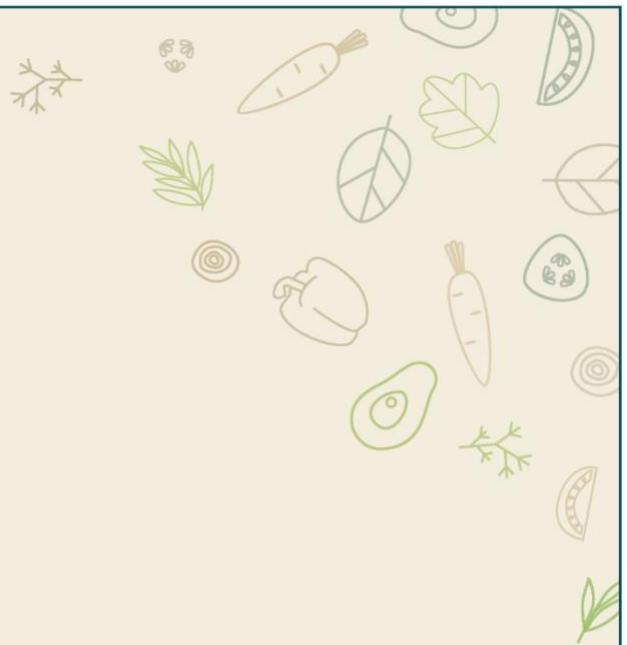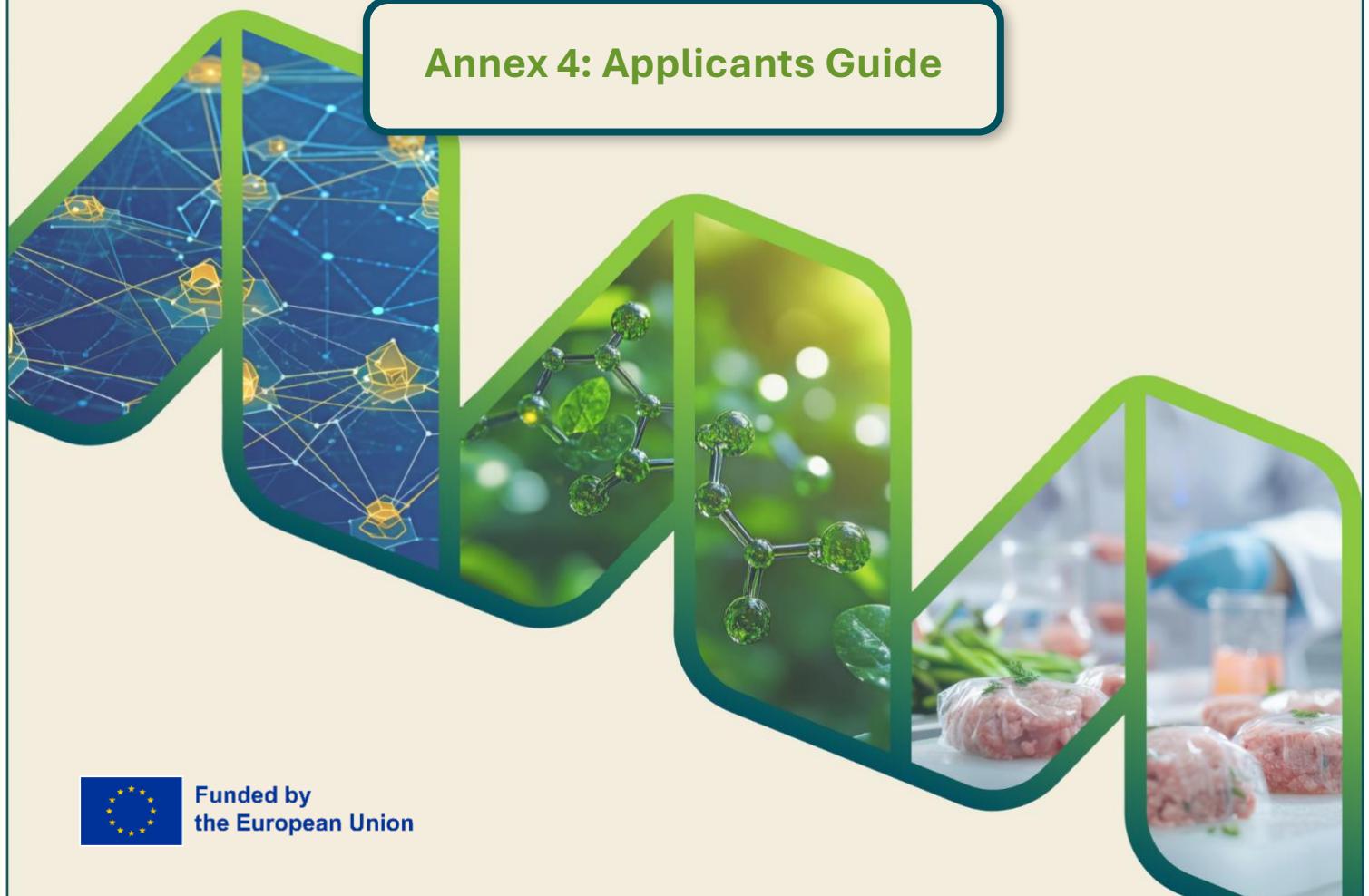# Excel4Pro

Excellence Hubs. Plant Proteins. Advanced Foods.

Strengthening the Capacity of Excellence Hubs of Türkiye, Greece, and Ukraine to Support Innovation Ecosystem of Novel Foods Based on Plant Proteins

Open Call for Financial Support to Third Parties to support innovation in the agri-food sector by focusing on novel foods based on plant proteins.

Annex 4: Applicants Guide

Glossary

Term	Description
Applicant	A single legal entity, specifically a start-up or Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME), established in Türkiye, Greece, or Ukraine that submits a proposal to the Excel4Pro Open Call. Applicants must register on the opencalls.fund platform to apply for funding.
ESR	**Evaluation Summary Report**; A report that all applicants receive after their proposal has been evaluated. Applicants can submit a request for redress if they believe there was a shortcoming in the evaluation process detailed in their ESR.
Excellence Hubs	A central concept of the Excel4Pro project, which aims to connect and scale up the national innovation ecosystems of Türkiye, Greece, and Ukraine into a single, cross-border "Excellence Hub". These hubs focus on developing novel food products from plant-based proteins and involve stakeholders from academia, business, government, and society.
FAIR principles	A set of principles (**F**indable, **A**ccessible, **I**nteroperable, **R**eusable) for data management. Sub-grantees must make data generated from their projects openly available based on these principles.
Focus Areas	There are three main technical areas that Excel4Pro focuses on: Innovations in Plant Proteins and Ingredients, Development of Novel Food Products, and Advancements in Sustainable Processing Technologies.
FSTP	**Financial Support to Third Parties**; A mechanism used by the Excel4Pro project to provide funding through its Open Call to startups and SMEs.
LCA	**Life Cycle Assessment**; A methodology for evaluating environmental performance. Sub-projects under Focus Area #3 are required to generate LCA data for their new protein supply chains.
OCAB	**Open Call Advisory Board**; The board responsible for conducting the eligibility check of submitted proposals. It is composed of domain experts, technology providers, exploitation experts, and the Open Call Manager.
opencalls.fund	The online platform where applicants must register and digitally submit their proposals for the Excel4Pro Open Call.
SME	**Small and Medium-sized Enterprise**; A primary target group for the Excel4Pro Open Call, along with startups. To be considered an SME under the EU definition, an enterprise must meet specific criteria related to staff headcount and financial thresholds. These standards as defined by the European Commission can be found here.
Startup	Startups are the other target group of the Excel4Pro Open Call, along with SMEs. A startup can be either an SME or a micro-enterprise, as defined by the European Commission here. The enterprise must be within its first five (5) years of operations and be focused on developing and commercialising novel products, services, or processes with the potential for high growth and scalability.

Sub-grant Agreement	The contract signed between the successful Applicant (sub-grantee) and RFF, the Open Call Manager.
Sub-project	The specific project proposed by an applicant that is selected for funding through the Excel4Pro Open Call. The successful applicant, known as a "Subgrantee," carries out the sub-project to innovate, test, validate, or implement breakthroughs in the focus areas of the call. The implementation is governed by a Sub-grant Agreement and has a defined timeline and deliverables.
TRL	**Technology Readiness Level**; A scale used to assess the maturity level of a technology. All outcomes from the funded sub-projects are expected to reach at least TRL 5.

