

Guidelines for Applicants

PRIMA Calls-2026-Section 1 IA – Innovation Actions

(Two Stage Submission)

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Disclaimer

This document was prepared by PRIMA-IS to provide guidance to applicants, the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains. In case of discrepancies between this document and the Work Programme 2026, the latter legally prevails.

PRIMA Partnership
www.prima-med.org



EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP

Co-funded by the
European Union 

● GLOSSARY

AC: Associated Countries
CA: Consortium Agreement
DMP: Data Management Plan
ESR: Evaluation Summary Report
ESS: Electronic Submission System
EU: European Union
IA: Innovation Action
GA: Grant Agreement
IPR: Intellectual Property Right
KPI: Key Performance Indicators
MPC: Mediterranean Partner Countries
NCP: National Contact Point
OCT: Overseas Countries and Territories
PI: Principal Investigator
PRIMA-IS: PRIMA – Implementation Structure
PS: Participating State
RIA: Research and Innovation Action
SDG: Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SRIA: Scientific Research and Innovation Agenda
TC: Third Countries
TRL: Technology Readiness Level
WP: Work Programme

- **SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

Stage 1 Pre-proposals

Deadline for Submission: 15/05/2026, 13:00 Spain Time

Documents for Stage 1:

- **Administrative and financial data**, the full cost and requested amount per partner (to be filled directly on the ESS)
- **PART I: Administrative Data** (template to be uploaded as PDF on the ESS, as an annex)
- **PART II: Technical Annex** (pre proposal template to be uploaded as PDF on the ESS)

Stage 2 Full proposals

Deadline for Submission: 07/10/2026, 17:00 Spain time

Documents for Stage 2:

- **Administrative and financial data**, the full cost and requested amount per partner (to be filled directly on the ESS)
- **PART I: Administrative Data** (template to be uploaded as PDF on the ESS, as an annex)
- **PART II: Technical Annex** (full proposal template to be uploaded as PDF on the ESS)
- **Detailed Budget Table** (template to be uploaded as an Excel file in the ESS)

The Electronic Submission System link will be announced on the PRIMA web page in the section corresponding to the call, **one month before the deadline for submission**.

Download all templates and reference documents from:

<https://prima-med.org/documents-reports/>

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The calls will follow a **two-stage** evaluation procedure.

For the First Stage, a short scientific Pre-Proposal (Part II-technical description, max. 10 pages) and Part I containing administrative information must be submitted to the Electronic Submission System by **the deadline (15/05/2026, 13:00 Spain Time)**.

For the Second Stage, only applicants invited to submit a full proposal may apply. Invited applicants must submit a full Scientific Proposal (Part II-technical description), Part I containing administrative information, and a detailed budget excel file via the Electronic Submission System by **the deadline (07/10/2026, 17:00 Spain Time)**.

Guidance about the Electronic Submission System is provided in “**Electronic Submission System Handbook**”. **The link to the Electronic Submission System will be announced ONE MONTH before the submission deadline on the PRIMA web page, in the section corresponding to the call.**

Please note that when these guidelines refer to “proposal”, this means that the conditions apply to both pre-proposal (First Stage) and full proposal (Second Stage).

The Work Programme 2026 (WP2026) contains the full description of the actions; please refer to this document to have more detailed information on participation.

I. Actions funded by PRIMA**1 Thematic Area 1-Water management in the Nexus:**

Topic 1.1.1-2026 (IA): Decentralised Brackish Water Desalination for Climate-Resilient and Resource-Efficient Mediterranean Agriculture

2 Thematic Area 2-Farming systems in the Nexus:

Topic 1.2.1-2026 (IA): Next Generation of Sustainable and Alternative Animal Feeds for Circular and Resilient Mediterranean Farming Systems

3 Thematic Area 3-Agri-Food value chain in the Nexus:

Topic 1.3.1-2026 (IA): Sustainable On-Site Transformation of Perishable Mediterranean Agri-food Products

Types of Action: Specific Provisions, Funding Rates and Technology Readiness Levels

Innovation Actions (IA)

Innovation Actions (IA) — Activities that aim directly to produce plans and arrangements or designs for new, altered, or improved products, processes, or services. These activities may include prototyping, testing, demonstrating, piloting, large-scale product validation and market replication.

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

A '**market replication**' aims to support the first application/deployment in the market of an innovation that has already been demonstrated but not yet applied/deployed in the market due to market failures/barriers to uptake. 'Market replication' does not cover multiple applications in the market of an innovation¹ that has already been applied successfully once in the market. 'First' means new at least to PRIMA countries or new at least to the application sector in question. Often such projects involve a validation of technical and economic performance at system level in real life operating conditions provided by the market.

Funding rate: up to 70 % of the total eligible costs may be reimbursed, except for non-profit legal entities where up to 100 % of the total eligible costs may be reimbursed.

Technology Readiness Levels (TRL)

Where a topic description refers to a TRL the following definitions apply unless otherwise specified:

- TRL 1 – basic principles observed
- TRL 2 – technology concept formulated
- TRL 3 – experimental proof of concept
- TRL 4 – technology validated in lab
- TRL 5 – technology validated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)
- TRL 6 – technology demonstrated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)
- TRL 7 – system prototype demonstration in operational environment
- TRL 8 – system complete and qualified
- TRL 9 – actual system proven in an operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies; or in space)

Applicants are encouraged to use the [TRL self-assessment tool](#) to accurately determine the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of their proposal. It is also recommended that applicants clearly indicate the TRL level at both the start and the conclusion of the project to demonstrate progression in technology readiness.

