on <https://www.cbe.europa.eu/reference-documents>). If your proposal (only for Innovation Actions) is expected to generate IKAA in line with this definition, you are requested to include a table as an annex to your proposal. A template of this table is provided [here](#) and in the 'part B' template. This annex is optional and indicative, and will not be taken into account during proposal evaluation. Should your proposal be invited for Grant Agreement Preparation (GAP), an update of your IKAA contribution will be requested, and the table will need to be created or updated.

'**In-kind contributions to operational activities (IKOP)**⁴ can be deduced from the proposal budget and the list of project participants that are BIC members (IKOP= the difference between BIC participants' total eligible costs and their requested funding). IKOP has to reach 15% (IAs) or 20% (Flagships) of the total eligible costs in the budget to be positively evaluated. These amounts are reflected directly in the proposal's budget.

⁴ Contributions by private members, constituent entities or the affiliated entities of either, by international organisations and by contributing partners, consisting of the eligible costs incurred by them in implementing indirect actions less the contribution of that joint undertaking and of the participating states of that joint undertaking to those costs

IKOP will (only) be taken into consideration during the evaluation of Innovation Actions, via the CBE JU-specific evaluation subcriterion “Ability to ensure the level of in-kind contribution to operational activities (IKOP) defined in the call/topic as % of total projects eligible costs (IAs 15% and IA-Flagship 20%)”. This means that you need to identify the BIC members in your consortium, because only their IKOP will be taken into account for the established thresholds. 15% (IAs) and 20% (Flagship) are *minimum* thresholds; in this call, no higher scores will be assigned in case of higher (than 15% or 20%) IKOP contributions.

Below, 2 budget examples are provided, each with 5 project beneficiaries.

- Example 1 is an IA-Flagship proposal with 2 BIC members (beneficiaries 1 and 3), whose total IKOP (= total costs minus requested funding) is € 4.8 million. The ratio IKOP / total proposal costs is higher than the requested 20% for Flagships, meaning that this proposal will be scored positively for the IKOP evaluation subcriterion.
- Example 2 is a non-flagship IA with 1 BIC member (beneficiary 1), whose IKOP is € 1.28 million. The ratio IKOP / total proposal costs is lower than the requested 15% for IAs, meaning that this proposal will be scored negatively for the IKOP evaluation subcriterion.

Example 1: IA Flagship Criterion: $\geq 20\%$ IKOP	BIC member	Industry / Academia	Total eligible costs	Funding rate	Requested EU contribution	IKOP
Coordinator (BIC member)	Y	industry	€ 7,000,000	60%	€ 4,200,000	€ 2,800,000
Beneficiary 2	N	academia	€ 590,000	100%	€ 590,000	
Beneficiary 3 (BIC member)	Y	industry	€ 5,000,000	60%	€ 3,000,000	€ 2,000,000
Beneficiary 4	N	industry	€ 3,000,000	60%	€ 1,800,000	
Beneficiary 5	N	academia	€ 800,000	100%	€ 800,000	
TOTAL			€ 16,390,000		€ 10,390,000	€ 4,800,000

$$\text{Percentage IKOP} = \frac{\text{€ 4,800,000}}{\text{€ 16,390,000}} = 29,3\% > 20\% \quad \text{👍}$$

Example 2: IA Criterion: $\geq 15\%$ IKOP	BIC member	Industry / Academia	Total eligible costs	Funding rate	Requested EU contribution	IKOP
Coordinator (BIC member)	Y	industry	€ 3,200,000	60%	€ 1,920,000	€ 1,280,000
Beneficiary 2	N	academia	€ 590,000	100%	€ 590,000	
Beneficiary 3	N	industry	€ 1,500,000	60%	€ 900,000	
Beneficiary 4	N	industry	€ 3,000,000	60%	€ 1,800,000	
Beneficiary 5	N	academia	€ 800,000	100%	€ 800,000	
TOTAL			€ 9,090,000		€ 6,010,000	€ 1,280,000

$$\text{Percentage IKOP} = \frac{\text{€ 1,280,000}}{\text{€ 9,090,000}} = 14,1\% < 15\% \quad \text{👎}$$

Q 4.2.5 How should the budget table be completed in the Portal?

