



# OPEN CALL FOR EXTERNAL EVALUATORS

## EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

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# 1.INTRODUCTION

<b>Project Acronym</b>	<b>REINFORCING</b>
<b>Project Title</b>	Responsible tEerritories and Institutions eNable and Foster Open Research and inClusive Innovation for traNsitions Governance
<b>Project Number</b>	101094435
<b>Project Topic</b>	HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01-40
<b>Project Duration</b>	50 months (1/01/2023 – 28/02/2027)
<b>Overall Budget</b>	€ 5.000.082,50
<b>Reserved budget for cascading grants</b>	€ 2.400.000,00

**Table 1:** REINFORCING summary information

## 1.1 REINFORCING project

REINFORCING supports organizations and institutions in Europe to transition to a new paradigm where responsibility and openness drive research and innovation processes.

In the current situation, the green and digital transitions have become an urgency that can no longer wait. The twin transition, as they have come to be known, will bring enormous benefits but also undesired externalities. Making it fair and inclusive is therefore key. To succeed, institutions and territories need to shift to more open and transparent R&I practices in which all actors share responsibility to develop services and products that are acceptable, sustainable and bring social satisfaction.

The Open and Responsible Research and Innovation (ORRI) approach promotes collaborative efforts. From sharing research outputs as early as possible to engaging citizens in co-creation processes, R&I should be open to the whole society.

Implementing Open and Responsible R&I can seem a daunting task. However, over the past decade, many resources and tools have been created, but an effort to systematize, curate and create a single entry point was still missing. REINFORCING is this much-needed European central hub for Open and Responsible R&I. The project's platform is the entry point to knowledge, training, ORRI skills match-making and capacity building for organizations interested in starting or continuing their journey to creating an inclusive R&I ecosystem. Furthermore, the project brokers unique networking opportunities for organizations, institutions and territories interested in becoming part of the European ecosystem that is transforming the R&I system by bringing it closer to society and societal needs.

To support this change, REINFORCING has ring-fenced funding for 96 grants - between 20,000 and 60,000 euros- to invite institutions from around Europe to develop projects aiming at implementing new modes of doing R&I that drive more just transitions. The project will launch 7 open calls for cascading grants to help territories and organizations experimenting with ORRI for the first time (ORRI Incubator Open Calls) or to boost those scaling up their ORRI activities (ORRI Booster Open Calls).





## 2. REINFORCING GRANTS

The REINFORCING project will provide financial support to third parties (FSTP) through seven open calls for grants. All REINFORCING calls will adhere to EU principles of transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest, and confidentiality, ensuring an objective and clear selection procedure.

REINFORCING grants will be awarded to projects dealing with Open and Responsible Research and Innovation implementation that will be addressed within the duration of the proposed project.

Two kinds of grants will be delivered by REINFORCING: ORRI booster (small) grants and ORRI incubator (large) grants. The specific objectives and targets of the calls will be defined throughout the project's lifetime.

- **ORRI BOOSTER (SMALL) GRANTS:** Booster grants will be awarded to applicants (at least one beneficiary) already experienced in ORRI who would like to strengthen their ORRI approach. Each ORRI booster call will support 12 grantees implementing an 8-month project. The maximum amount granted for each project is 20.000 €.

Grant	Duration (months) of each funded project	Estimated number of open calls
ORRI booster grants	8	4

**Table 1:** Small grants key features

- **ORRI INCUBATOR (LARGE) GRANTS:** Incubator grants will be awarded to small consortia of beneficiaries (at least two beneficiaries per consortium) that are newcomers in ORRI, and that would like to embark on an ORRI approach. Each ORRI incubator call will support 8 consortia implementing a 12-month project. The maximum amount granted for each project is 60.000 €.

Grant	Duration (months) of each funded project	Estimated number of open calls
ORRI incubator grants	12	3

**Table 2:** Large grants key features

### 2.1 GRANTS TIMELINE

ORRI Booster calls will be launched in:

- B1: November 2023
- B2: November 2024
- B3: March 2025
- B4: November 2025

ORRI Incubator calls will be opened in:





- I1: March 2024
- I2: July 2024
- I3: July 2025

After its launch, each open call will be open for two months. In the 3rd month after the launch, submitted project proposals will be evaluated. The timeline of the evaluation is shown in Table 3.

2024												2025												2026
J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J
<b>B1</b>				<b>I1</b>				<b>I2</b>				<b>B2</b>				<b>B3</b>				<b>I3</b>				<b>B4</b>

**Table 3:** Cascading grant calls launch timeline

In the 4th month, successful applicants will complete the necessary administrative procedure and requirements, signing the contract with REINFORCING. In the 5th month after the call launch, projects will start, ending after 8 (ORRI Boosters) or 12 months (ORRI Incubators).





