CLARIFICATIONS 1 TO 42

Call reference: EUBA-EFSA-2025-BIOHAW-04
Call title: Joint programming for risk assessments in vector-borne diseases

Question 1: I read "Only competent organisations based on designations by Member States, are eligible to apply to the call." And Switzerland is not in the competent organization list so I assume we cannot participate?
Answer: Your understanding is correct, organisations not present in the list of the competent organisations are not eligible to receive EFSA grants. More information can be found here.

Question 2: Do all art. 36 Institutions, members of the Consortium, have to belong to the same countries of the lot for which they are applying? In other words, if a Consortium would like to apply for Lot 2 (Southern Europe), would the composition of the Consortium be restricted to institutions from South European countries?
Answer: No, the consortium does not need to be formed by organisations belonging to the same country. As stated in the Call for proposals, section 1.5 Eligible organisations, to be eligible, the organisations must be on the list of competent organisations designated by the Member States in accordance with Article 36 of Regulation (EC) 178/2002 and Commission Regulation (EC) 2230/2004. This list is regularly updated by EFSA Management Board and is available for consultation using this link:
https://efsa.my.site.com/competentorganisations/s/competentorganisation/CompetentOrganisation_c/00B1v000009LqfIEAS

Question 3: In the document titled "Call for Proposals _EUBA-EFSA-2025-BIOHAW-04" and in chapter 3.1, there is a reference and a link to a webinar showing the use of the EU funding and Tender Portal for proposals submission. However, the link leads to a non-existent page.
Can you please fix this or send me a link to watch this webinar?
Answer: Please note that an updated version of the Call for proposals document (section 3.1 Submission modalities) has been published to adjust the hyperlink of the webinar showing the use of the EU funding and Tender Portal for proposals submission.

Question 4: In the draft Specific agreement Annex 5, Specific rules, it is not clear how the Individual DoI will be screened.
Answer: An updated Draft Specific agreement has been published to add in Annex 5, Specific rules the reference to the Individual DoI (highlighted in yellow).

Question 5: I would like to ask whether the grant funds could be used to purchase consumable and diagnostic materials, specifically ELISA diagnostic kits for detecting antibodies against West Nile virus and tick-borne encephalitis virus, as well as real-time RT-PCR kits for detecting RNA of these viruses in human clinical samples, to enhance the capacity of our laboratory to conduct timely and reliable testing for these vector-borne diseases.
Could you please confirm if such expenses would be considered eligible within the scope of the grant?
Answer: The type of financing of this grant is financing not linked to costs. This form of grant is different as it does not require the preparation of an estimated budget indicating the costs related to purchase of equipment, consumables and staff costs, therefore there is no evaluation of costs eligibility.

The grant amount is based on a pre-defined amount which is not linked to the actual costs of the project. The grant beneficiary does not need to co-finance the project and also there is no need for completion of estimated budgets or timesheets to record the time spent by your staff working on the project.
The payment of the agreed sums is done based on acceptance by EFSA of the deliverables due under the specific agreement. If those deliverables are completed to the level of quality which is defined in the Call for proposals, then the payment of the total amount for that specific agreement will be made without the need for you to produce evidence of actual costs incurred, such as receipts, pay slips etc.

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Q&As during Webinar on joint programming for risk assessments in vector borne diseases (link here)

Question 6: Can a consortium be formed from partners from different lots if the vector-borne diseases (VBDs) interest multiple areas?
Answer: Yes, a consortium can be formed by partners that are also part of other consortia of different lots.

Question 7: Is subcontracting with organisations and or experts from the organisation which are not included in the article 36 list possible?
Answer: It is possible to subcontract tasks to an organisation which is not on the Article 36 list. However, the subcontracted tasks must not be core tasks, as outlined in the Call for proposals section 1.3: *'Core tasks for this project are the risk assessment tasks defined in this table under points 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 and accordingly subcontracting is not permitted for those tasks'.*

Question 8: Is it allowed to use the budget to buy equipment and consumables and payment for human resources?
Answer: Please see the answer to question 5.

