Deliverable report

D3.2 (D21)

Assessment needs survey for each stakeholders category - update

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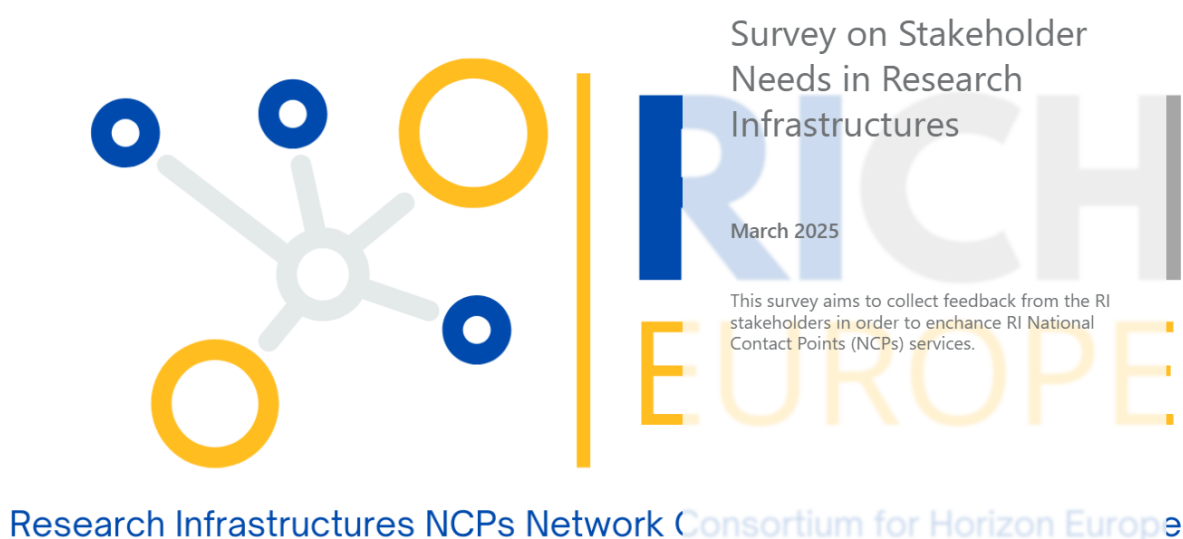| Version	Date	Changes	Author
1	13/05/2025	First draft	APRE
2	18/05/2025	Second draft	PRAXI Network/FORTH
3	30/05/2025	Final version	APRE

Sommario

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with the Description of Action, this deliverable collects the feedback from the main stakeholders category has defined in the section 2.2.2 (Target Groups) of GA : NCPs, Applicants in Horizon Europe RIs Calls, Industries and SMEs, Research Infrastructures (including ESFRI and ERIC stakeholders) and Academia as main target groups of the project. A specific contacts' list for each category has been outlined by APRE in coherence with the GDPR provisions to target and better involved the stakeholders.

The survey aims at updating the needs and challenges that stakeholders face in their daily activities in the Research Infrastructures field. A previous survey was launched at the beginning of 2023 (deadline 15th March 2023) with the same purpose.

This questionnaire collects both qualitative and quantitative data from Research Infrastructures stakeholders. Unlike the first questionnaire, on this occasion, specific questions were directed to the participants from the widening countries in order to better understand how RICH Europe activities can be developed and improved to also meet their needs.
The results gave information of what kind of stakeholders experience the network should design and which support the users need.

Survey on Stakeholder Needs in Research Infrastructures

March 2025

This survey aims to collect feedback from the RI stakeholders in order to enchance RI National Contact Points (NCPs) services.

Research Infrastructures NCPs Network Consortium for Horizon Europe

2. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

In the complex world of Research Infrastructures, the needs and challenges of various stakeholders are numerous. For this reason, RICH Europe has conducted a survey to better understand the requirements and difficulties that stakeholders face in the Work Programme of the Research Infrastructures of Horizon Europe. This survey, launched at the end of March 2025 and concluded on 25th Aprile 2025, aims to be an update of the first survey, which concluded on 15th March 2023.