When completing the budget table in the Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal, the following budget columns are shown, some of which are less or not relevant to CBE JU proposals (all costs in €):

- **Personnel costs.** Please enter the personnel costs for staff working on the project. The following types of personnel costs are allowed:
 - Employees (salaries and social security contributions, taxes and other costs linked to the remuneration, if they arise from national law or the employment contract or equivalent appointing act)
 - Natural persons under direct contract other than an employment contract
 - Costs for seconded persons by a third party against payment (example: a project team member, who is employed by a third party outside the project. The third party is reimbursed by the participant, and the participant charges these costs to the project)
 - Unit costs for the work of SME owners for the action (i.e. owners of beneficiaries that are small and medium-sized enterprises not receiving a salary) or natural person beneficiaries (i.e. beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary)
- **Subcontracting costs** (i.e. costs for subcontracted action tasks).
- **Purchase costs.** 3 types of purchase costs need to be entered (if applicable) in 3 columns:
 - 'Travel and subsistence';
 - 'Equipment' (i.e. the costs for equipment, infrastructure or other assets used for the action).
 - 'Other goods, works and services'.
- **Internally invoiced goods and services** (Unit costs- usual accounting practices)
- **Indirect costs** (Flat rate of other budget categories, calculated automatically)
- **Total eligible costs** (Total of all previous costs, calculated automatically)
- **Funding rate.** The funding rate is defined in the call conditions, and should be 100%, except for 'for profit' entities in Innovation Actions (IAs) incl. flagships, whose standard funding rate is 60%. The rate is based on / linked to each legal entity's status (e.g. SME, non-profit, etc.) as found in the [Participant Register](#). If the funding rate does not seem to be in line with an entity's legal status, please check and update the entity's data in the [Participant Register](#). If the problem persists, please contact the [IT helpdesk](#).
- **Maximum EU contribution to eligible costs** = the highest possible EU contribution for this legal entity (= total costs x funding rate, calculated automatically).
- **Requested EU contribution to eligible costs.** The amount that you request as EU contribution needs to be manually entered. This amount can be equal to or lower than the 'Maximum EU contribution to eligible costs'. In IA (incl. Flagships) proposals, the requested EU contribution can be reduced as to increase the IKOP (cf. Q 4.2.4 above).
- **Income generated by the action.** Please enter the expected income generated by the project (revenues), if any.
- **Financial contributions.** In CBE JU / Horizon Europe, 'Financial contributions' refer to funding given by third parties to the benefit of a beneficiary for being used specifically for the action. Hence, a typical example could be a specific nationally funded grant/donation to a beneficiary that covers the same action (and its related costs) than the one submitted for funding under Horizon Europe / CBE JU.

- **Other sources of funding – IKOP.** Please do **NOT** complete this column, as it is not applicable to CBE JU, where IKOP is calculated based on the difference between total costs and total requested funding of BIC members.
- **Own resources.** ‘Own resources’ refer to the resources at the disposal of a beneficiary and that do not qualify as ‘financial contributions’ (see above) per se. Typical examples could be the financial resources that a beneficiary draws directly from its commercial activity; or resources coming from the beneficiary’s annual operating allocation (like a public university receiving a general annual subsidy from its national Ministry).
- **Total estimated project income.** Calculated automatically as the sum of requested grant amount, income generated by the project, financial contributions and own resources.
- **IKAA.** Please enter the amount for expected IKAA (only for CBE JU IAs incl. Flagships, not for RIAs and CSAs; see also Q 4.2.4)

5. Project timing & duration

Q 5.1: What is the typical project duration of CBE JU projects?

The project duration is defined by the consortium in the proposal and must be in line with the project objectives. Unless the topic text states otherwise, typical – but not mandatory – durations for types of actions are:

- For Coordination & Support Actions (CSAs): 2-3 years
- For Research and Innovation actions (RIAs): 3-4 years
- For Innovation Actions (IAs), including Flagships: 4-5 years

Q 5.2: Can a project start before the signature of the Grant Agreement (GA)?

As a general rule, the project starts on the first day of the month following the date when the GA enters into force. The GA enters into force when the last party (i.e. CBE JU) signs it.