Question 9: Setting up a consortium to respond to the call while considering the terms of interaction at the national level, possible participation in different zones, and drafting the proposal takes a lot of time. The deadline for proposals submission of Mid-January seems extremely ambitious. Would it be possible to extend the deadline? This seems necessary to develop high quality proposals.
Answer: EFSA has set a deadline of 15 January 2026 for submission of proposals. The call has been open since 1st October 2025 to leave a significant period for the preparation and submission of proposals. However, without committing ourselves to extending the deadline, EFSA does review periodically the questions that we receive about the call during the period that the call is open and also reviews requests about the need for extension of deadline.
The possibility to extend the deadline for submission of proposals may be reviewed at a later stage in late December or early January based on information that EFSA has received during the application period. It doesn't happen very frequently that the deadline is extended, but it is a possibility for EFSA to consider deadline extension. If the deadline extension takes place, that will be published with the Call documents through the EU Funding and Tenders portal, using a corrigendum.

Question 10: what kind of information do we have to give in the proposal regarding the budget set up?
Answer: Being a financing not linked to cost grant, we do not require you to submit in your proposals any estimated budgets to justify the cost that you will incur during the implementation of the agreement. Please also refer to the answer to Question 5.

Question 11: In case the same consortium wants to apply for more lots, shall all the documents be replicated and submitted for each lot?
Answer: Yes, we must receive 1 proposal for each lot that you apply for. This may mean that you have to duplicate some of the documentation, but each lot will be evaluated independently on its own merits.

Question 12: Which role plays capacity building in the Member State for performing VBD risk assessment? Would trainings for experts from all Member States be eligible or planned?
Answer: Capacity building is one of the key aspects that we would like to develop in this call so it is very important. Specifically for the question of trainings for experts from all the member states, they would be eligible. Going back to how the call is organised and also the question on the deadline: at this stage we ask you to come with an explanation on how you build your consortium, nothing yet on the scientific part. It's only afterwards when the grant will be awarded and beneficiaries are known, then they will start for each of their areas to develop, drafting the road map for the next 4 years to work on. In the call we have seen that there was a first deliverable of the draft road map reports after four months of signing the first specific agreement. At that point we will compare the different draft roadmaps of the four different geographic areas and also get in touch with the beneficiaries to have a discussion to ensure that there is alignment and, where possible, synergy of the different draft roadmaps. And then we still have one month before coming to the final road map to see if what is proposed is applicable or not.
So, at that moment, if there is one area that suggests to hold a training relevant to all the area of the EU, we will ask the three other areas if they agree that the topics of the training are also relevant for them. If that will be confirmed, then indeed that could be something that can stay in the final road map.

Question 13: Should all 25 diseases be covered by at least one of the areas?
Answer: No, this is not a requirement. The list of the 25 diseases is just to give you the maximum type of diseases or list of diseases that you can work on. In the road map, you can just decide to work only on one or two or five up to whatever are the needs of the countries in a geographical area.
Twenty-five is the maximum, but it's up to you and the countries to decide what is relevant for you to cover or not.

Question 14: Can we have access to the preliminary assessment of existing tools and ongoing research dedicated to VBDS in the EU that is mentioned on page seven of the call.
Answer:

The report was published on 07 November:

- https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.2903/sp.efsa.2025.EN-9748

Question 15: In the call only four experts are to be included, of course with their respective teams. So how are the European countries divided into uneven groups, e.g. six countries in two lots and the northern lot is somehow nine countries. I would consider this as a bit unfairness, raising more competition.
Answer: Under selection criteria, professional capacity (section 2.4 of the call for proposals), EFSA requires to have a team of experts with four different profiles, but several profiles can be covered by the same person. So you can propose less than four experts, or you can propose more than four experts to have more exposure on the project.
On the separation of the different geographical areas, this is done on previous scientific work that already was published by EFSA beforehand, and it's based on areas where we believe questions on infected borne disease risk assessment will be more or less the same because the conditions for the factors and for the diseases to happen would be similar.
Competition will also play a role across the different lots.

