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primary

ANNEX 1 Call for Evaluators

Open Call for Financial Support to Third parties as a mechanism to test, promote, validate, replicate PRIMARY business model blueprints and develop new value chains

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List of abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Definition |
|--------------|--|
| DoH | Declaration of Honour. A self-declaration for organizations applying for or receiving EU funding, confirming they meet eligibility criteria, have capacity, and aren't excluded due to fraud, bankruptcy, or other serious issues, ensuring compliance with EU rules before grants are finalized. |
| EC | European Commission. The executive branch of the European Union responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, and overseeing EU programs. |
| EU | European Union. A political and economic union of 27 European countries. |
| FSTP | Financial Support to Third Parties. A mechanism used by the PRIMARY project to provide funding through its Open Call to beneficiaries. |
| HE | Horizon Europe. The EU's main research and innovation funding programme. |
| IA | Innovation Action. A type of Horizon Europe action primarily aimed at bridging the gap between research and market. They build upon earlier research results and move these results toward tangible products, processes, or services that can be rapidly introduced to the market or implemented by public authorities and stakeholders. |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation. |
| OC | Open Call. An invitation for proposals through which external beneficiaries can apply for funding to carry out specific activities that support the project's objectives. |
| SME | Small-Medium Enterprise. |

1. The PRIMARY project

PRIMARY (**New business for farmers and cooperatives in rural areas by local upcycling solutions using underutilized agricultural feedstocks**) is a Horizon Europe Innovation Action (IA) funded by the European Union (Project number: 101180167). The project supports the development, validation, and transfer of bioeconomy solutions that enable the sustainable use of underutilised agricultural residues in rural European regions.

The project focuses on feedstock streams that are widely available but often insufficiently valorised, namely grass, greenhouse residues, cotton by-products, and olive tree prunings. While these resources hold significant potential for producing food and feed ingredients, bio-based materials, bio-energy and bio-fuels, as well as soil-related products, their uptake remains constrained by limited local processing capacity and by the need to further adapt existing technical solutions to specific agricultural feedstocks and demonstrate their feasibility under real rural conditions, together with local actors and value chains.

PRIMARY addresses these challenges by developing and testing value-chain approaches that combine feedstock mobilisation, innovative processing technologies, and viable business model structures. The project works with six (6) main process solutions, including:

- (a) Grass biorefinery for fractionation of grass into protein- and fibre-rich streams for food, feed, and material applications;
- (b) Submerged fermentation of agricultural feedstocks to produce protein-rich food and feed ingredients;
- (c) Solid-state fermentation of greenhouse by-products to produce protein-rich feed ingredients;
- (d) Fibre-forming technologies for production of packaging and construction materials;
- (e) Pelletizing cotton and olive tree residues into biofuels for energy production;
- (f) Pyrolysis/gasification of cotton and olive tree originating residues into biochar.

These processes are developed with a strong emphasis on adaptability and transferability to different regional and operational settings.

An important output of PRIMARY is the development of four (4) preliminary business model blueprints, each associated with one of the targeted feedstock streams. These blueprints provide structured guidance on possible value-chain configurations, roles of actors, governance and cooperation models, indicative cost and revenue structure, operational requirements, and key environmental and social considerations. They are intended as reference frameworks rather than fixed solutions and require validation, adaptation, and refinement through practical implementation.

To support this validation process and extend the project's impact beyond the consortium regions, PRIMARY implements an Open Call providing Financial Support to Third Parties. Through the Open Call, selected consortia of local stakeholders, such as primary producers, SMEs, cooperatives, technology providers, and public or research organisations, will test and adapt PRIMARY processes and business model blueprints in new European regions. The Open Call projects are expected to generate practical evidence on technical feasibility, economic viability, and replicability under real-world conditions.

The insights, data, and lessons generated through the Open Call activities will feed back into the refinement of the PRIMARY business model blueprints and process concepts, contributing to the development of transferable knowledge, best practices, and guidance that can support wider deployment of sustainable bioeconomy solutions across Europe.

2. PRIMARY Open Call

2.1 Open Call Specifics

The main objective of the PRIMARY Open Call (OC) is to validate the replicability and promote the adaptation of PRIMARY solutions in Europe.

