Towards Europe
network development pilot

SIA
Regieorgaan

voor praktijkgericht
onderzoek

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1. Introduction

In this call for proposals, you can read about the application procedure for the Towards Europe network development pilot, May 2024 funding round. The whole text of this Call for proposals has been published in both Dutch and English. The Dutch version is deemed authentic. For legal interpretation the text of the Dutch version will be decisive.

This is the revised version of the call for proposals, published in March 2024, due to a revision in paragraph 2.2. In sub-paragraph Network building 'An innovative collaborative alliance is understood to mean that the applicant has previously collaborated with no more than one of the intended consortium members within the context of research. In other words, it is permitted for the applicant to have previously collaborated with the intended consortium members in another area than research, such as knowledge sharing within education, or within the context of research with just one of the consortium members' has been changed to 'An innovative collaborative alliance is understood to mean that the researcher submitting the application has previously collaborated with no more than one of the intended consortium members within the context of research. In other words, it is permitted for the researcher submitting the application to have previously collaborated with the intended consortium members in another area than research, such as knowledge sharing within education'.

This call for proposals falls under the responsibility of the National Taskforce for Applied Research SIA (SIA Taskforce). SIA Taskforce aims to boost the quality and impact of applied research at universities of applied sciences and is a part of the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

This call for proposals includes details of the aim of this programme (Chapter 2), the conditions for the grant application (Chapter 3) and how your proposal will be assessed (Chapter 4). This is the information you need to submit a grant application. Chapter 5 outlines the obligations for grant recipients in the event that you are awarded funding and Chapter 6 contains the contact details.

1.1 Background

Universities of applied sciences play a crucial role in boosting European knowledge and innovation ecosystems. These systems are required for the Netherlands' and Europe's development as a knowledge economy and their contribution to resolving the urgent societal challenges we now face. The levels at which these systems and challenges occur are complex and intertwined: on the one hand we see numerous societal challenges of a similar nature across the whole of Europe while on the other hand a strong local and regional influence is required in order to make an impact in the face of these challenges. Because it connects professional practice with knowledge institutions, applied research at universities of applied sciences serves as an important link in strengthening the relationship between knowledge and innovation ecosystems at regional, national and European level.

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SIA Taskforce is committed to boosting the quality of applied research and the link between universities of applied sciences and regional, national and European research and innovation agendas. As part of that, universities of applied sciences' participation in the European knowledge and innovation ecosystem is a key component of the movement aimed at strengthening the connection between regional, national and European challenges.

1.2   Available funds

The grant cap for this call for proposals is € 1,200,000. It is anticipated that no more than twelve proposals will be awarded funding within this call for proposals.

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1.3 Submission deadline

The deadline for submitting proposals is 28 May 2024, before 14:00:00 CEST.

When you submit your proposal in ISAAC, you will have to enter information online. You should begin submitting your proposal at least one day before the deadline for the relevant call for proposals. Any proposals submitted after the deadline will not be processed.

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2. Aim

This section describes the aim of the programme, the objective of the call and the societal impact.

2.1 Aim of the programme

The Towards Europe pilot programme aims:

1. to improve the connection between the regional and national agendas for applied research and the European research and innovation strategy and the societal challenges faced by Europe as described in the Horizon Europe Missions and Global Challenges;

2. to ensure that universities of applied sciences, professors and research groups are better connected to European networks;

3. to contribute to achieving further professionalisation of universities of applied sciences in the context of European research and innovation.

The programme primarily comprises a series of network meetings organised by SIA Taskforce, the pilot calls and participation in European partnerships. The pilot calls falling under this programmes include the Towards Europe pilot call and the Network Development Towards Europe pilot (this call for proposals).

2.2 Aim of the call (revised version)

The aim of the Towards Europe network development pilot is to enable university of applied sciences researchers to establish an innovative working relationship with European partners by collaborating on an applied research project. This project will connect regional and national expertise with relevant European developments and form the basis for future collaboration, for example in the form of a European research grant application.

Connection between regional, national and European research focus areas
In order to effectively fulfil the role of link between regional, national and European scale levels, it is important for the university of applied sciences to have the right expertise at its disposal and for internal support to be assured. In the proposal, the researcher must describe how the project envisaged will link to and build on existing initiatives and agendas at these different levels of scale and will not be isolated from these. Below are some of the ways in which this may be achieved:

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- links to strategic developments and focus areas within the university of applied sciences, including the policy for European research collaboration;
- connection with regional, national (mission-driven top sectors and innovation policy) and European themes (e.g. Horizon Europe, Digital Europe or Creative Europe Missions);
- links to recently completed (2022 and 2023) or ongoing multiannual applied research projects and groups within the university of applied sciences (e.g. SPRONG).

