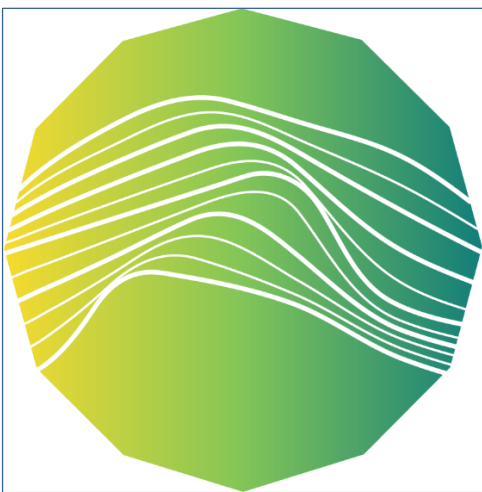


*The HBP Calls for Expression of Interest for SGA3
“Engagement of Industry, SMEs and start-ups”*

Guide for Applicants



Human Brain Project



EBRAINS

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1. The Human Brain Project

The Human Brain Project (HBP, <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/>) is an ambitious 10-year scientific research and infrastructure initiative that is part of the EU Future and Emerging Technology (FET) Flagship programme¹. The HBP is developing the European Brain ReseArch INfrastructureS (EBRAINS), an innovative ICT² infrastructure that will help neuroscientists and clinical researchers integrate data and knowledge about the brain across all levels of its spatial and temporal organisation. Using detailed digital representations, reconstructions, and simulations, it aims to make available ICT tools to thousands of researchers to advance and accelerate our understanding of the functioning of the healthy and diseased human brain.

Computing the Brain is at the centre of the HBP's scientific strategy in SGA3, the third Specific Grant Agreement, and the HBP focuses on Neuroscience at the interface with Computing, to create an added value in this field. More information is available in the supplementary document HBP SGA3 CEol - Work Plan and Outcome Overview (see [Call page](#)).

2. Scope of the specific Call

This Call for Expression of Interest on **Industry Engagement** has been designed to involve companies in the development of new and improved tools and services of the shared [EBRAINS³](#) digital brain Research Infrastructure (RI). The Call targets industrial **companies, most notably SMEs and technology-based start-ups**, operating in the **field of digital neurosciences**.

We offer industrial companies an active participation in the HBP to develop, integrate, and exploit, in cooperation with Partners of the HBP Consortium, new or improved EBRAINS functionalities of interest to the scientific and industrial communities, thus contributing to accelerate the effective utilisation of EBRAINS.

Contributing to the HBP legacy through a Research Infrastructure that will accelerate scientific efforts to “**compute the brain**”, will provide applicants with competitive advantages and industrial added value at the intersection of **brain research, medicine, and computing science**.

2.1 Challenge

The HBP has very relevant research and technology developing processes with the potential to reach a higher number of scientific and industrial user communities through EBRAINS. This Call aims to accelerate these processes and/or fund other external developments that could add new tools, services, and functionalities to the infrastructure.

By combining HBP's research efforts with industrial experience from companies, this Call aims to contribute to scale-up HBP technologies' maturity processes and accelerate the commercial and non-commercial exploitation of EBRAINS.

Priority will therefore be given to proposals centred around the following EBRAINS areas:

- **Data and knowledge:** <https://ebrains.eu/services/data-knowledge>
- **Brain atlases:** <https://ebrains.eu/services/atlases>
- **Brain modelling and simulation:** <https://ebrains.eu/services/simulation>
- **Neurorobotics:** <https://ebrains.eu/services/ai-and-robotics/neurorobotics>
- **Massive computing:** <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/massive-computing/>

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/fet-flagships>

² ICT, Information and Communication Technology

³ <https://ebrains.eu/>

- **Neuromorphic computing:** <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/silicon-brains/>
- **Medical informatics:** <https://mip.ebrains.eu/>

Eligible actions of the proposals include:

- Development, maturity scaling up, prototyping, testing, piloting, integration activities, and demos of new or improved EBRAINS tools and services of interest to the Neuroscience communities.
- Activities focused on accelerating the commercial and/or non-commercial exploitation of developed solutions in scientific and/or industrial markets through EBRAINS, including initiatives aiming to facilitate the access to private finance.