Question 16: Which role would have the Member States that do not participate in a consortium?

How would the specific conditions for vector borne diseases in this country be considered in this call?
Answer: This will be a discussion after signing of the first specific contracts when the beneficiaries will work on the draft road map. It's at that moment that the beneficiary countries should liaise with the other countries in their respective area to get input on what are relevant risk assessment questions also to cover the needs of those areas. Afterwards, when risk assessments will be done, the beneficiaries will also need to ensure that the results of their work are distributed, communicated back to all the countries within their specific area. This is after signing of specific contracts and it's not something that needs to be covered at this moment.

Question 17: Does EFSA expect some field activities in the road map or just table exercises and which would be the level of involvement of the national risk managers?
Answer: This call focuses on the risk assessment, it has not the ambition to be a research call. Also, we estimated that the maximum duration of each specific contract will be around 2 years. We expect it might be difficult to really do fields activities. There are other calls and initiatives probably that can be used for this.
Here the focus will probably be more on table exercises, what we normally do, work with existing data and use that for risk assessment. For what concerns the level of involvement of the national risk manager: under selection criteria 2.4.B, the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) needs to submit a statement confirming that your organisation already performs risk assessment on vector borne diseases, that it is working or giving some scientific advice to them at national level. That is for sure a formal involvement of the CVOs at that moment. Afterwards, when you develop the road map, you need to focus on risk assessment questions that are relevant for your national risk managers. Afterwards, once the road map is developed, it's up to the risk assessors to do the work and then when you have the results, the communication will go back to risk assessors in the community, hopefully also to the risk managers because the idea is that they also benefit from the scientific advice that will be generated via the work of this call.

Question 18: Can one institution be involved in more than one lot?
Answer: Yes, an institution may be involved in more than one lot. Organisations are free to apply to one or more lots and you may also apply for one lot in one consortium and maybe in another lot in a different consortium with different partners.

Question 19: Can all Member States participate in each lot, having regard that we still need to communicate between us?
Answer: This is up to the organisations within the countries. They can discuss among themselves how to create consortia or not. There is no limitation from one organisation to apply for multiple lots, it's up to them. In EFSA we are not in the position to facilitate this discussion, to steer this discussion. This is up to the organisations themselves to discuss.

Question 20: We fail to see how the "joint programming" is implemented if consortia are not mandatory. What joint programming can be done by a single organisation?
Answer: It's theoretically possible that one organisation applies for all the four different lots, has the best proposal and will be awarded, and then it's indeed one organisation that is driving the full project. However, this may not be a realistic scenario. It's quite rare that EFSA imposes the formation of consortium in our grant agreements. It does happen occasionally, but for this call we decided not to make it a mandatory requirement. It's up to the organisations to decide how best to meet the requirements of the call and who to partner up with, if indeed to partner for this call for proposals.

Question 21: Is the organisation leading the consortium funded by Work Package 4?
Answer: Because this is a financing not linked to cost grant, EFSA is not looking specifically at the costs per work package and at the costs related to costs of the consortium leader or those who are part of the consortium.
Whilst work package 4 is related to coordination and management, it would be true to say that, yes, in part, the partner who is leading the consortium does get some funding under that work package. It's for the consortium to agree amongst its partners with the total amount of money for each specific

agreement, how they will divide that up amongst the various partners that they're working with. There is no requirement to demonstrate the actual costs of each partner. This needs to be agreed upfront amongst those in the consortium.

Question 22: Am I correct in understanding that the scientific proposal should be based solely on the presentation of the consortium members, their experience and the interactions planned between them and with EFSA?
Answer: Looking at the call for proposal, under section 2.5 "Award criteria applicable for each lot", you can see how the proposals will be evaluated. It's very important that you look at this section to understand what you need to include in your technical proposal. It's correct that it's mainly about how you create your consortium, how you will work with each other and the interaction with EFSA. But also how this will help the capacity building, boost the scientific coordination regarding risk assessment, infected borne diseases compared to the current. This is what EFSA will evaluate.
It's only after signature of the grant agreement that you will be asked to work on this road map and then go more into the scientific topic. Please carefully check the requirements of the call under section 2 'Selecting proposals' for the documentation needed to be submitted with your proposal.