¹ A new or improved technology, product, design, process, service or solution.

II. Before submission of the proposal

There are some important steps to get ready before starting the preparation of the proposal. They are as follows:

- Carefully read the Call Text and this 'Guidelines for Applicants' document and check the eligibility and admissibility conditions (e.g. minimum number of required partners or their place of establishment).
- Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact PRIMA Officers as well as PRIMA National Contact Points (NCPs), whose contact emails are published on the [PRIMA website](#), to receive more information and guidance on PRIMA calls.
- Get familiar with the standard administrative and technical documentation to fill in. These templates are available on the PRIMA website ([Reference Documents](#)) to allow an early preparation of the proposal.
- The [PRIMA website](#) features a "[find partners tool](#)" which allows applicants to search for potential partners.
- Each consortium consists of several teams, each one with a Principal Investigator (PI), who is the leader of the team, lab, or institution. One of these PIs shall be nominated as Project Coordinator, whose responsibilities during the submission and the evaluation phase are to:
 - Ensure that all members of the consortium are eligible;
 - Submit the proposal, and all other requested documents, on behalf of the consortium;
 - Be the single point of contact between the PRIMA-IS and the consortium.

III. Preparing and submitting the proposal

The proposal must be submitted via the Electronic Submission System (ESS) by the Project Coordinator and consists of these main parts:

- Part I: **Administrative Data**, which comprise both those to be filled out directly on the ESS, and those to be uploaded by using the Part I template.
- Part II: **Technical Annex** (scientific document), which is the description of the planned project, (page limit stage-1: 10 pages, stage-2: 40 pages, all sections included).
- **Detailed Budget Table** (excel template) is needed only during the Second Stage.

All templates are available on <http://prima-med.org/>.

Proposals, all Annexes, and any additional documents **must be written in English**, in a legible font. Further guidance on the use of fonts, margins and other page formatting will be included in the Part II proposal templates available on the PRIMA website.

The work described in the proposal must correspond to the PRIMA Call Section 1. The proposal must meet all eligibility and admissibility conditions described in these guidelines and in the WP2026. Proposals that do not comply with such requirements will be considered ineligible or inadmissible.

Between Stage-1 and Stage-2, NO MODIFICATIONS are allowed in the consortium composition (Organisations, Coordinator and PIs), budget and scientific objectives.

On the online submission system, for each partner, the Project Coordinator must indicate the requested amount to PRIMA and the total cost of the project (please refer to the 'Electronic Submission System Handbook'). Please ensure that your requested contribution to PRIMA does not

exceed the maximum per grant as stated in the call text. **The project total cost = requested amount to PRIMA + own funding.**

A detailed explanation of eligible and ineligible costs can be found in the **Art. 6 of the PRIMA Model Grant Agreement** (available on <https://prima-med.org/documents-reports>).

Applications, including all required forms and annexes, must be received by the PRIMA-IS, only via the ESS, **by the deadline** stated for each application stage. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to not wait until the last moment to submit your proposal.

Please note that there is **no “Submit” button** on the ESS. The last version of all the uploaded documents will be automatically submitted at the call deadline’s closure time.

It is possible for the consortium to withdraw an already submitted proposal at any time before the deadline, or even during the review process. Correcting or revising proposals is only possible before the deadline. PRIMA will use the latest version of the proposal submitted by the deadline for review. **Proposals sent after the deadline are not eligible** for evaluation and will be automatically rejected. No extenuating circumstances will be taken into consideration.

ONLY consortia whose pre-proposals are selected by PRIMA-IS (based on the evaluation panel’s ranking list, please refer to Section VII of these guidelines for more information on the evaluation process), will be invited to submit a full proposal (Stage-2). The submission of a pre-proposal is mandatory.

Proposals submitted by coordinators will be opened and authenticated by the PRIMA-IS, which will perform the admissibility and eligibility check. No clarification or integration requests will be accepted after the call deadline. If the admissibility and eligibility criteria are met, the proposal will then be sent to evaluators.

Table 1. Main steps for the preparation and submission of a proposal

Main steps for the preparation and submission of a proposal	
1	Consortium composition and appointment of the Project Coordinator;
2	Verification of the eligibility conditions for all partners;
3	Pre-proposal writing (check the evaluation criteria, fill in the appropriate template);
4	Financial capacity check: Applicants must have stable and sufficient resources to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects. The financial capacity check will be done by PRIMA during the grant preparation stage. <u>However, it is recommended that applicants already carry out a financial capacity self-check (simulation tool available here) at the proposal preparation stage.</u>

5	<p>Stage-1 ‘Pre-proposal Submission’ by the Project Coordinator with the following information and documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Administrative and financial data (names of the partners, contact details, institutions....). Information to be filled in online. See ESS Handbook for details. Budget: Total cost per partner and required amount per partner to PRIMA, to be filled online. ✓ Part I Administrative Data: Administrative information, PDF to be uploaded on the ESS. ✓ Part II Technical Annex: A Detailed Scientific Document. PDF to be uploaded on the ESS. <p>Stage-2 ‘Full Proposal Submission’ by the Project Coordinator with the following information and documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Part I Administrative Data: Administrative information, PDF to be uploaded on the ESS. ✓ Part II Technical Annex: A detailed Scientific Document, PDF to be uploaded on the ESS. ✓ Detailed Budget Table (Excel file to be uploaded on the ESS). <p>The PI is the team leader (1 person per team, lab or institution).</p>
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IV. Eligibility for funding

a) Legal entities established in a PRIMA Participating State or created pursuant to Union law².

