



<https://humus-project.eu/>

# Open Call for Pilot Proposals

This version dated: 06-Nov-2023

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101091050. However, neither the EU (European Union) nor the granting authority REA (Research Executive Agency) can be held responsible for the contents of this call for proposals.

## Glossary of used terms

Admissible Proposals	Pilot Project Proposals verifying the criteria listed in §4 of this Call.
Eligible Proposals	Pilot Project Proposals verifying the criteria listed in §5 of this Call.
EU Soil Mission	The EU Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe' ( <a href="https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/soil-deal-europe_en">https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/soil-deal-europe_en</a> ) aiming to lead the transition to healthy soils via sustainable soil management.
HE AGA	The Annotated Grant Agreement of Horizon Europe contracts, see the full text of the latest edition at: <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf">https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/aga_en.pdf</a>
HuMUS Methodology	An original methodology (better described in Annex G to this Call) aiming to increase the cooperation among local Quadruple Helix stakeholders and support the co-implementation of solutions to protect and restore soil health at municipal and regional scale.
Open Call	This document, inclusive of all its Annexes.
Pilot Location	The geographical identification of the community where a Pilot Project is localised. Involved municipalities can be identified using the LAU nomenclature, available here: <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/local-administrative-units">https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/local-administrative-units</a>
Pilot Project	An exemplary, experimental, and time bound local instantiation of the HuMUS Methodology, or of any other equivalent approach, to instantiate participatory governance of soil health issues and threats at municipal and regional levels.
Potential Winners	Admissible and Eligible Proposals demonstrating their full compliance with the features listed in §6 of this Call.
Quadruple Helix	A model of innovation that describes the interactions and collaborations between 4 key actors: academia, industry, government, and the general public. The model suggests that innovation can be enhanced by involving the public, which consists of civil society and the media, in addition to the traditional 'Triple Helix' of university, business, and public sector actors. The Quadruple Helix recognizes the role of people in shaping the demand, acceptance, and diffusion of innovation, as well as in providing feedback, knowledge, and creative hints.
Selection Criteria	Evaluation of Potential Winners will be effected using the criteria listed in §17 of this Call.

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Soil	The top layer of the Earth's crust, situated between the bedrock and the land surface, which is composed of mineral particles, organic matter, water, air and living organisms.
Soil Descriptor	A parameter describing a physical, chemical, or biological characteristic of soil health.
Soil Health	The physical, chemical and biological conditions of soils, determining its capacity to function as a vital living system and to provide ecosystem services. More info at: <a href="https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0699">https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0699</a>
Soil Steward	A new and innovative professional profile being the target of a dedicated training programme by the HuMUS project, which will be open to the participation of Call Winners (see § 7 of this Call).
Territorial Management Agreement	A local contract or pact involving several stakeholders of the Quadruple Helix in the sustainable management of soil threats of issues. See the full definition in § 9 of this Call.

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## **1. Project and Call objectives**

The overarching aim of the HuMUS project is to facilitate the deployment of the EU Soil Mission at regional and local levels in Europe. It will do so by creating collective spaces of constructive dialogue on soil health and quality threats, both inside and outside the consortium, which should adopt participatory governance methods and tools for soil quality and health governance in the territories involved.

From inside the consortium, we expect the signature of 13 Territorial Management Agreements among relevant and engaged Quadruple Helix stakeholders of each HuMUS partner community.

The target of this Call for proposals is to identify and support another 20 Pilot Projects, involving a total number of at least 300 Quadruple Helix stakeholders.

The latter may consist of, for example, farmers and other entrepreneurs, including SMEs, consumer associations and other NGOs, professional soil experts, researchers and academics, government managers and public officials, as well as the general public of the Pilot location, notably including marginalised people and vulnerable groups.

This critical mass of 33 Pilot Projects is expected to provide substantial evidence that participatory governance methods and tools can promote, procure, and stimulate an increased and more diffused awareness of existing soil health issues and threats at local and regional levels and more effective approaches to their resolution.

