

How to organise national-level seminars

NCP GUIDE



ncpwideranet.eu



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Introduction

These guidelines are designed for WIDERA¹ National Contact Points (NCPs) of Horizon Europe (HE) programme. The guidelines provide a support framework on how to organise national-level seminars, which would enable better access to knowledge facilitation in terms of HE funding opportunities for applicants from Widening Countries.

The Guide introduces general and practical information what NCPs need to consider, when organising national-level seminars. There are two main parts of the Guide: general introduction of basic principles, followed by Annexes with practical information and elements to consider.

The aim

- Deliver practical knowledge on how to prepare seminars for applicants from Widening Countries;
- Increase collaboration and knowledge sharing amongst WIDERA¹ NCPs;
- In the long term increase the Widening applicants' participation in Horizon Europe calls and success rates, through better access to knowledge building provided by NCPs.

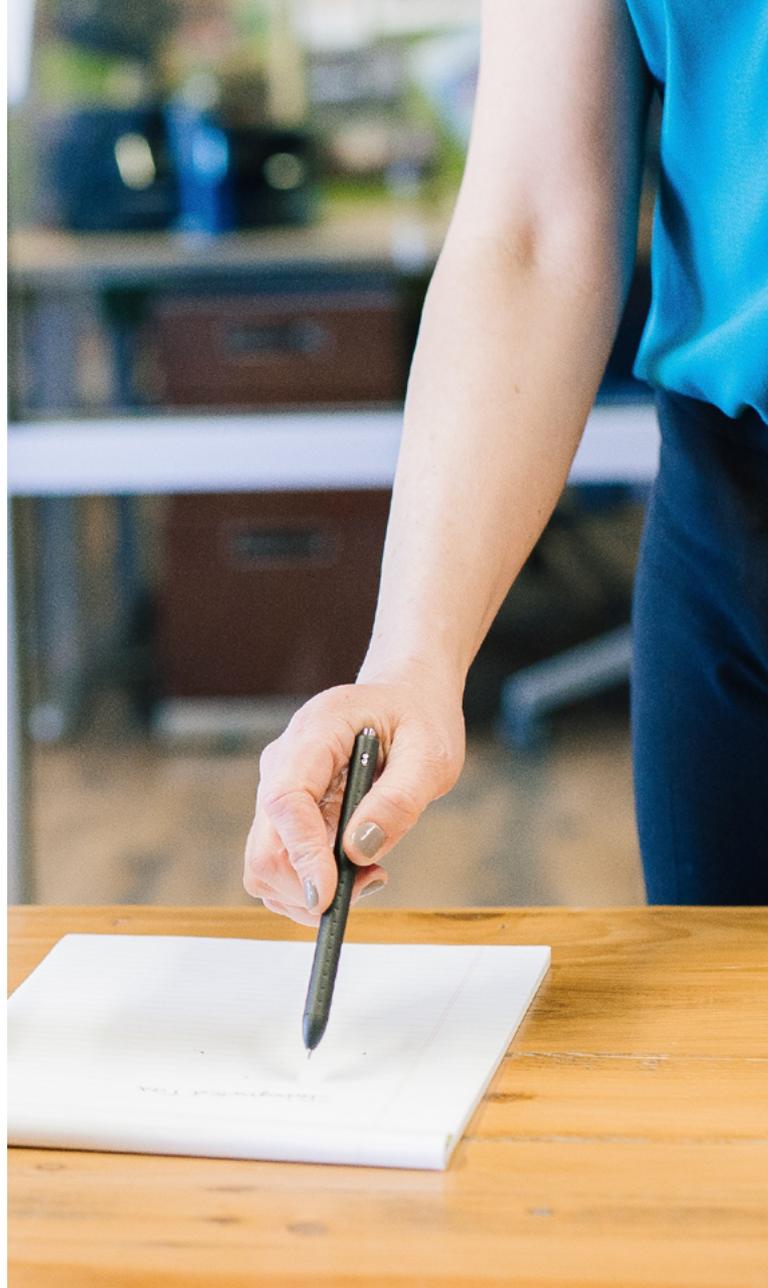
NCP role

NCPs have a key role in supporting the implementation of EU Framework Programmes (FPs) for Research and Innovation and their advisory and support services role help in increasing successful national participation to the FPs. NCPs core functions, as described in [Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles](#), are assisting, advising and training. More specifically, in terms of the seminars and trainings, NCPs are expected to:

- Organise courses and training sessions (both physical and virtual) on Horizon Europe where appropriate, for intermediaries and information multipliers to ensure high quality of advice;
- Where appropriate, organise courses and training seminars for specific target groups on specific topics (legal aspects, modalities for participation, research and innovation areas, financial rules, Open Science practices and FAIR4 management of digital research outputs, etc.).