- The following **EU Member States (MS)**: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Slovenia, including the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT)³ linked to these Member States.
- The following **Third countries associated with Horizon Europe (AC)**: Egypt⁴, Israel, Tunisia, and Türkiye.
- The following **Third Countries not Associated with Horizon Europe (TC)**: Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Algeria⁵

⚠ The eligibility of legal entities from non-associated third countries is conditional upon the entry into force of an agreement with the Union, in the form of an exchange of letters amending their existing international agreements on scientific and technological cooperation.

² New PS may join PRIMA and the regularly updated list of PS will be provided by PRIMA-IS. The composition of the PRIMA PS may evolve during the implementation of the Annual Work Programme. Additional countries may join PRIMA as PS in accordance with Articles 6 and 7 of Decision (EU) 2024/1167, provided that they commit a national financial contribution to PRIMA and conclude the necessary administrative arrangements. Applicants are therefore advised to regularly consult the PRIMA website (<https://prima-med.org>) for up-to-date information on the status of PS and their eligibility for funding.

³ Entities from Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) are eligible for funding under the same conditions as entities from the Member States to which the OCT in question is linked.

⁴ Egypt has signed the Horizon Europe Association Agreement in October 2025, and following the exchange of Notes Verbales, its association is now legally effective. Egypt is therefore considered an Associated Country to Horizon Europe, and legal entities established in Egypt participate in PRIMA under the same terms and conditions as those established in EU Member States.

⁵ Status of participation of Third countries not associated to Horizon Europe at the time of adoption of this WP:

- Jordan and Lebanon have completed the required steps for participation in accordance with Decision (EU) 2017/1324, as amended by Decision (EU) 2024/1167, and are eligible to participate under the conditions set out therein.
- Morocco has successfully concluded negotiations to amend its agreement with the European Union, with a view to enabling its participation in PRIMA-funded activities under Horizon Europe (2025–2027) on equal terms with other PRIMA Participating States. The procedures for the entry into force, or provisional application, of this agreement are currently ongoing.
- The possible participation of Algeria as a PRIMA Participating State remains subject to the outcome of ongoing negotiations with the European Union and to further assessment in accordance with applicable EU legislation.

Legal entities in third countries applying for PRIMA funding will be eligible if the required international agreements have entered into force by the time the relevant Grant Agreement is signed. In cases where these agreements are not in effect by the adoption of WP2026, please refer to the WP2026 “General Annex I on practical aspects: participation and eligibility”. Applicants are encouraged to consult the [PRIMA webpage](#) for the most up-to-date information on country eligibility and participation status.

b) International European interest organisations⁶ or international European research organisations⁷

In accordance with Article 7(4)(b) of Decision (EU) 2017/1324 as amended by Decision (EU) 2024/1167, and depending on the applicable budget as referred to in Article 3(1) thereof:

- International European interest organisations, as defined in Article 2(1), point (12), of Regulation (EU) No 1290/2013, are eligible to receive PRIMA funding for activities financed from the Horizon 2020 budget;
- International European research organisations, as defined in Article 2, point (15), of Regulation (EU) 2021/695, are eligible to receive PRIMA funding for activities financed from the Horizon Europe budget.

c) International Organisations

International organisations, as defined in Article 2, point (15), of Regulation (EU) 2021/695, may participate in PRIMA actions. Funding by PRIMA-IS to an international organisation, or to a legal entity established in a country that is not a PRIMA Participating State, may be granted only where at least one of the following conditions is fulfilled:

- The participation of the organisation or legal entity is deemed essential by PRIMA-IS for the implementation of the action⁸; or
- Such participation is foreseen in the Work Programme and funding is provided for under:
 - o a bilateral or multilateral scientific and technological agreement, or
 - o any other arrangement between the Union and the international organisation, or between the Union and the country where the legal entity is established, ensuring adequate protection of the Union’s financial interests

Participants not eligible for funding

Participants from countries not listed in points (a), (b), (c) may still participate as associated partners in PRIMA projects but they shall **not** be eligible to receive funds from PRIMA. Such entities must include a letter in their proposal from their organisation, signed by a legal representative, confirming that sufficient funds are available to support their role in the project, covering specific tasks, meeting attendance, and related activities.

⁶ An international European interest organisation means an international organisation the majority of whose members are Member States or countries associated to Horizon Europe; and whose principal objective is to promote scientific and technological cooperation in Europe.

⁷ International European research organisation’ means an international organisation, the majority of whose members are Member States or associated countries, and whose principal objective is to promote scientific and technological cooperation in Europe.

⁸ For the purposes of these Guidelines, the participation of an international organisation or of a legal entity established in a country that is not a PRIMA Participating State may be considered essential for the implementation of the action where such participation provides clear and demonstrable added value that cannot be achieved by other consortium members. This added value may include, inter alia:

- Access to unique scientific, technical, or operational expertise or to specialised research infrastructures not otherwise available within the consortium;
- Activities carried out in geographical, environmental, or socio-economic contexts that are critical to the objectives of the research or innovation action;
- Access to exclusive data, knowledge, biological or genetic resources, or field sites necessary for achieving the expected outcomes;
- Engagement of key stakeholders, end users, or innovation actors that are essential for innovation uptake, deployment, or impact in the target regions or markets.

The essentiality of such participation shall be duly justified in the proposal and assessed by PRIMA-IS during the evaluation and grant preparation phases, in line with the applicable Horizon Europe rules.