Before the end of their lifetime, the 20 Winners of this Call are expected to deliver:

1. The copy of a signed Territorial Management Agreement by all relevant Quadruple Helix stakeholders of the chosen Pilot Location;
2. Evidence of successful adoption of the HuMUS Methodology, as described in Annex G to this Call, or of another equivalent approach to instantiate the concept of participatory governance of soil health issues and threats at local or regional levels, gathered in the form of a Short final report;
3. An analysis of replication potential of the Pilot Project and approach, including details of the specific methodology adopted and highlighting the main barriers, drivers, enablers, and conditions for constructive dialogue and participatory governance of soil health issues and threats to materialise at the regional or local levels in Europe.

Only the Territorial Management Agreement and an executive summary of the Short final report will be published on the HuMUS website, while the other contents will be kept confidential and used only for internal purposes by the HuMUS consortium.

The HuMUS Call for Pilot proposals has a total budget of €600.000,00 and expires on

29.02.2024 at 5pm CET (Brussels time)

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The maximum subgrant per Pilot Project is € 30.000,00 (lump sum).

In addition to funding, the Call Winners will receive technical support from selected members of the HuMUS consortium, as described in §7 below.

This may involve their optional participation in a Soil Stewards training programme, which will include an in-depth presentation of the HuMUS methodology. In return for the support, Winners will participate in the HuMUS consortium's formative and summative evaluation activities, as explained in §13 below.

## 2. Project Information Summary

Project number:	101091050
Project acronym:	HuMUS
Project website:	<a href="https://humus-project.eu/">https://humus-project.eu/</a>
Project title:	Healthy Municipal Soils
Starting date:	January 1st, 2023
Duration in months:	36
Type of action:	CSA (Coordination and Support Action)
Project coordinator	ANCI Toscana, Italy
Horizon Europe Call identifier:	HORIZON-MISS-2021-SOIL-02-06
Topic:	Engage with and activate municipalities and regions to protect and restore soil health
Mission Strategic Objectives covered:	Improve soil literacy in society Facilitate the deployment of the Soil Mission at regional and local levels
Mission Operational Objectives covered:	Build capacities and the knowledge base for soil stewardship Co-create and upscale place-based innovations to improve soil health in all places Engage with the soil user community and society at large

### 3. Call Information Summary

Total budget:	€ 600.000,00
Number of stages/deadlines:	1
Help desk address:	<a href="mailto:info@humus-project.eu">info@humus-project.eu</a>
Opening date:	Monday, 6 November 2023
Deadline:	Thursday, 29 February 2024 at 17:00 CET (Brussels time)
Number of proposals to be funded:	At least 20
Number of applicants per proposal:	1 (Main applicant), other participants (co-applicants) are possible
Maximum funding per proposal:	€ 30.000,00
Funding instrument/rate:	Lump sum/100% of costs
Expected duration of the projects:	12 months maximum (no extension will be allowed)
Type of participants (co-applicants):	Any eligible entity for participation in Horizon Europe projects, residing in one of the eligible countries
Applicant's juridical status:	A Public entity or an entity governed by Public law
Language of the proposals:	English
Format of the proposals:	As per Annex A to this document
Submission of proposals:	In electronic form only, exclusively via ANCI Toscana/Goodgrants™ platform, <a href="https://anci-oscana.grantplatform.com/">https://anci-oscana.grantplatform.com/</a>
Notification of results:	By 30 April 2024 (indicatively)
Signature of Sub-grant agreement:	By 31 May 2024 (indicatively)

### 4. Admissibility criteria

4.1 Proposals must be submitted by a sole applicant, operating at regional or local level in the Pilot location.

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To assess the juridical status, a copy of the statutes and/or law of establishment (in the original language) accompanied by an English summary must be attached to the submission.

4.2 In case of a plurality of co-applicants, their existence must be mentioned in the application form (see Annex A—e.g. in Part 1—Section 1.3 and in Part 5—Section 5.4) and each of them will have to prepare a detailed breakdown of planned costs (as per Annex B). However, the presence of one or more co-applicants will not have any influence on the evaluation outcome. The main applicant will be the only to sign the Sub-grant agreement with ANCI Toscana and undertake all the resulting duties as well as enjoy the corresponding financial benefits, such as receiving the payment of the Sub-grant by instalments and being left with the sole responsibility of redistributing it among the co-applicants.