Question 23: Do the main proposers have to work exclusively with article 36 organizations?
Answer: The organisations applying to this call must be on the list of the Art.36 competent organisations. It is possible to subcontract tasks to an organisation which is not on the Article 36 list. However, the subcontracted tasks must not be core tasks. To this regard, please refer to the answer to question 7.

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Question 26: Could you please clarify what the term "LOT" refers to in the context of this call?
Does it mean:

i) a group of countries belonging to a selected geographical area (for example, "Southern EU (S-EU): Spain, Greece, Malta, Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Portugal, Cyprus"), or
ii) a separate or single country within such a geographical group (for example, "Slovenia")?

Understanding this will help us correctly identify our geographical eligibility and potential partners.

Answer: In this call for proposals, the lot corresponds to the geographical area to be covered in the technical proposal, as follows:

- Lot 1 - Risk Assessments in northern EU: Lithuania, Denmark, Latvia, Ireland, Finland, Estonia, Sweden, Norway, Iceland;
- Lot 2 - Risk Assessments in southern EU: Spain, Greece, Malta, Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Portugal, Cyprus;
- Lot 3 - Risk Assessments in western EU: Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Germany, Austria;
- Lot 4 - Risk Assessments in eastern EU): Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania

Question 27: Within the text of "Call for proposals and guide for applications" (under the: 2.4 SELECTION CRITERIA APPLICABLE FOR EACH LOT; B) Professional and operational capacity; Criterion No. 2.4.B; Requirements and requested evidence; 1 Professional and operational capacity; Requirements and requested evidence) there are listed also the following "Requirements for the team of experts:
Each lot will require to have a team of experts capable to fill in the 4 profiles described below. Several profiles can be covered by the same person:

- Coordinator Senior (+5 years)

- Epidemiologist Junior (3 years)
- Entomologist Junior (3 years)
- Data Analyst Junior (3 years)

The expert filling in the role of Coordinator will need more than five years' experience in coordinating scientific projects, including animal health risk assessments. Etc."

Due to the small size of our country (Slovenia, with only two million inhabitants), we do not have a single expert who fully meets the Coordinator criteria (i.e. more than five years of experience in coordinating scientific projects, including animal health risk assessments). However, we have several experienced experts who collectively cover the required expertise.
The National Veterinary Institute of the Veterinary Faculty, University of Ljubljana (and its potential national partners) is fully competent and institutionally capable of implementing the activities described in this call, with long-term experience in animal health, epidemiology, and risk assessment at both national and EU levels.

We would therefore like to ask whether we would still be eligible to submit an application if the role of Coordinator is assigned to an experienced expert (with scientific and managerial experience), while other team members provide the required expertise in animal health risk assessment.

Answer: The role of Coordinator must comply with the requirement set out in the Call for proposals under Selection criteria 2.4.B. for such profile. However, if your organisation does not meet individually some of the requirements under the selection criteria, it can form a consortium with other organisations and rely on the consortium partners' professional resources, competencies and qualifications to meet the selection criteria requirements. As stated in the call, '*The applicant or in case of a consortium, the consortium as a whole, must have the professional resources, competencies and qualifications necessary to complete the proposed project'*.

Question 28: Regarding the information to be provided on professional and operational capacity: for organisations that use collective expertise (scientific expert committees, working groups …) to produce their risk assessment work, does the information to be provided (names, CVs) also apply to the individual experts in these groups of experts?
Answer: If these scientific experts are part of the core team of experts (described in Criterion No. 2.4.B 2) carrying out the risk assessment required under the tasks outlined in section 1.3 of the Call for proposals document, then information should be provided. If these experts have a reviewing role, no information will have to be submitted.