NCPs role are the one of the organiser, facilitator and sometimes an expert presenter (if presenting a call topic or Work Programme). Before getting fully involved into the organization process, NCP should self-reflect and considering the following:

- What will you deliver? Is the proposed seminar is what is needed for the applicants at the national level? Will it provide the most needed information?
- What are your possibilities? Do you have enough time to organise a seminar, if you don't can you ask your colleagues for help? Do you have contacts to invite the variety of speakers?



- What are your strengths and weaknesses? Do you know how to use online tools to run a seminar? If not, who can help you? If the seminar is in English, are you confident in facilitating the seminar not in your mother tongue?

Once reflected on these aspects you should determine your role based on your competencies. The additional questions that you might want to think about in order to understand better your role and the ones of others might be the following: will the NCPs provide seminars themselves? Do you need assistance from other NCPs? Will you ask EC representatives to be involved in? Will you reach out to successful coordinators? This is a good starting point for designing seminar.

¹ Horizon Europe thematic area, which aims to implement concrete measures to support Widening participation and strengthening the ERA (European Research Area) through variety of financial mechanisms



Seminars

Concept

Seminar is an outreach event (held online or on-site), which aims to achieve a specific goal, for example, to disseminate information on the specific call topic for defined targeted group (applicants from Widening countries) in order to provide a better access to knowledge and build capacity.

Targeted group

Seminars can vary in size, however, for the national-level seminars, the targeted group should be potential applicants from across the region or country, who are considering applying for WIDERA calls. Seminar should be advertised widely to ensure national coverage. Depending on the number of researchers in the country, the seminar sessions could be grouped (beginners or/and experienced researchers) as information provided will differ.

Topic

Each seminar should have a topic chosen by NCP, topics can vary depending on what is current and important. For example the seminar can be organised around the WIDERA call topics (before the call launches), or on the topics of horizontal policies in HE, the novelty of lumps sum and etc.

Speakers

Seminars can be delivered by NCPs or invited speakers (European Commission (EC) representatives, grant holders, evaluators and/or mixture of all). However, it is strongly advisable to have invited guests to present as it makes national seminars more professional and applicants get diverse information.

Format

Table below provides advantages and disadvantages for different type of seminars. The concept of what type seminar NCP will organise depends on time, financial and human resources available.

Type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Less time consuming for the participants; + Easier to invite speaker from EC and the countries; + No limit on number of participants; + Diverse audience and no traveling costs; + Seminars can be recorded and used in the future; + Fewer NCP resources are needed for organisation of the event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Lack of face-to-face interaction (most participants turn they cameras off); × Technical challenges (bad internet connection, speaker does not know how to share slides, unmuted participants and etc.); × It is harder for NCP to control and manage atmosphere; × No opportunities to network; × More challenging to keep participants attention.
On-site (face-to-face)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Social interaction with NCPs and speakers; + Opportunities to network; + Easier to control the learning environment and keep participants attention; + Participants might feel more involved and ask the relevant questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × More difficult to get the speakers from outside of the country, i.e. EC representatives; × On-site events have costs associated them; × Takes longer to organise and there needs to be few NCPs running a seminar; × Limit on number of participants.
Hybrid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Opportunity to meet-face-to-face or attend online version of the event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Requirements technical expertise to set up hybrid event; × Time consuming organisation, requires a team of NCPs; × Potential for technical problems (poor internet connection, online participants cannot see the presenters and etc.)

NCP TIP

The success of the seminar not only depends on key speaker's skills competences, participants' willingness to gain new knowledge, but good planning is also of vital importance. Good seminars are never chaotic!



Understanding audience and the need

Once you decided on initial format NCP should think about the targeted audience, its needs and expectations. To determine what are targeted audience's expectations and needs for a seminar, NCP could prepare a questionnaire as part of a registration form.

There are other ways how NCP can determine the specific needs of some of the audiences by:

- Communicating with other WIDERA NCPs (through developed NCP contacts, or using WIDERA NCP Google group widera@googlegroups.com);
- Getting in touch with research managers at higher education institutions and research

organisations, representatives of industry/ SMEs and find out what are the needs of the potential applicants;

- Analysing previous applications and ESRs could help do determine the need to improve the quality of the applications, hence determining the seminar need and potential theme.