Network building

Connecting to the European knowledge and innovation ecosystem will require collaboration with partners in Europe. Not only do most European programmes for knowledge and innovation require work to be done as part of a European consortium, knowledge sharing of this kind is also an essential precondition for resolving societal challenges that transcend national borders.

European network building will help the researchers from universities of applied sciences to forge links with existing networks or organise new collaborative alliances.

The proposal must include a description of the type of research network the researcher wishes to develop or the type of network that the researcher wishes to join and what is necessary to achieve this. The proposal will also explain how this network will link to and build on developments within the university of applied sciences and forge connections between regional, national and European research focus areas. Finally, the applicant must describe how the proposal will involve an innovative collaborative alliance comprising partners most of whom are collaborating on research with each other for the first time. See section 4.3 for the assessment criteria.

An innovative collaborative alliance is understood to mean that the researcher submitting the application has previously collaborated with no more than one of the intended consortium members within the context of research. In other words, it is permitted for the researcher submitting the application to have previously collaborated with the intended consortium members in another area than research, such as knowledge sharing within education.

Duration of the working relationship

Consortia for European grant applications are often put together at an early stage. Positioning European network development with a view to future European grant schemes of relevance will help the researcher to form a consortium in time and submit a proposal.

The proposal will also include a description of the plans that the researcher applying has for after completion of the project and how these plans link in with the long-term network development envisaged.

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2.3   Societal impact

In the Netherlands, in Europe and worldwide, we face significant challenges relating to such areas as biodiversity and health. In the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations has drawn up a plan for tackling these challenges. This plan forms the basis for the European research and innovation strategy 2020-2024.

The Towards Europe network development pilot will enable the researchers to find solutions for international dimensions within local and regional challenges. By connecting their local and regional expertise with knowledge and developments from abroad, the universities of applied sciences will make a unique contribution to resolving these major challenges.

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3. Conditions for applicants

This chapter contains the conditions that are applicable to your grant application. Firstly it describes who can apply for funding (section 3.1) and how much funding you can apply for (section 3.2). Subsequently, you will find the conditions for preparing and submitting the proposal (sections 3.3 and 3.4), the funding conditions (section 3.7), financial conditions (section 3.6) and additional information (section 3.7).

3.1 Who can apply?

Proposals can be submitted by government-funded universities of applied sciences only. This refers to universities of applied sciences, as defined in Article 1.8 of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (WHW).

The person submitting the proposal in ISAAC will be deemed to have been authorised to do so by the Executive Board of the relevant university of applied sciences.

No limit has been set on the number of proposals per university of applied sciences.

3.2 What can be applied for?

In this round, you can apply for a maximum of €100,000 in funding.

3.3 Preparing and submitting the proposal

It is only possible to submit your proposal via ISAAC. Any proposals that are not submitted through ISAAC will not be processed.

Follow these steps when drawing up your proposal:
- download the application form and the consortium member form from the online application system ISAAC;
- complete the application form;
- complete the consortium member form;
- save the application form and the consortium member form as a single PDF and upload it to ISAAC;
- fill in the requested information online in ISAAC.

Make sure your application includes the following required annexes:
- the project proposal (PDF), signed by the Executive Board;
- the budget (Excel) with details of the funding requested, any financial contribution from partners and a breakdown of costs;
- a list of project group members involved (Excel) for the purposes of the assessment in accordance with the NWO Code for Dealing with Personal Interests.

Any annexes other than those above-mentioned are not permitted.

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Your application must be compiled in Dutch or English. As part of the application and assessment process, SIA Taskforce will use Dutch in all correspondence, even if your proposal is compiled in English.

As the applicant, you are required to submit the application via your ISAAC account. If you do not yet have an ISAAC account, create an account at least one working day before you submit your application. This will ensure that any issues that may arise can be resolved in time. If the applicant already has an account with NWO, they need not open a new account in order to submit a new application.

- The ISAAC login screen can be accessed via:
  www.isaac.nwo.nl/isaac-web/home
- The ISAAC manual can be accessed via:
  www.isaac.nwo.nl/isaac-web/help
- The ISAAC helpdesk can be reached via:
  isaac.helpdesk@nwo.nl

If you have any questions of a technical nature, please contact the ISAAC helpdesk.

View the full call for proposals in ISAAC (direct link).

3.4 Conditions for submission

Formal conditions for submission

SIA Taskforce will assess your application against the conditions listed below. Your proposal will only be considered if it meets these conditions. You are requested to remain available for two weeks after the deadline for the call for proposals, in case your proposal requires any administrative corrections in order to ensure it meets the conditions for submission.