4.3 To be considered admissible, a proposal/application must be:

- (a) presented through the electronic submission system of ANCI Toscana;
- (b) submitted before the deadline stated in the Call;
- (c) written in English language only;
- (d) including all the information concerning the co-applicants (if any);
- (e) complete in all its parts;
- (f) respecting the character limits and layout requirements set out in the template;
- (g) including all supporting documents specified in the Call.

4.4 The same proposal may be submitted and then edited online until the closure of the electronic submission system, which will happen automatically at the deadline of the Call.

## 5. Eligibility criteria

5.1 Applicants must be eligible for participation in the Horizon Europe Framework Programme. This includes not only organisations, but also natural persons above 18 years old, provided they hold a VAT Registration Number in their respective country.

5.2 Applicants must reside in the countries listed in part A of the General Annexes to the EC Horizon Europe Framework Programme document (available at the URL: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation\\_horizon-euratom\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf)).

5.3 By sending out their candidatures, applicants confirm (also on behalf of their co-applicants, if existing) that they have the necessary personnel and financial resources to perform the proposed pilot experimentations.

5.4 A proposal will only be considered eligible if:

- (i) Its contents, including all annexes, correspond, wholly or in part, to the description of the scope of the Call as presented in § 6 below (see the paragraph starting with “The different types of activity that qualify for financial support”);



(ii) No concurrent submission is done, with similar or different contents, to the same Call that could lead to the signature of two distinct contracts with the same legal entity.

5.5 In case of multiple applications, only the last received according to the timestamp of the electronic submission system will be evaluated. All the previous ones will be discarded.

5.6 The maximum duration allowed for the Pilot Projects is 12 months, of which 9 for the field activities and 3 to prepare a detailed analysis of their replication potential.

5.7 All work plans must include the signature of a Territorial Management Agreement, pertaining to the identified local or regional community where the Pilot Projects are carried out.

## **6. Scope of this Call for Pilots**

6.1 For an indication of the kind of Pilot Projects this Call aims to support, candidates can consult the following (non-exhaustive, exemplary) list of qualifying aspects of Potential winners:

- Pilot Projects that develop and implement effective participatory processes to enable and stimulate an extensive dialogue on soil health at local and regional levels.
- The activities of the Pilot Projects should contribute to the main objectives of HuMUS by enlarging the number of relevant local and regional authorities, citizens and other actors involved across Europe in regional and local dialogues on soil health and land management;
- Pilot Projects that contribute to effective exchanges of experiences between municipalities and regions across Europe, creating spaces and practices for discussion and dialogues on soil health challenges and promoting the co-implementation of solutions aligned with societal needs;
- The activities to be put in place should engage all relevant actors and in particular citizens and those with decision making power in the local or regional context of election.

6.2 The different types of activity that qualify for financial support are exclusively the following:

1. development and implementation of effective participatory processes to enable and stimulate dialogues on soil health and sustainable land management at local and/or regional level;

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2. development of engagement and awareness raising actions on soil health among local and regional authorities contributing to the development of soil innovation ecosystems;
3. drafting of regional or local action plans to integrate the improvement of soil health in policies and programmes, on the basis of any good practice example identified in other EU countries and regions.

6.3 Supported Pilot Projects are conceived of as real-life testbeds of participatory soil health governance in the practical life of European local or regional communities. To give further inspiration for further reuse of followed approaches and results, the Winners of the Call will be asked to disclose to the public domain the contents of some of the outputs of their respective Pilot Projects, namely the Territorial Management Agreement, and a publishable summary of their final activity reports. These outputs jointly with similar results obtained by 13 regional and local projects carried out by the HuMUS consortium members, will contribute to populating a reasoned collection of EU and international evidence of implementation of participatory methods, tools and approaches for the engagement of Quadruple Helix stakeholders in action research to improve soil health and quality. This collection is named “Best Practice Catalogue” and will soon be available at: <https://humus-project.eu/catalogue-of-best-practices/>.