⚠ The applicable Model Grant Agreement may also require financial guarantees from legal entities established in countries that are not Participating States, in accordance [Regulation \(EU, Euratom\) 2024/2509](#). For further details, please refer to [Decision \(EU\) 2017/1324](#) as amended by [Decision \(EU\) 2024/1167](#).

V. Standard of admissibility and related requirements

After the corresponding deadlines, PRIMA-IS will check if the proposal is **admissible** (complete and properly put together) and **eligible**. Eligibility checks include basic checking: if the contents of proposals are in line with the topic description, if they meet standard and any other eligibility conditions listed in these guidelines and in the WP2026. Only proposals which are **admissible and eligible** will be evaluated.

1. To be considered **admissible**, a proposal must be:

- (a) Submitted in the Electronic Submission System before the deadline given in the call conditions;
- (b) Readable, accessible, and printable;
- (c) **Complete** and inclusive of the requested administrative data, the proposal description, and any other obligatory supporting documents specified in the call conditions;
- (d) Include a **draft plan for the exploitation and dissemination of the results**. The draft plan is not required at the first stage.

2. In addition to the above admissibility requirements, page limits will apply to parts of proposals. The limit for a **Stage-1 'Pre-Proposal'** is **10 pages**, while the limit for a **Stage-2 'Full Proposal'** is **40 pages (THESE LIMITS APPLY ONLY TO THE 'PART II – TECHNICAL ANNEX' Document)**.

The Electronic Submission System will automatically reject the proposal if it exceeds the page limit.

Proposals must be written in a legible font. Further guidance on acceptable fonts, margins and other page formatting will be included in the proposal templates. The structure of proposals must correspond to the requirements specified under each section of the proposal template. Applicants must use the templates provided by PRIMA that can be downloaded from the PRIMA website under the relevant call section.

We strongly encourage you to write your proposal in a concise and precise way (please bear in mind that the length of the proposal is not considered as a guarantee of quality and evaluators appreciate to receive precise and clear documentation).

3. The following supporting documents will be required to determine the operational capacity for grant proposals (for Stage-2 only, as integral part in the 'Part I – Administrative Data' document):

- A curriculum vitae or description of the profile of the persons who will be primarily responsible for carrying out the proposed research and/or innovation activities;
- A list of up to five relevant publications, and/or products, services (including widely-used datasets or software), or other achievements relevant to the call content;
- A list of up to five relevant previous projects or activities, connected to the subject of this proposal;

- A description of any significant infrastructure and/or any major items of technical equipment, relevant to the proposed work;
- A description of any third parties that are not represented as project partners, but who will nonetheless be contributing towards the work (e.g. providing facilities, computing resources).

This scrutiny will be carried out by the evaluators during the evaluation process under the selection criteria, in particular the award criterion ‘Quality and efficiency of the implementation’.

VI. Standard eligibility conditions

While having a PIC is not mandatory for submitting an application, it is strongly recommended to facilitate the application process and subsequent checks.

All proposals must comply with the eligibility conditions laid down in [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/695](#), of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe (OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 1), as well as with any derogations introduced by [Decision \(EU\) 2024/1167](#), concerning the continuation of the Union’s participation PRIMA under Horizon Europe. Proposals must comply with the additional eligibility conditions outlined in this section, unless supplemented or modified by the conditions set out in the individual call or topic descriptions.

A proposal will be considered eligible only if **all** of the following conditions are met:

- The proposal content corresponds wholly or in part to the scope and objectives of the topic to which it is submitted.
- It complies with the eligibility conditions for participation set out in **Table 2** below, depending on the type of action.
- Where applicable, it complies with the **Gender Equality Plan (GEP) eligibility requirement**, as set out below.

Table 2. Eligibility conditions for participation

Type of Action	Eligibility conditions for participation
Innovation Actions (IA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least three independent legal entities, each established in a different PRIMA Participating State (<i>by the time of grant agreement signature</i>) out of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o at least one must be established in an EU Member State or a third country associated to Horizon Europe <u>and not being a third country bordering the Mediterranean (MPC)</u>⁹ and o at least one must be established in a third country bordering the Mediterranean Sea

⁹ For the purposes of this Work Programme, third countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea (Mediterranean Partner Countries – MPCs) are those defined in Decision (EU) 2017/1324, as amended by Decision (EU) 2024/1167, namely: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Türkiye. Eligibility of legal entities established in these countries for Union funding is subject to the applicable Horizon Europe status and the relevant international agreements in force at the time of grant agreement signature.

	<p>(MPC)</p> <p>All three legal entities must be independent of each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In addition, the consortium must include at least one additional legal entity established in a Mediterranean Partner Country (MPC). This additional entity is not required to be established in a different PRIMA Participating State from the other participating entities. ● At least one of the participating legal entities shall be a for-profit legal entity (which may include small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)¹⁰ established in a PRIMA Participating State. <p>The minimum consortium size is therefore four independent legal entities.</p>
So, the eligibility rules can be read as follows:	<p>At least four legal entities established in at least three different countries considered as PRIMA Participating States, out of which:</p> <p>-at least one must be established in an EU Member State or a third country associated with Horizon Europe and not being an MPC</p> <p>-at least two must be established in third country/countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea (MPC): Algeria, Jordan, Israel, Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, Egypt, Türkiye</p>
Examples:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Germany-Greece-Morocco-Türkiye: is eligible ● Germany-Greece-Morocco entity1-Morocco entity2: is eligible ● Morocco-Greece-Germany entity1-Germany entity2: is NOT ELIGIBLE due to lack of a second partner from an MPC ● France-Algeria-Egypt: is NOT ELIGIBLE due to lack of a 4th partner that can be from an MPC OR from an EU PRIMA PS

Under Section 1, the PI can submit more than one proposal as coordinator. But in case more than one proposal is selected for funding, the coordinator will have to choose one project to be funded and withdraw the others (**one funding per year**). The PI can be partner in other projects.