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These are as follows:
- the applicant meets the conditions set out in section 3.1;
- the application complies with the DORA guidelines as described in section 4.1;
- the application form and the required annexes are, after a possible request to make additions or changes, correct (according to the prescribed format), complete and filled out and submitted according to the instructions;
- in the application form, the applicant has indicated the relevant European projects in which the research group or university of applied sciences is currently participating or has participated in the past;
- in the consortium member form, the consortium members have indicated the relevant European projects in which the consortium member is currently participating or has participated in the past;
- the project plan has been approved by the Executive Board of the university of applied sciences applying;
- the application has been received by or before the applicable deadline;
- the application has been written in Dutch or English;
- the budget has been drawn up in accordance with the conditions for this call for proposals;
- the project will last no less than 12 and no more than 24 months and will start from 1 November 2024, with the last possible start date being 1 February 2025.

3.5   Grant conditions

All applications are subject to the NWO 2017 Subsidy Scheme.

Use of the grant
The grant is intended for the university of applied sciences submitting the proposal.

The duration of the project is at least 12 and no more than 24 months. It is not possible to make use of the grant outside this period.

Proposals that focus exclusively on promoting staff expertise, developing a new study programme/new curriculum for the university of applied sciences and/or are part of a university of applied sciences' regular activities are not eligible for subsidy.

Professor
The proposal must have been compiled under the responsibility of a professor affiliated with the university of applied sciences submitting the application. The professor may act as project manager.

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Consortium

In addition to the university of applied sciences submitting the application, the project consortium must at least include:

- two knowledge institutions based abroad from different countries,

or

- one knowledge institution based abroad and a partner in the field based abroad, both from different countries.

The consortium members will confirm their participation in the consortium by means of a signature on the grant application form.

The knowledge institutions from abroad must be based in member states of the European Union, countries that are associate members of the Horizon Europe programme or countries that had a transitional agreement with the European Commission in November 2023.

The countries that are associate members of the Horizon Europe programme or have a transitional arrangement with the European Commission are:

- Albania
- Armenia
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Faroe Islands
- Georgia
- Iceland
- Israel
- Kosovo
- Morocco
- Moldova
- Montenegro
- New Zealand
- North Macedonia
- Norway
- Serbia
- Tunisia
- Turkey
- Ukraine
- United Kingdom

It would be beneficial if Dutch knowledge institutions and/or partners in the field are also involved in the consortium in order to bolster the position within Europe of the university of applied sciences submitting the application.

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Dutch knowledge institutions include the following:

- Universities located in the Kingdom of the Netherlands
- University medical centres
- Institutes affiliated to the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) or NWO
- Universities of applied sciences, as referred to in Article 1.8 of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (WHW)
- Applied research institutes
- Netherlands Cancer Institute
- the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen
- Naturalis Biodiversity Center
- Advanced Research Center for Nanolithography (ARCNL)
- Princess Máxima Center

Partners in the field are defined as public organisations, SME businesses and umbrella and sector associations. The partners in the field must also be based in member states of the European Union, countries that are associate members of the Horizon Europe programme or countries that had a transitional agreement with the European Commission in November 2023.

The consortium members are to be included in the budget. It is also possible to allow others (other participants) to join the consortium. Any parties not included in the budget can be listed in the application form under parties involved.

Data management
The results of scientific research must be replicable, verifiable and falsifiable. In the digital age, this means that, in addition to publications, research data must also be publicly accessible insofar as this is possible.

SIA Taskforce expects that research data resulting from SIA Taskforce-funded projects will be made publicly available, as much as possible, for reuse by other researchers. In this respect, the principle adopted by SIA Taskforce is 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary'.

Researchers are at least expected to make the data and/or non-numerical results that underlie the conclusions of work published within the project publicly available at the same time as the work's publication. Any costs involved can be specified in the budget.

Researchers must explain how data emerging from the project will be dealt with based on the data management section in the proposal and the data management plan that is drawn up after funding is awarded.

Data management section
The data management section is part of the proposal. Researchers are asked before the start of the research to consider how the data collected will be ordered and categorised so that this can be made publicly available.

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Measures will often already need to be taken, during the creation of data and analysis of the data, to make its later storage and dissemination possible. If it is not possible to make all data from the project publicly available, for example due to reasons of privacy, ethics or valorisation, the applicant is obliged to list the reasons for this in the data management section.

The data management section in the proposal is not assessed and will, therefore, play no part in the decision about whether or not to award funding. The assessment committee can, however, give advice about the data management section.

Research integrity

In accordance with the NWO Grant Rules 2017, the project that SIA Taskforce funds must be carried out in accordance with the nationally and internationally accepted standards for scientific conduct as stated in the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2018). By submitting the proposal, the applicant commits to this code.