2.2 Details

2.2.1 Requirements

Eligible candidates should be preferably industrial SMEs or technology-based start-ups, operating in the field of digital neurosciences.

Granted candidates will cooperate with one or some co-developer HBP partner(s), to be appointed and agreed once the selection of granted projects has been completed.

Candidates should demonstrate their availability for co-developing or integrating the proposed technology, their interest in protecting the intellectual property of the expected results and the capacity of involving, if needed, Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs), Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs), or analogue units, in the negotiation and eventual commercialisation of these results, e.g. licensing.

Eligible proposals will have to demonstrate their ambition, commitment, and capacity to achieve ready-to-use maturity conditions for EBRAINS during the granted period. Priority will thus be given to proposals whose technologies are presently in the range of TRL5, at least, i.e. showing that effective technology development efforts and a commercial plan towards their exploitation is feasible within the available timeframe.

2.2.2 Contents of the proposal

The contents of the proposal must comply with the sections of the Proposal template. It is also particularly necessary that the “Contribution of the proposal” section specifically addresses the following aspects:

- 1) Objectives, Outputs⁴, and innovation potential of the planned solution: concept, scientific and industrial goals, expected results, and integration of the developed solution to EBRAINS, with a specific explanation on the reasons why the proposal should be granted.
- 2) Explanation of the research and technology activities, protection, and exploitation plans - making special emphasis in the contribution to the effective exploitation of the solution through EBRAINS. A brief discussion on the market potential is recommended.
- 3) Present and future connections, complementarities, agreements, and partnerships with external partners, including planned subcontractors.

⁴ **Outputs are tangible results** such as a software release, a dataset, a model, a prototype - e.g. something that we can provide a URL to. Outputs can also be scientific results leading to a new understanding or a theory. Outputs contribute to deliverables and are intended for use by both internal and external beneficiaries, in some cases it can be for use only by internal (Consortium) beneficiaries.

2.2.3 Exploitation aspects

The following aspects are related to the ownership, protection and commercialisation of the results developed through this Call.

- If a granted company develops a new product or service during the granted period, the same H2020 rules as for the rest of HBP partners will apply in relation to IPR ownership, protection, and exploitation of results. It may imply the commitment to offer free and Open Access to the results to scientific communities, while taking measures aiming to ensure commercial exploitation of these results through EBRAINS.
- If a granted project implies to improve or develop the candidate's existing products or services, these products or services should be considered background technologies (and explicitly acknowledged in the proposal), and the rules established in the Consortium will also apply, e.g. free use of these products/services by the HBP partners.

3. Expected contributions and impact

Applicants are expected to provide a detailed description of the implementation of work plans within the defined timeframe (24 months, from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2023), as well as plans on how to integrate such work into the HBP. In addition, all proposals are expected to briefly describe the long-term vision of the proposed research theme (i.e. in a timeframe of 5 years), as well as how it will contribute to the overall HBP [vision](#)⁵ and objectives.

Any duplication with existing HBP activities⁶ must be avoided.

4. Activities, eligibility and funding

Submission of proposals by single companies is possible. If a group of companies (partners)⁷ eventually applies for the CEol, the group should be represented by a project coordinator with the principal investigator (PI) acting as the main contact person. Only non-HBP partners⁸ are eligible for funding under this CEol.

The HBP has committed itself to improving equal opportunities. As such, we explicitly encourage applications of companies whose leaders or coordinators are women and groups of applicant companies who have considered gender equality aspects in their group (see Equal opportunities).

The European Commission's (EC) eligibility and financial rules apply⁹. The new partner organisations must therefore be established in the EU Member States or Horizon 2020 Associated Countries.