The feedback and answers that we gathered from the survey will play a crucial role in enhancing the activities and services RICH Europe provides. This valuable information will not only benefit the National Contact Points (NCPs) but will also serve the interests of all stakeholders involved. By understanding their needs and preferences, we can implement improvements that will lead to more effective and engaging initiatives for everyone.

To analyse stakeholders' needs and challenges, the survey was structured to identify the stakeholders respondent, their familiarity with the Framework Programme, the challenges and obstacles they face, the type of support they would need, their sources of information about opportunities in the research infrastructure sector and their level of interest in new training sessions and webinars organized and promoted by RICH Europe. Additionally, the stakeholders expressed their views on which measures would help increase international project collaborations.

The survey was disseminated through our social media (X and LinkedIn) and via RICH Europe's mailing list.

The Data collected through the survey will help RICH Europe beneficiaries to continue improving the RICH Europe services and make them as secure as possible with stakeholders' needs.
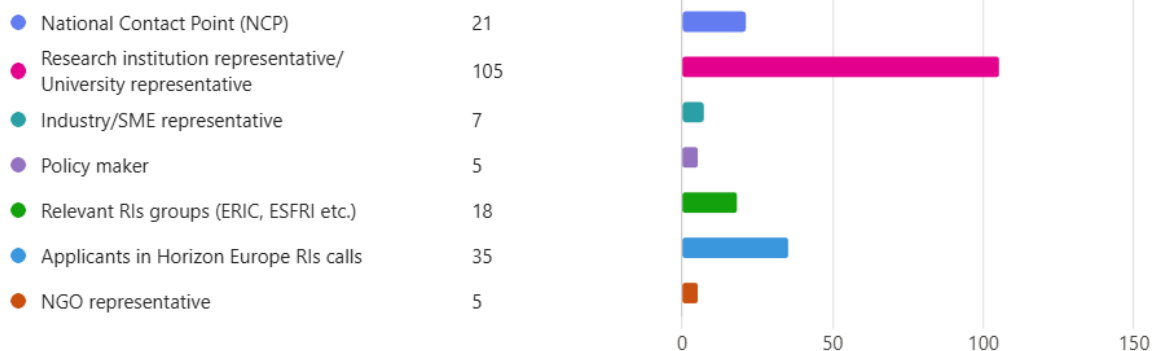
3. SURVEY RESULTS

Here below a detailed analysis of the data collected from the survey for the update of the assessment needs for each stakeholders category.

Survey launch: 1st April 2025

**Survey closure:** 25th April 2025

Survey participants: 150

1. **What is your role in the research and innovation ecosystem?**

● National Contact Point (NCP)	21
● Research institution representative/ University representative	105
● Industry/SME representative	7
● Policy maker	5
● Relevant RIs groups (ERIC, ESFRI etc.)	18
● Applicants in Horizon Europe RIs calls	35
● NGO representative	5

2. **In which country is your organization based?**

EU and Associated Countries	Third Countries
o Armenia: **1**	o Colombia: **1**
o Austria: **2**	o Nigeria: **2**
o Belgium: **6**	o Peru: **1**
o Cyprus: **1**	o South Africa: **1**
o Faroe Islands: **1**	o Tanzania: **1**
o Finland: **5**	o Uruguay: **1**
o France: **1**	
o Germany: **12**, *of which 1 is shared with Sweden*	
o Greece: **5**	
o Hungary: **1**	
o Iceland: **1**	
o Ireland: **1**	
o Israel: **1**	
o Italy: **4**	

