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Research Council of Lithuania

Introduction to the Twinning call

Policy background, call requirements, evaluation criteria



2014-2020 Operational
Programme for the
European Union Funds
Investments in Lithuania

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Twinning



Policy
background

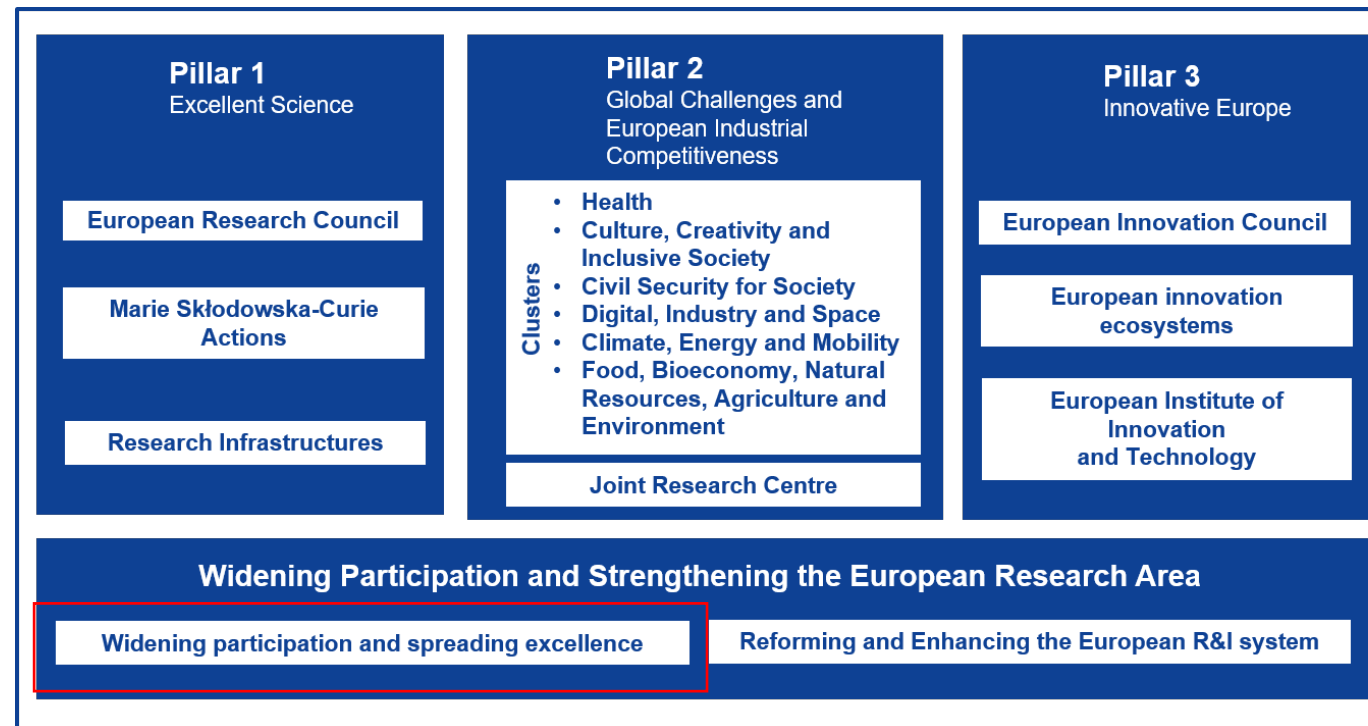


Call
requirements



Evaluation
criteria

Widening Participation and ERA



Widening participation aims at **connecting research and innovation** in *Widening countries* to a broader European network of excellence, with the goal of strengthening the Widening countries and allowing the EU as a whole to advance.