Contents

1. Introduction

This document provides guidance information on the Excel4Pro Open Call, describing the eligibility and evaluation criteria. The document in its entirety and all associated documents of the Open Call kit must be read carefully before the submission of an application.

1.1 About Excel4Pro

The **Excel4Pro** project, formally titled **Strengthening the Capacity of Excellence Hubs of Türkiye, Greece, and Ukraine to Support Innovation Ecosystem of Novel Foods Based on Plant Proteins**, is a Coordination and Support Action (CSA) funded by the European Union (Project No. 101186662). The project aims to support innovation in the agri-food sector by focusing on novel foods based on plant proteins.

The motivation for Excel4Pro stems from three critical global drivers: continuous population growth, the essential role of proteins in a healthy diet, and the need to mitigate the environmental impact of current animal-based food chains. While the trend toward plant sources in diets is growing, the existing generation of commercial plant-based alternatives is often described as suboptimal, necessitating more research to develop mild processing techniques and comprehensively understand the impact of plant proteins on technological and nutritional functionality.

Addressing these challenges, Excel4Pro is designed to support, through underpinning research and knowledge exchange, the capacity of the national Excellence Hubs of Türkiye, Greece, and Ukraine. The project serves as a critical tool to connect and scale up these strategically selected plant-based protein ecosystems into a single, interconnected, and cross-border "Excellence Hub" dedicated to growing and transforming the agri-food sector in the three countries by developing novel food products based on plant-based proteins.

The project employs a robust methodology, including collaborative Research and Innovation (R&I) strategies, mentoring programmes, action plans to attract dedicated investment, and various upskilling activities for researchers and entrepreneurs to help close knowledge gaps and support more sustainable food systems. The execution is managed by a multidisciplinary consortium of 17 partners (including 4 Academic, 8 Business, 2 Public Authorities, and 3 Societal Actors), coordinated by TURKIYE BILIMSEL VE TEKNOLOJIK ARASTIRMA KURUMU (TUBITAK).

A key mechanism for fostering innovation is the launch of one Open Call (OC), which offers Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) to single applicants, specifically focusing on start-ups and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). This initiative targets breakthroughs within Excel4Pro's focus areas: protein structure-function relations, nutritional quality, and process design. The project results are intended to be disseminated beyond the project's 48-month lifespan, promoting and updating guidelines and solutions on plant protein-based novel foods.

1.2 Excel4Pro Objectives

The Excel4Pro project has an overarching goal and several objectives designed to address challenges in the agri-food sector focusing on plant proteins.

The overall objective of Excel4Pro is to stimulate scientific excellence by widening and strengthening the Turkish, Greek, and Ukrainian "Excellence Hubs" of plant protein-based novel food innovation ecosystems and to improve internal and cross-border linkages between academia, business, government, and society.

The five main objectives of Excel4Pro are:

1. CO-DEVELOP HUB STRATEGIES AND A JOINT STRATEGIC RESEARCH & INNOVATION AGENDA.

This involves developing and executing joint Research and Innovation (R&I) and funding strategies at the national level and for cross-border cooperation to enhance the competitiveness and systemic resilience of each Hub and Europe as a whole. It aims to co-design joint research themes, strategic plans for collaborative research actions, and pathways to promote plant-protein-based food innovations with Quadruple Helix stakeholders. It also seeks to support these strategies with harmonized policy and funding recommendations aligned with EU priorities like RIS3, Farm to Fork, and the Green Deal.

2. ENHANCE CAPACITY IN EACH EXCELLENCE HUB FROM KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND UPSKILLING.

The goal is to promote knowledge and technology transfer, mutual learning, and the development of technical and business competences through training and support activities for relevant stakeholders. This includes supporting researchers with mobility and educational programmes, upskilling industry and local authorities through thematic workshops, providing innovation management programmes and funding for start-ups and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), and transferring knowledge to citizens to address misconceptions about the technologies and their implications.

3. IMPLEMENT JOINT R&I ACTIVITIES TO CLOSE KNOWLEDGE GAPS.

This focuses on launching joint pilot R&I projects to generate scientific evidence that supports the Hub strategies and investment plans concerning plant-based proteins for food. It aims to bridge research and deployment of novel plant protein-based alternatives by understanding the process of scaling lab prototypes to commercial products.

4. MAXIMIZE IMPACT THROUGH DISSEMINATION & COMMUNICATION (D&C) AND EXPLOITATION.

The aim is to enhance knowledge sharing by tuning D&C activities to engage all Quadruple Helix stakeholders, including organising joint events and establishing synergies with complementary initiatives. It also involves developing scalable business models for plant-based food products based on identified market opportunities in the Turkish, Greek, and Ukrainian markets.

5. PROVIDE MENTORSHIP TO STARTUPS AND SMEs IN EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES.

Specifically, this objective aims to enhance innovation and economic growth within the emerging Ukrainian ecosystem for plant protein-based novel foods. This is achieved by providing mentorship to startup founders, facilitating experience sharing, and offering training sessions and guidance on entrepreneurship principles.

Additionally, the project aims to foster the development of innovative food products through the finance of start-ups and SMEs to apply their own services and solutions. This is done through the launch of an Open Call (OC). The purpose of the Open Call is specifically to:

- Inspire **Startups** and **SMEs** to innovate, test, validate, or implement their breakthroughs within Excel4Pro's Focus Areas: protein structure-function relations, nutritional quality, and process design.
- Address a wide range of challenges related to the Focus Areas (protein structure-function relations, nutritional quality, process design) by providing short case studies that will enhance innovation in the agri-food sector.
- Enhance the Excel4Pro excellence hub by adding developed solutions and forming a lasting partnership to enhance the hub visibility through the network of funded sub-projects.

1.3 Excellence Hubs

The Excellence Hubs are a central component of the Excel4Pro project. The project addresses the increasing global demand for proteins, population growth, and the urgent necessity to mitigate the environmental impact of animal-based food chains. It is explicitly designed to support the capacity of the national Excellence Hubs of Türkiye, Greece, and Ukraine.

The core concept is to use Excel4Pro as a critical tool to connect and scale up these three strategically selected plant-based protein ecosystems into a single, interconnected, and cross-border Excellence Hub, the "**Protein Diversification Hub**". This interconnected Hub is dedicated to fostering the growth and transformation of the agri-food sector in these three countries by focusing on the development of novel food products based on plant-based proteins.

The activities undertaken within Excel4Pro are structured around strengthening the innovation capacity of these ecosystems. This involves developing and executing joint Research and Innovation (R&I) and funding strategies at both the national level and for cross-border cooperation, aiming to enhance the competitiveness and systemic resilience of each Hub.

The Hubs are characterized by a multi-stakeholder approach, actively involving Quadruple Helix stakeholders in each country: academia, business, government, and society. The consortium itself is comprised of 17 partners, including 4 Academic, 8 Business, 2 Public Authorities, and 3 Societal Actors, ensuring this balance.

Key activities focused on enhancing the capacity of these Excellence Hubs include:

- Co-development of Hub Strategies and a Joint Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda.
- Capacity Building activities aimed at promoting knowledge and technology transfer, mutual learning, and developing technical and business competences through training and support.
- Implementing joint R&I pilot projects focusing on plant proteins and utilizing model systems to close knowledge gaps related to processing and nutritional functionality, thereby paving the way for sustainable value chains in the Turkish, Greek, and Ukrainian plant-based food economies.

1.4 Excel4Pro Open Call

The Open Call encourages the submission of proposals from **start-ups or SMEs** specialising in **innovative technologies or solutions within the alternative plant-based protein area** for the agri-food sector. Selected applicants will receive funding to i**nnovate, test, validate, or implement breakthroughs within the Excel4Pro Focus Areas and integrate these innovations into the broader agri-food sector**.