o Latvia: **31** o Luxembourg: **1** o Netherlands: **1** o Norway: **2** o Poland: **1** o Portugal: **4** o Republic of Moldova: **1** o Serbia: **32** o Spain: **4** o Sweden: **14***, of which 1 is shared with Germany* o Switzerland: **6** o Turkey: **1** o United Kingdom: **1** o Kosovo: **1**	
2 respondents didn't specify their Countries.	
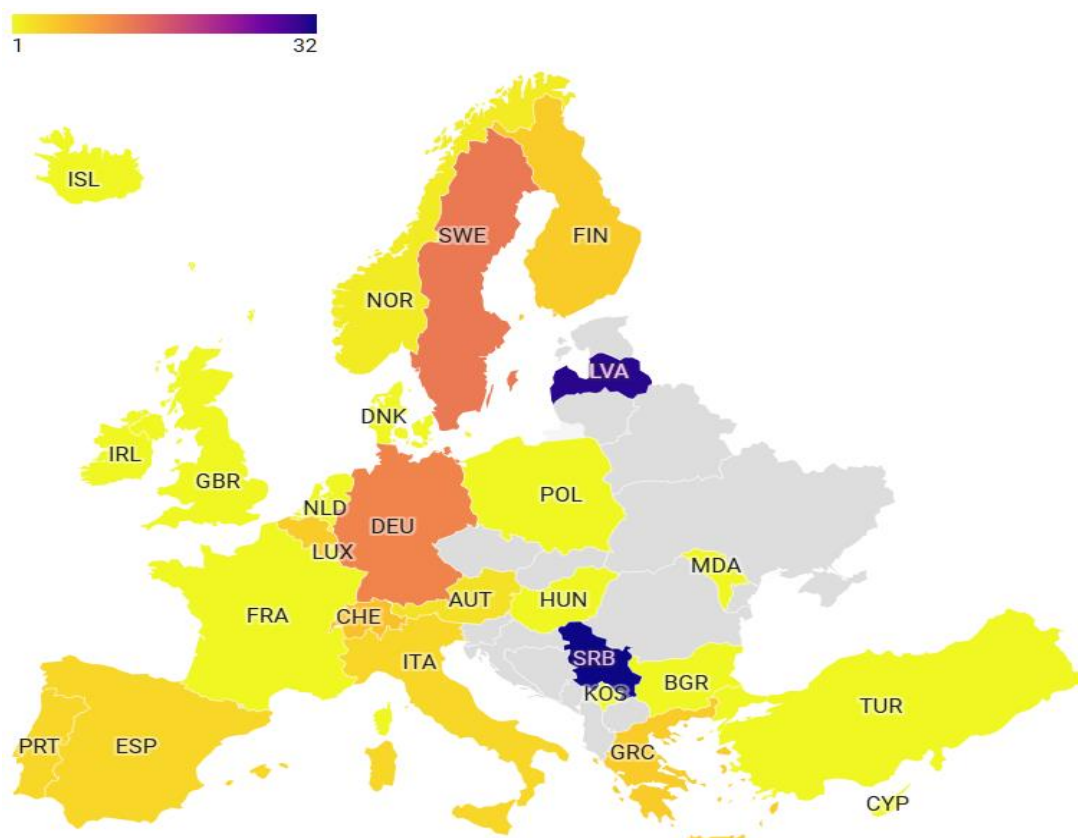
3. How long have you been engaged in Research Infrastructure environment?

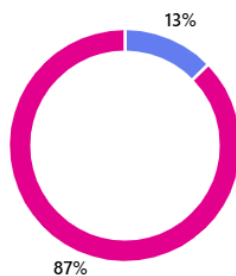|	
● < 1 year	8
● 1-3 years	23
● 4-7 years	29
● More than 7 years	90

5%
15%
60%
19%

4. Do you know RICH Europe project and its activities for the RI community?

42%
58%
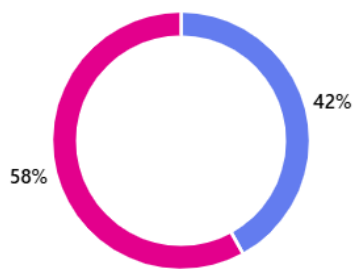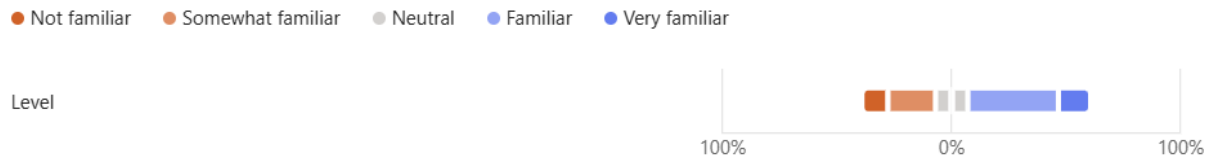
Yes: **63**