Question 29: Regarding the areas to be covered: for countries with overseas territories outside the geographical area of the European continent, should these areas be taken into account in the tasks to be carried out (and in particular the identification of vectors affecting them)?
Answer: No, the call focuses on the geographical area of the European continent.

Question 30: Data Analyst Experience Requirement - The call for proposals document (section 2.4.B, page 25) states that the Data Analyst (junior) must have "3 years' experience in vector-borne diseases' risk assessment." Could you please clarify how this experience is defined? Specifically: Does this require that the Data Analyst has worked exclusively on VBD projects for three years? Would intermittent or part-time involvement in VBD risk assessment activities over a longer period also fulfil this requirement?
Answer: Yes, intermittent and part-time work in VBDs over a 3 or more years would be considered as sufficient experience.

Question 31: Senior Coordinator's Institutional Affiliation - Regarding the role of the senior coordinator mentioned in section 2.4.B, page 25, is it mandatory that the coordinator is affiliated with the coordinating institution of the consortium, or can this role be fulfilled by a senior expert from one of the partner institutions within the consortium?
Answer: Yes. The role can also be fulfilled by a senior expert of the partner institutions.

Question 32: During discussions on forming a consortium for EFSA's Call on joint programming on risk assessments related to vector-borne diseases (EUBA-EFSA-2025-BIOHAW-04), a question was raised regarding whether urgent risk assessments, not planned in the roadmap, might also be requested from the consortium. This would make the planning of the project significantly more difficult, so it is important for us to understand if such a situation could arise.

Answer: Once the framework partnership agreement is signed, and after the roadmaps are delivered, EFSA will issue several other specific agreements based on the activities described in the roadmap. Other activities not described in the roadmap, may be requested after consultation with grant holders, these activities are described in the Call in sections **1.3 TASKS, DELIVERABLES, TIMELINES, MEETINGS AND PAYMENTS FOR EACH LOT** and **1.4.2 Implementation modalities.**

Question 33: Given that more than half of the pathogens listed in the call (pages 6-7) are zoonotic, and considering the need for a One Health approach to address the complexity of zoonotic vector-borne diseases, we would appreciate clarification on the following points regcoarding the role of public health expertise: are experts in zoonotic vector-borne diseases and risk assessment from the human health sector eligible to participate as expert team members under this call, particularly when they possess relevant entomological expertise?
Answer: If the experts have relevant entomological expertise (as defined in the call for proposals, selection criterion No. 2.4.B.2 'Requirements for the team of experts'), they can be part of the expert team.

Question 34: Should human epidemiological data be included in the roadmap and in the selected risk assessments? If yes, to what extent should such data be incorporated (systematically, or only when specifically requested by EFSA)?
Answer: Human epidemiological data can be included in the decision-making process needed to deliver the road map and assessments, but it's expected that animal health and animal disease impact in the affected Member States is at the center of the road map and the assessments.

Question 35: Regarding the evidence requested for Requirement 2 related to Professional and operational capacity (page 25), in the case of consortium, should all 4 required profiles be represented within each Member State participating in the consortium, or is it expected that the consortium as a whole covers all four profiles, implying that only a team of 4 experts (or fewer, if one expert covers multiple profiles) need to be submitted and summarized on one page by the consortium?
Answer: As stated in the call for proposals, selection criterion No. 2.4.B 'Professional and operational capacity', the requirement refers to the whole consortium.

Question 36: According to the call document, each lot (North, South, West, East) requires a separate proposal and will be evaluated and funded independently, with a distinct Framework Partnership Agreement per lot. However, the call also strongly encourages harmonization and collaboration between lots, including joint development of roadmaps and ongoing liaison between grant holders. Could you please confirm:
- Is it EFSA's expectation that consortia should be formed separately for each lot, with distinct proposals and governance, even if some partners participate in multiple lots?
Answer: The same consortium can apply to different lots, or you can form different consortia that applies to different lots
- Is it permitted or encouraged to propose a single, overarching consortium structure spanning multiple lots, with unified governance and coordination, or must collaboration between lots be organized through coordination mechanisms (e.g., joint workshops, shared methodologies, cross-lot meetings) while maintaining separate consortia and proposals per lot?
Answer: Both options are feasible
- If cross-lot collaboration is expected, what level of formalization does EFSA recommend (e.g., joint steering committee, harmonized deliverables, shared data platforms)?
Answer: EFSA doesn't have any preferences, it leaves the decision to the applicants. The application should nonetheless describe the way in which this collaboration will take place

Question 37: Does EFSA requests QES signature or handwritten signature with blue ink for Annex 2, Annex 3 and Annex 4?