In the case of a violation (or possible violation) of these standards during a project funded by SIA Taskforce, the applicant must immediately inform SIA Taskforce of this and must submit all relevant documents to SIA Taskforce. Further information on the code of conduct and policy in the area of research integrity can be found on the website: www.nwo.nl/integriteit.

Ethical statement or licence

The applicant is responsible for determining whether an ethical statement or licence is needed for the realisation of the proposed project. The applicant must ensure that this is obtained from the relevant institution or ethics committee on time.

If the project is awarded funding, the grant is issued under the condition that the necessary ethical statement or licence is obtained before the latest start date for the project. The project cannot start until SIA Taskforce has received a copy of the ethical statement or licence.

Nagoya Protocol

The Nagoya Protocol ensures an honest and reasonable distribution of benefits emerging from the use of genetic resources (Access and Benefit Sharing; ABS). Researchers who make use of genetic resources abroad for the purposes of their research must familiarise themselves with the Nagoya Protocol (www.absfocalpoint.nl). SIA Taskforce assumes that they will take whatever measures are necessary in respect of the Nagoya Protocol.

National Knowledge Security Guidelines

World-class science can benefit from international cooperation. The National Knowledge Security Guidelines (hereafter: the Guidelines) help knowledge institutions to ensure that international cooperation can take place securely. Knowledge security concerns the undesirable transfer of sensitive knowledge and technology that compromises national security; the covert influence of state actors on education and research, which jeopardises academic freedom and social safety; and ethical issues that may arise in cooperation with countries that do not respect fundamental rights.

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Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their project complies and will continue to comply with the Guidelines. By submitting an application, the applicant commits to the recommendations stipulated in these Guidelines. In the event of a suspected breach of the Guidelines in an application submitted to SIA Taskforce for project funding, or in a project funded by SIA Taskforce, SIA Taskforce may ask the applicant to provide a risk assessment demonstrating that the provisions in the Guidelines have been taken into consideration.

If the applicant fails to comply with SIA Taskforce's request, or if the risk assessment is in apparent breach of the Guidelines, this may affect SIA Taskforce's grant award or decision-making process. SIA Taskforce may also include further conditions in the award letter, if appropriate.

The National Knowledge Security Guidelines can be found on the central government website at: National Contact Point for Knowledge Security (Loket Kennisveiligheid).

3.6   Financial conditions

The funding of any activities (or partial activities) that have already been funded from other sources is not possible.

Only project-specific wage and material costs will be eligible for funding or count as co-funding and can therefore also be included in the budget. The amount of funding requested for each budget item (wage and material costs) in the budget submitted will be maximum figures.

Notes on the budget
All costs must include any non-deductible VAT.

If funding is granted, the rate for wage costs will be that applicable at the time of the award.

SIA Taskforce draws a distinction between costs that are eligible for funding and those that are not.

Costs eligible for funding
Both the costs of the university of applied sciences submitting the proposal and those of the Dutch universities of applied sciences that are part of the consortium will be eligible for funding.

This will always be coordinated by the applicant. The conditions below will apply when calculating these costs.

Wage costs at universities of applied sciences
For wage costs, the rates in accordance with the guide to government rates (*Handleiding Overheidstarieven* (HOT) 2024) will apply (table detailing integral costs per salary scale for 2024, column containing hourly rate for productive hours, excl. Dutch VAT).

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These rates can be applied in full and you can apply these rates without any further justification. An employee's rate is determined on the basis of the employee in question's pay grade under the collective bargaining agreement for the higher professional education sector. Higher rates than those stated in the HOT are not permitted.

The salary scale for the position requested will determine the rate from the [HOT table](#). You will apply these rates for the duration of the whole project.

Cost of students
You are permitted to deploy students from the university of applied sciences on the project. You can include the cost of these within the project.

For each year of funding, you can enter the following:

- hours worked by students who are working on the project as part of their study programme. In this case, the students will also earn credits for their work. As costs, you can include the standard internship allowance that is customary in your university of applied sciences up to a maximum of € 25 per hour. You are permitted to deploy a student for a maximum of 1,650 hours and/or;
- hours worked by students who are working on the project on an extracurricular basis. As costs, you can include up to 250 hours, at a maximum of € 25 per hour.

The following applies to both situations: you may only include amounts actually paid to the student, at a maximum hourly rate of € 25. You cannot include any hours or hourly rates that exceed the set maximums. There is no set maximum for the total number of students working on the project.

Project management
The HOT already includes a surcharge for overheads. For project management, the applicant can include up to 20% of the total project costs in the budget as costs.

Material costs
Material costs include any necessary costs incurred by the universities of applied sciences to implement the project. This includes supplies and materials, test sites and publications (see section 5.1 for the conditions), the hiring of third parties, Dutch and international travel and accommodation costs for conference or working visits (economy class) and organisation costs for network events, such as conferences, workshops and seminars.