No: **87**

5. Participants legal status

13%
87%

Public entities: **19**

Private entities: **130**

6. How familiar are you with the Horizon Europe Research Infrastructures Work Programme?

Not familiar: **17 (11,4%)**

Somewhat familiar: **31 (20,8%)**

Neutral: **21 (14,1%)**

Familiar: **59 (39%)**

Very familiar: **22 (14,1%)**

7. Have you previously applied for Horizon Europe Research Infrastructures funding?

Yes: **76**

No: **74**

8. What are the main barriers to accessing Horizon Europe RIs Work Programme?

	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Significant Barrier	Major Barrier
Lack of awareness about opportunities	22 (14,7%)	23 (21,3%)	42 (28%)	31 (27,3%)	13 (8,7%)

Complexity of application procedures	**8 (5,3%)**	**26 (17,3%)**	**53 (35,3%)**	**37 (24,7%)**	**26 (17,3%)**
Limited support from national institutions	**11 (7,3%)**	**33 (22%)**	**35 (23,3%)**	**46 (30,7%)**	**25 (16,7%)**
Lack of interest in Horizon Europe RIs Calls interest	**42 (28%)**	**38 (25,3%)**	**49 (32,7%)**	**18 (12%)**	**3 (2%)**
Insufficient financial resources	**14 (9,3%)**	**25 (16,7%)**	**46 (30,7%)**	**40 (26,7%)**	**25 (16,7%)**
Language barriers	**109 (72,7%)**	**21 (14%)**	**14 (9,3%)**	**3,3 (3,3%)**	**1 (0,7%)**
Lack of administrative support for proposal writing	**21 (14%)**	**34 (22,7%)**	**33 (22%)**	**35 (23,3%)**	**27 (18%)**
Communication to other stakeholders	**17 (11,3%)**	**41 (29,3%)**	**54 (37,3%)**	**24 (18%)**	**6 (4%)**

9. **How familiar are you with the above thematic areas of RIs**

	Not at all familiar	**Slightly familiar**	**Moderately familiar**	**Very familiar**	**Extremely familiar**
ESFRI Forum role to RI community	**45 (30%)**	**33 (22,7%)**	**38 (25,3%)**	**27 (18%)**	**6 (4%)**

Links between research 9nfrastructure and smart specialization strategies in your country	51 (34%)	38 (30%)	32 (22%)	19 (12,7%)	2 (1,3%)
Complementary funding of RIs (ERDF, Horizon Europe, Private Funds) in your country	46 (30,7%)	32 (21,3%)	35 (23,3%)	31 (20,7%)	6 (4%)

10. What are the key challenges faced by your organization in engaging with HE Research Infrastructures Work Programme?

|	
Limited funding opportunities	53
Bureaucratic hurdles	37
Lack of information on available support	32
Difficulties in finding international partners	24
Potential applicants face to apply for Transnational access to European Research Infrastructures	4
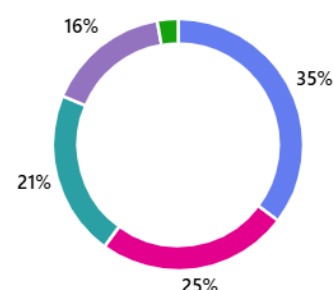
11. What kind of support would be most beneficial to you?

|	Not Beneficial	Slightly Beneficial	Moderately Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Extremely Beneficial
Training on application processes	4 (2,6%)	32 (22,4%)	37 (24,3%)	53 (34,9%)	24 (15,8%)
Networking opportunities with EU partners	4 (2,6%)	17 (11,2%)	41 (28,3%)	51 (33,6%)	37 (24,3%)