6.4 The HuMUS project adheres to the following (EU) definition of Soil Health: *Soils are healthy when they are in good chemical, biological and physical condition, and thus able to continuously provide as many of the following ecosystem services as possible:*

- *provide food and biomass production, including in agriculture and forestry;*
- *absorb, store and filter water and transform nutrients and substances, thus protecting groundwater bodies;*
- *provide the basis for life and biodiversity, including habitats, species and genes;*
- *act as a carbon reservoir;*
- *provide a physical platform and cultural services for humans and their activities;*
- *act as a source of raw materials;*
- *constitute an archive of geological, geomorphological and archaeological heritage.*

## 7. Technical Support

7.1 All questions and answers received from and sent to prospective participants in the Call will be made available on the official HuMUS project website (at the dedicated URL: <https://humus-project.eu/faq>). A primer on how to use the electronic submission system of ANCI Toscana is available as Annex H to this Call. A permanent help-desk service is available at [info@humus-project.eu](mailto:info@humus-project.eu) and will assist applicants in resolving any issues related to the use of the system that may come up during the application process.

7.2 Successful applicants will not become official members of the HuMUS consortium but only be considered as Financially Supported Third Parties and named as such in the HuMUS official website, in the published collection of cases and in all the project’s communication and dissemination materials. Also for this reason, the contract signed

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to access the financial benefits of the Open Call will be named Sub-grant agreement. A template of this contract is presented as Annex D to this Call.

7.3 In addition to the financial benefits of the Call, better described in the following §8 of this Call, Call Winners will be actively supported in the achievement of their proposal's objectives through specific measures (such as coaching, mentoring, training, and advisory services) which will be set up and delivered by selected HuMUS partners.

7.4 To ensure that each granted initiative through the HuMUS Open Call gets adequate and easily accessible technical support, each Call Winner will be formally assigned a "Mentor" (nominated in the Sub-grant agreement) responsible for providing advice on the participatory instruments, methods and tools that are most appropriate to their case. In addition, the HuMUS "Mentor" will help minimise the time required after the signature of the Sub-grant agreement to perform the Pilot Project in full, considering that no time extension can be allowed to the proposals retained for receiving the Sub-grant.

7.5 The HuMUS project will also come up with a specific online training programme for the so-called Soil Stewards, which will include an in-depth presentation of the HuMUS methodology for participatory soil health governance, also outlined in Annex G to this Call. However, the applicants to this Call are free to use their preferred participatory soil health governance instruments, methods, and tools as available in the state of the art. Likewise, the training programme for Soil Stewards may not be attended if Call Winners feel that they are knowledgeable enough of the topics dealt with in the programme itself. In that case the training can be transformed into a Q&A facility.

7.6 In no case can the provision of technical support be meant to substitute or compensate for the efforts and resources of successful applicants and co-applicants, who will be solely responsible for the coordination and execution of planned tasks.

7.7 The HuMUS consortium will organise public workshops for Call Winners to share experiences, facilitate their networking and promote better interaction with key stakeholders at European and international level.

7.8 Further details on the HuMUS technical support can be retrieved at this URL: <https://humus-project.eu/technical-support/>.

## **8. Financial Support**

8.1 The Call Winners will not receive the Sub-grant from the European Commission, but directly from the coordinator of the HuMUS project, ANCI Toscana, via the so-called Financial Support to Third Parties (also known as Sub-granting) process, according to the following rules:

- A lump sum of up to € 30.000,00 per proposal (as participants may ask for less);
- Covering 100% of eligible costs, as reported in the detailed breakdown of planned costs;

- To be shared among the co-applicants under the care of the main applicant, who will receive the entire payment by instalments, as explained below:
  - 50% of the total amount after the signature of the Sub-grant agreement,
  - 25% after the delivery of the signed Territorial Management Agreement (see § 9 below), and
  - 25% after the HuMUS consortium's approval of all the results foreseen by the awarded Action, thereby including the Short final report (public) and the Analysis of replication potential (business confidential) described in §§ 10-11 below.

