

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002337/24
to the Commission**

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(30 October 2024)

Subject: Horizon Europe: increased burden of providing budgetary details

In Section 3.1 of the new application form template for Horizon Europe project proposals (version 3.4, dating from 4 April 2024), the following new requirements, concerning how to describe the activities per work package, were added: ‘For each task or element of the work package, describe all activities to be carried out and quantify them (e.g., number of protocols, tests, measurements, combinations, study subjects, conferences, publications, etc.). Provide enough detail to clarify who will do this work and why it is needed for the project, (e.g., the level of qualification and number of person-months for personnel, as well as the requested equipment, consumables, meetings, etc.)’. This requirement applies to both lump sum and actual cost projects.

1. What is the rationale for reintroducing this requirement, given that it had been deleted in earlier changes to the template?
2. Specifically for lump sum projects, what is the rationale for requiring this information in the formulation of work packages, given that it has to be provided in the budget spreadsheet as well?
3. How does the introduction of this requirement align with the expressed objective of the Commission to simplify the programme’s funding processes?

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Answer given by Ms Zaharieva on behalf of the European Commission

(9 January 2025)

1. The requirement mentioned by the Honourable Members is not a new one. From the start of Horizon Europe ⁽¹⁾, the application form has asked applicants to give enough detail in their work package description to enable monitoring of proper implementation. The updated form provides extra clarification to achieve a more consistent way of presenting the work plan, and a more harmonised level of detail across applicants. However, the overall approach is unchanged. Through the improved description of the work, the Commission also addresses a recommendation from the European Court of Auditors to ‘define clearer requirements on implementation of Horizon Europe grants’ ⁽²⁾.
2. The information requested in the application form per task is not the same as in the detailed budget table. The guidance in the application form, including the update, does not concern budget estimates. Instead, it further explains the general requirement to give enough detail on the work plan and quantify it, so that project progress can be monitored. A list of examples aims to help applicants, but they are free to describe and quantify activities in the best possible way for their project.
3. The update to the application form does not introduce new requirements or change the approach but further clarifies how to describe activities in work packages. A full description of activities with a harmonised level of detail helps consortia and Commission services to monitor project progress in all grants. This is especially important for lump sum grants, which are paid without financial reporting when the work has been completed. The Commission will continue to monitor and review its practices to identify and implement simplification measures and reduce the reporting burden for beneficiaries.

⁽¹⁾ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

⁽²⁾ 2022 Annual Reports on the implementation of the EU budget for the 2022 financial year and on the activities funded by the 9th, 10th and 11th European Development Funds (EDFs) for the 2022 financial year — https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/AR-2022/AR-2022_EN.pdf (Chapter 5, Recommendation 5.3).