The purchase of equipment (investments) is not included in the project costs. For equipment, only depreciation costs attributable to the project can be included. Depreciation periods are calculated based on the historic purchase price excluding the cost of funding, a linear depreciation method and a realistic lifespan. It is therefore not possible to include costs for the use of any equipment older than five years.

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Material costs are not eligible for funding if they count as organisational infrastructure and overheads, such as a fully functioning workplace, office automation, other depreciation not included above, accommodation, insurance, administration and archiving facilities.

The material costs must not exceed 50% of the total project costs. No more than 50% of the material costs eligible for funding can be funded from the grant.

Costs not eligible for funding

Costs incurred by consortium members, with the exception of universities of applied sciences as defined in Article 1.8 of the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act (WHW), will not be eligible for funding. These costs will be regarded as co-funding or the partner's own contribution. The conditions below will apply when calculating this co-funding (which is not eligible for funding).

Wage costs of university researchers
The wage costs of doctoral candidates, postdocs and non-academic staff at universities and other knowledge institutions as referred to in section 3.5 will be based on the actual gross salaries and allowances listed in the most recent Agreement for Funding Scientific Research (www.nwo.nl/salaristabellen). For university medical centres, the Dutch Cancer Institute and the Princess Máxima Center, the NFU rate will apply. For other academic positions, the same rates apply as for universities of applied sciences, i.e. the HOT table. The university researchers' wage costs are not eligible for funding.

Wage costs at knowledge institutions abroad
Expenditure on personnel from knowledge institutions abroad is considered as wage costs. To calculate the rate for this, you use the Dutch wage costs, as described above, and multiply them by the correction coefficient that applies for each different country. The correction coefficients table can be found in the Money Follows Cooperation scheme on the NWO website. The wage costs of staff from knowledge institutions abroad are not eligible for funding.

Wage costs of other consortium members
For the other educational institutions, applied research institutes, government bodies and other institutions funded by central government, the same rates apply as for universities of applied sciences.

There is no set hourly rate for the other consortium members, including SME companies, up to a maximum of € 130 per hour, excluding VAT.

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Material costs of consortium members

You can include the material costs of consortium members as co-funding. For this, the same conditions apply as for the material costs of Dutch universities of applied sciences. This means that material costs that are not eligible for funding can also not be counted as co-funding.

Financial contribution by consortium members

The university of applied sciences and/or consortium members submitting the proposal will make a financial contribution to running the project. Combined, this contribution will amount to at least 50% of total project costs.

This contribution can be in cash or in-kind (items that can be expressed in monetary terms, such as material costs and hours).

You must include details of the size of the contribution in cash and/or in-kind in the budget in your proposal.

Here is an example:

If the funding requested is € 100,000, the total project cost will be at least € 200,000. The minimum contribution will therefore be € 100,000.

Permissible as in-kind co-funding contributions

Deployment of personnel or material contributions can be included as in-kind co-funding, provided that these have been valued monetarily and the contributions are fully included in the project. Services and know-how must not already be available or easy to access by the applicant. In-kind contributions will only be accepted provided that the part that is contributed by the co-funder forms an integral part of the proposal and can be traced as an identifiable commitment.

3.7 Additional information

Please indicate on the application form the themes and policy lines to which your proposal relates. This information may be useful in helping us to make policy choices. You will find further information about this on our web page on information collection and monitoring.

Connection to 'Themes with impact' (Association of Universities of Applied Sciences)

SIA Taskforce would like to be informed about how the proposal relates to the research themes specified in Applied research as a knowledge accelerator, Strategic Research Agenda for Universities of Applied Sciences (hbo) 2022-2025 published by the Dutch Association of Universities of Applied Sciences. On the application form, you must therefore indicate the themes from this research agenda to which the activities relate.

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Contribution to mission-driven innovation policy

SIA Taskforce aims to make it possible for universities of applied sciences and researchers at academic universities and other knowledge institutions to make a valuable contribution to [mission-driven innovation policy](#), partly by means of the Towards Europe network development pilot.

As the main applicant, please indicate on the application form which Knowledge and Innovation Agenda (KIA) the project relates to. You can find further information about the KIAs in a range of top sector documents:

- [KIA 1 Climate and energy](#)
- [KIA 2 Circular economy](#)
- [KIA 3 Agriculture, water, food](#)
- [KIA 4 Health and healthcare](#)
- [KIA 5 Safety](#)
- [KIA 6 Key technologies](#)
- [KIA 7 Digitalisation](#)
- [KIA 8 Social earning capacity](#)

Top sectors

If applicable, SIA Taskforce would also like to know which top sector(s) your project relates to. You can find more information about the top sectors at [topsectoren.nl](#).