The Open Call invites proposals from **consortia of local and regional actors, including technical partners and public (e.g., public body, university) or private organisations (e.g., primary producers, cooperatives, start-ups, SMEs, NGOs)**, that are active in the sustainable valorisation of agricultural residues. Selected consortia will receive funding to pilot, adapt, and validate processing solutions and business model blueprints within the PRIMARY framework, focusing on underutilised feedstocks and innovative bioeconomy processes. The supported projects are expected to demonstrate technical feasibility, economic viability, and replicability of integrated value-chain solutions under real rural conditions, contributing to the wider deployment of PRIMARY solutions across Europe.

Sub-projects must contribute to the following Objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Validate, adapt, and further improve the four (4) PRIMARY business model blueprints for the feedstock streams of grass, greenhouse residues, cotton by-products, and olive tree prunings. **Each proposal must address at least one (≥1) feedstock**, which may be selected from the PRIMARY feedstock streams or from similar agricultural residues, provided that their characteristics, availability, and valorisation pathways are comparable to the PRIMARY feedstocks and align with the project's objectives on sustainable biomass utilisation. Applicants are expected to structure their business model by specifically addressing the building blocks included in the *PRIMARY Open Call Business Model Template* (Annex 4: Open Call Applicants' Guide). The template, based on a circular business model canvas approach, supports Applicants in describing, testing, and refining their proposed value chain, covering the full scope from feedstock sourcing to market uptake. It further guides Applicants in addressing all key elements in a consistent manner and in validating them through practical implementation in the proposed regional context, thereby generating practical evidence on economic viability, operational feasibility, and value-chain governance arrangements.
- **Objective 2:** Demonstrate the replicability and scalability of PRIMARY processes and technologies by enabling third-party consortia to **pilot and adapt at least one (≥1) of the six (6) PRIMARY processing concepts**, namely biorefinery process, submerged fermentation, solid-state fermentation, fibre-forming technology, pelletizing or pyrolysis/gasification of agricultural residues, in European regions where similar pilot or demonstration infrastructure is limited or absent. Indicative examples included in the *PRIMARY Open Call Business Model Template* (Annex 4: Open Call Applicants'

Guide), such as the Cotton Residues Use Case from Karditsa, Greece, illustrate how these processes can be implemented and adapted in practice. The selected sub-projects will generate practical evidence on technical performance, operational feasibility, and adaptability to local conditions, supporting wider replication across rural European regions.

- **Objective 3:** Enhance stakeholders’ opportunities for knowledge transfer on bioeconomy-oriented production by actively engaging local and regional actors in pilot implementation and validation activities. Through this engagement, the Open Call will support mutual learning, capacity building, and the exchange of practical experience across regions, thereby extending the impact of PRIMARY solutions beyond the consortium countries.

PRIMARY will launch one (1) single Open Call providing Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) as a mechanism towards the validation of the four (4) PRIMARY business model blueprints on feedstock-specific value chains, as well as to promote and test the processes and technologies replicability and scalability potential to other regions beyond the ones participating to the project. To this end, it will fund 6-9 sub-projects (consortia of 2-3 parties) with the maximum grant budget to be €150,000 per sub-project for consortia of three (3) parties and €100,000 per sub-project for consortia of two (2) parties. The total amount of the Open Call will reach at maximum €900,000.00.

| Total amount | No. of projects | Partners per sub-project | Maximum budget per sub-project |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| €900,000 | 6-9 | 2 | €100,000 |
| | | 3 | €150,000 |

Important notice:

The submission timeline of the Open Call for the proposals is from the 9th March 2026 to the 8th June 2026.

2.2 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 PRIMARY Open Call for Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) will be published through the opencalls.fund platform.

We are looking for evaluators!

- **Evaluators’ profile**

We are looking for independent evaluators, who will be able to assess the quality of applications received within the **PRIMARY Open Call**, shortly after its closure.

Evaluators must be:

- European - EU nationals Member States of the European Union (EU), including their outermost regions, as well as Overseas Countries and Territories linked to an EU Member, as well as nationals of Horizon Europe associated countries (full list [here](#)).
- Experienced in academic, technical and/or industry knowledge surrounding **agriculture, bioeconomy, biodiversity, circular economy and sustainability**.
- Experienced in evaluating EC proposals or have similar experience.