Widening Participation and ERA Strategic orientation



EC Policy Priorities	Based on the Political Guidelines for the European Commission 2019-2024 with a focus on three key priorities: Green Deal, Europe fit for the Digital Age, and Economy that Works for People as well as the new Recovery Plan, ERA and the ESFRI white paper
Objectives and Expected Impacts	Wider effects on society (including the environment), the economy and science, enabled by the R&I outcomes (long-term)
Destinations	Packages of actions around which each Work Programme part will be designed, aimed at contributing to the objectives and expected impacts set out in the Strategic orientations. The Destinations will provide the policy narrative for the calls and actions included in the WP.
Calls for proposals	Each Destination will be implemented by means of calls for proposals. Each Call for proposals will include one or more topics.

Widening and ERA: Programme level policy aspects

Widening and ERA Work Programme contribute to **improving research management capacities** in the Widening Countries and Outermost Regions, **support national policy reforms** as well as **valorise the potential of the Union's talent pool through targeted actions** (both Widening and ERA).

This part will contribute [de facto to all SDGs](#), but directly to the following: SDG 4 - **Quality Education**; SDG 5 - **Gender Equality**; SDG 9 - **Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**; SDG 17 - **Partnership for the Goals** (both Widening and ERA).

Closer links between research and innovation and institutional cooperation to produce high-quality knowledge are also paramount to help bridging these disparities (Widening).

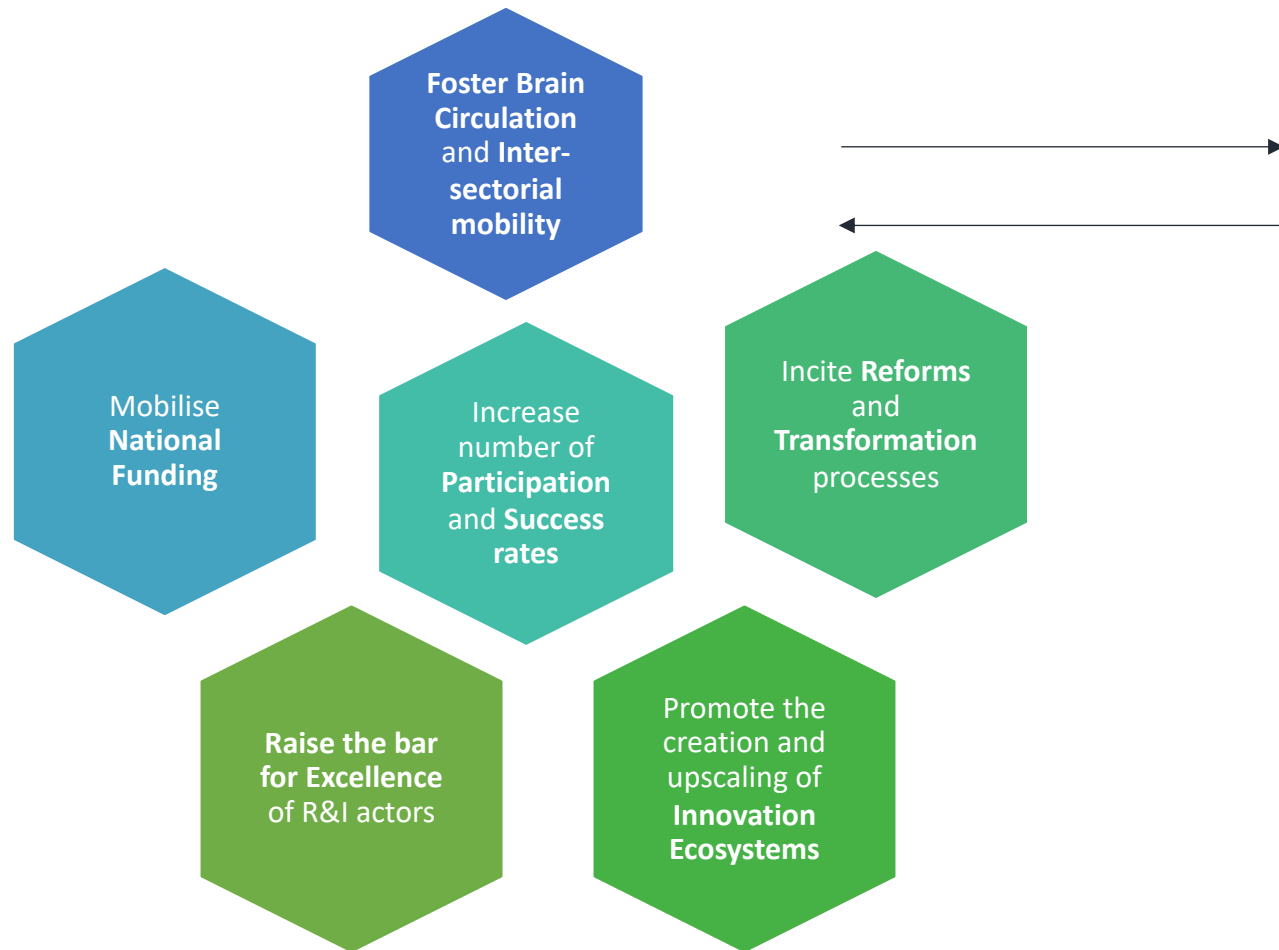
In the field of **climate science as well as clean-tech and energy&transport technologies**, disparities between R&I leading and lagging countries are particularly large. This Work Programme component therefore **particularly encourages to improve access to excellence and reform the innovation system in these domains** (Widening).