Contribution to National Science Agenda

SIA Taskforce actively works to ensure that universities of applied sciences can participate in applied research within the different routes of the [National Science Agenda (NWA)](#). If applicable, you must therefore also indicate in your proposal which NWA route your project is related to.

Horizon Europe

SIA Taskforce would like to know which part of the Horizon Europe programme your project relates to.

EU Missions

SIA Taskforce would like to be informed about how the proposal relates to the EU Missions within the Horizon Europe programme.

Other European funding programmes

SIA Taskforce would like to know which other European funding programmes your project relates to.

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4. Assessment procedure

This chapter first describes the assessment according to the DORA principles (section 4.1) and then the course of the assessment procedure (section 4.2). Finally, it states the criteria that the assessment committee will use to assess your application (section 4.3).

The NWO Code for Dealing with Personal Interests applies to all persons involved in the assessment and/or decision-making process (www.nwo.nl/code).

SIA Taskforce strives to achieve an inclusive culture in which there is no place for conscious or unconscious barriers due to cultural, ethnic or religious background, gender, sexual orientation, health or age (www.nwo.nl/diversiteit-en-inclusie).

SIA Taskforce encourages members of an assessment committee to be actively aware of implicit associations and to try to minimise them. SIA Taskforce will provide them with information about concrete ways of improving the assessment of an application.

4.1 The San Francisco Declaration (DORA)

NWO is a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). DORA is a worldwide initiative that aims to improve the way research and researchers are assessed. DORA contains recommendations for research funders, research institutions, scientific journals and other parties.

DORA aims to reduce the uncritical use of bibliometric indicators and obviate unconscious bias in the assessment of research and researchers. DORA's overarching philosophy is that research should be evaluated on its own merits rather than on the basis of surrogate measures, such as the journal in which the research is published.

For SIA Taskforce, this means that committee members are asked not to base their assessment of proposals on indicators such as the Journal Impact Factor or the H-index. You are not allowed to mention these in your proposal. You are, however, allowed to list other scientific products besides publications, such as datasets, patents, software and code, products, tools, new frameworks for action and so on.

For more information about what NWO is doing to implement the DORA principles, see: www.nwo.nl/dora.

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4.2 Procedure

The application procedure consists of the following steps:

- Submitting the proposal
- Admissibility of the proposal
- Pre-advice from assessment committee
- Rebuttal (written response)
- Meeting of the assessment committee
- Decision-making

For this call for proposals, an external, independent assessment committee will be set up. The committee will be made up of independent advisers who are expert in the subject of the proposal.

Due to the expertise present in the assessment committee and the small size of the grant, SIA Taskforce has decided for the assessment of the proposals to make use of the possibility given in Article 2.2.4, paragraph 2, of the NWO Grant Rules 2017, to assess all applications without involving referees.

Submitting the proposal

There are standard forms available in ISAAC for the submission of the proposal. In your proposal, you must adhere to the questions on these forms and the methods described in the explanatory notes. You must also adhere to the conditions for the maximum number of words and pages. Your fully completed application form (including the consortium member form) and the required appendices must be received via ISAAC by the deadline (see section 1.3). After this deadline, you can no longer submit a proposal. After submitting the proposal, the applicant will receive a confirmation of receipt.

Admissibility of the proposal

As soon as possible after you have submitted your proposal, you will be notified whether SIA Taskforce will proceed to process your proposal. We base this assessment on the criteria indicated in section 3.4. SIA Taskforce can only consider your proposal if it meets these conditions. You are requested to remain available for two weeks after the deadline, in case your proposal requires any administrative corrections in order to meet the conditions of submission.

You will be given one opportunity to make the corrections, and you will be given five working days to do this. If the resubmitted documents remain incomplete and/or incorrect, we will be unable to process your proposal.

Pre-advice from assessment committee

If a proposal is accepted for processing, the proposal will be put to two members of the assessment committee for pre-advice (the pre-advisers).

The pre-advisers will make comments on the proposal based on the assessment criteria set out in section 4.3.

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Rebuttal (written response)

The pre-advice will be emailed to the applicant together with substantive feedback. You will be given five working days to submit your rebuttal by email. This approach makes it possible to hear both sides of the argument. If SIA Taskforce receives your rebuttal after the deadline, it will not be included in the rest of the procedure.

If you decide to withdraw the proposal, you must do this as quickly as possible by emailing the contact person for this call for proposals: Thomas Kelderman (thomas.kelderman@regieorgaan-sia.nl). You must also withdraw your application in ISAAC.

Prior to the meeting of the assessment committee, every proposal will be issued with a written assessment by the other three members of the assessment committee based on the pre-advice and any rebuttal. The committee members who issue a written assessment of your proposal are not the pre-advisers. These members of the assessment committee will assess the proposal based on the assessment criteria set out in section 4.3.

