EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Directorate G – Common Policy Centre
G.4 – Common Missions & Partnerships Service

Phasing-out strategies
Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

SCENARIOS

- **What constitutes an alternative implementation modality?**

Alternative implementation modalities are models or mechanisms, other than the European Partnership as it stands today, that would allow partners to sustain, build on, and further develop their joint assets and results. These may also involve transformations, growth, or shifts in form or focus. Examples include a self-sustained network, a national co-funding model, integration into another initiative, creation of a legal entity, or a private-public financing model.

This reflection should be led by the partnership itself, as it holds the best understanding of its results, assets, and strategic context.

- **What is the actual rationale of this exercise? How can we carry on what we do with no more budget to do it?**

Not with no budget, but with no *Framework Programme* budget.

This exercise prepares partnerships for the eventuality of not receiving further funding from future Framework Programmes. There are finite resources and evolving priorities, no continuation can be guaranteed.

The purpose is to ensure that valuable assets, knowledge, and collaborations built over time are not lost. For activities and results identified as essential, there should be interest in maintaining and developing them beyond Framework Programme support.

- **If the EU budget is cut, European synergies are likely to be affected first. Should we elaborate on how individual Member States will react to this "EU budget cut"?**

European Partnership have a defined and limited duration. Not renewing a partnership does not constitute a budget cut to the currently existing partnership.

Phasing-out strategies are not about describing reactions to non-renewal, but about identifying proactive, solution-oriented ways to preserve what has been achieved: *how to make the most of what was built together.*

It is a strategic exercise to define how the partnership can evolve beyond FP funding, maintain collaboration, and secure its legacy and impact.

- **Are we requested to describe different degraded or reduced scope projects as a consequence of initial budget reduction?**

The focus is on planning for potential future scenarios, not on undoing past commitments. The defined lifetime of current European Partnerships will not be shortened. Therefore, the projects kicked off or foreseen will not see their scope reduced due to the decision of not renewing the partnership in the next Framework Programme. The goal is to proactively reflect on how to sustain the added value and benefits of your partnership beyond the current funding.

The strategies should explore alternative pathways, how the partnership could transition into a new form, sustain part of its activities, or leverage its assets through alternative structures or funding sources. Essential activities and results should attract interest in being maintained and developed beyond Framework Programme support. The scope of activities will indeed be proportionate to the support expected to be secured. The focus is however on maintaining relevance and value, rather than describing contraction.

- **What is meant by policy assumptions? How can we anticipate the policy by 2033, when the partnership ends?**

"Policy assumptions" refer to the underlying policy conditions or trends your scenarios are built on: for example, the continuing relevance of a thematic area, emerging EU priorities, or evolving regulatory contexts. These assumptions help make scenarios realistic and coherent with likely policy developments, without requiring you to predict them. They should be transparent and updated as the policy landscape evolves.

- **Is the expectation a description of what will still be present at the end of the FP's financial support? Is it part of a mitigation risk analysis of the project?**

The exercise goes beyond describing what will remain. It is about outlining *how* the partnership can transition: identifying what structures, networks, and capacities should continue, and under which modalities.

European Partnerships have a defined lifetime. No-renewal is not a risk, but the default scenario under which all should be working.

- **One of the options that the guidelines identify is to use EU funding programmes other than Horizon Europe. Some of these depend on other DGs. Are other DGs open to this option?**

Exploring feasibility is part of the scenario development. Partnerships may indeed identify opportunities in other EU programmes, if relevant and realistic. The exercise does not imply prior commitment from those programmes but aims to identify promising pathways to be further explored.

- **Are we expected to describe alternative strategies in which we get funding elsewhere in order to carry on the network activity, for instance at other European calls?**

Yes. Exploring other potential European, national, or private funding sources can form part of a credible scenario, <u>provided it is realistic and consistent</u>. The key is to show how the partnership's core value proposition could remain relevant and viable through different funding models.

- **How does the relationship with the European Commission evolve once EU Framework Programme funding ends?**

In principle, without EU funding, there is no longer a formal governance or contractual link with the Commission. The partnership or its successor structure would continue independently. However, if other forms of EU funding or cooperation are maintained, some level of interaction may continue, although the nature of the relationship would likely evolve.

- **Could you clarify whether other sources of EU funding (than Horizon Europe funding) can be used as source for the scenarios?**

Yes. The strategy must include at least one credible scenario *without* FP funding, but this does not exclude the possibility of drawing on other EU programmes or instruments, where relevant and feasible.

- **Would it be a valid scenario for the partnership to continue operating without EC funding, following a model similar to the JPIs?**

Yes, it would be a valid scenario; you just need to reflect on the funding source.