This programme part is especially **responding to the second policy priority of the ERA communication** i.e., **improving access to excellence**: towards more excellence and stronger R&I systems across the whole of the EU where best practice is disseminated faster across Europe (Widening).

There should be complementarities with [smart specialization strategies](#) under [Cohesion Policy](#).

Don't forget [Six Key objectives](#) - Widening part of programme (p.10)

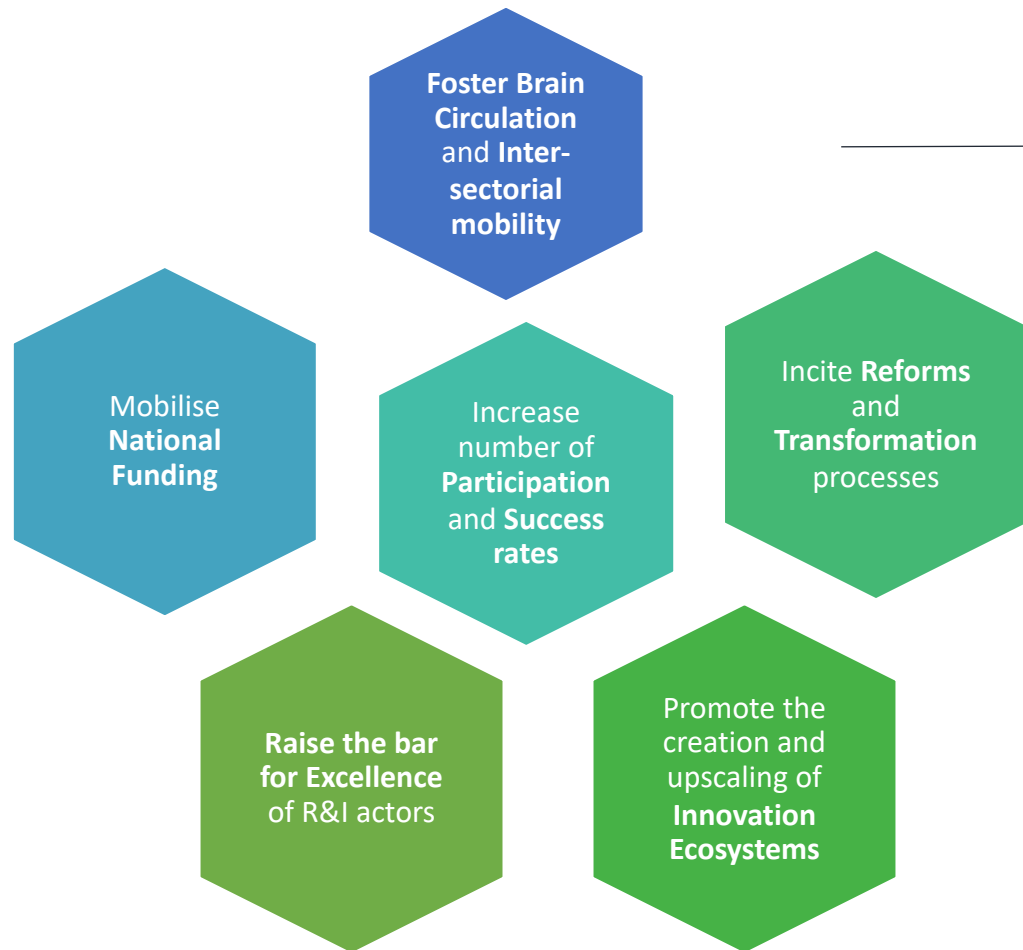
Strategic Priorities and Destinations



Destinations:

1. Improved access to excellence
2. Attracting and mobilising talents
3. Reforming and enhancing the EU research and innovation system

Strategic Priorities and Destinations



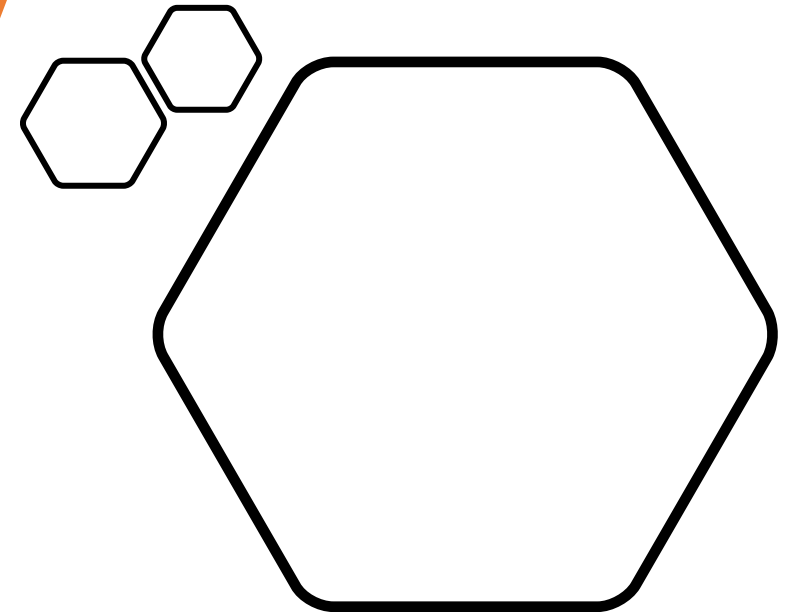
Destinations:

1. Improved access to excellence
2. Attracting and mobilising talents
3. Reforming and enhancing the EU research and innovation system

Twinning: Destination level policy aspects

Twinning call supports Work Programme's destination 1 - “Improving access to excellence”:

- **Complementary actions that aim at building up R&I capacities** in widening countries, also through national and regional R&I reforms and investments, to **enable them to advance to the competitive edge** at European and international level
- **Maximize investment in R&D and enhance economic growth**, Horizon Europe is taking relevant actions under Widening participation and spreading excellence objective
- **Capacity building will go beyond purely scientific capacities** since it includes the development of management and administrative capacities for the benefit of institutions.
- **Focused networks with excellent partners will develop new promising R&I domains** and test novel approaches in smaller joint research projects
- Particular attention will be paid to **cross-cutting objectives set for Horizon Europe**, such as gender equality and open science practices, through the different funded actions.





Twinning



Policy
background



**Call
requirements**



Evaluation
criteria

Twinning – What is it ?