## 3. REINFORCING GRANTS EVALUATION

### 3.1 EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation and ranking process of applications is based on stringent administrative and technical criteria and is structured as follows:

- **Eligibility check and formal requirements**

The REINFORCING consortium, represented by Consorzio Italbiotec as the Contracting Entity, will check each proposal for formal requirements, eligibility criteria (as defined in the Guide for applicants), completeness of the application and compliance with the submission process.

- **Preliminary assessment by the consortium**

If eligible and complete, the REINFORCING consortium will proceed with a first assessment of the proposals. The initial evaluation will focus on the Objectives, need and approach [Excellence] and Changes to be achieved [Impact] sections of proposals in order to assess the compliance of the project objectives with the call topic. The preliminary assessment will result in selecting not more than 48 proposals (maximum of 5 pages in total each) per ORRI booster call and not more than 48 proposals (maximum of 10 pages in total each) for each ORRI incubator call.

- **Final evaluation**

Each proposal that passes the preliminary assessment will be evaluated by an evaluation committee (see paragraph 1.4) according to the awarding criteria defined in paragraph 1.5 "Evaluation Criteria". The proposals obtaining the highest ranking after the final evaluation will be selected according to the maximum number of projects that can be funded under each call (12 for ORRI Boosters and 8 for ORRI Incubators).

All applicants undergoing the final evaluation will be informed of the evaluation ranking and results by receiving an Evaluation Summary Report, which will be duly completed by the evaluation committee. All other applicants not shortlisted for the final evaluation will receive a communication via email at the end of the evaluation process.

### 3.2 EVALUATION COMMITTEE

The Evaluation Committee will comprise three external panelists, experts in ORRI implementation, and experienced in the sector/topic of the call. A list of potential evaluators for each call will be compiled through both an open call and a direct invitation from the REINFORCING consortium to ensure the best possible expertise in the evaluation process.

The evaluation process will consist of:

- a short **online briefing** with the REINFORCING consortium;
- an **initial individual evaluation**, carried out individually and remotely by each expert of the evaluation panel;
- and an **online panel assessment**, where experts reach an agreement on the proposal evaluation.

As a general rule, the proposals submitted under the same call will be evaluated by the same panel of experts.

The duration of the evaluation process will depend on the grant type and the number of proposals to be evaluated:

- ORRI booster grants: maximum of three full days for the entire evaluation process for a maximum of 48 proposals (5 pages max each). The process





will always include a full day of initial briefing and an online panel assessment plus a variable number of days/hours for the individual evaluation. Each evaluator is expected to review 24 ORRI booster proposals per day (around 3 proposals per hour) for a maximum of 48 proposals to be evaluated in two days.

- ORRI incubator grants: maximum of four full days for the entire evaluation process for a maximum of 48 proposals (10 pages max each). The process will always include a full day of briefing and online panel assessment plus a variable number of days/hours for the individual evaluation. Each evaluator is expected to review 16 ORRI incubator proposals per day (around 2 proposals per hour) for a maximum of 48 proposals to be evaluated in three days.

Experts who are involved in a proposal are not eligible to review any of the proposals submitted under the same call. Evaluation panel members will sign an agreement detailing the confidentiality terms and a declaration of no conflict of interest (Expert Terms of Reference).

### 3.3 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The proposals selected for funding must demonstrate high quality in the context and in relation to specific criteria set out for each call. In general terms, 3 criteria will be applied:

- **Objectives, needs and approach [Excellence]**, describing the objectives of the proposal, as well as the clarity and pertinence of the project’s objectives and the proposed solutions in relation to the issues addressed.
- **Changes to be achieved [Impact]**, describing the expected impacts and results of the project on the organizations, the territory and society at large.
- **Activities [Implementation]**, demonstrating the quality and consistency of the actions and resources assigned in relation to the project objectives.

Preliminary quality criteria for the initial assessment carried out by the Consortium will focus on the *Objectives, needs and approach [Excellence]* and *Changes to be achieved [Impact]* sections, aimed to verify the compliance of the project objectives with the call topic.

**Awarding criteria evaluated by the external panelists will take into consideration all three sections.** The detailed criteria are described below.

Section	Evaluation criteria
<b>Objectives, needs and approach [Excellence]</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity of the project’s objectives and approach.</li> <li>• Pertinence of the project’s objectives with the call requirements.</li> </ul>
<b>Changes to be achieved [Impact]</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected changes benefitting the organization(s) involved, the territory and society at large.</li> </ul>
<b>Activities [Implementation]</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality and consistency of the actions in relation to the project objectives.</li> </ul>

**Table 4:** Evaluation criteria for proposals assessment

Gender practices will be considered ranking criteria for *ex aequo* proposals based on the presence of a Gender Equality Plan within the organization and the brief description reported in the application template.