- **Because of the composition of some partnerships, equity, equity options and revenue-sharing are challenging; how can we compare these structures?**

Each partnership should identify what financial model fits its individual structure and governance. Equity-based approaches are not suitable for all, and comparison across different partnership types is neither expected nor meaningful. What matters is internal consistency, credibility, and feasibility within each partnership's context.

- **What role are Moonshots going to play in the ecosystem? Will more details about them be made available for consideration in time with respect to the first phasing-out draft deadline in December?**

As Moonshots feature in the proposal for the next Framework Programme, transitioning into one could constitute a potential scenario, though it would not qualify as a "scenario without FP funding."

Negotiations on the next MFF are ongoing, so the detailed selection and implementation modalities of moonshots will evolve. Strategies should be treated as living documents and may be updated as new opportunities, including Moonshots, become clearer.

- **There are different conditions for each type of partnership. Could the Commission take this into consideration so that they are not evaluated or compared directly to each other?**

The Commission is fully aware of the different implementations' modes and levels of maturity across partnerships. This is why a checklist was provided rather than a prescriptive template, to allow for flexibility. The development of the phasing-out strategies is not an evaluation exercise, and the strategies will not be compared against each other. The purpose is simply to ensure that reflection on the partnership's possible future is taking place and that the legal requirements are fulfilled.

- **Given that the current MFF draft may change, how should we develop our strategies? Should we base them on current expectations or ignore the draft?**

You should base your work on the current expectations for the MFF. If these expectations change in the coming months, this will not be held against you. What matters is that you acknowledge the context in which these scenarios are developed and reflect it in your strategy. Remember, this is a living document that can be updated as needed to remain relevant.

- **Some partnerships will continue well into the 2030s, so developing detailed scenarios for events nearly a decade away is difficult. Given the uncertainty about future priorities and the MFF, what level of detail is realistically expected for such long-term scenarios?**

The timeline for phasing out is far in the future, which makes it difficult to predict how partnerships will evolve. Exactly because of this uncertainty, we cannot assume the partnership will remain the same or change in a specific way. That's why it's important to consider different future scenarios. For the level of detail, the three-page limit is intended to help you address the required checklist items without being overly detailed. We expect a realistic level of detail that fits within these pages, understanding that more detail now may require more updates later. This requirement is not new; it was originally meant to be addressed even before the partnership launched. We recognize the need for flexibility and encourage a sensible approach to the level of detail provided.

- **We have already started considering phasing out strategies. We are reviewing the different activities coordinated at the partnership level, as each activity we want to continue and the linkages we want to maintain may require different phasing out or continuation options. These options might need to be anchored at various levels within the European framework, so we will need to develop several scenarios for each activity. In some cases, especially on the research side, certain activities may not be able to continue without additional funding, resulting in potential gaps that would require seeking EC funding.**
Who should we discuss these activities and scenarios with? Should these discussions happen only within the partnership, or also at the European level? And who ultimately decides how we proceed?

Absolutely, it's possible for different activities within your partnership to follow different continuation paths. Some may evolve or merge with other initiatives. On the research side, even if framework program funding ends, you may still be able to secure national or private funding for certain activities.

As for decision-making, you are encouraged to discuss these scenarios within your partnership and during the feedback round with relevant services. Ultimately, the partnership itself decides which scenario to pursue for its future.

CO-FUNDED PARTNERSHIPS

- **How will this exercise be integrated/considered for the 2nd Top-up amendments (now under evaluation)?**

The two processes run in parallel. Updates or additions from the amendment can be integrated into the phasing-out reflections. The phasing-out strategy development exercise does not interfere with the amendment evaluation.

Where feasible, the top-up amendment process could offer an opportunity to include a specific activity to work on the phasing out strategy. An additional dedicated deliverable report (updated in regular intervals) could be included, where the scenarios analysis and the different phasing-out options would be detailed.

- **Some co-funded partnerships, like THCS, have a strict 7-year duration with no phasing out period, while others like EP PerMed, are structured as a 7 + 3 year duration. For the former, we're in a situation where we don't know if we have EC funding for projects funded in the final years of the partnership but extend beyond the end date of the partnership. Are the phasing out strategies being discussed here relating to that issue at all, or are they only about the long-term continuation of core activities beyond the EC co-funded periods?**

This question refers to the partnership's 'winding up' period, i.e. the phase where partnerships do not actively launch calls anymore, but are solely focused on implementing and reporting on funded projects, typically indeed a 3 year period, where the partnership should require fewer resources as compared to its 'active' phase. These are typically included in the Grant Agreements. Phasing-out strategies are not a built-in "period" in the partnership's life cycle.

Partnerships may start preparing for transition before the end (of the funding period, or of the partnership) to maintain momentum and continuity. The focus is on the long-term continuation of core activities and networks, not on administrative timing of calls or grants.