Sub-projects must contribute to the following Objectives:

Objective 1: Innovation within Excel4Pro Focus Areas. Applicants must develop prototypes, enable lab-scale tests, or execute real-world pilots in at least one of the following areas:

- **Focus Area #1: Protein Structure-Function Relations** - *Targeting next-generation plant proteins with enhanced functional properties. Some examples are:*
    - **New or Improved Protein Ingredients:** Developing plant proteins with superior techno-functional properties (e.g., solubility, gelling, foaming) and optimized nutritional profiles (e.g., amino acid balance).
    - **Novel Protein Sources:** Validating new protein sources from underutilized plants or agricultural by-products.
    - **Higher Quality Protein Extracts:** Creating ingredients with high digestibility, increased bioavailability, and reduced anti-nutritional compounds.
- **Focus Area #2: Nutritional Quality** - *Optimising plant proteins for performance in food matrices. Some examples are:*
    - **Enhanced Sensory Profiles:** Developing plant-based foods with optimized texture, flavour, and colour to meet consumer expectations.
    - **High-Protein, Minimally Processed Foods:** Formulating products that maintain structural integrity while requiring minimal processing.
    - **Targeted Nutritional Products:** Designing formulations rich in proteins, vitamins, and minerals, adapted for specific groups (e.g., athletes, children, the elderly).
- **Focus Area #3: Process Design** - *Implementing Sustainable Processing Technologies. Some examples are:*
    - **Validated Sustainable Processes:** Testing energy-efficient technologies for extraction and modification, such as ultrasound or fermentation.
    - **Circular Economy Solutions:** Valorising agricultural side streams and by-products, turning waste into valuable protein-based inputs.
    - **Scalable Technologies:** Demonstrating scalable processes (e.g., extrusion, fermentation) that reduce costs and environmental footprint.

Objective 2: Enhance the Excel4Pro Excellence Hub. Applicants must contribute to the innovation capacity of the **Türkiye, Greece, and Ukraine** regions by:

- **Cross-Border Engagement:** Actively collaborating with research actors or SMEs across the Excel4Pro target regions.
- **Regional Impact:** Developing solutions that utilise local resources or address specific regional challenges, thereby enhancing the strategic autonomy of the local food system.
- **Knowledge Exchange:** Participating in Excel4Pro hub activities to share research findings and prototype results, strengthening the collective knowledge of the regional hubs.

Proposed solutions (products, ingredients, processes, etc.) may start from any Technology Readiness Level (TRL) and should reach at least at **TRL 5**.

1.5 Approach & Planned Open Call Realisation

Excel4Pro through this Open Call will provide Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) as a mechanism to support innovation in the agrifood sector of the three ecosystem countries (Türkiye, Greece, and Ukraine) by focusing on novel foods based on plant derived proteins. To this end, it will fund three sub-projects of each country, totalling in 9 sub-projects. The total amount of the Open Call will reach at maximum the €360,000.00, with each successful applicant receiving a maximum funding of €40,000.00.

Table 1. Excel4Pro Open Call Budget

	Total amount	No. of projects	Maximum budget per applicant
Turkish ecosystem	€ 120,000.00	3	€ 40,000.00
Greek ecosystem	€ 120,000.00	3	€ 40,000.00
Ukrainian ecosystem	€ 120,000.00	3	€ 40,000.00
Total; All ecosystems	**€ 360,000.00**	**9**	-

To minimise administration and financial errors, beneficiaries will receive the funding on a lump sum basis, in compliance with EC's Guidelines about lump sum grants in Horizon Europe[1] and according to the terms of the contract signed between it and Excel4Pro. A payment calendar tied to milestones, such as reports and corresponding deliverables, will be set in advance according to the implementation phases of the sub-projects as described below. Implementing this approach, rather than a payment tied to complex administrative justifications, will decrease the administrative burden of the Open Call. No pre-financing is foreseen, and payments will follow the ''General eligibility conditions for lump sum costs'' according to the EU Grants: AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement: V1.0 – 01.05.2024 and specifically Article 5. The 15-month implementation period will be divided into 3 phases:

- **Phase 1** - Design [(November 2026) - (February 2027); Duration: 4 months]: Payment of 30% of the total grant [Deliverable: Activity plan];
- **Phase 2** - Development [(March 2027) - (July 2027) ; Duration: 5 months]: Payment of 50% of the total fund [Deliverable: Report on Results/Outcomes];

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[1] EU Funding & Tenders Portal

- **Phase 3** - Validation [(August 2027) - (January 2028) ; Duration: 6 months]: Payment of the final 20% of the total fund [Deliverable: Final report on community-associated activities].

1.6 Submission procedure

Excel4Pro Open Call for proposals will be submitted digitally through the opencalls.fund platform developed by reframe.food. Interested Applicants should visit Excel4Pro website (https://excel4pro.eu/) for any updates and the FAQ section available in the opencalls.fund platform as well as on the project website.

Submissions received through any other channel will not be considered and will be automatically discarded.

Documents required in subsequent phases will be submitted via dedicated channels (e.g. via email or via the opencalls.fund), which will be indicated by the Excel4Pro consortium in the contracting phase.

In case multiple versions of the same application are submitted, only the last version will be evaluated. All the previous ones will not be considered and will be discarded.

Throughout the entire process, the confidentiality of applicants' identities and the contents of their proposals will be strictly maintained. Information related to the selected Excel4Pro solution(s) and their planned implementation will be treated with the outmost discretion.

By applying to Excel4Pro Open Call, Applicants (single entities) automatically accept the terms and conditions of the Open Call as described in the Open Call Kit.

1.7 Language

English is the official language for the Excel4Pro Open Call. **Applications submitted in any other language will not be evaluated.** English is also the only official language throughout the whole execution of the Excel4Pro project. This means all requested contributions (documents of the OC kit) must be submitted in English to be eligible. In the case of official documents as a proof of the legal existence of the applicant, they can be submitted in original language, however if it is deemed essential to facilitate the eligibility check, Applicants may be requested to provide additional documentation (i.e., a translation of the relevant sections of the official document into English—this does not have to be a formal, certified translation) in a timely manner.

1.8 Documentation format

Any document requested by the Applicants in any of the phases (e.g. submission, eligibility check) must be submitted electronically in PDF format without restrictions for printing. The provided proposal template (Annex 5) must be used when preparing the proposal and should **not exceed the limit of 15 pages**. This included all relevant tables, figures, and references. **Excess pages will not be considered during the evaluation of the proposal.**

The provided budget template (Annex 6) must be used. The budget tables provided in Annex 6 **do not count** towards the 15-page limit of the proposal, as they should be submitted as a separate ".pdf". However, please aim to limit the budget section to one page.

The reference font for the body text of applications is Calibri and the minimum font size allowed is 11 points. Paragraph spacing of 6 pts and a minimum of single line spacing is to be used. This applies to the body text, including text in tables. Text elements other than the body text, such as headers, foot/end notes, captions, formula's, may deviate, but must be legible. The page size is A4, and all margins (top, bottom, left, right) must be at least 15 mm (not including any footers or headers). The cover page and the Table of Contents (ToC) are **not included** in the limit of the 15 pages. Removing explanatory text in the proposal template, located below the paragraph sub-titles is allowed.

Incomplete applications or applications that do not comply with these requirements will be excluded from evaluation as non-eligible. Applications that do not use the official proposal and budget template will be excluded from evaluations as non-eligible.

1.9 Origin of the funds

All sub-grantees will sign a dedicated Sub-grant Agreement with the Excel4Pro Open Call Treasurer (TUBITAK) and the Open Call Manager (RFF). The funds provided to the Sub-grant Agreement originate from the funds of the European Project Excel4Pro which is funded by the European Commission under Grant Agreement Number 101186662, and remain therefore, property of the EU until the balance is paid, whose management rights have been transferred to the project partners of Excel4Pro. This relation between the sub-grantees and the European Commission through the Excel4Pro project carries a set of obligations to the sub-grantees with the European Commission. It is the responsibility of the sub-grantees to fulfil these, and of the Excel4Pro consortium partners to inform them on these.

More details on the obligations of sub-grantees can be found in Chapter 4.

1.10 Opencalls.fund platform

The opencalls.fund platform is a digital platform for the management of the applications for financial support to third parties and accelerator programs, developed and maintained by reframe.food. The Excel4Pro Open Call for Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) will be published through the opencalls.fund platform.

2. Proposal Submission and Selection

All Open Call selected applicants must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in this section and sign and submit the following documents.