Out of this CEol, four (4) proposals will be selected for EU funding for the HBP SGA3 period. Project duration will be 24 months maximum (1 April 2021 - 31 March 2023), depending on the inclusion of the new partner in the Consortium, and has a fixed end date which is the end of SGA3, 31 March 2023.

⁵ <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/science/overview/>

⁶ See <https://ebrains.eu> and the document HBP SGA3 CEol - Work Plan and Outcome Overview, see <https://opencalls2.humanbrainproject.eu/call/hbp-sga3-ceoi-industry-smes-and-start-ups>

⁷ Partner = a company, not an individual

⁸ Non-HBP partners are not part of the HBP Consortium, thus not receiving any HBP funding and need to join the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) via Amendment

⁹ The countries eligible to apply are all the EU Member States and the H2020 Associated Countries. For eligibility of other countries, see http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/international-cooperation_en.htm and https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/3cp/h2020-hi-list-ac_en.pdf

Activities to be undertaken within the frame of the selected project will become a new Task, integrated within the HBP Work Plan for SGA3. The project will be integrated in WP4. The selected partner organisations will be incorporated in the HBP Consortium. The new partners will be requested to sign the relevant agreements with the EC as well as the Consortium Agreement that regulates the relations between the Partners of the Consortium.

The agreements with the EC include a Framework Partnership Agreement ([FPA¹⁰](#)) and a Specific Grant Agreement (SGA). The FPA Consortium Agreement applies to the Consortium during the entire Flagship period and is amended regularly for major changes. The addition of new Partners to the Consortium is subject to the approval of the required FPA Amendment by the HBP Stakeholder Board and the EC.

It is important to recognise that a two-step process is followed; only applicants that went through the pre-proposal submission step are eligible to submit a full proposal (see Section 5 Pre-proposal submission).

Success in this CEol should not be considered as a commitment by the HBP or the EC to continue funding the Partners after the end of the SGA3 period.

Note: Applicants will receive the final confirmation of project acceptance and funding only once approved for funding by the EC.

4.1 Budget of the proposal

The total Call budget is EUR 1,000,000 (direct costs).

The requested budget must not exceed EUR 250,000 per proposal.

The total Call budget refers to the direct costs (funded expenses) and does not include overheads/indirect costs (funded overhead). An additional 25% (overhead rate) of indirect costs following the H2020 funding rules for Research & Innovation Actions will be calculated automatically by the Open Call Platform and the sum will include direct costs (total call budget) plus 25% overhead (indirect costs).

The Call budget per proposal includes a Voucher of EUR 25,000 (10% of the Call budget per proposal) to fund co-development and technical support for integration of project results in [EBRAINS¹¹](#), which will be performed by the High Level Support Team and/or by a specific HBP co-development partner. If the latter is the case, the Voucher will be assigned to the HBP partner most pertinent to the project proposed.

Co-funding of approximately EUR 80,000 is recommended (e.g. staff in-kind contribution). The provided co-funding information will be included in the FPA to show the contributions towards the HBP by each Beneficiary. Proposals with lower contributions are not *a priori* excluded but must be justified.

It is expected that the new partners have the operational capacity to carry out the activities related to the main objectives of this CEol. Nevertheless, subcontracting is allowed but will be reviewed on case by case base (see Financial Rules - [H2020-amga¹²](#)).

5. Pre-proposal submission

The pre-proposal **must** be submitted via the [HBP Open Call Platform¹³](#). HBP Leading PIs or WP Leaders will respond to the applicants within 1 week after the pre-proposal deadline. The response will be

¹⁰ <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/about/framework-partnership-agreement/>

¹¹ <https://www.ebrains.eu/>

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/amga/h2020-amga_en.pdf

¹³ <https://opencalls2.humanbrainproject.eu/call/hbp-sga3-ceoi-industry-smes-and-start-ups>

limited to clarifying whether the proposal fits into the scope of the Call and how the proposal could be improved.

Note: it is **mandatory** to submit a pre-proposal in order to be eligible to submit a full proposal. The pre-proposal has no influence on the score of the full proposal.