The PI cannot be a coordinator in both Section 1 & Section 2 calls of the same year, but can be a partner in other proposals in both Sections, with an eligibility condition that proposals must be different in terms of objectives, methodology and consortium composition.

¹⁰ 'Small or medium-sized enterprise' or 'SME' means a micro, small or medium-sized enterprise as defined in Article 2 of the Annex to Recommendation 2003/361/EC (27)

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

In accordance with Horizon Europe eligibility rules, to be eligible for PRIMA funding, legal entities established in EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries that are public bodies, research organisations, or higher education establishments (including private research organisations and private higher education establishments), and that apply as beneficiaries or affiliated entities, must have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in place. The GEP must be **in place at the time of grant agreement signature** and must be maintained for the entire duration of the grant.

Minimum process-related requirements

The GEP must cover the following minimum process-related requirements:

- Publication: a formal document published on the institution's website and signed and/or formally adopted by top management;
- Dedicated resources: commitment of human and financial resources and availability of gender equality expertise for implementation;
- Data collection and monitoring: collection of sex- and/or gender-disaggregated data on personnel (and students, where applicable), with monitoring and reporting at least every two years;
- Training: awareness-raising and training activities on gender equality, including unconscious gender bias, for staff and decision-makers

Recommended content elements

In terms of content, it is recommended that the GEP addresses, through concrete measures and targets:

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

Compliance with the GEP requirement shall be confirmed through a self-declaration at full proposal submission stage (stage 2 submission) via the PRIMA Electronic Submission System (ESS). The existence and compliance of the GEP will be verified during the grant preparation phase. Where all the mandatory requirements are fulfilled through another formal strategic document (e.g. a development plan, inclusion strategy, or diversity strategy), this may be considered equivalent, provided that all requirements listed above are met.

This eligibility requirement does not apply to:

- private for-profit organisations, including SMEs;
- non-governmental or civil society organisations;
- legal entities established in non-associated third countries.

VII. Evaluation rules

- Selection Criteria

Financial Capacity

Applicants must **have stable and sufficient resources** to successfully implement the projects and deliver their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

The financial capacity check will be done by PRIMA based on the documents exchanged by email with PRIMA-IS during the grant preparation stage (e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet business plan audit report produced by an approved external auditor certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year etc.). The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators but will also consider other aspects such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for the coordinator if the requested grant amount is equal to or greater than EUR 500 000 except for:

- public bodies (entities established as a public body under national law including local regional or national authorities) or international organisations or body whose participation is guaranteed by the government of an EU country or associated country following the PRIMA MGA
- cases where the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000 (low-value grant).

If needed it may also be done for the other applicants including affiliated entities. If the financial capacity is structurally guaranteed by another legal entity, the financial capacity of that legal entity will be verified.

If the PRIMA-IS considers that the financial capacity is not satisfactory they may require:

- further information
- an enhanced financial responsibility regime (i.e. joint and several responsibilities of affiliated entities) and
- pre-financing paid in instalments

or

- propose no pre-financing;
- request that the applicant concerned is replaced

or

- if needed reject the entire proposal

Operational Capacity

Applicants must have the **know-how qualifications** and **resources** to successfully implement their tasks in the project and contribute their share (including when appropriate sufficient experience in EU/transnational projects of comparable size).

This assessment of operational capacity will be carried out by external experts during the evaluation of the award criterion *'Quality and efficiency of the implementation'*, during the second stage submission. It will be based on the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams including their operational resources (human technical and other) or the measures proposed to obtain the necessary competence and experience by the time the tasks are implemented.

If evaluating this award criterion leads to a score above the applicable threshold then the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

For this assessment applicants will be required to provide the following information in the application form:

- Description of the consortium participants; and
- For each participant:
 - o Identity of researchers involved in the proposal (through the researchers table)
 - o up to five most relevant publications widely used datasets software goods services or any other achievements relevant to the call content
 - o up to five most relevant previous projects or activities connected to the subject of this proposal and
 - o description of any significant infrastructure and/or any major items of technical equipment relevant to the proposed work

Public bodies, Member State organisations, and international organisations are exempted from the operational capacity check.

The PRIMA-IS will perform the operational capacity check at the evaluation phase while the financial capacity check is performed before the grant agreement is signed (however, it is recommended that applicants already carry out a financial capacity self-check at the proposal preparation stage: simulation tool [available here](#)).

- Award criteria, Scores and Weighting

1. If admissible and eligible, proposals will be evaluated by experts, based on the **award criteria** 'Excellence', 'Impact' and 'Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation' (see description of each criterion in the table below).

Table 3. Description of evaluation criteria

	Excellence (The following aspects will be taken into account to the extent that the proposed work corresponds to the description in the work programme)	Impact	Quality and efficiency of the implementation
Innovation Actions (IA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. - Soundness of the proposed [for the first stage: overall (*)] 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>(*) Including all aspects mentioned in the first stage proposal template which also include the integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content as well as open science practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the WP2026 - Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities. - Soundness of the proposed approach to ensure market uptake, scalability and sustainability of the results, including the economic and financial viability of the proposed innovations, cost-effectiveness considerations, investment needs and deployment potential under realistic market conditions, where relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages and the resources overall. - Capacity, role and complementarity of each participant, including the contribution of for-profit organisations and SMEs where relevant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary scientific, technical, entrepreneurial and market-oriented expertise to achieve the project objectives.