At the time of submission, applicants must submit the following documents:

- **Declaration of Honour.** The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by the entity's legal representative and stamped (with the applicant's stamp if applicable).
- **SME Declaration.** The document must be filled in appropriately, signed by the entity's legal representative and stamped (with the applicant's stamp if applicable). The declaration must be submitted by both SMEs and start-ups that typically qualify as SMEs and comply with the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC.

Important:

As a general rule, all documents that require to bear stamps and signatures must be signed by the legal representatives of the Applicant (startups/SMEs). **In the case of Applicants coming from a country where the use of stamps is not mandatory, it is required to provide relevant justification documents in English.** E-signatures are also acceptable and in this case the existence of stamps is not required. PadES and CadES are acceptable e-signature formats for the Excel4Pro OC.

Although there is no requirement for letters of support/intent, Applicants can make a reference in their proposal.

During the contracting phase, selected beneficiaries must submit the following documents:

- Bank account information
- Signed and scanned copy of the Sub-grant Agreement (Annex 9), which will be sent to them by the Open Call manager following the evaluation and selection phase.
- Proof of legal existence. Selected applicants will be requested to provide any supporting documentation as proof of their legal existence.

2.1 Open Call Publication

The Excel4Pro Open Call will be published on the Funding and Tenders portal of the European Commission, and the Excel4Pro website (https://excel4pro.eu/). It may also be published on the Excel4Pro project partners' websites/dissemination portals. It will be published on January 26th and will remain open until April 27th, 2026, 17:00 CET. The OC will be widely communicated through the Excel4Pro social media channels and the Excel4Pro partners' networks and channels.

The publication will be supported by the Open Call Kit, which includes the following documents:

- **Open Call text (Fiche),** which provides the scope and objectives of the OC.
- **Open Call Applicant's Guide** (present document)
- **Declaration of Honour (DoH)**, which confirms the ability of the single Applicant to execute the subproject (if selected), exclusion of conflict of interest, etc. (signed and submitted as .pdf in the submission phase).
- **SME Declaration**, which secures that the applicants are eligible for the OC (in terms that they are SMEs according to the EC rules). Startups are also required to fill in the declaration.
- **Proposal template** word document to be completed by the applicant, saved, and submitted as .pdf in the application phase.
- **Open Call Budget template**, excel document to be completed by the Applicant, saved and submitted as .pdf in the application phase.
- A **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)** document, which will be updated throughout the entire OC duration
- An **indicative Subgrant Agreement contract**, just as a reference for the Applicants (**only applicable** at the contracting stage and subject to changes by the OC Treasurer/Coordinator and the OC Manager).

Interested Applicants have to regularly check the FAQ section in the opencalls.fund platform and/or Excel4Pro website.

2.2 Eligibility Criteria

2.2.1 Overall eligibility criteria

An automatic filtering to discard non-eligible proposals will be based on the following criteria:

- Legal entity established in Türkiye, Greece, or Ukraine.
- Uniqueness of the proposal (one proposal per legal entity). If an applicant is found to participate in multiple applications of different scope, all such project applications will be rejected. In case multiple versions of the same application under the same scope are submitted, only the last version will be evaluated. All the previous ones will not be considered and will be discarded
- Applicants must use the official proposal, budget, Declaration of Honour, and SME Declaration templates provided. If an Applicant does not use the Excel4Pro Open Call templates, the submitted proposal will be disqualified.
- Startups and SMEs of the agrifood sector that specialize in or want to develop innovative technologies or solutions within the alternative plant-based protein area.
- The proposal addresses both the Open Call Objectives as described in Section 1.4.
- The proposal should fall within at least one (1) of the Focus Areas mentioned in the Open Call's first objective.
- Proposed work to be carried out after the selection process.
- Existing Excel4Pro consortium members and their affiliates[2] are not eligible for the Open Call.
- The proposal will be delivered before the defined deadline (April 27th, 2026, 17:00 CET), applying the requested submission procedure, and will take place entirely through the opencalls.fund platform.
- Proposals shall only ask for funding for the part of the work that is not yet accomplished and will be carried out once having been selected for funding. Of course, this does not exclude the usage of e.g., results, IP, infrastructures or approaches already held by the applicants.
- All Applicants must have a valid VAT number and must be active and operational. However, in case having VAT number is not mandatory according to the national legislation of the applicant's country, a registration number from the respective national authority (National business registry, Commercial court or similar) must be provided during the contracting phase.

Only the proposals that comply with these criteria are eligible to move on to the evaluation round.

Excel4Pro Open Call team reserves the right to ask for additional explanations from the applicants during the eligibility check.

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[2] Affiliated entities (formerly called 'linked third parties') are entities with a (usually legal or capital) link to a beneficiary and which implement parts of the action and are allowed to charge costs directly to the grant.

The Advisory Board will be formed to run the eligibility check of the submitted proposals and validate the selection of the external experts who will evaluate the proposals.

2.2.2 Definition of eligible countries

Excel4Pro will accept applications submitted by legal entities established in Türkiye, Greece, or Ukraine that are eligible to participate in Horizon Europe.

2.3 Eligible costs

Excel4Pro project follows the guidelines of the European Commission in terms of cost eligibility for financing within its open calls. Payments will follow the "General eligibility conditions for lump sum costs'' according to the EU Grants: AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement: V2.0– 01.04.2025 and specifically Article 5 and 6.1.e.

As mentioned above (Section 1), each selected entity will receive the funding on a lump sum basis. To justify the lump sum, applicants need to provide a detailed explanation with cost estimations. The cost estimations are subject to the basic eligibility rules of Horizon Europe, that is the proposed budget may be adjusted to exclude costs that are deemed ineligible. If the evaluators find overestimated costs, this is recorded in the Evaluation Summary Report and will be reflected in a modified lump sum amount in the sub - grant agreement. If the pre-selected sub-grantee does not agree with the amount of the grant offered, they are at liberty to withdraw their proposal.

The following cost categories are considered eligible:

- **Personnel costs –** Costs of the personnel realising the work and preparing the deliverables/reports during each of the 3 phases. Applicants must calculate personnel costs according to the rules and regulations of their country and real labour market data regarding the relevant positions. For the proposal template, only the final amount allocated to personnel costs is necessary. Personnel costs are considered direct costs and can't be managed as indirect costs.

- **Subcontracting -** Subcontracting should be clearly justified. Costs must be reasonable and comply with the principle of sound financial management. Coordination tasks cannot be subcontracted. Applicants should ensure that there are sufficient details for the action tasks, the estimated budget, and the procedure that will be followed to ensure best value-for-money. Any kind of organisation could be subcontracted, provided that they are not part of the Excel4Pro consortium. The evaluators will assess the scope and value-for-money aspects of subcontracting, and their assessment will be reflected in the score of each proposal. Subcontracting is allowed for up to a maximum of 25% of the proposed budget when properly justified. When submitting the proposal, Applicants should only write the total amount for subcontracting. Selected Applicants should follow the standards for subcontracting set by the European Commission, ensuring best value for money and absence of conflict of interest, during the project implementation. Procurement must comply with the national and European regulations or internal rules applicable to each applicant.

- **Purchase costs:**

  - **Travel costs** – Travel costs necessary for the execution of the subproject.

  - **Equipment costs** – Borrowing or lending the necessary equipment is not eligible. Only depreciation costs for purchased equipment are eligible.

  - **Other goods & services** – Other goods and services include, for instance, consumables and supplies, dissemination (including open access), protection of results, certificates on the methodology, translations, and publications.

- **Indirect costs** - Indirect costs (overheads) could be up to 25% of the direct cost. Subcontracting is not included in the calculation of the 25% ceiling for indirect costs**.**

The budget must be filled in for each proposal using the excel template provided. Applicants will then save the excel sheet as pdf and upload it on the opencalls.fund platform.

Applicants should take into consideration that adequate budget must be allocated to dissemination activities. A minimum 7% of the funding will be allocated to the deployment of dissemination activities such as organisation of information/field days, workshops and informal events to promote the selected Excel4Pro solution(s).

Applicants **should explain and justify the budget (for each budget category separately)**. For personnel costs, indicate the number of person months, and link such personnel effort to the contents (tasks, goals) of the proposal. If Applicants use subcontracting, they must justify it and specify the role of subcontractor.

Important:

In terms of financial monitoring of the subprojects' implementation, no financial justification is required by the project, however the Subgrantee shall keep the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the Contract for at least three years after final payment. These shall be made available to the EC when requested during any audit under the Grant Agreement.