Tools to use for the communication²:
phone calls, emails, visiting institutions, live or online meetings, online communication.



Duration

The duration of a seminar will depend on the type of the event (online, on-site, hybrid), the chosen topic and number of speakers. For example, the event organised by Research Council of Lithuania NCPs "Let's talk about Impact in Horizon Europe" (Picture 1) was just over an hour long. There were three speakers, including NCP presentation, on the topic of Impact section.

It was a seminar aimed at introducing applicants to the importance of impact section in CSA and RIA application forms and present first evaluation reports on this section.

- Online seminars should not be longer than 2 hours.
Provide enough breaks: for example, one 10 minute break after first 45 minutes, another 5 minute break after 30 min and etc.
- On-site seminars should not be longer than 6 hours;
- If the event is longer than 2 hours, alternate the breaks of 5 and 15 minutes (these should include coffee);
- Provide longer lunch break for longer events.

² Tools for communication that might be used to obtain the information: the best tool to use will always be defined by the specifics of the situation: resources that the organization has, availability and distance. general information about the call can be presented by NCP as well

Example

The Twinning call is about to be launched and you have decided to run a seminar to promote this topic. Questions you need to ask yourself:

- 1. Who is my audience?** Applicants who have submitted Twinning application before, but were unsuccessful? Applicants, who have never applied before, but are planning to? Research managers and administrators, who support the application development? All of them?
- 2. How do I ensure, that seminar is beneficial if diverse audience attends the event?** Before promoting the seminar you have already agreed a preliminary agenda (see examples in ANNEX II) with your chosen speakers. For example, for Twinning seminar session you could invite EC representative³ from [DG R&I A2.1](#) to generally present WIDERA and Twinning call (scope, policy background, eligibility requirements) and Twinning project coordinator (from your own or other country). Having two speakers will already ensure, that you cover general information for newcomers and offer some insight tips/tricks from a successful coordinator by sharing a success story, for those who are looking for additional information. To actually find out participants expectations you can add **additional question in the registration form**, which will provide detailed intel on what type of audience will be attending. You could ask few questions to determine the demographics:
 - Have you ever applied for H2020 or Horizon Europe funding?
 - Have you submitted Twinning application before?
 - If you have not, are you planning to submit an application in the coming call?
 - If you have applied, but was not successful, are you planning to resubmit?
 - What are your expectations of this seminar?
 - Do you have any questions for the speakers?
- 3.** Even if you have agreed the agenda with your speakers, after the registration closes and you analysed answers, you can go back to your speakers and ask them to focus on one or the other element, which was most popular in the answers. As well, you have an option to gather participants' questions, the answers can be incorporated into speakers' presentations.

NCP TIP

When planning the duration of your event do not forget to include breaks and time for questions (around 10-15 min). NCPs should have some questions ready in case there are none from the audience. As a rule of thumb, EC representatives speak for around 15-20 min. This provides a good indication and a starting point to build the rest of your agenda and timeline of a seminar.

³ This general information about the call can be presented by NCP as well



Choosing a topic and speakers

As determined, NCP has to make a decision and choose the topic of the seminar based on the need. The NCP could organise a seminar on the following themes (the list is not exhaustive):

- **Presentation of the new Work Programme** (important to align event date with appropriate open calls for proposals or even before call openings to ensure adequate time for proposal preparation) - as soon as the work programme is published, or around 6-8 weeks before the call is published;
- **Horizontal aspects:** Open Science, Citizen Science, SSH Integration, Gender Equality, Ethics, IPR, FAIR data principles and data management etc.;
- **Practical seminars** on “How to complete the CSA application form” or “How to use Funding and Tenders portal” and etc.
- **Legal and Financial Aspects:** Lump Sum Model in Horizon Europe
- **Evaluation Criteria:** Excellence, Impact, Implementation

It would be ideal, that **each seminar has at least two speakers:** expert (EC representative or/and NCP) and practitioner (coordinator, or someone having practical experience on the chosen theme). If your organisation has Legal and Financial NCP,

you could always ask the person to attend the seminar or even prepare a presentation on legal and financial aspects related to the topic.