If a fixed start date is requested, the start date of the project can never be set before the date of proposal submission. If a fixed date prior to the GA signature is requested, any cost incurred before the GA signature is incurred at the own risk of the consortium member(s). Costs incurred before the official start date of the project are NOT eligible.

Q 5.3: Can the project duration be extended?

The project proposal has to take into account possible causes of delays in the project and plan sufficient time to carry out the action ('risk management').

(Only) if unscheduled and exceptional circumstances arise during the project, the consortium has the option to request a duly justified project extension.

6. Call 2023 topic-specific Q&A

In this part, topic-specific Q&A (if any) are addressed per 'type of action': Coordination & Support Actions (CSAs), Research & Innovation Actions (RIAs), Innovation Actions (IAs) including Flagship projects. Section 6.5 describes topic interpretation Q&A (if any) linked to the [New European Bauhaus Academy \(NEBA\) Call](#). In an introductory section, terminology-related questions that affect more than 1 topic are discussed.

6.0 Elements relevant for multiple topics

Q 6.0.1 Where can I find more information regarding CBE JU 's terminology?

The *Annual Work Programme (AWP) 2023* provides the following clarifications about terminology:

- In the [introduction](#) (p. 6), a list of acronyms, definitions and abbreviations is provided;
- A [glossary](#) (incl. references) is provided in section 4.2, and includes the explanation of topic-specific terminology;

Q 6.0.2 Where can I find more information regarding CBE JU 's scope, acceptable feedstock, and output requirements?

The *SRIA* (<https://www.cbe.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/cbeju-sria.pdf>) provides the CBE JU framework stating that *"The bio-based solutions and innovations that fall within the scope of CBE should focus on the production of bio-based chemicals, materials, food and feed ingredients and soil nutrients. Biofuels, bioenergy, food and feed, pharmaceuticals and medical devices are not within the remit of the partnership. The activities to be funded by the CBE JU will follow the principles of cascading use of sustainably-sourced biological feedstock (including bio-based waste, residues and side-streams), as well as delivering innovative solutions with improved climate and environmental performance"*.

Regarding the feedstock, the *AWP's section 2.2.3.1* defines some specific requirements such as the feedstock type, sourcing, sustainability requirements, environmental performance, etc...

Q 6.0.3 In topics where the EC's safe-and-sustainable-by-design (SSbD) framework is mentioned in the scope: how should the testing phase of this SSbD framework be taken into account?

Topics including the implementation and testing of the SSbD framework should align the safety and sustainability assessment with the Commission Recommendation (EU/2022/2510) establishing a European assessment framework for 'safe and sustainable by design' chemicals and materials".

Q 6.0.4 Can peat be used as a feedstock?

According to the EU Taxonomy Regulation, the technical screening criteria for the 'Do-No-Significant Harm' (DNSH) ambition include the exclusion of any activity involving the degradation of land with high carbon stock, which means wetlands, including peatland, and continuously forested areas within the meaning of Article 29(4)(a), (b) and (c) of Directive (EU) 2018/2001. This condition is confirmed in the CBE JU SRIA ("Feedstock should be sourced in order to contribute to operations respecting local ecological limits and protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecosystems services"). Furthermore, under the same DNSH principle, the EU Taxonomy Regulation establishes, covering

‘transition to circular economy’, that peat extraction should be minimised. Therefore: if the topic text provides a broad choice of biomass and if you would consider peat as biomass, you should clearly justify the adherence to the DNSH principle and overall environmental considerations. Furthermore, even if side or waste streams of peat-related bioprocesses would be considered, applicants would not only need to demonstrate they are improving the resource efficiency when using these side or waste streams, but also that the primary process (e.g. burning of peat as fuel) from which these side or waste streams come is also aligned with these sustainability criteria, taxonomy regulation, DNSH ambition, etc.

(Background: Peatlands are ecosystems with a peat soil. Peat consists of at least 30 % dead, partially decomposed plant remains that have accumulated in situ under waterlogged and often acidic conditions. Resolution XIII.12 Guidance on identifying peatlands as Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) for global climate change regulation as an additional argument to existing Ramsar criteria, Ramsar convention adopted on 21- 29 October 2018.)