2.4 Application process

2.4.1 Applicant's registration

Applicants should register at the Excel4Pro Open Call page on the opencalls.fund (OCF) platform. This will be the central interface for managing the proposal applications for the remainder of the Open Call.

The information on the Excel4Pro Open Call will be available on https://excel4pro.eu/open-call/, as well as on the Funding & Tenders Portal.

It is important to note that only individuals registered on the opencalls.fund platform will be in a position to apply for the Excel4Pro Open Call and submit questions on the dedicated FAQ section on the opencalls.fund platform.

Questions can be submitted until Friday 24th of April, 2026 at 17:00 CET through email to the Excel4Pro support team at   excel4pro@opencalls.fund or through the FAQ section of the opencalls.fund platform and responses will be made available the soonest possible.

Important

Applicants should be aware that the email address that will be used for the submission of the application will be used as the primary contact email for any formal communication during the eligibility and evaluation phases.

2.4.2 Application preparation

Applicants should follow the steps below:

1. Applicants must register on the platform prior to the submission of the proposal.
2. For the application preparation, applicants are requested to apply online and provide all necessary information. Applicants must submit all requested documents on the opencalls.fund platform. Documents to be submitted include:
   a. Proposal template (.pdf)
   b. Budget template (.pdf)
   c. Declaration of Honour (signed .pdf)
   d. SME Declaration (signed .pdf)

Incomplete submissions or applications not using the official templates provided, will not be accepted.

3. Applicants that do not accept the terms and conditions and do not sign and upload to the platform the completed documents (as mentioned in Section 3) in .pdf format, will not be able to submit the application.
4. Applicants must submit the required documents on time after uploading them and confirming that the complete application is online. Late submissions will not be accepted.
   Important note: The platform supports only files in .pdf format. The size of each file can be up to 10MB. Compressed files (such as .zip, .rar, etc.) are **not acceptable**.
5. In case applicants have any technical difficulties, they should contact the Excel4Pro OC support team at: excel4pro@opencalls.fund no later than Wednesday 22nd of April, 2026 at 17:00 CET so that the open call support team can have sufficient time to address any technical issues. Please **do not contact** opencalls.fund Help Center for any technical difficulties with the submission process.

It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the application. Failure of the application to be submitted in time for any reason, including indicatively network communications delays or working from multiple browsers or multiple browser windows, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the application as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

Technical issues may occur with large documents in different formats. The Excel4Pro project does not bear responsibility for technical problems at any stage. Make sure to check and test upload on time. If technical issues do arise, Applicants may contact the Excel4Pro OC team for support, via email: excel4pro@opencalls.fund until April 22nd at 17:00 CET.

2.4.3   The application reception

Applications will ONLY be submitted via the opencalls.fund platform. The application reception will close at 17:00 CET (Brussels time) on April 27th, 2026. At this time, a full list of applicants will be generated and will include the basic information provided during registration. The full list will only be available to the Open Call Advisory Board in the context of the eligibility check, evaluation and contracting, and shared with the EC for transparency. Additional non-identifier information (e.g. country, type of applicant) will be collected for statistical purposes. Proposals and contact information will not be shared within the consortium without consent. Applicants will be expected to read and accept the privacy policy and accept the terms of the open call during the application process.

2.4.4   Use of generative AI in proposal preparation

The Excel4Pro project follows the same guidelines regarding generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in proposal preparation as is stated in the applications for Horizon Europe projects.

Applicants are expected to exercise caution and carefully consider the use of generative AI in the preparation of their proposal. Content generated in such a manner should be thoroughly reviewed and validated by the applicant to ensure accuracy, appropriateness, and compliance with IP regulations. Applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal, including those elements generated by AI and must be transparent in disclosing which tools were used and how.

Specially, applicants must:

- Verify the accuracy, validity and appropriateness of AI generated content and citations, and correct any errors or inconsistencies
- Provide a list of sources used to generate the content and citations. Make sure sources are properly cited.
- Be aware of potential plagiarism. Check original sources to avoid plagiarism.

Acknowledge the limitations of the tool, such as potential of error, bias and/or gaps.

2.5 Evaluation process

2.5.1   Eligibility check

Once the Open Call is closed (April 27th, 2026) and before assigning the applications to external evaluators, each proposal will be checked against the overall eligibility criteria. During May and July 2026, the eligibility check will be carried out by the Excel4Pro OC Advisory Board (OCAB), consisting of representatives from:

(i)   Domain experts (TUBITAK MAM, GTU, NTUA, LPNU)

(ii)   Technologies providers experts (Besler, JOTIS, FRUKTONA)

(iii)   Exploitation experts and the OC Manager (RFF)

Please note that only complete applications will be considered, those with missing or incomplete information will be discarded.

This procedural part of the evaluation will check the eligibility of the submitted proposals against the overall eligibility criteria according to section 2.2.1.

Proposals that do not comply with these criteria are not eligible to move on to the evaluation round.

During the eligibility check, the Applicants might be requested to provide additional explanations if their application raises questions such as, but not limited to, ambiguity of the information, inconsistencies which are obvious errors, among others. In that case, Applicants will have three (3) working days starting from the day after receiving the notification to provide clarifications or additional documents to complete their initial application. If the requested clarifications / documents are not provided in the specified time, their application will be discarded and will not move on to the evaluation round.

Important note: The designated contact person in the opencalls.fund, will be responsible for all communication during the eligibility phase. If further clarification is required, the Open Call team will notify the applicant via the email address provided. Failure by the contact person to respond within the specified deadline for submitting the requested clarifications will result in the rejection of the application, and the OC team will not be held accountable.

2.5.2   Remote evaluation key points

Each proposal will be reviewed by two (2) external evaluators with specific technical and/or business expertise related to the topics of the call. The evaluators will have to evaluate each proposal under the specific evaluation criteria.

All eligible proposals will be assessed by two expert evaluators against the following **award criteria**:

Alignment [Scoring 1-5; threshold 3]

- **Relevance and Alignment with Excel4Pro Open Call Objectives.** To what extent does the proposal align with the objectives, priorities, and expected results of the Excel4Pro Open Call? Does it clearly address the specific challenges and focus areas outlined in the call?

Excellence [Scoring 1-5; threshold 3]

- **Feasibility of concept:** Is the implementation of the proposed solution(s) practical and achievable within the project's timeline and budget?
- **Ethics and compliance:** Does the proposal address ethical concerns and adhere to relevant legal and regulatory frameworks?
- **Gender and inclusivity:** Does the project promote diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities?

Impact [Scoring 1-5; threshold 3]

Applicants must demonstrate the project's potential to deliver measurable social, economic, or environmental benefits and outline strategies for scaling, sustainability, and stakeholder engagement.

- **Demonstration of impact on the Excel4Pro ecosystem:** Describe how the proposed activities will generate impact within the Excel4Pro ecosystem, particularly on relevant stakeholders such researchers and scientists, food industry, policy makers, and the general public. Highlight how the implementation of the selected solution(s) will contribute to the adoption of plant-based proteins and promoting sustainable protein sources, contributing to the transformation of food systems, and addressing global challenges related to food security and nutrition.
- **Impact and Sustainability:** What is the expected social, environmental, and economic impact of the proposed solution(s) implementation? Does the proposal foresee a credible pathway for post-project commercial sustainability? Does the developed solution(s) address real market needs?
- **Scalability and replicability:** Can the proposed solution(s) be scaled up or replicated in other regions or contexts?
- **Dissemination and Policy Uptake:** Does the proposal include strategies to share results, promote the adoption of the solution(s), and inform local or regional policies?
- **Community Engagement:** How is the involvement of stakeholders ensured?

Value [Scoring 1-5; threshold 3] Proposals must include a comprehensive budget definition including the amount of funding requested and how it will be spent.

- **Budget Allocation:** Is the budget realistic, transparent, and appropriately allocated to project tasks?
- **Use of Resources:** Are the proposed resources, including equipment, data, and expertise, adequate and effectively utilised?

Implementation [Scoring 1 – 5; threshold 3] Applicants must provide a work plan and credible evidence that the project delivery team has the necessary skills, infrastructure, and management experience to deliver the proposed solution(s) in the timescales and budget specified.