An evaluator should not work for an organisation that aims to apply for the **PRIMARY Open Call** nor in an organisation participating in the **PRIMARY consortium or their affiliates**¹.

All evaluators must declare beforehand any known conflicts of interest and must immediately inform the PRIMARY Consortium staff if they detect a conflict of interest during the evaluation. The evaluator's contract also requires evaluators to maintain strict confidentiality with respect to the whole evaluation process.

All evaluators must follow any instruction given by the PRIMARY Consortium to ensure this. Under no circumstance may an evaluator attempt to contact an applicant on his/her own account, during the evaluation process. Confidentiality rules must be always adhered to before, during and after the evaluation. All external evaluators will sign a confidentiality declaration.

All evaluators must adhere to the guiding principles for independent experts set out by the EC including independence, impartiality, objectivity, accuracy and consistency.

The evaluators will be in charge of providing a neutral yet technical/scientific review of the received applications on the following aspects:

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

- **Alignment** [Scoring 1-5; threshold 3] Proposals must align with the Open Call objectives.
- **Excellence** [Scoring 1-5; threshold 3] Proposals must align with the PRIMARY goals.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Organizational Capacity and Sufficiency** [Scoring 1-5; threshold 3] Applicants must provide credible evidence that the project delivery team has the necessary skills, resources and capacity to effectively deliver the project in the timeframe and budget as specified.

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.

¹ According to HE programme: an affiliated entity is an entity that has a link with a beneficiary, in particular legal or capital link, which is neither limited to the project nor is established for the sole purpose of its implementation.

The full evaluation criteria of the Open Call are specified in the respective Open Call kit documents. In addition, the kit will be part of the evaluators' manual. The evaluation process per application as well as specific reimbursement of evaluators' efforts will be listed. It is important to note that the number of applications per evaluator depends on several factors: the time availability of the evaluators, the number of submitted applications, and the number of evaluators to be selected throughout the Open Call.

- **Financial Benefits**

Evaluators will be compensated at a daily rate of €450, in accordance with European Commission rules. Two (2) evaluators will be assigned to each proposal, with a projected capacity of two (2) to four (4) proposal evaluations per day, depending on the volume of applications.

Payment will be done in Euros by bank transfer on the personal account of the evaluators, up to 60 days after submission of the evaluations and reception of an invoice from the evaluator.

The minimum and maximum number of days per evaluator will depend on the number of applications received, and other factors such as availability of the evaluator throughout the process, etc.

- **Evaluation Procedure**

The entire evaluation process will take place remotely on the opencalls.fund platform; no physical meetings are planned. The evaluation process will start with a short briefing meeting (online), providing additional project context, and elaborating on the procedures and expectations, with a particular focus on the evaluation criteria and the nuances of the different categories. Guidelines for the evaluators will also be shared at this time.

Each proposal will be assigned to two (2) evaluators. Each evaluator is expected to individually score each evaluation criterion and provide comments that justify their score. Evaluators are expected to work within their expertise for each criteria and ensure that any comments made align with the score they give. After completing their evaluation, each pair of evaluators will have to consolidate their evaluations into one report, ensuring that they reach a mutual agreement on the proposal's merits. The process will be monitored and facilitated by the OC Manager. This collaborative process ensures consistency in judgement and guards against bias, ultimately leading to the selection of the most deserving proposals. The effort of consolidation is included in the overall fee and is not reimbursed separately.

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. In case the consensus meeting is unsuccessful, an online interview of the applicant by a third external evaluator will be conducted.

- **Evaluators Selection Procedure**

Evaluators will be selected by the PRIMARY OC Monitoring Committee based on their competences and needs of the Open Call. Only the selected evaluators will be communicated via email.

- **Expression of Interest**

If you are interested in being an evaluator, first you need to register as a user to the opencalls.fund platform. Then you can proceed and apply as an evaluator, by filling in all necessary fields and uploading your CV (as .pdf) - the application shouldn't take more than 5 minutes!