- Twinning action (CSA) aims to enhance networking activities between the research institutions between Widening countries and **top-class leading counterparts at EU level.**
- Policy objectives: 1) ***develop excellence in a chosen R&I domain***, 2) ***increase visibility*** 3) ***and upskill its staff.***
- Twinning actions intend to ***raise the research profile of the institution*** from the Widening country as well as ***research profile of its staff.***





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Twinning – Why ?

- There are no prescribed topics
- **30%** of the allocated budget (EUR 0,80 and 1,50 million) can be **spent on R&I activities** (at least 70% of the budget for research activities must be allocated to the coordinator from a widening country).
- Wide range of eligible costs: short term staff exchanges; expert visits and short-term on-site or virtual training; workshops; conference attendance; organisation of joint summer school type activities; dissemination and outreach activities, research activities
- 3 years projects



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Twinning – How ?

- 1 coordinator or Coordinating Legal Entity from a **Widening country**: public or private research active university or a public or private non-profit research organization
- 2 **advanced** research institutions from two different Member States (MS) or Associated Countries (AC)
 - Twinning proposals will have to clearly outline the **scientific quality** and the **operational capacity** of the partners involved in the twinning exercise.
- 30 pages CSA form via Funding & Tenders portal
- Reimbursement rate. The standard 100% for direct eligible costs and a 25% flat-rate of the total eligible direct costs



Twinning – How ?

Organisations acting as internationally-leading (advanced) partners:

- Twinning proposals will have to clearly outline the **scientific quality** and the **operational capacity** of the partners involved in the twinning exercise.
- The internationally-leading (advanced) institutions can be established in **any EU Member State (MS) or Associated Country (AS) to HE**
- The **main partners** of a Twinning proposal shall be universities, research organisations, or private **not for profit research institutions**. However, once the minimum eligibility requirements are met, **bringing in a company as an additional partner if properly justified in the proposal is possible**.
- As long as the minimum eligibility requirements are respected (i.e. there are at least two internationally-leading (advanced) institutions from two different countries other than that of the coordinator), **then additional partners established in the same country as the coordinator are allowed**.





Twinning



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requirements



**Evaluation
criteria**

Evaluation criteria CSA

Excellence

- Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives
- Quality of the proposed coordination and/or support measures including soundness of methodology.

Impact

- Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions due to the project
- Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.

Quality and efficiency of the implementation

- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall
- Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

Evaluation criteria CSA

Excellence

Within this part, the evaluators are asked to consider the extent to which the proposed work corresponds to the topic description in the call text as well as to the relevant Work Programme. **Do not forget Open Science and Gender Dimension elements if you planning R&I activities.**

Impact

In this part, the evaluators are asked to consider the extent to which the project output would contribute to each of the anticipated **impacts and outcomes stated in the Work Programme and the call text, respectively.**

The experts assess the **quality of the proposed measures to maximize expected outcomes and impacts.**

Finally, they look at the **quality of the proposed measures to communicate project activities (D, C, & E) to different target audiences**

Quality and efficiency of the implementation

Evaluators have to look at all the **aspects allowing for the efficient and effective implementation** of the proposed project. Specifically, this means that they have to check the **quality and effectiveness of the work plan, including the extent to which the resources assigned to work packages are in line with their objectives and deliverables.** The experts look at **appropriateness of the allocation of tasks**, ensuring that the involved personnel have a valid role and adequate resources to fulfil their roles.

Most frequent mistakes...(evaluators feedback)- Excellence Criteria

SWOT analysis

- proposed methodology lacks proper SWOT analysis
- travels are considered as threats
- explanation of strengths and weaknesses of the widening institution justifying proposed methodology is not provided

Concept, methodology and scientific strategy

- description of methodology is weak and lacks enough detail / models and assumptions are not sufficiently clear
- proposed concept is not sufficiently described and therefore is not credible
- clear scientific strategy is missing / consists of a too extensive variety of research areas

Partners

- institute from widening country is not properly linked with internationally-leading research institutes since their roles are not appropriately explained
- participants and their levels are not properly defined
- Lack of knowledge exchange between the partners