- **It is unclear how we can actually implement the monitoring of something that is expected to take place after the end the EC funding/grant. Because if we start implementing during the lifetime of the partnership for example some additional funding, will it be considered as income? How will it impact the grant and reimbursement?**

Starting the transition before the end of the partnership is recommended to ensure continuity. Monitoring such preparatory steps towards transitioning during the project's lifetime is part of good management. Any additional funding leveraged should be reported transparently and treated according to grant rules, but the focus of the phasing-out monitoring is strategic continuity, not financial reporting.

- **We want to ensure that preparing phasing-out strategies does not affect our entitlement to the full initial budget agreed with the commission, even if we secure extra funding, especially from private stakeholders. While monitoring and preparation should occur during the partnership, it's unclear how to manage new commitments or cash flows during the grant period in line with our grant obligations.**

There is not necessarily a contradiction between the requirement for European Partnerships to develop a phasing-out strategy, potentially including measures for financial sustainability, and the grant-based nature of co-funded partnerships under Horizon Europe. The latter are bound by the Financial Regulation and the no-profit rule, which prevents the generation or retention of profit during the lifetime of the grant.

The key distinction lies between activities implemented under the grant (which must remain non-profit and for which Horizon Europe 2021-2027 funding is not questioned) and those prepared within the grant but taking effect after its closure, which may legitimately aim to secure future financial autonomy.

Possible approaches could include: developing business or sustainability plans during the grant; preparing the establishment of a legal entity for post-grant activities; identifying complementary funding sources; and designing contribution or service models to be activated only after the grant ends.

How exactly to manage potential new commitments or cash flows during the grant period, in line with grant obligations, can only be determined based on concrete proposals or situations. The feedback round on the phasing-out strategies could offer a first opportunity to do so. For specific cases that may arise later on, co-funded partnerships are encouraged to raise these with their project officers or the relevant Commission policy services in a timely manner to ensure targeted support.

CO-PROGRAMMED PARTNERSHIPS

- **For co-programmed partnerships, the MoUs already include indicators for project achievements and clear objectives for implementing the partnership, along with thorough reporting. What kind of new indicators are expected, and how can we avoid creating a double reporting burden?**

New indicators could, for example, track funding from other sources, which can help offset the end of Framework Programme financing. The appropriate indicators will also depend on the specific transition scenario chosen, such as merging with another initiative, in which case indicators should capture changes in governance or operational structure.

Since each partnership and strategy is different, the feedback round is there to review your ideas and offer partnership-specific suggestions based on your scenarios, which will be more relevant and practical than general guidance.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

- **As our partnership just started, we do not have implementation data yet. How can we engage into a phase-out strategy before we really fully got going? Can we foresee a special provision for such new partnerships to engage in a lighter or delayed phase-out scenario development process?**

All partnerships must comply with this legal requirement (which was intended as an ex-ante selection criterion), and new partnerships are strongly encouraged to make use of this ongoing support and feedback exercise, both to learn from others and to benefit from direct feedback from the Commission services. Moreover, the guidance and checklist are designed to offer flexibility. For newer partnerships, a less detailed but conceptually sound strategy is acceptable, provided it meets the criteria. The document is a living one and can evolve as implementation advances.

- **Will the document we develop be a part of the evaluation/selection process and will it also be incorporated into our Grant Agreement, or is this phasing-out exercise completely separate from that?**

Phasing-out strategies are an ex-ante selection criterion for European Partnerships under Horizon Europe. A mandatory section on the phasing-out strategy is included in the proposal template and as such part of the evaluation. While the level of detail may evolve (as the proposal allows for limited space for elaboration), the requirement applies from the outset.

Since you are in a pre-evaluation stage, the expected exit strategy could be less detailed, possibly only outlining the mandatory scenario, and may be elaborated further later on. As long as it is conceptually sound and credible it should be sufficient. However, passing from the evaluation to the Grant Agreement preparation phase later, we advise to foresee and include a specific activity to update the exit strategy at regular intervals, possibly producing corresponding dedicated deliverable reports, where the strategy could be presented in more detail.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

- **Who will decide on the scenario to be chosen? With whom will this be discussed?**

The partnership itself is responsible for selecting and implementing the scenario that best fits its context, in consultation with its members and governance bodies. The Commission services may provide feedback and guidance but do not decide the chosen pathway.

While the Commission does not chose the phasing-out scenario, the configuration of the future partnership portfolio may influence which scenario is most relevant or ultimately implemented (e.g. mergers or integration with other initiatives).

- **When is the expected start of scenarios?**

Strategies are not timebound. The current duration of the partnership under Horizon Europe sets the earliest possible transition point.