Answer: QES signature or handwritten signature is required for Annex 4 and, in the event of award, for Agreements signature.

Question 38: We would like to enquire if is it acceptable, according to EFSA rules, if a member of the EFSA Management Board participates in an EFSA Grant as an expert with no remuneration. The intention is to use his professional expertise and knowledge to support the project activities.

Answer: Please note that according to Article 5(4) of the Code of Conduct of the Management Board *"Management Board members shall not engage in projects or activities funded by or benefiting from the financial contribution of EFSA (e.g. procurement and grants), even in case they would not receive any payment for their work. Management Board members holding managerial positions in organisations receiving funds from EFSA shall delegate to others any task related to contractual relations with EFSA, including negotiation".*

Question 39: We come back to you regarding the request for an extension of the deadline to submit the proposals. We have taken note of the response to the request for clarification sent on 9 December and thank you for extending the deadline to 4 February 2026.
However, our initial request was for an extension of at least one month to enable us to respond to this call for proposals […].

Answer: The call has been open since 1st October 2025 to leave a significant period for the preparation and submission of proposals. Initially, EFSA set a deadline for submission of proposals to 15th January 2026, extended to 4th February 2026 through Corrigendum 1.
Due to the tight schedule required for implementation of this project, it is not possible for EFSA to grant a further extension of the deadline for submission of proposals.

Question 40: Page 25 of the call states that: *'A letter from the CVO of the respective MS confirming that the Art36 applicant organisation performs risk assessment on Vector Borne Diseases to support risk managers at national level.'* Could EFSA please clarify if this CVO confirmation is required only for the "applicant" and not for all "partners" within the consortium?

Answer: The CVO letter is required for each partner of the consortium, but not for subcontractors.

Question 41: We would like to involve an external expert (Entomologist) in the risk assessment activities. We understand that key activities (RA) cannot be subcontracted.
The expert is not our employee at the moment, but our organisation would sign an "agreement on work performed outside the employment relationship" with the expert at the start of the project to carry out the project tasks.
Such "agreements on work performed outside the employment relationship" are used in our country to employ natural persons according to § 223 of the Labour Code if it is work that is defined by a specific result or if it is occasional work defined by the type of work.
Is it possible to use this type of work agreements for the risk assessment tasks?

Answer: As stated in the Call for proposals, section 1.7 IMPLEMENTING CONTRACTS AND SUBCONTRACTING *'Subcontractors are entities contracted by the beneficiary to carry out some specific tasks or activities. Core tasks must not be subcontracted. Only ancillary and assistance tasks can be subcontracted'.*
The agreement you described constitutes subcontracting. It is not permitted to subcontract the performance of risk assessment tasks as these are considered to be core tasks under the grant agreement.

Question 42: I've been told that only Annex 3 - A has to be filled in and signed. No need at this stage to sign Annex 3 -B&C. Would you confirm that?

Answer: Annex 3 should be signed based on the role of the organisation (leader/partner/subcontractor).
As stated under 'Exclusion criteria', section 2.3 of the call for proposals, part A needs to be signed by the applicant, partner(s) and subcontractors (if applicable).

In part *C. Confirmatory statement of professional conflicting interest*, it is stated '*To be completed only by subcontractors, if the subcontractor is a legal entity (i.e. company/organisation) not included in the Article 36 list of competent organisations . Subcontractors which are natural persons (i.e. single individuals) should not complete this section but should instead complete an individual declaration of interest.*