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Mentorship and guidance from experienced applicants	3 (2%)	16 (10,5%)	26 (18,4%)	60 (39,5%)	45 (29,6%)
Simplified funding access	2 (1,3%)	7 (5,3%)	20 (13,2%)	52 (34,9%)	69 (45,4%)
Awareness campaigns on research infrastructures	4 (2,6%)	16 (10,5%)	42 (28,3%)	47 (31,6%)	41 (27%)
Technical assistance for proposal writing	4 (3,3%)	22 (14,5%)	27 (17,8%)	56 (37,5%)	41 (27%)

12. How do you typically receive information about Horizon Europe Research Infrastructures Work Programme?

● National Contact Points (NCPs)	80
● EU websites and portals	95
● Research conferences and events	35
● Professional networks	76
● Social media platforms	18
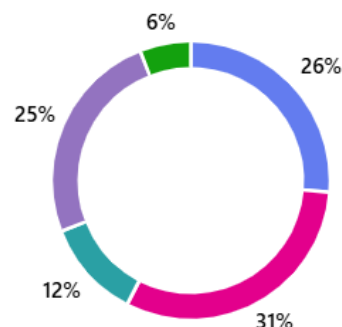
13. Would you be interested in participating in training programs or workshops to enhance your engagement with Horizon Europe Research Infrastructures Work Programme?
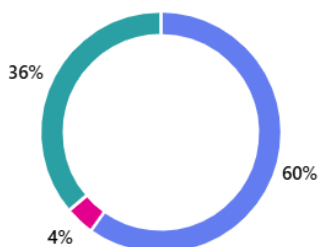
Yes: **91**
No: **6**
Maybe: **55**

14. What formats of training or support would you prefer?

	Not Preferred	Slightly Preferred	Moderately Preferred	Highly Preferred	Strongly Preferred
Online webinars	8 (5,3%)	8 (5,3%)	35 (23%)	53 (36,2%)	46 (30,3%)
In-person workshops	15 (10,5%)	20 (13,2%)	49 (32,9%)	41 (27%)	25 (16,4%)
One-on-one mentorship	13 (9,2%)	25 (16,4%)	37 (25%)	44 (28,9%)	31 (20,4%)
Written guides and toolkits	7 (4,6%)	22 (15,8%)	40 (26,3%)	41 (27%)	40 (26,3%)
Interactive Q&A sessions	7 (5,3%)	26 (17,1%)	40 (26,3%)	48 (32,2%)	29 (19,1%)

15. Are you currently collaborating with partners from other EU countries on research projects?
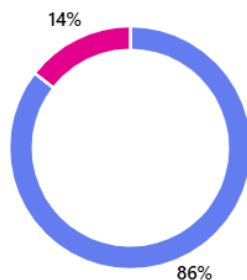
Yes: **128**
No: **22**

16. What would help facilitate more cross-border collaboration for your organization?

	Not helpful	Slightly helpful	Moderate helpful	Highly helpful	Strongly helpful
Collaboration support	4 (2,6%)	18 (13,2%)	46 (30,3%)	58 (38,2%)	24 (15,8%)
Increased funding for international partnerships	3 (2,6%)	6 (3,9%)	19 (12,5%)	61 (40,8%)	61 (40,1%)
Easier access to EU networks	4 (2,6%)	14 (9,9%)	31 (20,4%)	63 (42,1%)	38 (25%)

|					
Formal Matchmaking programs	14 (9,2%)	26 (18,4%)	48 (31,6%)	42 (27,6%)	20 (13,2%)
Training on partnership development	10 (6,6%)	29 (19,7%)	53 (34,9%)	33 (22,4%)	25 (16,4%)
Creation of a platform dedicated to RIs stakeholders	5 (3,3%)	25 (16,4%)	36 (23,7%)	48 (32,2%)	36 (24,3%)

17. Do you have any additional suggestions or concerns regarding research infrastructure access in widening countries?

Respondents' answers are clustered as follows:
o   Concern for the lack of twinning calls for 2025;
o   Further trainings and webinars;
o   Pay even more attention to the needs of the Widening Countries;
o   Need of a list of all available Research Infrastructures;
o   Foster the participation from Widening Countries;
o   Need to foster the communication among NCPs at local level;
o   More efforts are requested to improve the visibility of the political and bureaucratic framework around RIs;
o   More visibility to platform dedicated to RIs stakeholders;
o   More funds to enhance the participation from Widening Countries and simplified administrative procedures;
o   More support from national governments for Research Infrastructures;
o   Support for further development of national Research Infrastructures;
o   More dissemination via social media on initiatives, programmes, opportunities and funds;
o   *AD HOC* platform for RIs opportunities;
o   More calls on social sciences should be provided in the WPs;
o   More flexibility for country specifics, especially in case of co-funding regulations;
o   Capacity building projects would be an added value;
o   Pre-assessment sessions for proposals to submit.