6. Proposal submission

The proposal is submitted via the [HBP Open Call Platform](#)¹³. The applicants are required to register a profile, enter the proposal information and partner data, and submit the proposal document as a PDF and the requested budget.

The applicants can edit the proposal before the deadline (e.g. submit revised versions); only the last version will be considered for evaluation. It is recommended to upload a pre-final version.

Shortly after the submission of the proposal, an acknowledgement of receipt will be sent to the e-mail address of the proposal's main contact person, registered in the platform. Sending of an acknowledgement of receipt does not imply that a proposal has been accepted as eligible for evaluation.

For any given proposal, the proposal main contact person will act as the main point of contact between the proposal partners and the HBP.

It is the responsibility of the applicants to ensure timely submission; proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered. Failure of timely submission of the proposal for any reason, including communication delays, will automatically lead to rejection of the proposal. The time of receipt of the submission, as recorded by the submission system, will be authoritative.

Upon the Call deadline, the proposals have to fulfil the H2020 [admissibility](#)¹⁴ and [eligibility](#)¹⁵ criteria and the HBP-specific ones (see Section 4), in order to be retained for evaluation. In addition, the proposals have to strictly adhere to the template provided via the [HBP Open Call Platform](#)¹³, which defines sections and the overall length. Evaluators will be instructed not to consider extra material in the evaluation.

The HBP offers an email-based helpdesk system for applicants at info@opencalls.humanbrainproject.eu. Applicants are encouraged to use this facility for any queries in relation to the Call and the submission.

With the upload of the proposal template and the completion of the contact information, the applicants agree that partner(s) names, affiliations and proposal titles of the winning proposals (only) will be announced on the HBP website.

Remember: a full proposal submitted without the pre-proposal will not be considered eligible for the evaluation.

7. Ethical issues

Research activities in Horizon 2020, and particularly in the HBP, must respect fundamental ethical principles as outlined in the [Horizon2020_Ethics_Guidance](#)¹⁶.

If there are ethical issues specific to the proposal (see the ethical issue table in the [Horizon2020_Ethics_Guidance](#)¹⁶), before and during the runtime of the research activities within the

¹⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/2018-2020/annexes/h2020-wp1820-annex-ga_en.pdf#page=5

¹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/wp/2018-2020/annexes/h2020-wp1820-annex-ga_en.pdf#page=7

¹⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/ethics/h2020_hi_ethics-self-assess_en.pdf

HBP, an HBP Ethical Issues and Approvals survey must be submitted, including the documents that are required under national law (e.g. proof of approval by the competent authority).

The HBP Ethical Issues and Approvals survey should describe how the proposal meets the national legal and ethical requirements of the country or countries where the tasks raising ethical issues are to be carried out, and explain, in detail, how issues in the ethical issues table are addressed, in particular with regard to research objectives (dual use, etc.), methodology (protection of collected data, etc.) and potential impact of the research (dual use issues, benefit-sharing, misuse, etc.).

Applications, especially from non-European countries⁹, must make sure to comply with the above Horizon2020 Ethics Guidelines¹⁶ and clarify ethical issues before submission of the proposal.

Proposers should demonstrate that they are mindful of the fact that the citizens of Europe trust the public R&D endeavour to produce tangible results benefiting society by advancing health, economic growth, and quality of life across all communities.

The applicants are responsible for ethical compliance. They will work with the HBP contact persons, the respective HBP ethics rapporteur and ethics support team to ensure compliance with ethical and legal requirements. Their ethics compliance will be included in the HBP ethics compliance management processes. An Ethics Pre-Screening will be performed prior to inclusion of new partners into the HBP Consortium.

8. Equal opportunities

Gender equality concerns all parts of Horizon 2020 (see the [Guidance on Gender Equality in H2020 and the Gender Equality Strategy “A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025”¹⁷](#)). HBP has committed itself to offer [equal opportunities¹⁸](#), especially to balance the proportion of male and female scientists in leadership positions, as well as among PhD students and post docs, but also to overcoming artificial barriers, prejudices or preferences. The HBP created the [Gender Advisory Committee¹⁹](#) which provides advice and feedback on the HBP Gender Action Plan on [activities planned to improve equality in their respective areas of responsibility²⁰](#). This [document²¹](#) shows guidelines developed by the HBP for researchers.