! For two stage submission procedures, only the aspects in bold are considered for the evaluation of first stage.

- **Scoring and Weighting:**

Innovation Actions (IAs)

For Innovation Actions in the WP2026, PRIMA applies a two-stage submission and evaluation procedure.

In the first stage, proposals will be evaluated solely based on the 'Excellence' and 'Impact' criteria. Only the elements explicitly highlighted in bold award criteria (Table 3. Description of evaluation criteria) will be assessed.

- The individual threshold for both criteria is 4.
- The overall threshold (sum of the two scores) is determined during evaluation with the aim of selecting proposals corresponding to approximately three times (but not less than two times) the available budget. This threshold is typically set at 8 or 8.5, depending on the volume and quality of submissions.

Only proposals meeting or exceeding both individual thresholds and the overall threshold will be invited to submit a full proposal for the second stage.

In the second stage, proposals will be evaluated against the full set of award criteria: 'Excellence', 'Impact' and 'Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation'. Each criterion will be scored out of 5, with an individual threshold of 3 and an overall threshold of 10. For Innovation Actions, the Impact criterion will be weighted by a factor of 1.5 in the final ranking.

Table 4. Score description

Score description for the evaluation criteria (half point scores may be given)		
0	Weak	The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
1	Poor	The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
2	Fair	The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
3	Good	The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
4	Very Good	The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
5	Excellent	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

- Evaluation Procedure

Section 1 Innovation Action Calls in Work Programme 2026 are subjected to a two-stage submission procedure.

Proposals will first be assessed for **admissibility** and **eligibility**. Eligible proposals will then be evaluated per topic by an evaluation committee, composed of independent external experts, in accordance with Article 49 of Regulation (EU) 2021/695. The evaluation covers both operational capacity and the applicable award criteria. Proposals will be ranked according to their final evaluation score, and a ranking list will be drawn up for each indicative budget specified in the call conditions. The evaluation process is described in detail in the [PRIMA website](#).

Individual Evaluation

Each eligible proposal is evaluated remotely by at least three independent expert evaluators (Article 29(1), Regulation (EU) 2021/695), based on the applicable award criteria. Each expert prepares an Individual Evaluation Report (IER), which includes scores and justifications for each criterion. Where proposals receive divergent individual scores, a consensus meeting is convened among the experts to discuss and agree on a common position.

Panel Review

After the remote individual evaluation, evaluators meet in a panel to discuss and find agreement on the initial comments and scores attributed to each proposal. They will prepare an Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) for each proposal which shows the outcome of the project proposal evaluation. The panel is also responsible for preparing a consensus ranking list of proposals.

Project funding decisions will be taken based on this ranking list. The panel configuration allows evaluators to overview all eligible proposals checking the consistency of comments and marks, not just the ones they have evaluated. This enables them to make fair decisions when ranking the proposals.

In case of disagreement or project proposals with the same score, the panel will determine the priority order for proposals described in the section below. Special procedures will be set out in the call conditions if they apply.

Priority order for proposals with the same score

In cases where proposals receive the **same final score** within a single budget envelope, a **priority order** will be established to determine which proposals are retained for funding.

For each group of proposals with the same score, starting with the group achieving the highest score and continuing in descending order:

- 1) Proposals that address aspects of the call that have not otherwise been covered by more highly ranked proposals will be considered to have the highest priority.
- 2) The proposals identified under 1), if any, will themselves be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for 'Excellence'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on scores for 'Impact'. In the case of 'Innovation actions', priority will be given to the score for 'Impact', followed by that for 'Excellence'.
- 3) If necessary, the gender balance among the researchers with a leading role named in the researchers table in the proposal, will be used as a factor for prioritisation.

- 4) If necessary, any further prioritisation will be based on geographical diversity, defined as the number of MPCs represented in the proposal, not otherwise receiving funds from projects higher up the ranking list (and if equal in number, then by budget).
- 5) If a distinction still cannot be made, the panel may decide to further prioritise by considering other factors related to the objectives of the call, or to Horizon Europe in general. These may include, for example, enhancing the quality of the project portfolio through synergies between projects or, where relevant and feasible, involving SMEs. These factors will be documented in the panel report.
- 6) The method described in 1), 2), 3) and 4) will then be applied to the remaining equally ranked proposals in the group.

All prioritisation decisions will be fully documented in the evaluation panel report, in line with the principles of transparency, equal treatment, and fairness. All such decisions will be **clearly justified and documented in the ESR**. Once a proposal is prioritised within its group, the methods described in points **1 through 4** will be **reapplied to the remaining proposals** in the same group to determine their order.

VIII. Communication of evaluation results

At the end of the evaluation all applicants will be informed of the result. The proposal coordinators receive an Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) showing the evaluation results for a given proposal. In the ESR the overall score will be provided.

Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will receive a formal communication informing them that the grant preparation phase can begin.

If special procedures apply, they will be set in the call conditions.

⚠ No commitment to provide funding: Invitation to the grant preparation stage does NOT constitute a formal commitment to funding. Various legal checks are still needed before the grant can be awarded such as legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check etc.