For Evaluators

Joining our platform as an evaluator comes with a multitude of benefits tailored specifically for those engaged in assessing innovative projects under Horizon Europe open calls. As an evaluator in our open calls, you gain the opportunity to contribute your expertise to the advancement of groundbreaking EU funded projects while enhancing your professional profile in the industry.

Apply now

[Apply here](#)

If you know someone else who might be qualified for this task and might be interested, please forward this to him or her. By applying to PRIMARY Call for Evaluators, applicants automatically accept all the rules and conditions described below:

- **Tentative Timeline of Activities for Open Call***

PRIMARY Open Call duration for evaluators: March 2026

Eligibility check of the received evaluators' applications: April – May 2026

Contracting with selected evaluators: June 2026

Evaluation of Open Call proposals by the external evaluators: July 2026 – August 2026

* Dates may be revised/amended due to unforeseen events and situations.

- **Evaluators' Liability**

All evaluators will be required to sign a declaration of no conflict of interest and non-disclosure agreement with the PRIMARY consortium prior to the evaluation start.

By applying to the PRIMARY Call for evaluators and registration to the opencalls.fund platform, the expert:

- understands that applying (registration) does not guarantee the selection as an evaluator for any of the Open Calls.

- understands that a signed Code of Conduct and a Declaration of Honour (DoH) will have to be provided, along with any other requested documents if the applicant is selected to serve as an evaluator for a specific Open Call published on the opencalls.fund platform.
- acknowledges that for each Open Call, the designated coordination team will contact them to confirm their availability to conduct evaluations within the specified time frame. This may also include participation in a briefing session prior to the evaluation and a debriefing session after the selection process, if required. Specific timelines and requirements will be communicated in advance for each Open Call.
- confirms the interest to be informed about the future opportunities to act as an evaluator on ongoing and upcoming Open Calls that will be conducted on opencalls.fund platform.
- assures that he/she will only evaluate the applications of applicants for whom she/he does not have a Conflict of Interest (CoI).

- **Admissibility**

- The Applicant must be a European (EU nationals (Member States of the European Union (EU), including their outermost regions, as well as Overseas Countries and Territories linked to EU Member) as well as nationals of Horizon Europe associated countries (full list [here](#)). (**Note:** if you are not a citizen of these countries, but a resident/taxpayer in one of these countries, you are still eligible to become an evaluator).
- Applications can be submitted at any time starting from 9 March 2026, and they should be submitted before 1 April 2026.

Applications must be submitted electronically via the opencalls.fund platform electronic submission system as indicated in this call, using the form provided inside opencalls.fund platform, and a CV, as .pdf, must be attached as part of the application. Paper or email submissions will NOT be accepted.

Applications must be complete for all parts, and CV should be readable, accessible and printable.

If the admissibility criteria are respected, then the evaluation of the expert will be performed by the Open Call Monitoring Committee and the OC Manager. To formalise the collaboration, if not specified differently, a service contract will be signed between the OC Treasurer/Coordinator and the evaluators.

By applying for evaluators, interested applicants automatically accept the Guidelines in this Call for Evaluators and all the guidelines and requirements emerging from documentation included in the Open Call kit.

- **Conflict of Interest**

Evaluators must not have a conflict of interest at the time of their appointment and must sign a contract with a declaration that no such conflict exists. They also must inform the consortium should such a conflict arise in any of the applications they have been assigned. When a potential conflict of interest is reported by the evaluator or brought to the attention of the

consortium by any means, the project consortium will analyse the circumstances and any objective elements of information available. If the consortium concludes that there is conflict of interest, the evaluator will be excluded from the evaluation of that application. All potential conflicts of interest will be assessed carefully. Please see more info [here](#).

- **Confidentiality**

Evaluators are bound by confidentiality, as all information relating to the assessment process is strictly confidential. They are not allowed to disclose any information about the applications submitted and results of the assessment and selection to anyone. They are also not allowed to use the ideas of the application for their own purposes.

Good luck and thank you for your interest.

We are looking forward to collaborating with you!

The PRIMARY OC Team

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New business for farmers and cooperatives in rural areas by local upcycling solutions using underutilized agricultural feedstocks

Grant agreement ID: 101180167



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