- **Team Expertise and Roles:** Does the team have the necessary technical, managerial, and domain-specific expertise?
- **Quality of the team as a whole:** Including complementarity, gender balance and diversity
- **Risk Management:** Are potential risks identified, and is there a mitigation plan in place?

All award criteria have the same weight. Each award criterion can be scored from 1 to 5 with a threshold of 3 points in each category, and a minimum of 15 points in total.

Interpretation of scores:

1 - Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

2 - Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.

3 - Good. The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.

4 - Very Good. The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.

5 - Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor

A 'minor shortcoming' is an issue that relates only to a marginal aspect of the proposal with respect to the criterion and/or can easily be rectified (it will not impact the scoring).

A 'shortcoming' is a problem that relates to an important aspect of the proposal. It impacts the scoring but does not render the proposal inappropriate for funding, i.e. the proposal is still expected to lead to useful results with positive impact.

A 'significant weakness' means that the proposal addresses the criterion in a limited and/or not sufficiently effective way (will lower the score below threshold). This can also be the case when the proposal includes a large number of shortcomings, each one of them not rendering the proposal inappropriate for funding, though all together make the proposal not addressing the criterion sufficiently in an effective way

The evaluators' scores for each criterion will be averaged, and these averaged scores will then be summed to calculate the total score.

Scores must pass the individual threshold AND the overall threshold if a proposal is to be considered for funding within the limits of the available call budget.

In case the difference in total scores between evaluators is significant (>5), a consensus meeting between the two evaluators will be held to seek adjustments.

Important note:

From the pool of eligible proposals, the highest-scoring proposal from each of the three and eligible countries as listed in section 2.2.2, will be selected for funding, provided that each selected proposal addresses different Excel4Pro solution(s) that are within the Open Call Focus Areas.

If more than one proposal in the same ecosystem country shares the same score and is listed at the last place planned for funding, the proposals will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for 'Impact'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on scores for 'Excellence'. If the scores are equal, priority will be given to the score for 'Alignment", followed by that of 'Implementation'.

Example: There are two proposals from the same ecosystem country—Proposal A and Proposal B—both achieving an overall evaluation score at the threshold for funding. Suppose that Proposal A and Proposal B have an overall score of 15 (the cut-off for funding). To decide between Proposal A and Proposal B for the final funded spot, the following tie-breaker steps would be applied:

1. First, compare the 'Impact' scores. If Proposal A received a 4 and Proposal B received a 3 in this category, Proposal A would be prioritised.

2. If both proposals had identical 'Impact' scores, then the next step would be to review the 'Excellence' scores. Suppose both proposals scored 4 there as well; then the tie-break would move to the next criterion.

3. Next, the 'Alignment' scores would be compared. If Proposal A scored 4 and Proposal B scored 3 in this area, then Proposal B would take precedence.

4. Lastly, if all previous criteria were also equal, the decision would be based on the 'Implementation' scores.

This stepwise approach ensures that even when proposals have very similar overall scores, the selection committee can fairly prioritise the proposal that demonstrates the strongest potential in core areas of the evaluation process.

All five criteria are equally weighted.

At the end of this phase, all proposals will be ranked based on their scores. If a decision still cannot be made, other factors related to the objectives of the OC may be considered to further prioritise proposals. Such factors include: Portfolio balance / geographic coverage, complementarity with proposals already selected for funding, lower delivery risk at fixed budget/time.

After completing this process, communication with the OC Advisory Board will be made by RFF, to present the status and propose the outcome of this process to the members. The Excel4Pro consortium, with the approval of the EC, retains the discretion to select a higher or lower number of applications than initially scheduled.

All Applicants will receive their Evaluation Summary Report (ESR).

2.5.3   Redress procedure

2.5.3.1   Process for Redress: Eligibility Results

Applicants may submit a written request for redress to the Excel4Pro OC Advisory Board via email at excel4pro@opencalls.fund **within three (3) calendar days** of receiving the eligibility status email if they believe the results of the eligibility checks are incorrect. The Excel4Pro OC Advisory Board will review these requests to ensure coherent interpretation and equal treatment of all applicants. Requests **must relate specifically to eligibility checks**, **clearly describe the complaint, and include reasons for consideration**. Additionally, they must be submitted within the specified timeframe and by the legal representative of the applicant who submitted the proposal. The review of complaints will occur within a reasonable timeframe taking into account the complexity of the case and the number of requests received. If evidence of a shortcoming is found that could have impacted the eligibility decision, appropriate corrective actions will be taken.

2.5.3.2   Process for Redress: Evaluation Results

Applicants may submit a written request for redress regarding the evaluation process to the Excel4Pro OC Advisory Board and the OC Manager via email at excel4pro@opencalls.fund **within five (5) calendar days of receiving the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR).** This request can be made if they believe there was a shortcoming in the evaluation that affected the decision. The Excel4Pro OC Advisory Board will examine these requests, ensuring equal treatment of all applicants. **Requests must relate specifically to the evaluation process, clearly describe the complaint, and be submitted within the five (5) calendar day timeframe by the legal representative of the applicant**. The review will take place within a reasonable timeframe taking into account the complexity of the case and the number of requests

received, and if clear evidence exists that a shortcoming affected the final funding decision, partial or full re-evaluation may occur. The outcome of the redress review will be communicated to the applicant once the process has been concluded. The final evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be considered definitive and could be lower than the original score. Only one request for redress per proposal will be accepted, and all requests will be treated with confidentiality. **It's important to note that the Excel4Pro OC Advisory Board will not question the scientific or technical judgment of the evaluators, and any requests contesting this judgment will be automatically rejected.**

2.5.4 Contracting

Based on the evaluator comments in each ESR, the OC Manager will start negotiations for the contract preparation with the representatives of the selected (winning) proposals (if shortcomings were identified and changes are needed in the proposals). If the negotiations do not finish successfully, the proposal will be rejected and the next highest ranked proposal will be selected. Contract preparation will go via an administrative and financial checking. On a case-by-case approach, a phone call or teleconference may be needed for clarification.

Reframe.food (RFF) is assigned as the OC Manager and the TURKIYE BILIMSEL VE TEKNOLOJIK ARASTIRMA KURUMU (TUBITAK MAM)-Coordinator as the OC Treasurer and are committed to ensuring a competitive and transparent OC process, ensuring confidentiality, equal treatment and no conflict of interest.

The objective of the contract preparation is fulfilling the legal requirements between the Excel4Pro consortium and every beneficiary of the call. The items covered will be:

- To validate the status information of the Applicant, the following documents will be required from the Applicant:
    o **Copy of ID-card or Passport** of legal representative(s) of the selected applicant's (Sub-grantee) organisation.
    o **Copy of Company Register**, **Official Gazette** or other official document per country showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number
    o **Proof of VAT registration**: a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case having VAT number is not mandatory according to the national legislation of the applicant's country, a registration number from the respective national authority (National business registry, Commercial court or similar) must be provided).
    o **Legal proof that the selected applicant's (Sub-grantee) organisation is not under liquidation or has filed for bankruptcy.** If a formal "no liquidation/no bankruptcy" certificate is not mandatory in your country, an official statement or declaration confirming this (together with a translated extract in English) must be provided alongside an official letter in English confirming that the selected applicant's (Sub-grantee) is neither under liquidation nor in bankruptcy signed and stamped by your legal representative.
    o **Bank Account Information**: The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a form signed by the legal representative and the bank representative. The account should be a business bank account of each beneficiary. The financial information should not be older than three months.

The Subgrantee assumes full responsibility on the bank account info they provided. For instance, if they provide a wrong IBAN, and the Treasurer proceeds with the transfer to that account, they will assume responsibility for any costs related to the transfer (expenses with the return of the amount from the wrong bank account and/or expenses with the new transfer will be deducted from their grant transfer). Ultimately, in a worst-case scenario, if the Treasurer does not manage to recover the amount transferred to the wrong bank account, the beneficiary who provided a wrong IBAN will not be able to claim that payment.

The request, by the Excel4Pro consortium, of the above documentation will be done within designated deadlines. The subproject contract negotiations will be carried out from August 2026 to October 2026. In case negotiations have not been concluded within the above period, the application is automatically rejected and the next application in the reserve list is invited.