- Information on the means of redress

If a consortium believes that a procedural error or factual shortcoming occurred during the evaluation of its proposal, the coordinator may submit a request for evaluation review (redress review), following the process detailed in the Proposal Outcome Letter and the ESR.

⚠ The evaluation review procedure may only address procedural aspects of the evaluation. It cannot be used to contest the expert evaluators' scientific judgments. If the notification of evaluation results is not accessed within 10 calendar days of dispatch, the system will consider it accessed, and the 30-day deadline will start from that date.

An Evaluation Review Committee will assess the complaint and issue a recommendation. The committee may:

- Re-evaluate the proposal by new independent experts, *only if the procedural shortcoming is clearly demonstrated and materially relevant to the evaluation outcome*
- Or confirmation of the original evaluation result, if no flaw or relevant impact is identified

The decision of the PRIMA Executive Director, based on the committee's recommendation, will be communicated to the coordinator by letter. PRIMA aims to process and issue the final outcome within six weeks from the close of the evaluation review time-limit. Further information on the evaluation review process is available on the PRIMA website.

IX. Conditions related to open access to research data

Open science as an approach to the scientific process emphasizes collaborative work and the dissemination of knowledge openly. It aligns with Article 39(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/695¹¹.

Open science practices¹² are considered in the evaluation of proposals under 'Excellence' and under the 'Quality and efficiency of implementation'. Proposers should be aware of both mandatory and recommended practices and integrate them into their proposals.

Mandatory open science practices

Some open science practices are mandatory for all beneficiaries per the grant agreement. They concern:

- open access to scientific publications under the conditions required by the grant agreement
- responsible management of research data in line with the FAIR principles of 'Findability' 'Accessibility' 'Interoperability' and 'Reusability' notably through the generalised use of data management plans and open access to research data under the principle 'as open as possible as closed as necessary' under the conditions required by the grant agreement
- information about the research outputs/tools/instruments needed to validate the conclusions of scientific publications or to validate/re-use research data
- digital or physical access to the results needed to validate the conclusions of scientific publications unless exceptions apply

As an exception, if providing open access would be against the beneficiaries' legitimate interests, the beneficiaries must grant non-exclusive licenses on fair and reasonable conditions to legal entities that need the research output to address the public emergency. These legal entities must commit to rapidly and broadly exploit the resulting products and services on fair and reasonable conditions. This exception is limited to four years after the end of the action.

¹¹ Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0695>)

¹² Open science practices include early and open sharing of research (for example through preregistration, registered reports, pre-prints, or crowd-sourcing); research output management; measures to ensure reproducibility of research outputs; providing open access to research outputs (such as publications, data, software, models, algorithms, and workflows); participation in open peer-review; and involving all relevant knowledge actors including citizens, civil society and end users in the cocreation of R&I agendas and contents (such as citizen science).

Data protection¹³

Research Data Management (RDM)

Responsible management of research data shall be ensured in line with the principle's 'findability' 'accessibility' 'interoperability' and 'reusability' (the 'FAIR principles'). Attention shall also be paid to the long-term preservation of data. Proper Research Data Management (RDM) is mandatory for any PRIMA project generating or reusing research data. It is a key part of Horizon Europe's open science requirements. As part of making research data findable, accessible, interoperable and re-usable (FAIR) RDM can be applied to research outputs other than data (i.e. workflows, protocols, software samples etc). Beneficiaries must manage the digital research data generated in the action ('data') responsibly in line with the FAIR principles and should at least do the following:

- 1) Prepare a Data Management Plan (DMP) and keep it updated throughout the course of the project
- 2) Deposit data in a trusted repository and provide open access to it ('as open as possible as closed as necessary')
- 3) Provide information (via the same repository) about any research output or any other tools and instruments needed to re-use or validate the data
- 4) As part of making research data findable accessible interoperable and re-usable (FAIR) a DMP should include information on:
 - the handling of research data during & after the end of the project
 - what data will be collected processed and/or generated
 - which methodology & standards will be applied
 - whether data will be shared/made open access and
 - how data will be curated & preserved (including after the end of the project).

Please make sure you also check the relevant sections of the WP2026 addressing other important aspects i.e.: Confidentiality and security (EU classified information), Ethics (research integrity), and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).

X. Gender-related aspects in research and innovation

In line with [Article 7 of Regulation \(EU\) 2021/695](#), the requirement to have a **Gender Equality Plan (GEP)** is an **eligibility condition** for public bodies, research organisations, and higher education establishments, including private entities falling under these categories, participating in PRIMA actions. While [Decision \(EU\) 2017/1324](#) as amended by [Decision \(EU\) 2024/1167](#) does not explicitly refer to this provision of the [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/695](#), this requirement is applied by analogy, in line with Horizon Europe practices.

¹³ PRIMA ensures compliance with EU data protection regulations, aligning with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – Regulation (EU) 2016/679, which governs the lawful processing of personal data, ensuring privacy, security, and fundamental rights protection in research activities. Additionally, PRIMA follows the principles outlined in Regulation (EU) 2021/695 (Horizon Europe Framework Programme) regarding open science, research data management, and ethical data handling.

The **applicable eligibility rules, scope, and minimum requirements for the GEP** are set out in Section 1 – General Annex B (Eligibility) of the Work Programme 2026. Applicants are required to comply with those provisions.