## **9. Output #1: Territorial Management Agreement**

9.1 The Winners of this Call shall deliver a signed Territorial Management Agreement, aimed at the sustainable management of soil health issues or threats in the local or regional community of their choice. The Territorial Management Agreement is a type of contract or pact between different Quadruple Helix actors and stakeholders in a specific geographical area, who share a common vision and objectives for the development and conservation of their natural and cultural heritage, based on the principles and practices of sustainability. The actors and stakeholders may include local communities, farmers, businesses, civil society organisations, public authorities, and others. The agreement defines the roles, responsibilities, rights, and obligations of each party, as well as the actions, indicators, and monitoring mechanisms to achieve the desired outcomes. The objectives of the agreement are to enhance the social, economic, and environmental well-being of the inhabitants of a certain area, by promoting cooperation, innovation, participation, and accountability. A Territorial Management Agreement can be applied to various sectors and domains, such as agriculture, forestry, tourism, energy, water, biodiversity, and culture.

9.2 In case the delivered Territorial Management Agreement is not approved by the HuMUS consortium, based on objective circumstances and with the appropriate motivations, no payment will be effected until a new version conforming to the revised specifications is delivered again.

## **10. Output #2: Analysis of Replication Potential**

10.1 The Winners of this Call will deliver an Analysis of Replication Potential, consisting in a (business confidential) document evaluating the likelihood and feasibility of replicating the adopted approach during the Pilot Project in a different context and/or scale. The analysis will start from the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) overview included in the proposal (see Annex A, Part 5, Section 5.4) and update it after the results of the finalised intervention. Replication potential can be influenced by various factors, such as the availability and quality of data, the clarity and validity of methods, the relevance and applicability of results, the costs and benefits of replication, the alignment and engagement of stakeholders, and the legal and ethical implications of replication. The Analysis of Replication Potential will help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of used approach and intervention results, as well as the opportunities and challenges for their replication. It will also provide some tactical recommendations and guidance for improving the design, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of similar projects in the future, in order to enhance their replicability and impact.

10.2 In case the delivered Analysis of Replication Potential is not approved by the HuMUS consortium, based on objective circumstances and with the appropriate motivations, no payment will be effected until a new version conforming to the revised specifications is delivered again.

## **11. Output #3: Short Final Report**

11.1 The Winners of this Call will deliver a Short Final Report, consisting in a description of the activities done and the results achieved during the Pilot Project's lifetime. The contents of the report should provide evidence of successful adoption of the HuMUS Methodology, or of any other equivalent approach chosen by the applicant to instantiate participatory governance of soil health issues and threats at local or regional levels. Parts of this report may be used by the HuMUS consortium members for inclusion in the reporting documents to the EC and/or in public presentations. Therefore, the inclusion of confidential information should be expressly annotated therein, and the limits of its authorised handling specified beforehand.

11.2 A publishable summary of the Short Final Report, to be hosted on the HuMUS website, will also be required. The structure of the Short Final Report including its publishable summary is presented in Annex C to this Call.

11.3 In case the delivered Short Final Report is not approved by the HuMUS consortium, based on objective circumstances and with the appropriate motivations, no payment will be effected until a new version conforming to the revised specifications is delivered again.

## **12. Eligible expenses**

12.1 In line with the financial provisions of Horizon Europe, eligible expenses under the Call include the direct costs related to the implementation of the Pilot Project, such as personnel costs (both staff and in-house consultants), travel and accommodation expenses, other miscellaneous goods and services, including internally invoiced ones.

12.2 Due to the specialty of the case, no subcontracting is allowed nor will purchase or amortisation of technical equipment and infrastructure be acknowledged.

12.3 A detailed breakdown of planned costs for each involved co-applicant must be attached to the application/proposal. To this end, participants can use the template made available as Annex B to this Call.

## **13. Reporting duties**

13.1 As the Call Winners will be associated with the HuMUS consortium as Financially Supported Third Parties only, no input will be asked to them for the fulfilment of any of the periodic project reports, which the HuMUS consortium needs to submit to the EC. However, their participation and/or involvement in the technical support activities (of coaching, mentoring, training etc.) may require the signature of attendee lists, the compilation of forms and templates, and other forms of written interaction, which will never be made compulsory for the Call Winners and/or members of their teams, but in

some cases are specifically demanded for the effective and efficient delivery of related services. In such cases, the refusal to sign, compile, or interact in writing may lead to the suspension of the technical support following a written warning in that sense.