Detailed guidelines for the evaluation procedure and criteria will be provided in advance by the REINFORCING consortium to the evaluators.

All proposals submitted will be treated equally: they will be evaluated impartially based on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants.







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In some cases, diversity could be the leading principle driving the selection of the projects, aiming to obtain a balanced list of selected projects in terms of geography, types of stakeholders involved, and issues addressed.

The evaluation procedure will be clear and transparent for applicants. At the end of the evaluation process, applicants undergoing the final evaluation will receive an Evaluation Summary Report detailing the assessment results. All other applicants not shortlisted for the final evaluation will nevertheless receive a simple communication via email at the end of the evaluation process briefly explaining why the proposal was not selected (i.e. if the application was not eligible or if the proposal was out of scope).





## 4. BACKGROUND

This call is a call for expression of interest for External Evaluators of proposals that will apply for cascading grants within the REINFORCING project (GA 101094435). The call for expression of interest will be open from October 2023 to December 2025.

It seeks individuals to assist in the evaluation of the proposals in a personal capacity as experts in the implementation of ORRI initiatives.

Expression of interest on the project website or via email (as defined in paragraph 6) is a mandatory prerequisite for being contracted by us to work as an expert in the funding programme. Registration does not automatically mean you will have a contract for task assignments. This will depend on the number of proposals to be evaluated and if the evaluators' CVs fit the topics of the calls.

If you are contacted for an evaluation assignment, you will sign a Contract with REINFORCING (Expert Terms of Reference).

By signing the contract, you agree to perform the assignments to the highest professional standards and in compliance with the:

- Conditions set out in this call;
- Conditions set out in the REINFORCING Guide for Applicants;
- Conditions set out in the specific ORRI Booster/Incubator call;
- Detailed guidelines for the evaluation procedure and criteria

And

- Expert Terms of Reference (aka Contract with REINFORCING) to confirm the assignment

in their version as published on the Project Website at the moment of contract signature.







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## 5. TIMETABLE AND DEADLINES

This call for expression of interest is permanently open for almost the entire duration of the REINFORCING project. It will be closed in the month before the evaluation of the last cascading grant call (i.e. at M36 - December 2025).





## **6. EVALUATORS ELIGIBLE PROFILES**

We are looking for:

- experts with a high level of expertise and professional experience in ORRI and ORRI-related initiatives, specifically in the practice of ORRI implementation and policy.
- experts with experience in academia, policy development, and interdisciplinary research, promoting ethical, inclusive, and sustainable innovation practices across various domains.
- Experts with specific expertise with respect to the topic of the call.
- Experts with a deep knowledge in the field of public engagement, diversity, and inclusivity in innovation processes.
- 

Previous experience in proposal evaluation is considered a plus. Proficiency in English is mandatory.





## 7. EXCLUSION

Persons who are subject to EU administrative sanctions (i.e. exclusion or financial penalty decision) or in one of the following exclusion situations that bar them from receiving EU funds can NOT work as experts:

- bankruptcy, winding up, court-ordered administration, arrangement with creditors, suspension of business activities or similar procedures
- in breach of social security or tax obligations
- guilty of grave professional misconduct
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No 2988/95
- have created an entity under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin.

Experts will also be refused if it turns out that:

- during the contract award procedure, they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information
- they are in a conflict of interest.

Similarly, it is not possible for REINFORCING to contract experts who are excluded from receiving EU funds on other legal grounds (e.g. entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), etc).

Finally, experts who are involved in a proposal are not eligible to review any of the proposals submitted under the same call.





## **8. PROCEDURE**

To work as an expert assisting in evaluating ORRI-related initiatives proposed to get REINFORCING cascading grants, you must declare your interest by submitting your application through the project website (<https://reinforcing.eu/>).

If you comply with eligibility criteria and other conditions as detailed in this call, you will be then included in a database of potential evaluators. If we would like to engage your services, we will contact you from the official project email [evaluators@reinforcing.eu](mailto:evaluators@reinforcing.eu), to propose the task assignment and check your availability. At that moment, we will also need to verify your identity and bank account and check compliance with the mandatory legal requirements laid down in the EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

Please note that submission through the REINFORCING website does nothing more than declare your interest in working for us. We do not check your eligibility or any other conditions at that moment, and registration does not entail any entitlement to receive assignments.

### **8.1 EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

The expression of interest must be submitted through the [project website](#).

All sections of the online form must be completed. Areas of expertise and professional experience must be adequately detailed and documented through a current CV. Contracts can only be signed after the evaluators' identity and bank account have been validated and compliance with the mandatory legal requirements has been checked.

Besides completing basic information online regarding your expertise, you will be asked to upload your full CV (to be uploaded as .pdf file).

Please note that we may use publicly available sources to confirm and cross-check the information you provide in the online form (including the internet, social media, etc).