Q 6.0.5 How should the feedstock sourcing eligibility condition be interpreted for (almost) associated countries?

Section 2.2.3.1 of the [AWP 2023](#) describes the feedstock sourcing eligibility condition as follows: “Proposals shall confirm in Part B that:

- *if the bio-based feedstock is processed in EU/EEA/EFTA countries, the bio-based feedstock comes from such countries;*
- *if the feedstock is processed in an Associated Country, the bio-based feedstock comes from the same country or from neighbouring EU/EEA/EFTA countries.”*

For Research & Innovation purposes, samples of biomass grown in [associated countries \(as well as the UK and Morocco\)](#) could be used in EU/EEA/EFTA countries for quality tests, lab experiments on batch processes, etc. For demonstrating and upscaling value chains however, the feedstock sourcing eligibility condition shall apply, and this value chain needs to be considered when performing an economic viability check (for RIAs), and the business case, model (IAs incl. Flagships) and plan (Flagships).

6.1 IA-Flagship

Q 6.1.1 topic IAFlag-01 ‘Optimised and integrated wood-based value chains’

- a) ***“Is non-wood based forest feedstock (berries, straw, aromatic plants) acceptable?”***

No. The topic focuses on woody biomass. Bark, branches and leaves can be considered in scope as residual streams from wood-based operations but berries, mushrooms and the like are not in scope.

Q 6.1.2 topic IAFlag-02 ‘Expansion and/or retro-fitting of biorefineries towards higher-value bio-based chemicals and intermediates’

- a) **“Does this topic also cover the extension of recently built biorefineries? Or it is only looking to revamp older plants?”**

There is no restriction related to the age of the plant. As long as the proposed plant expansion satisfies all points in the scope, it is eligible.

Q 6.1.4 topic IAFlag-04 Valorisation of aquatic biomass waste and residues

- a) *“Can seaweed that strands on touristic beaches be used as an input?”*

If the seaweed collected from the beach is currently processed, the residual streams can be used. If not, i.e. when the stranded seaweed is collected with the sole purpose of using it in the Flagship, then the seaweed is a non-eligible input. This is in line with the topic text: “Residual and waste streams derived from sustainably sourced aquatic biomass, applying available EU/international certifications - when applicable - from fisheries, seafood processing and aquaculture, including seaweed and invertebrates,…”

- b) *“How should ‘new biobased products’ (as described in the scope of the topic text) be interpreted?, especially the reference to ‘chemicals’? Can e.g. bio-based agricultural ingredients, or natural polymers be considered as ‘chemicals’?”*

Biobased agricultural ingredients or natural polymers seem in line with this topic. The topic text is broad (“new bio-based products (food/feed ingredients, chemicals and materials”), and the first scope bullet point (“produce a variety of products in the scope of CBE JU including chemicals, bioactives, soil nutrients, as well as food and feed ingredients”) provides examples, but does not restrict possible end products to ‘only’ chemicals, bioactives, soil nutrients, as well as food and feed ingredients.

- c) *“Are end products that can be used as animal feed for microalgae within the scope of the topic?”*

The topic text states that microalgae and related streams are not in scope as potential *feedstock*. Therefore, although animal feed for microalgae can in principle be an eligible end product, using the ‘fed’ microalgae for further conversion steps would not be in scope. Any microalgae cultivation can only be seen as a downstream validation of the nutritional properties of the product from aquaculture side streams in its final application. As such, the actual cultivation of microalgae (if any) can only have a very small role (and the related CAPEX cannot be eligible), and their further conversion cannot be included.

6.2 IA

Q 6.2.1 topic IA-01 ‘Small scale biorefining in rural areas’

- a) *What is meant with ‘small scale’?*

“Small scale” in this topic simply means “not large scale”; we are not targeting large biorefineries needing large investments and regional-scale biomass supply chains, but rather very local installations with a very local biomass input. The budget available and envisaged end TRLs reflect the targeted scale of operations.