Meeting of the assessment committee

The assessment committee bases its plenary discussion of the proposals on the pre-advice, any rebuttal and the written assessment. Following their deliberations, the committee will prepare written advice for the board of SIA Taskforce. This advice will be based on the assessment of the proposal (according to the assessment criteria referred to in section 4.3), the position in the ranking and the maximum available budget (grant cap) for this call for proposals.

Ex aequo
SIA Taskforce understands ex aequo to be a situation in which two or more proposals based on their weighted score cannot be distinguished from each other. An ex aequo situation is relevant when we approach the threshold of the grant cap or the selection threshold. The existence of an ex aequo situation is determined in the following way. The starting point is the ranking drawn up by the assessment committee, with the final scores rounded down to two decimal points. The reference score is the score of the lowest-ranked proposal within the limits of the grant cap or the selection threshold. All proposals with a score that is within 0.05 or less of the reference score will be considered. In this way, the proposals that are equal within a score of 0.10 will be selected.

In the case of a tied ranking at the threshold of the grant cap or the selection threshold, the proposal with the highest score for the criterion "network building" will be ranked first. If this does not remedy the ex aequo situation, the assessment committee will determine the ranking by a majority vote, which may be anonymous (in accordance with Article 2.2.7, paragraph 3(a)(iv) of the NWO Grant Rules 2017). If this vote also fails to break the tie, or is not a good option, the ex aequo situation will be escalated to the decision-making body.

Decision-making

Finally, the SIA Taskforce board will review the procedure followed and the advice of the assessment committee. The board will reach a decision concerning the allocation of funds, based on the advice of the assessment committee.

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Timeline

Below, you will find the timeline for this call for proposals. During the current procedure, SIA Taskforce may find it necessary to make further changes to the timeline for this call for proposals. You will of course receive timely notification in such an eventuality.

Dates	Process step
28 May 2024, 14:00:00 (CEST)	Deadline for submission of proposals
June 2024	Pre-advice from assessment committee
June 2024	Listening to both sides
July/August 2024	Assessment committee meeting
September 2024	Determination of assessment by assessment committee and decision-making by SIA Taskforce board
September 2024	Announcement of decision

4.3 Criteria

Proposals will be assessed by the assessment committee based on the following four criteria:

Connection between regional, national and European research focus areas (30%)
- There is further development of ongoing or recently completed applied research projects and strong research groups within the university of applied sciences that relate to regional and national developments.
- The proposal is in line with the university of applied sciences' strategy (under development) with relation to European collaboration in applied research.
- The project envisaged forges a logical link between the chosen research focus area of the university of applied sciences, development at regional and national level and the European themes for research and innovation.

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Network building (30%)

- The consortium members have an active role in the implementation of the project.
- The consortium has been shown to have sufficient knowledge and quality to conduct the research and develop the network envisaged.
- The network of people or organisations is not isolated and there are relationships with relevant regional, national and European research focus areas.
- There is an innovative collaborative alliance comprising partners most of whom are collaborating on research with each other for the first time.
- It would be beneficial if Dutch knowledge institutions and/or partners in the field are also involved in the consortium in order to bolster the position within Europe of the university of applied sciences submitting the application.

Duration of the working relationship (20%)

- The approach is characterised by a clear long-term ambition across the institution for a long-term working relationship with the European partners in the project.
- The approach is characterised by a clear long-term ambition across the institution aimed at connecting regional, national and European agendas relating to the societal challenge(s).
- The long-term ambition across the institution clearly sets out how, on completion of the project, the applicant will increase and/or safeguard support within the organisation by highlighting aspects of long-term involvement by researchers, policy staff and administrators within the university of applied sciences and partners in the region and Europe.
- The approach contains a clear overview of the intended impact of the working relationship on the university of applied sciences and the region after completion of the project.

The quality of the project plan (20%)

- The project has a clearly-defined objective.
- The project activities are set out clearly and achievable.
- The funding requested is proportionate to the nature of the project.

For each criterion, proposals will receive a score expressed as whole numbers, from 1 to 6, with 6 being the highest score.

The criteria connection between regional, national and European research focus areas and network building each account for 30% in the assessment. The criteria duration of the working relationship and quality of the project plan each account for 20% in the assessment.

All proposals will be given a weighted average total score and will be ranked based on this score. Only proposals that receive a score of 4.00 or higher for each criterion will be given a positive assessment. All applications given a positive assessment may be eligible for funding.

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5. Obligations for grant recipients

This chapter details the various obligations that, in addition to the grant conditions stated in sections 3.5 and 3.6, apply to successful grant recipients.