How to find the right expert to present on the topic? It is of a vital importance to choose your speakers carefully, as they will set the tone for the seminar. Experts can be:

- 1. EC/REA experts** (usually the presentation is delivered in EN, unless there will be native speaking officer);
- 2. Representatives of successful projects** (coordinators, partners of the successful projects, who can share their success stories with practical insights). NCPs might find relevant projects via CORDIS <https://cordis.europa.eu>
- 3. Evaluators** (the most updated evaluators list can be found on [Funding and Tenders portal](#) - to open the list, please click on the link, scroll down, open “Templates & forms”, then “Other” and there you will find the “Experts list (2021)”);
- 4. Others:** for example, national/regional authorities, if the topic relates to synergies or missions.

Approaching speakers

Once you find the speaker, the way you approach them is very important and the first email should be **professional, friendly, engaging and offer enough detail** for the potential speaker to start the conversation with NCP about further event details. If you are planning a seminar in advance, and don't have the set date yet, you can always say "the date has not been confirmed yet, but we could work around your availability" and provide few date selections.

It is important not to overload the first email with too much information – **engaging speaker into conversation** is much more important. At the end

of the email you could always offer to meet online/ or offer a phone call, so to present a topic idea and expectations in more detail.

Once the speaker initially has agreed, follow up with more information and discuss expectations, needs of the participants, share the programme, and ask what physical and technical support they may need. As well, once you get more information from the registration (if you decide to add extra questions regarding participants experience and expectations) inform the speakers so they can adjust they presentation or prepare answers to questions.

Example

The email below is an example from email sent to EC representative to ask to speak at the national-level seminar on the topic of "Open Science":

Dear Name,

I hope you are well. I have attended „Open Science and Data management in Horizon Europe projects” workshop organised by Danish Ministry of Education and Science back in January and heard you speak. The workshop was extremely engaging and interesting.

I work as NCP for XXXXXX, and the workshop you have presented at made me wonder, if you would be able to present the same topic to XXXX researchers, research managers and NCPs at our national-level seminar?

XXXXX research community still finds Open Science and Data Management principals novel and challenging, when it comes to writing the grant proposals, hence we believe a seminar on this topic is much needed.

We do not have a set date yet, however are planning the event at the end of April. We would be very happy to work around your availability.

Looking forward hearing from you, and I hope you would agree to introduce this important subject to our research community.

*All the best,
Name Surname*

NCP TIP

Do not be afraid to ask for help. Use widera@googlegroups.com to ask for recommendations on the speakers, or share ideas on seminar topics with few fellow NCPs, who have already run similar events. This will help you to build your own confidence, knowledge and get feedback.

Annex I. Short guide on how to organise seminars

Steps before the seminar		
Main steps	Tasks to be performed	Seminar type
Defining the organising team	<p>Choose the team from your organisation which will help you to run a successful seminar:</p> <p>Main roles are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Lead NCP (responsible for liaising with the speakers, agreeing on agenda, moderation); → Supporting NCP (administrative tasks: setting up and confirming registrations, gathering all the slides); → Technical support (NCP and IT – managing online platforms, setting up equipment for IT on-site; letting participants in to the virtual room); <p>! Make sure that each task is assigned to a person responsible for that task who has the skills needed to perform it!</p>	ALL types
Creating work plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make a list of all the activities that should be completed. 2. Assign the activities to the individuals. <p>! Use deadlines for every task!</p>	ALL types
Defining the date of the seminar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pick a date for the seminar carefully considering the deadlines for other events happening at EC, other NCP events happening at your organisation; 2. Check if expert speakers are available in advance (preferably 2 to 3 months before the physical seminar, 6-8 weeks before online) <p>! Avoid using the dates of public holidays, religious celebrations.</p>	ALL types
Creating agenda	<p>The agenda depends on the duration and type of a seminar (see section on “Duration”). Make sure to leave time for Q&A session, either between of the presentation or at towards the end of the seminar.</p> <p>If you are inviting guest speakers from abroad, make sure to double check, that you are using the same timeline, i.e. Central European Time (CET) in agreeing the time for the presentations.</p> <p>More details on how to choose and approach speakers can be found in the “Topic and speakers” section.</p>	ALL types