- **Are you expecting us to identify hard points for instance initial investments in a project that would make awkward a budget reduction during the project?**

Phasing out Framework Programme funding is not a budget cut or reduction during implementation. It refers to the decision not to renew a partnership in the next Framework Programme. The focus should be on transition and legacy.

- **How will the Commission use these strategies? Will they be part of the portfolio approach for partnerships, and what is the expected timeline for their use?**

This process is connected to the partnership portfolio because it supports the overall life cycle. However, it does not influence decision-making or selection. Its main purpose is to ensure compliance with legal obligations under the current Framework Programme, strengthen the resilience of each partnership, and safeguard their legacy so that the achievements built so far are preserved for the future.

Developing a phasing out strategy is not about activating it or comparing partnerships. The purpose is to encourage everyone to consider possible futures and be prepared, not to evaluate or trigger the phase-out process. Creating a strong strategy does not mean it will be implemented, nor is it used for selection or assessment purposes. However, failure to comply with this legal requirement may be considered a weakness when assessing the partnership's performance and future prospects.

EXAMPLES PRESENTED

- **Some KICs are actively involved in HE ongoing projects (receiving considerable EC contribution and thus not fully phased out). Given the nature of the KICs and expected pathways, what the presenters (from EITs) recommend to the Partnerships to consider in particular to the phasing out (and sustainable)?**

KICs, as independent legal entities, remain eligible to apply for competitive funding under Horizon Europe, just like any other eligible entity. It is important to distinguish between such participation in competitive calls and ring-fenced funding. What is being phased out is the latter – dedicated, ring-fenced funding streams – not the possibility for KICs to compete successfully for project funding alongside other applicants. If applicable, partnerships may also propose similar models under their additional or optional scenarios to sustain certain activities in the future.

PROCESS

- **Can you elaborate on 'coordination in thematic clusters' support from RTD.G4: timeline, organisation…?**

Coordination in thematic clusters enables exchange, cross-fertilisation, and the identification of potential synergies among related partnerships. As illustrated by the breakout sessions in the Phasing out Workshop, this will be enabled by grouped communications, opportunities for collaborations, and peer review across clusters during the feedback loop.

Important: Partnerships' strategies will not be compared or ranked; differences in maturity and context are fully recognised.

Timeline:

- 15 December 2025: draft for feedback
- 31 March 2026: final and approved strategy

- **How is this exercise related to the phase out plans that the JUs have already prepared and decided at Board level? Do you expect input at JU level or private side members of the JUs?**

For Joint Undertakings and KICs, specific processes already exist. Participation in this exercise is therefore optional but encouraged, to share knowledge, elaborate and improve their existing phasing out strategies, and benefit from mutual learning.

- **Could the EC propose a Word template for the phasing-out strategy, aligning all of us with clear sections and expected inputs, in the leanest way possible?**

The EC has provided guidelines, a checklist, and a workshop to ensure shared expectations while leaving flexibility to account for differences in maturity and structure. A strict template would risk oversimplifying diverse realities and decrease flexibility for the partnerships to present specific and tailored strategies.

- **The timeline for December is indeed short, also because we would have to consult our membership. In addition, Partnerships (at least the co-programmed) have to deliver the Biennial Report by end of January, which could be one input to prepare more in details scenario(s) for the phasing-out. Shall we go rather for end of March as kind of a deadline for 1st draft of phasing-out strategy?**

The development of a phasing-out strategy is an ex-ante criterion. For co-programmed partnerships, it should already be in place before the Horizon Europe mid-term evaluation (April 2025). The December draft already provides a postponed timeline.

- **How can we provide thorough and meaningful responses within the three-page limit, given the complexity of the requirements?**

We set a three-page limit to keep the phasing out strategies concise and avoid overburdening partnerships. You're welcome to include extra background information as needed, but the main document should remain strategic and to the point. This approach also considers partnerships that are not yet launched, ensuring expectations and requirements are reasonable for everyone.

- **As we are required to submit a draft phasing out strategy in December, which applies to all partnerships. Our current partnership in ecology runs until December 2030, but we recently submitted a proposal for a phase two extension to 2033. However, we likely won't know the outcome of this evaluation by December, making it difficult to adapt our strategy. Should we prepare the phasing out strategy assuming the extension to 2033 will be approved, or should we base it on our current end date of 2030? This choice significantly affects our planning horizon.**

The difference between a 2030 or 2033 end date represents two possible scenarios. You can begin developing both and then update your strategy once you know the outcome of your evaluation.

- **Given the fact that we are now committed to release the phasing out strategy would the biennial monitoring report be relaxed or delayed?**

This exercise of phasing-out strategies does not impact the reporting requirements for the biennial monitoring reports.