5.1 Implementation of the project

Secretariat

The applicant will be responsible for implementation of the project and act as official secretary.

The official secretary is also responsible for making agreements with the consortium members about access and rights to the research results and, where applicable, about intellectual property. Agreements will also need to be made about data management and open access publications as indicated below.

Data management

After a proposal has been awarded funding, the official secretary must draw up a data management plan based on the data management section. For this purpose, official secretaries can make use of any advice issued by referees and the assessment committee concerning the data management section.

In the plan, the official secretary indicates whether use will be made of existing data or whether new data collection will be involved, and how this will then be made FAIR, i.e. Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable. Before submission, the data management plan must be checked by a data steward or similar officer of the organisation where the project will be realised.

The plan must be submitted to SIA Taskforce via ISAAC within four months after the proposal has been awarded funding. SIA Taskforce will check the plan as quickly as possible. The award of a grant is conditional upon approval of the data management plan by SIA Taskforce. The plan can be modified after the research work has started.

More information about NWO's data management protocol can be found at: www.nwo.nl/datamanagement.

Intellectual property

With respect to intellectual property (IP), the NWO IP policy applies. This can be found in Chapter 4 of the NWO Grant Rules 2017. SIA Taskforce's ambition is that research results can be applied by partners involved in the project. SIA Taskforce aims to ensure that all research results from projects it funds are made publicly accessible while at the same time encouraging parties to further develop the research results by giving them the possibility to exploit these. For the exploitation of results, it can be desirable to transfer intellectual property rights or to license the use of these to one or more of the private parties involved in the project.

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The basic premise is that all research results can be published with due consideration for agreements about publication procedures made with the consortium members.

If applicable, you will make agreements about intellectual property and publication, taking due account of the NWO Grant Rules 2017.

Socially responsible licensing

The knowledge that emerges from the project could be suitable for use in society. When entering into agreements about licensing and/or transfer of research results developed in this funding round, due consideration should be given to the ten principles of socially responsible licensing, as contained in the NFU factsheet 'NFU-19.3793 Ten Principles for Socially Responsible Licensing CMYK 7.indd'.

Open Access

As a signatory to the Berlin Declaration (2003) and a member of cOAlition S (2018), NWO is committed to making the results of the research it funds openly accessible via the internet (Open Access). By doing this, NWO gives substance to the ambitions of the Dutch government to make all publicly funded research available in Open Access form.

Scientific publications that are based on research funded by grants as a result of this call for proposals are to be made accessible on an open access basis, in accordance with NWO's Open Access Policy.

Scientific articles

Scientific articles must be made available in Open Access form immediately at the time of publication (without embargo) via one of the following routes:

publication in a fully Open Access journal or platform registered in the DOAJ;

publication in a subscription journal and the immediate deposition of at least the author accepted manuscript of the article in an Open Access repository registered in OpenDOAR;

publication in a journal for which a transformative Open Access agreement is available between Universities of the Netherlands and a publisher. For more information, see: www.openaccess.nl.

Books

Different requirements apply to scholarly books, book chapters and edited collections. See the NWO's Open Access regulations on www.nwo.nl/openscience for more information on these.

CC BY licence

To ensure the widest possible dissemination of publications, at least a Creative Commons (CC BY) licence must be applied. Alternatively – in case of substantial interest – the author may request to publish under a CC BY-ND licence. For books, book chapters and collected volumes, all CC BY licence options are allowed.

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Costs
Any costs relating to publication in Open Access journals can be specified in the budget as material costs. Costs for publications in hybrid journals are not eligible for reimbursement by NWO. For Open Access books, a separate NWO Open Access Books Fund is available.

For a more detailed explanation of NWO's Open Access policy, see: www.nwo.nl/openscience.

Monitoring
If your proposal is granted funding, you will keep SIA Taskforce informed of progress in the project. After the project's completion, you will inform us about the results. The funding decision will include an explanation of how you keep us informed of progress and the results.

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6. Contact and other information

6.1 Contact

You will find the most recent information about this call for proposals on the network development pilot page of the SIA Taskforce website. You will also find the contact details of the programme manager.

6.2 ISAAC helpdesk

In the event of technical problems with ISAAC, please contact the ISAAC helpdesk. Before doing so, you should consult the ISAAC manual.

The ISAAC helpdesk can be reached from Monday to Friday from 10:00 to 17:00, with the exception of public holidays. Telephone number: +31(0)70 – 344 06 00

You can also ask your question by sending an email to isaac.helpdesk@nwo.nl. You will receive a reply within two working days.

6.3 Other information

SIA Taskforce processes the personal data it receives in the context of this round of funding in accordance with our privacy statement.

SIA Taskforce may approach applicants to ask them to complete an evaluation of the grant procedure and/or this round of funding.

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