Q 6.2.2 topic IA-02 ‘Production of safe, sustainable, and efficient bio-based fertilisers to improve soil health and quality’

- a) *“Can manure be used as a raw material for the fertiliser?”*

In principle, manure is acceptable, as the topic text is broad (“...from nutrient-rich waste and side streams (such as agricultural/forest/aquatic residues and wastes, municipal waste, food waste, sludge, etc.)”), and the use of ‘such as’ gives further flexibility. However, as manure has been used as fertiliser for a long time, it is paramount to clearly describe the innovation / how your proposal goes beyond the state of the art.

b) *“Can bio-simulants be targeted as an end product?”*

(Only) biostimulants as defined in regulation (EU) 2019/1009 are in scope. The regulation states that “A plant biostimulant shall be an EU fertilising product the function of which is to stimulate plant nutrition processes independently of the product’s nutrient content with the sole aim of improving one or more of the following characteristics of the plant or the plant rhizosphere: (a) nutrient use efficiency; (b) tolerance to abiotic stress; (c) quality traits; or (d) availability of confined nutrients in the soil or rhizosphere.” Nevertheless, the above-mentioned regulation explicitly excludes certain product categories by clarifying that “products with one or more functions, one of which is covered by the scope of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009, are plant protection products falling within the scope of that Regulation”.

Q 6.2.3 topic IA-03 ‘Improve fermentation processes (including downstream purification) to final bio-based products’

a) *“How (much) should a project be connected to a biorefinery?”*

Proposals must “solve previously identified bottlenecks in industrially relevant fermentation processes”. Thus a proposal will always need to refer to a real, industrially relevant, use case. Process improvements applicable to biorefineries are in scope

b) *“Can projects be based only on downstream processes?”*

Proposals must “consider both upstream and downstream steps”. However, the topic aims to especially resolve fermentation downstream processing issues, including purification challenges upon scale up.

c) *“Are ‘only’ unstable products in scope?”*

The topic scope states that “non-volatile **as well as** thermally and/or chemically unstable compounds, presenting higher downstream purification constraints, should be in the scope”. This means that the main target products should be non-volatile or unstable (thermally and/or chemically). That being said, volatile and stable **co**-products can be in scope.

d) *“Is hydrogen considered a sustainable feedstock?”*

No. hydrogen can ‘only’ be used as an energy source or catalyst, but not as primary feedstock.

Q 6.2.4 topic IA-04 ‘Recycling bio-based plastics increasing sorting and recycled content (upcycling)’

a) *“What is the definition of a bio-based plastic?”*

A ‘product derived from biomass’ (EN 16575:2014).

b) *“How ‘far’ should the recycling go?”*

The focus of the topic is to “target as much as possible the same grade for the recycled as the virgin product (e.g. keeping food grade), or upgrade the resulting stream into higher-value products (e.g. using them as fermentation feedstock for conversion into chemicals, materials)”. The biodegradation of bio-based plastic in open environments such as (open) soil is not in scope.

c) *“How should ‘Demonstrate integration of the recycling process(es) at relevant scale inside a real waste management plant’ be interpreted?”*

The demo plant needs to be compatible and as much as possible integrated in/with a real waste management plant. If for any reason (logistics, space constraints, health & safety regulations) it is not possible to include it inside the physical building, it can be a separate but connected installation (e.g. on an adjacent lot in the same industrial park), as long as it is run by the waste management company. Sorting and separation of bio-based plastics from the mixed bio-based and fossil-based plastics streams and the subsequent recycling (mechanical, chemical, or

biotechnological) will need to be tested at a real, large-scale environment. This should be done as applicable, i.e. either all these steps in one waste management location or sorting/separation in a waste management location and recycling of bio-based polymer fraction in a recycling hub.

- d) *“Is it possible to include multilayer materials with paper (e.g. PLA paper)?”*

In principle yes, with some considerations. The scope of the topic includes “Develop sorting and separation systems for isolating dedicated bio-based plastics from the mixed bio-based and fossil-based plastics streams (when applicable, as an enabler for conversion of the bio-based polymer fraction)”. Thus, the bio-based plastic (PLA in this case) should be already part of the plastic waste stream separately collected. However, thanks to the sentence in brackets (when applicable, as an enabler for conversion of the bio-based polymer fraction), also separation of PLA content from paper and then recycling PLA is acceptable.