18. Do you have any interest of future webinars, initiatives, Info Days, and educational material?
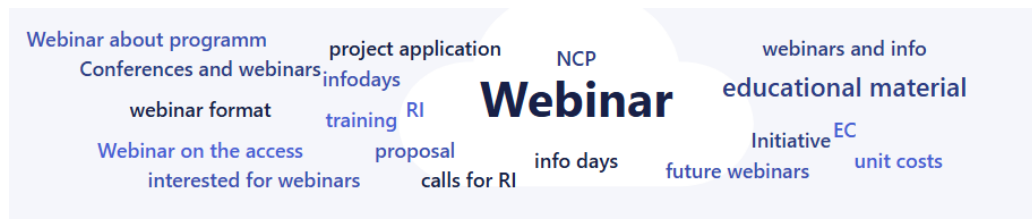
4. SURVEY ON STAKEHOLDER NEEDS IN RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES – FORM

At this link, you can view the questionnaire submitted to research infrastructure stakeholders in PDF format to map their needs and challenges. Below the PDF version:

1. What is your role in the research and innovation ecosystem?

☐ National Contact Point (NCP)

☐ Research institution representative/ University representative

☐ Industry/SME representative

☐ Policy maker

☐ Relevant RIs groups (ERIC, ESFRI etc.)

☐ Applicants in Horizon Europe RIs calls

☐ NGO representative

2. In which country is your organization based?

3. How long have you been engaged in Research Infrastructure environment?

○ < 1 year

○ 1-3 years

○ 4-7 years

○ More than 7 years

4. Do you know RICH Europe project and its activities for the RI community?

○ Yes

○ No

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RICH EUROPE
Research Infrastructures NCPs Network Consortium for Horizon Europe

5. Legal status

○ Private

○ Public

6. How familiar are you with the Horizon Europe Research Infrastructures Work Programme?

	Not familiar	Somewhat familiar	Neutral	Familiar	Very familiar
Level	○	○	○	○	○

7. Have you previously applied for Horizon Europe Research Infrastructures funding?

○ Yes

○ No

8. What are the main barriers to accessing Horizon Europe RIs Work Programme? *

	Not a Barrier	Slight Barrier	Moderate Barrier	Significant Barrier	Major Barrier
Lack of awareness about opportunities	○	○	○	○	○
Complexity of application procedures	○	○	○	○	○
Limited support from national institutions	○	○	○	○	○
Lack of interest in Horizon Europe RIs Calls interest	○	○	○	○	○
Insufficient financial resources	○	○	○	○	○
Language barriers	○	○	○	○	○
Lack of administrative support for proposal writing	○	○	○	○	○
Communication to other stakeholders	○	○	○	○	○

9. How familiar are you with the above thematic areas of RIs *

	Not at all familiar	Slightly familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar
ESFRI Forum role to RI community	○	○	○	○	○
Links between research infrastructures and smart specialization strategies in your country	○	○	○	○	○
Complementary funding of RIs (ERDF, Horizon Europe, Private Funds) in your country	○	○	○	○	○

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10. What are the key challenges faced by your organization in engaging with HE Research Infrastructures Work Programme? *

◯ Limited funding opportunities

◯ Bureaucratic hurdles

◯ Lack of information on available support

◯ Difficulties in finding international partners

◯ Potential applicants face to apply for Transnational access to European Research Infrastructures

11. What kind of support would be most beneficial to you? *

	Not Beneficial	Slightly Beneficial	Moderately Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Extremely Beneficial
Training on application processes	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Networking opportunities with EU partners	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Mentorship and guidance from experienced applicants	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Simplified funding access	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Awareness campaigns on research infrastructures	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Technical assistance for proposal writing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

12. How do you typically receive information about Horizon Europe Research Infrastructures Work Programme? *

Please select 2 options.