Please also be aware that we may use the email address used for your application to contact you (including for formal notifications). Formal notifications not opened within 10 days after sending will be considered accessed, and deadlines will be counted from opening/access.

### **8.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

You will be required to comply with the rules regarding confidentiality and conflict of interest set out in the Expert Terms of Reference and specifically confirm compliance for each assignment.

### **8.3 SELECTION**

Evaluators will be selected (when and as needed) from the pool of experts who applied through the project website.

There are no restrictions on nationality. The REINFORCING project welcomes experts from any country as long as they are not subject to EU administrative sanctions (i.e. exclusion or financial penalty decision) or in one of the exclusion situations mentioned in the call text that bar them from receiving EU funds.

The procedure will be done on the basis of selection criteria such as professional expertise and experience with respect to the call topic, language skills, geographical and business-sector balance, gender balance, regular rotation, and absence of conflict of interest. The procedure will be objective and follow the principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment.

Assignments are subject to the following ceilings:





- Experts can normally not be paid more than EUR 90 000 during a period of four consecutive calendar years, excluding allowances and travel costs
- Individual contracts must stay below the thresholds for the award of public contracts referred to in Article 175 of the EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046 (currently EUR 140 000, excluding allowances and travel costs).

## 8.4 CONTRACTING

If you are selected, you will sign a contract (**Expert Terms of reference**) with the details related to your assignment (e.g. tasks and working arrangements, remuneration and payment arrangements). The Expert Terms of Reference will include the Expert Code of Conduct and a declaration about the no-conflict of interest. Evaluation panel members are furthermore bound to a confidentiality agreement with the contracting entity.

## 8.5 PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Payments must be requested via email ([evaluators@reinforcing.eu](mailto:evaluators@reinforcing.eu)) at the end of the assignment and will be made in accordance with the payment schedule and the amounts set out in the contract.

Payments are subject to the approval by Consorzio Italbiotec, as the contracting entity for cascading grants management, and Fondazione Bassetti, as the coordinator of the REINFORCING project.

Payments will be made to the bank account specified in the contract.

Payments will be made in euro. Conversions of costs incurred in another currency will be made by the contracting entity according to the monthly accounting rates published on the European Commission website (InforEuro), that applied on the (first) day of the panel meeting.

Payment deadline suspension — The payment deadline will be suspended if:

- if a request for payment cannot be approved because the required work has not been delivered or is not complete.
- if additional information is needed.
- if there are doubts about the amount to be paid.
- if additional checks, reviews, audits or investigations are necessary.
- if there are other issues affecting the EU financial interests.

## 8.6 REMUNERATION

Each panelist will receive a payment of €450 for each working day (8 hours of work), calculated as the following:

- 24 ORRI booster proposals per day for a maximum of 48 proposals in two days.
- 16 ORRI incubator proposals per day for a maximum of 48 proposals in three days.

Besides the days dedicated to the individual evaluation as previously described, the evaluation process will always include an additional paid day for the online briefing and the evaluation panel.

In case evaluators are asked to review a lower number of proposals per day, the total individual remuneration will be reduced accordingly.

For example, for an ORRI Boosters call, evaluators are asked to review 36 proposals. The duration of the evaluation process and related compensation will be determined as follows:

- one full working day for the online briefing and the panel assessment (€450)





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- one full working day for evaluating 24 ORRI booster proposals (€450)
- half working day for evaluating the remaining 12 proposals (€225)

Total remuneration for the example: 1.125€







## **9. OBLIGATIONS**

### **9.1 RECORD KEEPING**

Records and other supporting documentation to prove compliance with the experts' obligations (original supporting documents) must be kept for at least three years after the final payment under a contract.

In case of ongoing checks, audits, investigations, litigation or other pursuits of claims, the records and other supporting documentation must be kept until the end of these procedures.

### **9.2 BREACH OF CONTRACT**

In the event that REINFORCING identifies a breach of a contract by an evaluator of its obligations under the Experts Terms of Reference, REINFORCING and its contracting entity (Consorzio Italbiotec) may decide to terminate his/her participation with a total or partial reduction of the compensation.





## **10. DATA PROTECTION**

Personal data of experts will be processed under the responsibility of the data controller of the contracting entity and will be treated according to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016).

If personal data is processed by the expert, this must be done in accordance with the written instructions of the data controller.

Appropriate technical and organizational security measures are in place to address data processing risks (preventing unauthorized access, reading, copying, alteration or deletion of personal data, etc).

For more information on how data will be collected, treated and stored, read the privacy policy of the contracting entity (Consorzio Italbitoe) at the following [link](#).





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## **11. HELP & CONTACT**

Additional information can be provided by writing to the following email address:  
[evaluators@reinforcing.eu](mailto:evaluators@reinforcing.eu)