- e) *“Is it possible to consider a complex stream of bio-based plastics (e.g. PET, PE, PA, PP, PTT, Others), based on an initial mapping and characterization of the bio streams that are generated both in the ‘yellow’ and ‘brown’ containers?”*

Complex streams are in principle in scope; however, please ensure to only sort and treat the bio-based plastics which are not drop-ins (e.g. in the list above, PET is mentioned, which is out of scope; cf. the topic text: “The scope of this topic focusses on the recycling of bio-based plastics which are not already recycled with the conventional (fossil-based) plastics (bio-based PET, for example, is recycled with fossil-based PET). This means that bio-based plastics made of ‘drop-ins’ polymers are excluded from the scope”. The focus of the topic is on recycling/upcycling bio-based plastics existing in plastic waste streams already separately collected. In principle, the Organic Fraction of Municipal Solid Waste (OFMSW) should not be tackled. However, if applicants present a particular case in which bioplastics are ending in the (‘brown container’) OFMSW stream and the applicants have a way to recover and recycle these bioplastics (instead of sending them to compost with the rest of the OFMSW), it will be up to the applicants to clearly justify / convince expert-evaluators that this concept has merits, since the bioplastics will most likely be very diluted in the OFMSW stream.

Q 6.2.6 topic IA-06 ‘Selective, sustainable production routes towards bio-based alternatives to fossil-based chemical building blocks’

- a) *“Can the developed solution be a material or formulation which substitutes several chemicals (e.g. bioplastics, biocoatings*

- b) *,...)?*

No. The topic is focusing on bio-based platform chemicals (drop ins, smart drop ins or dedicated structures), not formulations and materials.

Q 6.2.7 topic IA-07 ‘High performance, circular-by design, biobased composites’

- a) *Are end products composed of a polymer and additives (without fibres) allowed?*

No. The topic text’s scope asks to produce “bio-based composite materials and products made from bio-based natural (e.g. plant) fibres and/or bio-based synthetic fibres (e.g. lignin carbon fibres), in bio-based thermoset and/or thermoplastic matrices”. Therefore, proposals must address one or more classes of fibres and matrices (including additives where applicable) depending on the application(s) and products in scope.

- b) *Are nanofibres allowed?*

The topic text does not set any limitations to the size of the fibres. However, nanoscale fibres are normally considered additives rather than fibres. Therefore, although in principle nanofibres are allowed, you’ll need to convince expert-evaluators of the merits of your idea, and that it can be considered as a fibre+matrix case (as requested by the topic).

6.3 RIAs

Q 6.3.1 topic R-01 ‘Phyto-management; curing soil with industrial crops, utilising contaminated and saline land for industrial crop production’

- a) “Should the proposal tackle both contaminated **and** saline lands together, or tackling one of them would be sufficient?”
One is enough; the topic text says ‘or’.
- b) “What does high yield mean? Is it related to the amount of biomass per harvest? The number of harvests per year? The amount of post-product obtained, for instance for fibres or high value chemicals?”
It could be any of these strategies, depending on the specific crop chosen. The goal is to target (as much as possible in a RIA) economically sustainable operations that allow a continued provision of environmental service even without the grant. The topic text refers to “high biomass yielding crops”, “high-yielding industrial crops” and “high biomass yield”, which indicate that the crops in scope should ensure a satisfactory amount of primary biomass harvested per area of land. Furthermore, proposals will “Identify and validate economic-viable value chains, end products and applications of biobased products”.
- c) *How should ‘increased availability’ be interpreted?*
The topic does not specify to which extend the availability should be increased. However, the scope explicitly states that proposals will assess resource-efficient pathways” and “identify and validate economic-viable value chains”, which both indicate that the production level should be at a relevant scale. I.e. projects are expected to demonstrate that they can contribute to increased availability when deployed at scale.
- d) *What are ‘industrial crops’? Could you please provide some examples?*
Industrial = non-food crops. Some examples are provided in annex V of the SRIA (<https://www.cbe.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/cbeju-sria.pdf>), such as perennial grasses and fibre crops.
- e) *How should ‘domestic’ be interpreted: raw materials produced in the immediate vicinity of where the pilots are being built, or at EU level?*
Proposals are expected to contribute to the availability of raw materials in the European Union. So ‘domestic’ = at EU level.
- f) *Does the source of the contamination need to be man-made (polluted by human activities), or is it possible to operate on lands / soils naturally rich in certain contaminants?*
The topic does not include references to the source of contamination. Therefore, soil contamination occurring naturally may in principle be covered. However, there are some challenges associated with this approach, which you’ll need to clearly describe in your proposal. Specifically: you will need to take into account the impact (e.g. on biodiversity) of changing a naturally occurring landscape into something different, and if/how this is in line with the ILUC best practices.