<p>Moderators</p>	<p>It is very important to have a moderator for the event. They would be responsible for supervising the process, creating atmosphere, following agenda and support speakers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ! This role might be performed by NCPs ! For online, hybrid events it is important to have a technical moderator for dealing with technical issues 	<p>ALL types</p>
<p>Number of participants</p>	<p>The size of the group will very much depend on the type of the seminar. The online seminar can have unlimited number of participants, depending on the online platform licence your organisation is using.</p> <p>Also, you should consider different expertise levels of the participants (beginners, experienced, lacking specific competences). In this case, it might be a good idea to group people according to their level of expertise.</p> <p>For on-site events, the number of participants will depend on the space you are using. As you are organising seminar (information dissemination session) more people can attend the better.</p> <p>For Hybrid seminar participant numbers will depend on physical location and online platform license you are using.</p>	<p>ALL types</p>
<p>Choosing the venue for the seminar</p>	<p>Once you decided on the type of the event, you should choose the venue.</p> <p>Online</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → If the seminars will be held online do check what platforms and support is available at your institution for organising and running the seminars online; → If your institution does not have a preferred platform, you can use ZOOM, MS Teams, Cisco Webex, GoToMeetings, GoToTrainings or any other tools, which are in line with any internal policies. If you are used to work with different platforms, ask the speaker about their preferences. For example, EC uses MS Teams as their preferred platform, but will present using Zoom as well; → It is important to test the connection with speakers few days before the event. This would give the speakers opportunity to test sharing their slides. 	

	<p>On-site/accessible physically</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → If the seminars are on-site, you should take care of: breakout rooms, cafeteria or space for coffee breaks, computers, internet connection, specific software packages, projector, screen, laser pointer, microphones, headsets and translation boots (if interpretation is provided and needed); catering, accommodation (guest house, hotel for invited experts/speakers/trainers), transportation (if appropriate); → It is also important to ask participants about their allergies, food preferences or any other special needs. <p>For hybrid events mixture of both should be taken into consideration.</p>	ALL types
<p>Budgeting</p>	<p>We recommend considering carefully all the tools and services needed and make a list of possible extra needs. What you might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Equipment hire and technical support (for hybrid or large scale online events) → Catering; → Seminar material; → Travel for speakers. <p>If a budget is required it will depend on the type, scale and importance of the event. The budgets for these events might come from variety of sources (your institution, ministries, and funded projects, for example NCP_WIDERA.NET). The budget has to be agreed before inviting speakers and promoting the event.</p>	Mostly on-site and hybrid
<p>Registration</p>	<p>To create a complete registration form, use clear selection criteria and provide specific questions to get as much information as you might need.</p> <p>The list of tools you could use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Google forms https://docs.google.com/forms/ → Microsoft Form https://forms.microsoft.com/ → Eventbrite https://www.eventbrite.com/manage/events/create → Zoom https://zoom.us/ (your organisation needs to have created Zoom business account) 	ALL types

	<p>! Do not forget to include a question on personal data security – GDPR rules.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p><i>By registering for this event, you agree that the event organisers may use the personal information you provide on this form for the purposes of organising the event and to include your name, organisation and email address in the event’s participant list and newsletter.</i></p>	ALL types
Communication before the seminar	<p>Before the seminar there are key groups of stakeholders you should communicate with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Speakers (ask for the meeting to test the connection, ask of they need anything else from you, remind about the time and date of the event, send the log-in link if the seminar is taking place on-line, inform of any changes to agenda); → Registered participants (send out reminders about upcoming seminar. If its online do send the link to join the session, if its on-site make sure you share directions to the venue (parking, public transport information and etc.) answer their inquiries promptly); → Your organising team (as NCP in charge of organising and running the seminar you need to make sure that the team is aware of all the details and changes). 	ALL types
Promotion	<p>When promoting the seminar, make sure to include all the information: theme and objectives, programme, language, dates, venue, facilities, transport, accommodation, finances, contact person, deadlines for registration (if applicable), etc. There number of channels you can chose to promote your national-level seminar:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Use your organisations website, LinkedIn and Facebook pages (if your organisation is using social media); → You can promote your event through WIDERA google group (widera@googlegroups.com); → NCP_WIDERA.NET website, LinkedIn and Twitter pages (get in touch with relevant person in the group in order to organise the promotion); → Include the seminar information in NCP or organisations newsletters. If other thematic area NCP colleague in your organisation is sending out newsletter ask them to include information about your seminar; → Use your own developed networks and mailing lists to send the information directly to your audience. 	ALL types