13.2 Another consequence of participating in this Call, and of being subsequently awarded a Sub-grant, is that the applicants and co-applicants of the pilots selected for funding agree to be surveyed periodically during the monitoring and evaluation activities planned by the HuMUS partners during the funded period. This may include, inter alia: providing data on the experience of participating in the Pilot Project and its outcomes; describing the participatory methods and tools adopted and their results; expressing satisfaction on some of the training or networking events organised by the HuMUS project. In such cases as above, the refusal to provide answers can lead to the suspension of the technical support following a written warning in that sense.

## **14. IPR management principles**

14.1 As indicated above, Call Winners acting as Financially Supported Third Parties, rather than full partners of the HuMUS consortium, will be paid for the implementation of a Pilot Project that is clearly distinct from the other activities carried forward by the HuMUS partners. Consequently, successful applicants and co-applicants cannot claim any IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) on the foreground knowledge generated by the HuMUS consortium or by individual partners (such as the HuMUS methodology, see Annex G to this Call), being sublicensed to them for possible use, free of any charge, during the execution of pilot activities.

14.2 In return, the HuMUS partners will not claim any IPR on any material or output released by the Call Winners, despite the fact that it was made possible by the existence of financial and technical support from the HuMUS project. Additionally, the preferential avenue for the results delivered by the funded projects is a full disclosure to the public domain.

14.3 The general principles for the management of IPR stemming from pilot activities can be summarised as follows:

- A) All parties (including both the HuMUS partners and the Call applicants) shall exhaustively identify the background knowledge assets they will bring to the project and assess their suitability for access rights as regards potential third parties' rights on such background;
- B) Ownership of project results (including joint results generated by two or more parties) will belong to the party(ies) having generated them;
- C) The parties owning the results will take all appropriate measures for the protection of those results that are suitable for commercial or industrial exploitation, notably through patents, trademarks or other forms when relevant;
- D) The same parties will provide their best efforts to exploit and disseminate the results, either directly or indirectly, for instance by out-licensing them;

E) Unless specifically mentioned in the above licence(s), project results will be put at free disposal of the public domain as Open Source / Open Access.

14.4 Further references to IPR management principles and rules of behaviour are / will be included in the Sub-grant agreement, a template of which is provided as Annex D to this Call.

## **15. Electronic submission system**

15.1 The HuMUS electronic submission system—made available at the ANCI Toscana / Goodgrants™ platform, <https://anci-toscana.grantplatform.com/>—is the only valid means for submitting applications under the provisions of this Call.

15.2 In Annex H, applicants will find an instructional document specifying how to access the platform, while Annex A is a courtesy application form specifying the type of information expected in each section and the expected number of characters for the text to be placed therein. Applicants remain solely responsible, however, for completing all required fields of the proposal according to the received instructions.

15.3 Beside filing in the online proposal, conforming to the template provided as Annex A to this Call, applicants will also be enabled to attach and upload the required supporting documents—without any of which the proposal will be declared not admissible—that are listed below:

- (i) Detailed Costs Breakdown (see Annex B)**
- (ii) Declaration of honour (see Annex F)**
- (iii) Signed Privacy Statement (see Annex E)**
- (iv) Copy of the applicant's statute and/or law of establishment (in the original language), accompanied by a short summary in English.**

15.4 Proposals/application must be written only in English and submitted (together with their annexes) exclusively through the electronic submission system. Notification of reception will be immediate.

15.5 Updates to a submitted proposal or its annexes are allowed until the Call deadline. Based on the automatic time stamp, only the latest editions of the documents will be evaluated.

## **16. Indicative timing of the evaluation, contracting and payment processes**

16.1 The evaluation process will tentatively last for two months. Therefore, notification of acceptance will be sent by ANCI Toscana to the Winners of the Call (indicatively) by 30 April 2024.

16.2 Sub-grant agreements are expected to be signed electronically, based on the template already available as Annex D to this Call, indicatively by 31 May 2024.

16.3 Selected third parties will receive an advance payment of 50% of the Sub-grant amount until 30 June 2024.

16.4 Another 25% of the Sub-grant amount will be paid upon reception of the Territorial Management Agreement described in § 9 above and under the conditions stated therein.