Q 6.3.3 topic R-03 ‘Robust and optimised industrial biotech and chemical/industrial biotech processes’

- a) *The scope of the topic text asks to ‘Identify **existing**, industrially relevant, bio-based process(es) [...]’. Does this mean that only the improvement of **existing** bioprocesses is within the scope of the topic?’*

No. In the expected outcomes, the following is stated: '(Industrial) biotech or chemical/(industrial) biotech processing routes with improved efficiency compared to established routes, or completely new processing routes that are currently unavailable'. Therefore, also new processing routes are in scope.

Q 6.3.4 topic R-04 'Development of novel, high-performance bio-based polymers and co-polymers'

- c) *"Is there a difference between biopolymers (directly obtained from biomass) and bio-based polymers (made from monomers produced from renewable feedstock) and are biopolymers eligible here, i.e. are they considered to be equivalent?"*
They are considered equivalent.
- d) *"The scope of the topic describes that co-polymerisation or blending with other materials is possible. Can these "other materials" also be inorganic materials, or does "other materials" only mean other bio-based polymers? I.e. would blending or co-polymerisation of biopolymers with inorganic polymers be allowed, provided that the majority of the new material consists of biopolymers?"*
Yes, this is possible. However, if not 100%, please keep it at least 95% bio-based.
- e) *"How should '(unprecedented) properties' be interpreted?"*
The first bullet point of the scope refers to improved or unprecedented technical performance properties of novel bio-based polymers. It leaves it open whether this can be achieved via polymerization or co-polymerisation or even blending. In addition to the technical properties, safety, sustainability, technoeconomic feasibility and circularity are also necessary requirements for the polymer design and performance assessment (as addressed in the other bullet points of the scope).
- f) *"Can drop-in chemicals be targeted as end products? I.e. can 'new properties' be interpreted as the reduced environmental impact of the polymer synthesis compared to a current fossil-based alternative?"*
Producing a drop-in bio-based polymer (as an exact analogue of a fossil-based product) is out of scope for this RIA, as the focus is on polymers with new or improved technical properties, not on drop-ins.
- g) *"How should the reference to the Sustainable Products Initiative (SPI) and the Sustainable Textiles Strategy be incorporated in the proposal?"*
The proposal can be considered in scope if at least one of the results contributes to the Sustainable Product Initiative. It is not required that all results fall within Sustainable Products Initiative or Sustainable Textiles Strategy scope."
- h) *Can only bio-based reagents / catalysts be used?*
The topic text requires "Polymerisation of bio-based monomers with no fossil-based counterpart to produce new polymers with unprecedented properties". The production process is not limited to biotechnology; the resulting polymer/co-polymer, on the other hand, needs to be bio-based. I.e. the "no fossil-based counterpart" in the scope refers to the product (i.e. we are not aiming at bio-based drop-ins of existing fossil-derived analogues), not to the process.
- i) *Can reagents / catalysts with a certain toxicity be used?*
One of the expected outcomes of the topic states: "Improved sustainability, **safety** and circularity when compared to fossil-based (or bio-based) state-of-art benchmark(s)". The safety of the monomer and polymer production process is not excluded from that. Moreover, the scope refers to "Perform a preliminary assessment of the **safety**, circularity and overall sustainability of the developed polymers in view of the subsequent scale-up phase". Overall, the proposal needs to

take all these aspects into account, explain the choices and any trade-offs, as well as present a convincing assessment of the overall safety and sustainability and risk management strategies.