The HBP aims to demonstrate how diversity drives scientific excellence, innovation, and collaboration and aims to become a European best practice example for fostering equal opportunities across different institutions, member states, disciplinary cultures, and intellectual environments.

In line with the European Commission (https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/gender_en.htm), applicants are encouraged to promote gender balance at all levels in their teams and in management structures. Applicants should seek at having a balanced participation, as close as possible to 50/50, of both men and women in the teams and among the leading roles (following [H2020 recommendations²²](#)).

Equal opportunities represent an evaluation criterion (see Table 1: Proposal evaluation criteria

In their proposal, applicants have to outline which measures will be undertaken to foster equal opportunities:

i) see criterion 1 - in relation to content (e.g. analysing and taking into account the possible differences between men and women, sex of animals, cells or tissues in the research and innovation content of the proposed research project). Sex and gender might intersect with further diversity

¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/gender-equality-strategy-2020-2025_en.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/about/gender-equality/>

¹⁹ <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/about/gender-equality/gender-advisory-committee/>

²⁰ <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/about/gender-equality/measures-and-materials/>

²¹ https://sos-ch-dk-2.exo.io/public-website-production/filer_public/23/1e/231e7bc7-bd5c-4c90-92b1-35aa403f0f13/hbp_guideline_diversityinresearch_190204-1207.pdf

²² https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/gender/h2020-hi-guide-gender_en.pdf#page=10

traits, such as age or culture. Additionally, research findings might have different implications for different user groups or stakeholders.

ii) see criterion 4 - in respect of human resources (e.g. the balance between women and men in the research teams, who will implement the project and how sex, gender or other diversity issues are addressed).

9. Proposal evaluation

All submitted proposals will be evaluated by acknowledged external experts from relevant research fields and by reviewers from the broader scientific and industrial community (all referred to as 'experts'). To avoid conflicts of interest, the experts are independent of the HBP Consortium and the applicants. The conflict of interest rules for this Call are set out [here](#)²³.

Experts will **maintain strict confidentiality with respect to the entire evaluation process**. Experts perform evaluations in their private capacity, not as representatives of their employer, their country or any other entity. Under no circumstance may an expert attempt to contact an applicant directly, either during the evaluation or afterwards. Experts cannot submit an Expression of Interest (Eoi) proposal for the Call they are reviewing.

The proposals evaluation will be performed in two steps.

In the **first step**, at least **three external experts** will review individually each proposal assigned to them. They evaluate each proposal considering the evaluation criteria in 9.1 - Table 1: Proposal evaluation criteria

The experts score each criterion (0 to 10, detailed in 9.1 - Table 2), with explanatory comments.

In the second step, the experts discuss and compare all proposals during a panel meeting. They establish the final ranking of the proposals, providing a list of proposals being above and below threshold (defined in Table 1). A proposal is eligible for funding if all thresholds are met or exceeded. However, the highest ranked proposal will be recommended for funding. If all proposals fall below threshold, no selection will be made and the CEoi might be reopened.

The experts will be advised by an invited group of HBP members of the Directorate (DIR) and WP leaders, who will clarify the procedure and need of the HBP prior to the evaluation, and offer their opinion on what is especially relevant for the specific Call, during a **kick-off meeting**.

The ranked list of the proposals will be presented to the HBP Science and Infrastructure Board (SIB) and the DIR for endorsement. The selected proposal(s) will be funded and integrated into the HBP SGA3 Work Plan via Amendment.

To ensure transparency, the results of the evaluations will be made available to the EC prior to announcement and integration.

After completion of the Call, applicants will receive the evaluation summary report for their proposal, showing the results of the evaluation for a given proposal. Any request for redress can only be based on procedural grounds and must be submitted by the proposal coordinator within 30 calendar days from the receipt of the official letter (Evaluation Summary Report).