After successful negotiations, the legal representative of the open call winner Applicant will be invited to sign a contract, which will then be signed by the Excel4Pro Open Call Manager (RFF) and Open Call Treasurer/Coordinator (TUBITAK MAM). The final list of accepted proposals will then be published on the [Excel4Pro website](#).

3. Implementation of the Excel4Pro Open Call

Selected projects will be launched in November 2026 having an implementation timeframe of 15 months (until December 2027). The implementation period will be divided in 3 phases:

- **Phase 1 - Design** [Deliverable: Activity plan] (November 2026 – February 2027) - Payment of 30% of the total fund
- **Phase 2 - Development** [Deliverable: Report on Results/Outcomes] (March 2027 – July 2027) - Payment of 50% of the total fund
- **Phase 3 - Validation** [Deliverable: Final report on community-associated activities] (August 2027 – January 2028) - Payment of the final 20% of the total fund

In all selected projects, payments are deliverable based, meaning that the subgrantees have to deliver a specific report after the end of each phase in order to receive the payment **(no pre-financing is foreseen).**

4. Applicant's responsibility

The selected Subgrantees are indirect beneficiaries of European Commission funding. As such, they are responsible for the proper use of the funding and ensure that they comply with the obligations set out in HE specific requirements as described in the "Excellence Hubs" (**HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-07-01**) topic. The obligations that are applicable to the beneficiaries include (but are not limited to):

4.1 Conflict of interest

The Subgrantees must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the Subgrant Agreement could be compromised for reasons involving family,

emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect interest ("conflict of interests"). At the same time, Applicants cannot be affiliated with Excel4Pro consortium partners, nor can they be employees of the Excel4Pro consortium partners. All potential conflicts of interest will be assessed carefully. Please see more info **here**.

The Subgrantees must formally notify the Excel4Pro consortium without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation. The Excel4Pro consortium may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

If a Subgrantee breaches any of its obligations, the Subgrant Agreement may be automatically terminated. Moreover, if the Subgrant Agreement is terminated due to a breach made by a Subgrantee, the Excel4Pro consortium reserves the right to suspend further payments to the subgrantee and claim the full refund of all payments made to the Subgrantee up to date.

4.2 Ethics, Data Protection & Confidentiality

Prior to granting financial support, Excel4Pro will require Applicants to identify and explain any ethical issues that may arise during the subproject implementation as part of their project proposals. A dedicated chapter in the proposal template will require from the Applicants to describe how they will comply with European Union ethical rules/principles and outline how ethics principles will be integrated into the project, addressing aspects such as participant involvement, informed consent, privacy protection, data management, and any other relevant ethical considerations. All subprojects should follow an "ethics by design"-way of working, whereby ethical and legal principles, on the basis of GDPR, competition law compliance, absence of data bias are implemented since the beginning of the design process.

Once a project is selected for FSTP funding, regular monitoring and reporting will be conducted to ensure ongoing adherence to ethics principles. This monitoring mechanism contributes to the overall integrity and ethical excellence of the Excel4Pro project and reinforces its commitment to ethical research and innovation.

During the implementation of the subproject and for at least five (5) years after the final payment of the subproject, the beneficiaries must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at subcontract signing time (Article 6 - Confidentiality').

If an OC beneficiary makes a request for a longer period of data protection and confidentiality, the European Commission and the Excel4Pro consortium may agree to keep such information confidential for an additional period beyond the initial five (5) years. This will be explicitly stated in the Subgrant Agreement.

If additional information is identified as confidential during the subproject execution or through verbal communication, it must be accepted by the Excel4Pro Coordinator and confirmed in writing within 15 days of its disclosure. Unless otherwise agreed between the parties, they may only use confidential information to implement the Subgrant Agreement. The OC beneficiaries may disclose confidential information to the Excel4Pro consortium and to the selected external reviewers, who will be bound by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

Applicants must confirm that all proposed services, including the means of their delivery and upkeep, have been reviewed to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation on data protection, privacy, and fundamental rights.

OC beneficiaries will have to submit three deliverables (1. Feasibility Plan, 2. Demonstration Report, 3. Scale-Up Plan) during the subproject implementation. In these deliverables the beneficiaries will report any ethics measures in a dedicated chapter. The deliverables will be reviewed by the Excel4Pro OC Advisory Board and the OC Manager.

By implementing this proposed mechanism, Excel4Pro aims to foster ethical conduct and responsible practices in all projects funded through the FSTP. It establishes a system of checks and balances, providing assurance that the ethical commitments of Excel4Pro are upheld by external entities receiving financial support. This monitoring mechanism contributes to the overall integrity and ethical excellence of the Excel4Pro project and reinforces its commitment to ethical research and innovation.

Personal data from individuals (such as: name, last name, address, country of residence, phone number, email address) will also be gathered via the Open Call during the process of potential applicants' and evaluators' registration and application on the opencalls.fund platform (to post a question or apply to a specific open call or enter the pool of external evaluators). The majority of the information (if not all of them) that will be required for SMEs and startups as potential applicants, are already publicly available in business registries across Europe (i.e. owners' name, company address and email).

No sensitive personal data will be collected (e.g. health status, race, sexual lifestyle, ethnicity, political opinions, religious or philosophical conviction, receipt of social support, victims of violence, criminal records and sexual life).

Personal information (such as IP address, device type, geographic location, etc.) may also be collected (automatically) for statistical reasons and to better understand the people who visit the opencalls.fund platform, where they come from and what content they are interested in the activities related to the Open Call, since personal information received will not be shared by default.

Access to the opencalls.fund platform is also feasible following a registration process and obtaining user credentials. With respect to the personal data protection collected during the Open Call, all collected data will be anonymised, encrypted and stored on a server, which will have server-side encryption. Only the required personnel (specifically assigned for this project) will have access to the data. GDPR rules will be applied for data protection.

According to the Grant Agreement, data will be kept for at least five (5) years after the completion of the project (or three (3) years for data related to Open Call grants of not more than EUR 60 000). However, the data will always be stored anonymously and will not be accessible by external third parties

4.3 Promoting the action and giving visibility to the EU funding

The Subgrantees must promote the subprojects, the Excel4Pro project and its results, by providing the description of their project upon request from the Excel4Pro Consortium and highlighting the financial support of the EC.

Unless the European Commission or the Excel4Pro Coordinator requests or agrees otherwise or unless it is impossible, communication activities of the beneficiaries related to the action (including media

relations, conferences, seminars, information material, such as brochures, leaflets, posters, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.), dissemination activities and any infrastructure, equipment, vehicles, supplies or major results funded by the grant must:

- o acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement,
- o display the Excel4Pro logo,
- o include the Open Call Funding acknowledgement following disclaimer: "This sub-project has received funding from the project Excel4Pro (Grant Agreement number: 101186662) through its Open Call, funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme",
- o include the standard disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

When displayed in association with other logos (e.g., of beneficiaries), the European emblem must be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos. This obligation to use the European emblem in respect of projects to which the EC contributes implies no right of exclusive use. It is subject to general third-party use restrictions which do not permit the appropriation of the emblem, or of any similar trademark or logo, whether by registration or by any other means. Under these conditions, the Subgrantee is exempted from the obligation to obtain prior permission from the EC to use the emblem. Further detailed information on the EU emblem can be found on the European Commission's web page.

Any publicity made by the Subgrantee with respect to the project, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, must specify that it reflects only the author's views and that the EC or Excel4Pro consortium are not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

The EC and the Excel4Pro consortium shall be authorised to publish, in whatever form and on or by whatever medium, the following information:

- the name of the Subgrantee,
- contact address of the Subgrantee,
- the general purpose of the subproject,
- the amount of the financial contribution foreseen for the subproject; after the final payment, and the amount of the financial contribution actually received,
- the geographic location of the activities carried out,
- the list of dissemination activities and/or of patent (applications) related to foreground,
- the details/references and the abstracts of scientific publications related to foreground and, if funded within the subproject, the published version or the final manuscript accepted for publication,
- the publishable reports submitted to Excel4Pro,
- any picture or any audio-visual or web material provided to the EC and Excel4Pro in the framework of the subproject.

The Subgrantee shall ensure that all necessary authorisations for such publication have been obtained and that the publication of the information by the EC and Excel4Pro does not infringe any rights of third parties.

Upon a duly substantiated request by the Subgrantee representative, the Excel4Pro consortium, if such permission is provided by the EC, may agree to forego such publicity if disclosure of the information indicated above would risk compromising the beneficiary's security, academic or commercial interests.