Q 6.3.5 topic R-05 ‘Pre-normative research to develop standards for biodegradability of bio-based products in controlled and open environments’

- a) *As the end goal of this topic does not seem to be to produce certain chemicals or products: are all specific requirements described in section 2.2.3.1 of the Annual Work Programme (AWP) also applicable to topic R-05? Specifically: those requirements dealing with the origin of the feedstock (EU/EEA/EFTA/associated country), and the ‘food first’ and ‘cascading use’ principles?*

In principle, all specific requirements should be taken into account. The scope of this topic is to develop a methodology to test the safe biodegradation of bio-based materials and products. Therefore, since the scope of R-05 indeed does not include the use of feedstock, the sourcing and sustainability requirements of feedstock do not apply, strictly. Applicants could include case-studies respecting such requirements, whereas case-studies not respecting such requirements could also be in scope provided that they are relevant for the EU market.

6.4 CSAs

Q 6.4.2 topic S-02 ‘Supporting the capacity of regions in environmental sustainability assessment for the bio-based sectors’

- a) *“The topic text’s scope states that “International cooperation is encouraged, in order to collect best practices (indicators, methodologies, tools and data) **outside EU** and to expand the outreach of projects outputs...”. However, the – also applicable to CBE JU - [Horizon Europe General Annexes 2023-2024](#) state that “To be eligible to participate as beneficiaries (or affiliated entities) in ‘Coordination and support’ actions, legal entities must be established in a Member State or Associated Country, unless the specific call conditions provide otherwise. Legal entities established in a non-associated third country may, however, participate in ‘Coordination and support’ actions as associated partners, unless this is explicitly excluded by the specific call conditions.” How can best practices outside of the EU be considered in a proposal, if participants from ‘third countries’ (= non-EU27 and non-associated countries) are not eligible for funding?”*
Topic S-02 still allows funding for organisations in associated (= non-EU) countries. Furthermore, ‘outside EU international cooperation’ can still be achieved in other ways than having (fundable) beneficiaries, e.g. via advisory boards and other auxiliary structures.
- b) *“Since a representative from the Bio-based Industries Consortium (BIC) should be(come) part of the project’s advisory board: (how) should we contact BIC before submission of our proposal?”*
BIC will be in the advisory board of the winning project regardless of the identity of the participants. BIC is not involved in any proposal, nor in the evaluation, so it doesn’t change whether BIC is contacted now or during GAP; contacting BIC now does not give extra points in the evaluation.
- c) *“How should ‘cooperation with the BIOEAST initiative’ be interpreted?”*
The topic text says (**bold italic** added for emphasis) “Cooperation with macro-regional initiatives **such as** BIOEAST Initiative is **encouraged**.” Therefore, BIOEAST’s direct involvement as a proposal beneficiary is not mandatory, there are other initiatives as well, and there are also different – direct and indirect - ways of “cooperating”.
- d) *“How should the involvement of the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative (CCRI) be incorporated in a proposal?”*

Footnote 101 of the Annual Work Plan (AWP) gives additional nuance, saying “the proposals should share their knowledge, solutions and recommendations with the CCRI Coordination and Support Office and the CCRI-related projects. They are also encouraged to contribute to the CCRI activities and/or organize joint actions.” So it is not necessary to already involve the CCRI coordinator in the proposal; you should however make clear how you will engage with CCRI in your project, e.g. by mentioning / including them in your dissemination, communication & exploitation plan.

- e) *The 5th bullet point of the scope asks to “provide an inclusive platform for all stakeholders, including expert voices, market actors (especially SMEs), civil society (especially NGOs) and policy makers”. Does this mean that a virtual platform should be developed within the project, and/or should physical activities to involve stakeholders, expert voices, market actors, civil society, policy makers, etc. also be considered?*

The scope of this topic also includes the requirement to “Develop practical forums for case studies’ collection and exchange of best practice at regional level, to build a preliminary set of benchmarks or references of best performing industrial systems, across a diversity of European regions, providing an inclusive platform for all stakeholders, including expert voices, market actors (especially SMEs), civil society (especially NGOs) and policy makers”. Therefore, an inclusive platform should allow for a direct way of interaction, and may not be limited to a virtual tool.

6.5 New European Bauhaus Academy (NEBA)

In this section, Q&A related to the [NEBA call](#) will be published.