Clarity and pertinence of the objectives

- objectives are too generic and vague / not clearly specified with regard to networking gaps and deficiencies of cooperation with internationally leading counterparts
- objective are not measurable and target values and indicators are too general
- objectives are not in line with the proposed tasks in the work plan

Quality of CSA measures

- activities are not comprehensively integrated into the concept
- neither description nor justification of CSA measures is sufficient
- pathways towards achieving the aims and objectives are not detailed enough

Gender

- gender issues are not sufficiently considered
- it is not clearly presented how the aim to increase the ratio of female researchers at all academic levels will be achieved

Interactions with authorities and stakeholders

- no information regarding existing interactions with national or regional authorities and stakeholders / no explanation on how they would be realized
- interests of stakeholders with no letter of intent are not well documented
- no adequate description of interactions with national stakeholders other than involved parties / actions aiming to connect to researchers at other institutions are unclear
- measures to link with regional stakeholders are insufficiently detailed and lack credibility

Most frequent mistakes...(evaluators feedback)- Impact criteria

Expected impacts

- described not convincingly enough / misunderstood and replaced by actions and outputs
- no clear quantitative and qualitative illustration based on indicators
- how improved capability to apply for competitive research funding will be reached is insufficiently elaborated / increased research excellence and attractiveness not considered
- most of the planned activities could be performed without involvement of other partners

Dissemination and exploitation (DoE)

- DoE activities are described in general terms / mostly targeting national level
- no coordinated strategy for dissemination to scientific community
- initiating dialogue with policy makers or boosting engagement with industry is not considered
- more measurable indicators for proposed dissemination activities should be included

IPR, data and knowledge management

- IPR management is not sufficiently addressed / not included
- data management lacks details / knowledge management and knowledge transfer activities are missing
- efforts to manage research data are not sufficiently detailed

Communicating the project activities

- communication primarily targets professionals in the same field with limited engagement beyond project partners / categories of target groups are too broad
- communication plan to different groups is not developed and specific measures are missing / it does not consider post-project actions / measures for communication during and after the project are insufficiently planned

Most frequent mistakes...(evaluators feedback)- Quality and efficiency of the implementation criteria

Work plan and division of tasks:

- work packages are not in line with objectives / are not interdependent / WPs on management and dissemination are missing / 18 WPs is too much for CSA
- relation between deliverables and milestones is not clearly set out / milestones are not specified / no deliverables for twinning actions
- work plan is very generic / lacks details / does not justify the budget / Gantt and Pert chart are missing

Management structures and processes:

- are not explained and justified / are too complex / responsibility is not specified
- involvement of leading partners in decision making is not satisfactory
- responsibilities of coordinator are not clearly explained
- plans for dispute settlement between partners are insufficient

risk and innovation management

- possible risks are not set out convincingly / are limited / are underestimated
- all critical risks are not addressed / risk and innovation management are poorly described
- mitigation measures are not sufficiently developed / are not convincing
- information on risk analysis and risk management is not provided / is not sufficiently detailed

Consortium and complementarity of partners

- complementarity is not demonstrated clearly and adequately / partners have significantly overlapping expertise / choice of partners is not clearly justified / no explanation of synergies and complementarity of consortium
- roles and adequate resource allocation to international partners is not specified
- coordinator's limited expertise in managing similar projects is not sufficiently addressed

Resources and budget

- insufficient PMs for management and dissemination / PMs are overestimated / no justification for equal allocations of PMs to all partners
- tasks are not adequately distributed to partners / tasks lack details and justification
- travel costs differ enormously while PMs and no. of travels are the same
- requested budget is not justified / costs are unbalanced / insufficiently described



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Evaluators feedback

Excellence criteria – Successful projects

Proposal **clearly explains and presents in very good detail the scientific direction** that will be strengthened to achieve the objectives for scaling up the coordinating research group.