16.5 The final balance of the 25% of the Sub-grant will be paid upon reception of the Analysis of Replication Potential and of the Short Final Report described in §§ 10-11 above and under the conditions stated therein.

16.6 The maximum duration allowed to the Pilot Projects is 9 months for the field activities and 3 months for the replication analyses. No extensions will be possible. Therefore, all the Pilot Project activities must be finalised at the latest until 30 June 2025.

## **17. Selection criteria**

17.1 Only applicants that pass the admissibility and eligibility criteria stated in §4 and §5 of this Call will be evaluated against the following selection criteria.

17.2 Each Pilot Proposal will be evaluated by a special committee composed of three experts: one representative from academia, one from local or regional authorities (or their associations) and one expert on deliberative democracy and participation, selected from within the HuMUS consortium by the General Assembly, excluding any conflict of interest.

17.3 The quality of applications will be evaluated against the following 4 award criteria:

- Awareness and understanding of the value of soils and soil health challenges and their drivers;
- Contribution to the dialogue on soil health challenges and solutions at regional and local levels;
- Planned involvement of stakeholders and citizens with balanced representation of interests;
- Capacity to co-implement solutions between public and private actors aimed at the protection and restoration of soil health.

17.4 Received proposals will be scored with 0=non-existent, 1=very poor, 2=limited, 3=fair, 4=good and 5=excellent for each criterion. Half points can also be assigned. The scores attributed by the three experts will be summed up. The minimum scores for a positive evaluation are 9 per criterion and 40 overall. At the end of the evaluation process only Pilot Proposals ranking from 1 to 20 will be retained for funding.

17.5 If one or more Call Winners have asked for fewer resources than the maximum of € 30.000, the unused budget can be allocated to the following one(s) after the 20th in their order of appearance.



17.6 Proposals will be evaluated as they are, not considering the possibility of making changes –whether big or small–after their approval. Each score will be duly motivated in writing, but the justification will not be made public, unless in case of request for access to the evaluation proceedings.

## **18. Ranking, notification of acceptance and contract signature**

18.1 At the end of the evaluation process, all applications will be ranked according to the score received. Those not achieving the minimum scores will be rejected.

18.2 In case of identical total scores, the proposals will be ranked according to the score received in the individual criteria listed in § 17.3, following the reverse order. In case of a tie, proposals including a majority of women will be given preference to.

In case of another tie, proposals including team members from vulnerable groups (such as migrants, disabled persons etc.) will be given preference to.

18.3 Based on the ranking, from the top downwards, applicants will be invited to sign the Sub-grant agreement with ANCI Toscana electronically. Those who fail to do so by a predefined deadline (indicatively 10 calendar days) will be skipped to the benefit of the following ones in the ranking.

18.4 Further Sub-grant agreements will be signed until available financial resources are exhausted. In case the residual funds do not allow the signature of an additional contract, ANCI Toscana will reserve the right of deciding whether to integrate the Call's budget to the required extent or not.

18.5 If for any reason it proves impossible to sign the Sub-grant agreement with a Call winner, the best of the following Pilot Proposals according to the global score will be invited to take their place.

## **19. Special provisions**

19.1 The HuMUS consortium adheres to the Horizon Europe standards with respect to transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest and confidentiality. In particular, this Call satisfies the conditions specified in Articles 12 (Conflict of interest), 13 (Confidentiality and Security), 14 (Ethics), 17.2 (Visibility of EU funding), 18 (Specific rules for carrying out the action), 10 (Information) and 20 (Record keeping) of the HE AGA, which also apply to all Third Parties receiving financial support.

19.2 ANCI Toscana will ensure that the third parties supported by this Call will comply with Article 9.4 in regard to conflict of interest, confidentiality and security, ethics, visibility of EU funding, respect of specific rules, information obligations and record keeping.

19.3 This Call will be published on the EU Participant's Portal and on the HuMUS website (<https://humus-project.eu/open-call/>). Any changes to the Call provisions will

immediately be published on those pages and all already pre-registered applicants will be informed via the electronic submission system.