☐ National Contact Points (NCPs)

☐ EU websites and portals

☐ Research conferences and events

☐ Professional networks

☐ Social media platforms

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13. Would you be interested in participating in training programs or workshops to enhance your engagement with Horizon Europe Research Infrastructures Work Programme? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe

14. What formats of training or support would you prefer? *

	Not Preferred	Slightly Preferred	Moderately Preferred	Highly Preferred	Strongly Preferred
Online webinars	○	○	○	○	○
In-person workshops	○	○	○	○	○
One-on-one mentorship	○	○	○	○	○
Written guides and toolkits	○	○	○	○	○
Interactive Q&A sessions	○	○	○	○	○

15. Are you currently collaborating with partners from other EU countries on research projects? *

○ Yes

○ No

5. CONCLUSIONS

The survey involved 150 stakeholders from various countries, mainly in Europe, with some from Third Countries. Most responses came from private entities and organizations with a good familiarity with the Horizon Europe Program, although about 20% are still not well acquainted with RICH Europe's activities.

Regarding engagement with the Horizon Europe Research Infrastructures Work Programme, 91 respondents expressed interest in participating in training programs or workshops, with 55 indicating "Maybe" and only 6 responding "No". The most preferred training format is online webinars, followed by in-person workshops, one-on-one mentorship, written guides and toolkits and interactive Q&A sessions. Key challenges faced by organizations in engaging with the Horizon Europe Research Infrastructures Work Programme include limited funding opportunities (54 responses), bureaucratic hurdles (37 responses) and lack of information on available opportunities (33 responses). When asked about support, "Networking opportunities with EU partners" and "EU websites and portals" were identified as the most beneficial. The most common ways participants receive information about the Horizon Europe Research Infrastructures Work Programme are through EU websites and portals (95 responses) and National Contact Points (80 responses).

Regarding additional suggestions and concerns for Research Infrastructure access in Widening Countries, there is a strong consensus on the need for better funding, clearer communication and more inclusive, flexible policies. Specific suggestions include dedicated WIDERA-type funding schemes, prioritizing funding for basic research, establishing dedicated calls for operational costs (OPEX), reducing co-funding requirements, offering incentives for including Widening Countries and clarifying program streams (e.g. Horizon Europe's -TECH, -DEV, and -SERV). Access to RIs, inclusion and capacity building can be improved through equitable access, support for national RIs, in-country support mechanisms and increased twinning and collaborative initiatives. Policy and governance suggestions include national-level reforms to resolve bureaucratic inefficiencies and policy differentiation for various types of RIs. For awareness, communication, training and recommendations include face-to-face engagement at conferences, user-centric NCP portals, increased training opportunities, transparent communication on calls and strengthened engagement with the European Commission. Broader participation could be fostered by expanding funding opportunities to include social sciences and allowing more flexibility in rules to accommodate country-specific conditions.

Among the main obstacles reported it's important to underline the lack of awareness of opportunities, the complexity of application procedures and limited support from national institutions.

Regarding thematic areas, many stakeholders feel little or moderately informed, but they are very interested in receiving training, support, and networking opportunities. In particular, online trainings, in-person workshops and mentoring are highly valued as support methods.

International collaboration is widespread, with over 85% already working with partners from other EU countries. However, there is a clear need for more support tools, such as easier-to-access funding, dedicated platforms and matchmaking programs to further facilitate cross-border collaborations.

Finally, many responses highlight the importance of increasing the visibility of opportunities, improving communication between Research Infrastructures National Contact Points and Institutions, and strengthening support for Research Infrastructure in Widening Countries, with requests for more funds, training and practical support tools.

In conclusion, the data show a strong interest and need for support, training and networking tools to improve access and participation in European Research Infrastructures, especially in Widening Countries. RICH Europe can continue to develop targeted initiatives to meet these needs, promoting greater inclusion and international collaboration.