The **concept is very sound and credible and is based on cross-disciplinary collaborations** with highly qualified partner institutions that can efficiently transfer novel techniques to the Widening institution. A **clear scientific strategy is proposed** which will stimulate scientific excellence and lead not only to continued collaborations with the twinning partners, but will also **attract and secure new collaborations and successful funding applications**.

The **objectives outlined are clear, realistic and achievable**; they are designed to address specific "bottlenecks" in the knowledge and expertise of the Widening Institute.

The progress towards achieving the stated objectives will be facilitated by **measurable and relevant benchmarks**.

Supported by a **comprehensive SWOT analysis**, the Widening Institute has recognised two specific areas where they lack knowledge and expertise, and it is proposed that these weaknesses can be addressed with the current funding proposal with internationally leading partners. Measures to improve excellence in research and training, as well as for the leading institution groups, are very well documented. The focus on **promoting the involvement of early stage researchers from the coordinating institution is very well explained**, and supports the potential benefit of the proposed activities.

Impact criteria – successful projects

The proposal **describes measures intended to maximise impact including identifying stakeholders from academia, industry, healthcare providers, policy makers and the school children**. The dissemination plans are excellent and target relevant audiences.

This aspect of the proposal is very well specified and well demonstrated. In addition a **clear socio-economic and educational impact in the research topic is described**. The dissemination strategy is very well designed and use a **number of relevant tools to maximize the impact** of the Twinning actions.

The **proposal clearly identifies and presents the outcomes, which are perfectly in line with the expected impacts of the Twinning programme**. They are also **aligned with regional strategic objectives**, which is a very strong point. Due to the innovative nature of the topic, which is highly relevant in advanced clinical research areas, the potential for enhancing the international reputation and attractiveness of the coordinating institution is exceptional.

The proposal includes **clear qualitative and quantitative indicators for impact**. These involve future publications in peer-reviewed journals (e.g. 6-7 peerreviewed papers in high IF journals + 3-4 papers, with ESRs being among the authors in peer-reviewed journals, plus at least 5 papers in conference proceedings) that are likely to have a high impact on an important and rapidly developing field of research that has historically been concentrated in a small number of member states, which contribute to new research avenues and related developments.

Quality and efficiency of the implementation – successful projects

The **individual work packages cover the relevant activities to help ensure effective implementation**. The work packages are **integrated and linked to each other**, thereby ensuring a smooth workflow between different tasks and objectives.

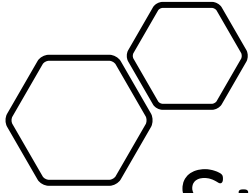
The overall work plan is clearly specified and is effective to implement the project. It is distributed in **5 interlinked WPs (research, scientific and management training, ESR training, communication)** with clear milestones and deliverables that are coherent with the proposed actions.

All the activities will be managed adequately by the WP coordinator together with the **hierarchical structure of each task's supervisors. The management structure is very well designed and highly credible**.

The **specific role of each partners of the Twinning project is clearly defined** and the allocation of tasks is well designed and will ensure that the three participants will have adequate resources in the project.

The partners are leading research institutions in the field. The **complementarity of the consortium is based on the diversity of the expertise, knowledge, and networks that the partners possess**, substantially covering all skills, resources and access to the stakeholder communities required for the success of the project.

The allocation of tasks is appropriate and the distribution of responsibilities among partners is balanced, as **all participants have a valid role**.



Successful Twinning project

Do detailed SWOT analysis

Be self-critical and elaborate well on weaknesses and threats

Incorporate your SWOT analysis into your action plan and individual work packages (5-7 is optimal)

Management structure should be simple and the roles and responsibilities of the people involved should be described

The proposal should be clear and brief, structured in short paragraphs, using simple sentences, and avoiding buzzwords and abbreviations where possible

Links with national and regional RIS3 strategies as well as the use of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) should not be missed

Clearly explain the benefits for all involved organisations





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