## **20. Right to appeal**

20.1 If a prospective applicant considers that they have been adversely affected by any of the provisions of this Call, a request for a revision concerning such provisions shall be submitted within 15 calendar days after the publication of the Call itself and addressed to ANCI Toscana, [info@humus-project.eu](mailto:info@humus-project.eu), with a clear specification of the reasons for such appeal.

20.2 However, the submission of a request for revision does not waive the obligation to submit the application by the set deadline if the requestor wishes to be considered as a valid applicant to the Call.

20.3 Likewise, a complaint against the decision of the evaluation committee on the final ranking of received applications may be lodged to ANCI Toscana at the same address specified above within 15 calendar days after the publication of the ranking and will be examined in the next 15 days. Against the final decision an appeal can be lodged before the European Court of Justice and/or the European Ombudsman.

## **21. Post-award events**

21.1 If at any point in time during project evaluation or contract signature, or during the execution of the pilot, a successful applicant decides to withdraw from the proposal or the Sub-grant agreement, or is found to be ineligible or unable to fulfil the commitments stated in the Pilot Proposal, the corresponding project will irrevocably be disqualified without the opportunity of substitution.

21.2 In no case can a modification of the contents of an awarded Pilot Proposal be accepted, even if it could be demonstrated that the essential features, key impacts, or original traits of the project are preserved. Should this occur, ANCI Toscana will disqualify the Winner and ask for immediate reimbursement of the advance payment already paid (if any).

## **22. Privacy**

22.1 Personal data shall be collected, processed and published in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679, also known as GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). Please refer to Annex E for a complete Privacy Statement.

22.2 The HuMUS consortium's appointed Data Protection Officer is Mr Federico Campatelli, [federico.campatelli@ancitoscana.it](mailto:federico.campatelli@ancitoscana.it).

## **23. Acceptance of all terms and conditions of this Call**

23.1 By submitting a proposal, applicants irrevocably accept all the terms and conditions set out in this Call, and in particular:

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1. They certify that all information provided is accurate and correct, including plans and estimates of the costs expected to be incurred into while carrying out the work described in the proposal;
2. They declare on their honour that the conditions specified in Articles 12 (Conflict of interest), 13 (Confidentiality and Security), 14 (Ethics), 17.2 (Visibility of EU funding), 18 (Specific rules for carrying out the action), 10 (Information), 20 (Record keeping) and 25 (Checks, Reviews, Audits and Investigation) of the HE AGA, are and will be complied with;
3. In case the proposal is awarded, they commit to signing the Sub-grant agreement as Financially Supported Third Parties to the HuMUS consortium without making any change to the scope and contents of the proposed Pilot Project and to bringing it to successful conclusion within the time frame originally stated in the proposal;
4. In case for any reason and at any point in time the proposal is disqualified, they commit to refunding ANCI Toscana of any payment duly received prior to the disqualification of the proposal.

23.2 Upon submission of their proposal, each applicant will sign the declaration of honour displayed as Annex F to this Call, including all the above provisions.

### **24. Financial checks and audits**

24.1 Payment of the Sub-grant will be in the form of a lump sum. This means that the Winners of the Call will not be asked to provide to ANCI Toscana any justification or documentation for the costs incurred during the execution of the Pilot Project. There will be no reporting of actual costs nor of used resources to the HuMUS consortium.

24.2 However, applicants and co-applicants may need to comply with record keeping and other legal obligations outside the lump sum grant agreement, if any (e.g. under national law or internal procedures). Therefore, it is advisable for them to keep all the original documentation (such as time sheets, payslips, invoices and payments made) to demonstrate that the activities have been carried out and related expenses have actually been incurred.

24.3 However, some obligations concerning the liability in case of financial checks and audits are preserved. In particular, ANCI Toscana, the European Commission and its agencies such as REA, the European Anti-Fraud Office OLAF, the European Public Prosecutor's Office, the European Court of Auditors ECA and any external auditor authorised or appointed by them have the right to carry out checks, reviews, audits, and investigations on site, and in particular to audit the payments received. If access is denied by the Call Winner, the costs will be rejected and the sub-grant revoked.