Support and Guidance: To help institutions meet this requirement, the European Commission has prepared a [Guidance document on Gender Equality Plans](#) that PRIMA advises referring to when preparing it. Applicants are encouraged to refer to this guidance when preparing or updating their institutional GEP. In addition, the [HE Programme Guide](#) provides practical guidance on identifying, analysing, and appropriately integrating the gender dimension into research and innovation content, including when such integration is relevant and how it may be addressed in project design.

The integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content, should be duly considered where relevant.

For more information on the GEP and gender-related aspects, please check the PRIMA WP2026 and its General Annexes.

XI. Responsible use of generative AI in research

The European Commission and the European Research Area countries and stakeholders have prepared a set of guidelines on the responsible use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in research. The contents of the guidelines are relevant for any researchers from PRIMA Participating States. You can find more information [here](#) and download the guidelines from [here](#). Please take some time to read them, and make sure that you follow the principles they outline when developing your proposal.

XII. Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

The PRIMA partnership will be implemented in compliance with the objectives and provisions set out in the Decision (EU) 2024/1167 and will be based on the priorities described in the PRIMA Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA).

For the proper evaluation and monitoring of the projects, consortia must consider in their proposal how and to which extent it will contribute to the targeted research and innovation objectives of the PRIMA partnership and to its overall expected impacts.

For this purpose, proposals should clearly define KPIs - Key Performance Indicators that will allow the evaluation and measurement of the progress of the project and its impact.

At the proposal stage, applicants should **select at least three PRIMA KPIs** from the PRIMA KPI Table 5 included in WP2026. Detailed definitions and methodological guidance are provided in the **PRIMA KPI Handbook for Applicants**. The selected KPIs should clearly correspond to the expected outcomes of the project, align with the PRIMA SRIA and its Operational Objectives (OOs).

Where relevant, applicants are encouraged to include at least one KPI from each of the following:

- Scientific or technological output

- Socio-economic or environmental benefit
- Policy, capacity-building, or governance uptake

For certain topics, **recommended KPIs may be indicated directly in the topic description.**

For each selected KPI, the proposal should indicate the baseline, meaning the situation at the start of the project, and the target value expected to be achieved by project end. It should also describe the methodology and data sources that will be used to monitor, measure, and verify progress over time. Each KPI should be quantified, when appropriate, using a numerical metric, and qualified with a brief explanation of its relevance to the project objectives. KPIs must also be linked to the project's expected outputs and outcomes, with supporting evidence provided where applicable—for example, publications, demonstration records, training materials, or stakeholder engagement documentation.

A [KPI Handbook](#) will be available at the call opening: the handbook provides detailed descriptions, data collection methods, reporting guidelines, and baselines for each KPI. Please make sure you check the KPI handbook as well as the relevant sections on KPIs of the WP2026 and call texts.

XIII. Call Secretariat – PRIMA-IS

The Call Secretariat of the **PRIMA-IS** will provide administrative support to applicants regarding the calls, call documents and procedures.

Project Officers:

Kindly note that communication via email is most preferred.

For Water Management in the Nexus: Ali Rhouma

Phone : +34 93 019 08 23

E-mail : ali.rhouma@prima-med.org

For Farming Systems in the Nexus: Fabrice Dentressangle

Phone : +34 93 019 08 23

E-mail : fabrice.dentressangle@prima-med.org

For Food Value Chain in the Nexus: Mohamed Wageih

Phone : +34 93 019 08 23

E-mail : mohamed.wageih@prima-med.org

XIV. National Contact Points

Besides the Call Secretariat, each country has nominated representatives at national level as National Contact Point (NCP). These representatives give support to the applicants and are the primary points of contact for all general matters related to the calls, and can act as a link between PRIMA and the

coordinator of the project. A list of the National Contact Points is provided on the PRIMA website (<https://prima-med.org/ncps-contacts/>).

XV. Use of the Electronic Submission System

The proposal submission occurs online via the Electronic Submission System. It is the duty of the Project Coordinator to enter the data online. Please READ CAREFULLY THE ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION SYSTEM HANDBOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION. (download from PRIMA website)

The ESS will ask for the following information:

- Project Title;
- Project Acronym;
- Project duration;
- Topic;
- Keywords. You can select predetermined keywords for main topic selected or add any new keyword;
- Abstract;
- Documents. You can upload the required documents (Part I-Administrative Form, Part II-Technical Annex/scientific document, Budget table -in PDF or EXCEL files). Max allowed file size: 10 MB;
- The ESS will ask you for the total cost / partner and the requested amount to PRIMA / partner. For information Total cost = requested amount to PRIMA + own funding;

The Project Coordinator must list all partners of the consortium. After having entered the required information, each partner will receive a confirmation email and will be able to edit his/her administrative and financial data.

XVI. Annex 1: Timeline for PRIMA-2026 Calls, Section 1 Innovation Actions

THEMATIC AREA	CALL TOPICS	Call publication and opening	Stage 1 - Submission deadline	Stage 1 - Evaluation results	Stage 2 – Submission deadline	Stage 2 – Evaluation results
Water management in the nexus	Topic 1.1.1 (IA)	20/03/2026	15/05/2026, 13h00 Spain time	24/07/2026	07/10/2026, 17h00 Spain time	11/12/2026
Farming systems in the nexus	Topic 1.2.1 (IA)	20/03/2026	15/05/2026, 13h00 Spain time	24/07/2026	07/10/2026, 17h00 Spain time	11/12/2026
Agri-food value chain in the nexus	Topic 1.3.1 (IA)	20/03/2026	15/05/2026, 13h00 Spain time	24/07/2026	07/10/2026, 17h00 Spain time	11/12/2026