Note: The addition of new Partners to the Consortium is subject to the approval of the required FPA and SGA Amendments by the HBP Stakeholder Board and the EC. Following this process, the partner(s) will be welcomed into the HBP Consortium.

9.1 Proposal evaluation criteria and scores

The evaluation criteria for this CEoi are provided in Table 1: Proposal evaluation criteria

²³ https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/pse/h2020-guide-pse_en.pdf#page=12

The criteria reflect the expected impact of the project funded under this HBP CEol.

The proposal evaluation scores are provided in Table 2.

At the evaluation stage, gender balance in staff is one of the ranking factors. Evaluators will compare the shares of men and women in the personnel named in the proposals and will rank a proposal with the share closer to 50/50 higher. Other explained taken measures for Equal Opportunities and Diversity might be considered in the same way as number of men and women. A proportion of women considered in the proposal, similar to the proportion in similar scientific disciplines, is the expected bare minimum to be found in proposals.

Scoring

Scores for each evaluation criterion are in the range 0-10. Evaluators will be asked to score proposals as they were submitted, rather than on their potential if certain changes were to be made.

Thresholds & weighting

The standard threshold for individual criteria is **6**; no threshold is foreseen for the Equal Opportunities score. The standard overall threshold (including the Equal Opportunities score), is **6**.

Scores are weighted. The weight for each score is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposal evaluation criteria

1. Excellence	Weight: 30%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of the proposed actions: research and technology development processes, methodologies, definition of protection and exploitation plans 	Score 1: ../10 (Threshold: 6/10)
2. Impact - adequacy	Weight: 10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequacy and relation of the solution to the EBRAINS objectives 	Score 2: ../10 (Threshold: 6/10)
3. Impact - relevance	Weight: 20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevance of the solution in relation to neuroscientific and industrial needs 	Score 3: ../10 (Threshold: 6/10)
4. Impact- innovation	Weight: 10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation potential of the solution: maturity, novelty, attractiveness for targeted users 	Score 4: ../10 (Threshold: 6/10)
5. Implementation - adequacy	Weight: 10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequacy of the company (and potential subcontractors) in relation to its experience, size (SMEs are prioritised), knowledge base, innovation management abilities, networking potential, exploitation capacities, resources committed, and co-funding 	Score 5: ../10 (Threshold: 6/10)
6. Implementation - feasibility	Weight: 10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility of the proposal from technical, financial, and market perspectives 	Score 6: ../10 (Threshold: 6/10)
7. Equal Opportunities	Weight: 10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equal Opportunities for the company teams, diversity aspects (gender, age, career stage, other factors) must be considered: Are there measures in place and described in detail to enhance fair work distribution and equal opportunities for career development? Is the proportion of women leaders and contributors justified in detail? In case of an imbalance compared to the 	Score 7: ../10 (NO Threshold)

proportion of women in similar scientific or industrial disciplines, are measures planned to improve gender equality?	
8. Ethical implications and compliance	Mandatory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethical implications and compliance with applicable international, EU and national law Ensure that the study proposed will not promote indications that raise ethical issues 	<i>No Score</i>
OVERALL SCORE	<i>Overall score: ../10</i> <i>(Threshold: 6/10)</i>

Table 2: Proposal evaluation scores

0	The proposal fails to address the criterion	The proposal fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.
1-2	Poor	The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
3-4	Fair	While the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses.
5-6	Good	The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present. Improvements will be necessary.
7-8	Very good	The proposal addresses the criterion very well, although a small number of shortcomings are present. Some improvements are still possible.
9-10	Excellent	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.

10. Additional information

You can find more information on the HBP [here](https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/)²⁴.

A list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) is available [here](https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/collaborate/hbp-open-calls-frequently-asked-questions/)²⁵.

²⁴ <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/>

²⁵ <https://www.humanbrainproject.eu/en/collaborate/hbp-open-calls-frequently-asked-questions/>