<p>Presentations</p>	<p>If NCPs are delivering the seminar themselves, they should plan time to prepare the presentation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Use NCP or organization logo and other attributes that makes you recognisable. It might be a good idea to have NCPs institutional .ppt template; → It is important to use the logo of the NCP_WIDERA.NET in all the package materials, including the .ppt, if national seminars fall under the activities funded by this project. Follow EC provided guidelines on project communication – “Communicating about your EU-funded project”; → If the event is held online, have a background slide and backdrop with organisations, NCP, project logos (use what is appropriate); → When preparing the .ppt it is important to indicate the CC licenses. It will help your audience to know what the restrictions are (especially important if you plan to send them to the participants). It might be a good idea to remind this to your speaker too. More info: https://creativecommons.org/ ! Inform the participants if the slides will be available (you should ask speakers beforehand if they are willing to share the slides). For online events, which are recorded ask speakers consent to record the session and provide the information about the availability of the record to the participants. 	<p>ALL types</p>
<p>Reminders/ confirmation</p>	<p>This part of the communication, however it is essential to email the participants a day before the event. Notifications by event type:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Before the online event, you should create a link and send it to all the registered participants; → In case of the on-site event, you should send the participants a reminder with the date, time and address of the venue, parking options. As well, request confirmation of participation (if the event is on-site or hybrid style), as you would need numbers for catering. → For hybrid events, you should provide both the link and the on-site info. ! In all the cases, the description on the event and the programme should be included. 	<p>ALL types</p>

Steps during the seminar

Main steps	Tasks to be performed	Seminar type
Registration	<p>If the event is held on-site, you should prepare a place with all the materials for registration (printed sheet with registered participants names, pens, seminar programme to give out) and have the room ready for arriving participants;</p> <p>For online seminars, you should start the meeting on the online platform beforehand (recommended 5 minutes prior the seminar) and be prepared to allow the participants to enter the 'room' when they ask for permission. Ask your speakers to be 15 min before the seminar starts to double check that cameras, microphones and slides are all working</p> <p>For hybrid events, both tasks should be performed simultaneously, hence a bigger organising team is necessary</p>	ALL types
Moderating	<p>In most cases NCP will be moderating the seminar. Things to keep in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Prepare welcome speech and briefly remind participants of the seminar's objectives and aim; → Present agenda and briefly introduce the speakers; → If its online seminar, inform participants that event is recorded and slides with recording will be shared; → For online and hybrid events ask participants to keep the microphones muted and put the questions to the speakers in the chat box; → While speakers are presenting keep an eye on the chat box and answer any questions or put questions forward to speakers during Q&A session; → After speaker presents, thank speaker for the shared insights and conduct Q&A session (if its according to prepared agenda); → Make sure to keep to the time, and if needed shorten Q&A session so to finish on-time; → Prepare a closing speech for end of seminar with thanks to speakers and participants. 	ALL types
Closing	<p>At the end of the seminar remind the participants that they will receive a feedback form to fill in together with all of the materials. You can use Google forms to prepare anonymous evaluation form. For on-site events the evaluation forms can be handed out and collected.</p>	ALL types

Steps after the seminar

Main steps	Tasks to be performed	Seminar type
Final communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Write thank you emails to speakers and experts as well as colleagues, who supported you in preparing and running the seminar;→ Provide any additional answers if participants ask, or direct them elsewhere for more information;→ Discuss the results/feedback with your team and other NCPs (if involved).	ALL types

Annex II. Example of an agenda



THE EU RESEARCH & INNOVATION
PROGRAMME **2021 - 2027**


#HorizonEU

AGENDA

“LET’S TALK ABOUT IMPACT IN HORIZON EUROPE”

26TH OF APRIL 2022, 10:00 TO 11:10 (CET)

[REGISTRATION](#)

10:00	Welcome	Aurelija Povilaikė (NCP, Research Council of Lithuania)
10:00	What is Impact	dr. Simon Kerridge (Honorary Staff, University of Kent, United Kingdom)
10:20	Overview: Impact in Horizon Europe Proposal evaluations	Aurelija Povilaikė (NCP, Research Council of Lithuania)
10:50	Practitioners tips and tricks on writing “Impact” section in grant proposals	Chris Knighting (Project Development Officer at Technische Universiteit Eindhoven, Netherlands)
11.00	Q&A and closing of the event	

Working language of the event – English. If you have any questions, please contact NCP Aurelija Povilaikė, aurelija.povilaikė@lmt.lt



Research Council of Lithuania



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2014-2020 Operational Programme for the European Union Funds Investments in Lithuania



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