4.4 Financial audit and controls

The European Commission (EC) will monitor that Excel4Pro partners and the Subgrantees comply with the conditions for financial support to third parties set out in Annex A of the Excel4Pro Grant Agreement and may take any action foreseen by the grant agreement in case of noncompliance vis à vis the beneficiary concerned.

Moreover, the EC may at any time during the implementation of the Excel4Pro project and up to 5 (five) years after final payments, arrange for financial audits to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). Such audits will be formally notified to the beneficiary concerned and will be considered to start on the date of the notification.

Such audits may cover financial, systemic and other aspects (such as accounting and management principles) relating to the proper execution of the grant agreement. They shall be carried out on a confidential basis.

The Subgrantee shall make available directly to the EC all detailed information and data that may be requested by the EC or any representative authorised by it, with a view to verifying that the grant agreement is properly managed and performed in accordance with its provisions and that costs have been charged in compliance with it. This information and data must be precise, complete and effective.

The Subgrantee shall keep all subproject deliverables and the originals or, in exceptional cases, duly authenticated copies – including electronic copies – of all documents relating to the subproject contract for up to three (3) years from the end of the project. These shall be made available to the EC when requested during any audit under the grant agreement.

In order to carry out these audits, the Subgrantee shall ensure that the EC´s services and any external body(ies) authorised by it have on-the-spot access at all reasonable times, notably to the subproject applicant offices, to its computer data, to its accounting data and to all the information needed to carry out those audits, including information on individual salaries of persons involved in the subproject. For on-the-spot visits, the beneficiary concerned must allow access to sites and premises (including for the external audit firm) and must ensure that information requested is readily available. Information provided must be accurate, precise and complete, and in the format requested, including electronic format.

On the basis of the audit findings a draft audit report will be drawn up and it will be formally sent to the Subgrantee concerned, which may make observations thereon within 30 days of receiving the notification to make observations. The Commission may decide not to consider observations conveyed or documents sent after that deadline. The final audit report shall be sent to the beneficiary concerned within two months of expiry of the aforesaid deadline.

Based on the conclusions of the audit, the EC shall take all appropriate measures which it considers necessary, including the issuing of recovery orders regarding all or part of the payments made by it and the application of any applicable sanction.

The European Court of Auditors shall have the same rights as the EC, notably right of access, for the purpose of checks and audits, without prejudice to its own rules.

In addition, the EC may carry out on-the-spot checks and inspections in accordance with Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/96 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities.

Audits (including audit reports) will be in the language of the Subgrant Agreement.

4.5 Sub-project Communication

The Subgrantee representative should:

- Provide any notices in writing to the Excel4Pro Open Call manager (RFF) and Open Call treasurer (TUBITAK MAM).
- Notify the Excel4Pro Open Call manager (RFF) immediately of any change of persons or contact details. The address list shall be accessible to all concerned.
- Notify the Excel4Pro Open Call manager (RFF) about the dissemination activities that the Open Call beneficiary will organise.

4.6 Originality of the sub-granted projects

It is required that applications submitted are based on original works by the Applicants and that their foreseen developments are free from third party rights. Excel4Pro consortium is not obliged to verify the authenticity of the ownership of the foreseen products/services. Any issues delivered from third party claims that arise as a result of the sub-granted projects are on the sole responsibility of the applicant.

4.7 IPR ownership of the sub-granted projects

Each Subgrantee shall retain ownership of the Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) attached to the results it generates during the development process, as well as any other results that do not constitute IPRs. Each Subgrantee is individually responsible for the management and protection of its own IPRs and shall bear any associated costs.

The Subgrantees funded within the Excel4Pro project will be the unique owners of the technologies created within the framework of their sub-granted projects. Parts of their works will be requested to be public for Excel4Pro dissemination purposes.

In addition, if subprojects create any data on new diversified proteins and their properties, new processing methods, and any other data related to alternative protein sources, ingredients, products, and processing methods, the subgrantees must make them openly available based on FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) principles, as defined in the **HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-07-01** call. However, subgrantees may disclose data that would jeopardize their legitimate interests,

specifically regarding commercial exploitation (e.g., trade secrets), intellectual property protection, or security.

4.8 Liability

The Excel4Pro consortium and the European Commission cannot be held liable for any acts or omissions of the applicant in relation to the selected sub-granted project implemented by the Subgrantee. The Excel4Pro consortium shall not be liable for any defaults of any products, processes or services created in the sub-granted project. Including, for instance, anomalies in the functioning or performance thereof.

In case any damage is caused to a third party by the Subgrantee, the Subgrantee will assume full responsibility for the damage caused. In no way will the Excel4Pro consortium be responsible for any damages caused by the Subgrantee. Subgrantees shall bear sole responsibility for ensuring that their acts within the framework of their sub-granted projects do not infringe third parties' rights.
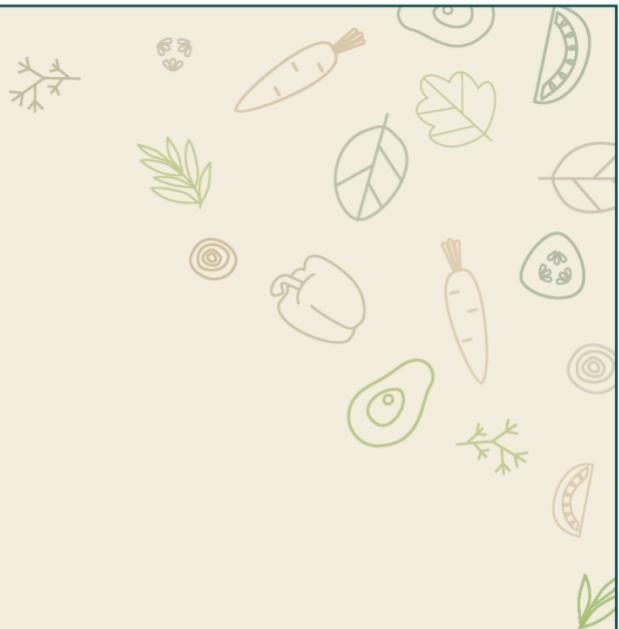
5. Checklist

☐ **Is your proposal eligible?** The eligibility criteria are given in chapter 3 "Proposal Submission and Selection".

☐ **Is your proposal complete?** Have you completed all mandatory fields on the Open Call Proposal Template?

☐ **Have you checked all technical details related to submission?** Difficulties with application and submission arising from technical aspects will not be taken into consideration by the Excel4Pro project. Applicants should do test rounds and make sure to submit everything on time.

☐ **Does your proposal fulfil questions requests/comments?** Proposals should be precise, concise and must answer requested questions, which are designed to correspond to the applied evaluation. Omitting requested information will almost certainly lead to lower scores and possible rejection.

☐ **Have you maximised your chances?** There will be strong competition. Therefore, edit your proposal tightly, strengthen or eliminate weak points.

☐ **Have you submitted your proposal before the deadline?** It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the proposal. Failure of the proposal to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the message as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

☐ **Have you used the Excel4Pro official proposal and budget templates, the Declaration of Honour, and the SME Declaration?**

☐ **Have you described the dissemination activities as 7% of your budget?**

☐ **Does your planned work fit with Excel4Pro Open Call?** Ensure that your proposal directly addresses the Open Call objectives.

☐ **Do you need further advice and support?** You can reach out to the Excel4Pro Open Call team via excel4pro@opencalls.fund. The technical team can provide assistance to the extent possible, up until the 22nd of April 2026, 17:00 CET.

6. Points of contact

All questions concerning the Call must be in writing and be stated on the FAQ section on the opencalls.fund or sent by e-mail to excel4pro@opencalls.fund. The deadline for asking clarification questions or requesting additional information is 17:00 CET on 24th of April, 2026.

We strongly recommend Applicants to regularly visit the FAQ section to get valuable feedback for the preparation of their proposal.

Excel4Pro

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TÜBİTAK

ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΜΕΤΣΟΒΙΟ ΠΟΛΥΤΕΧΝΕΙΟ

GEBZE TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ

BESLER

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑ ΠΕΛΟΠΟΝΝΗΣΟΥ

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WHITE

FRUKTONA
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prana
ORGANIC

foodback

reframe.food

Tech StartUp School