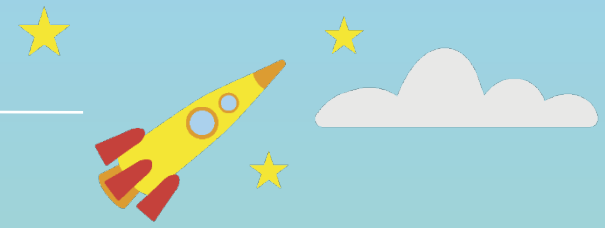
European Commission

#HorizonEU

INFO DAYS

CLUSTER 5
CLIMATE, ENERGY & MOBILITY

6 May 2025



The Societal Readiness (SR) pilot

Parallel Session 2: *11:25-12:20*

Jenkins room

Rationale

Possible misalignment between:
Innovation trajectories
Societies needs & concerns

Creates bottlenecks in tech development and deployment
Erodes trust
Generates negative externalities

Failure to meet people needs
Waste of public resources
Lack of mobilisation for societal challenges

Societal issues

2 parallel approaches to address societal concerns:

1) SSH-flagged topics:

- SSH activities streamlined in thematic topics (same approach as WP 2023-2024)
- Include the standard SSH sentence*
- 10 SSH-flagged topics in WP 2025 (standard way):
  - 2 in Destination 1
  - 1 in Destination 2
  - 3 in Destination 3
  - 2 in Destination 4
  - 2 in Destination 6

**This topic requires the effective contribution of SSH disciplines and the involvement of SSH experts, institutions as well as the inclusion of relevant SSH expertise (including social innovation), in order to produce meaningful and significant effects enhancing the societal impact of the related research activities.*

Societal issues

2 parallel approaches to address societal concerns:

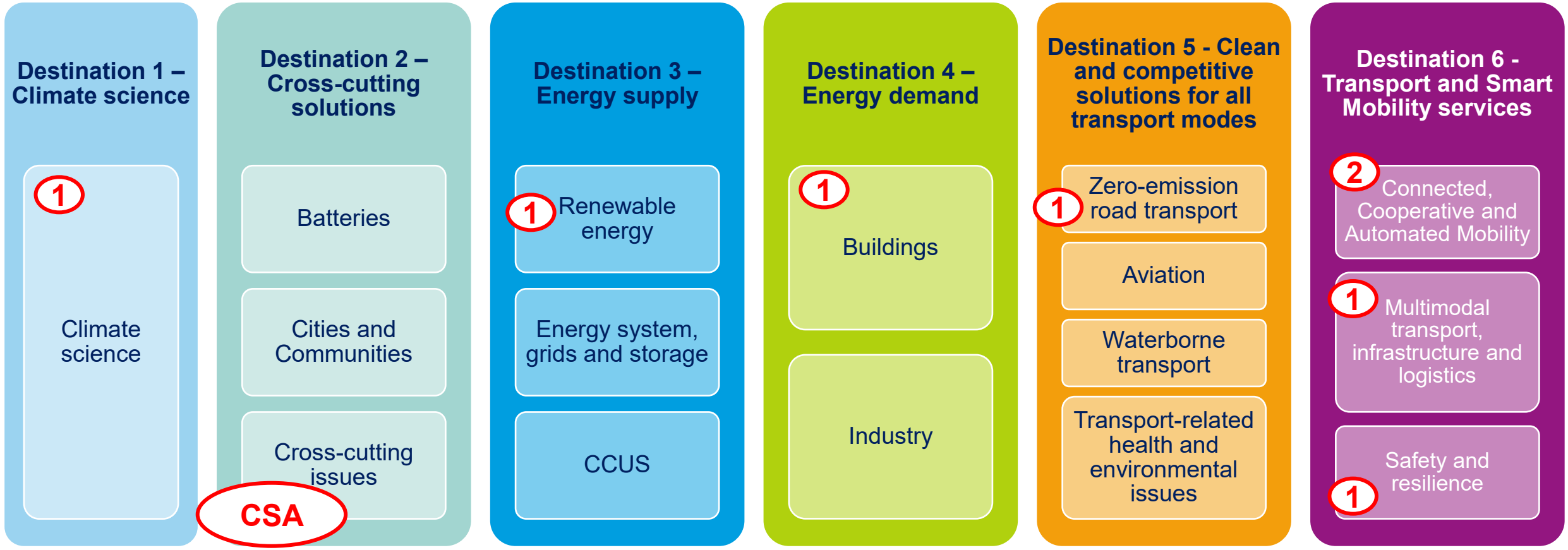
2) Societal Readiness (SR) pilot topics:

- Integrated in thematic topics
- Include the SSH flag (standard sentence)
- 8 SR pilot topics in WP 2025:
  - 1 in Destination 1 – (DL: Sept 2025) → 3 projects
  - 1 in Destination 3 – (DL: Sept 2025) → 3 projects
  - 1 in Destination 4 – (DL: Feb 2026) → 3 projects
  - 1 in Destination 5 – (DL: Sept 2025) → 2 projects
  - 4 in Destination 6 – (DL: Sept 2025) → 2, 1, 2, 2 projects

~18 projects

- 1 CSA for the pilot's monitoring and evaluation in Destination 2 – (DL: Jan 2026)

Structure of Cluster 5 WP



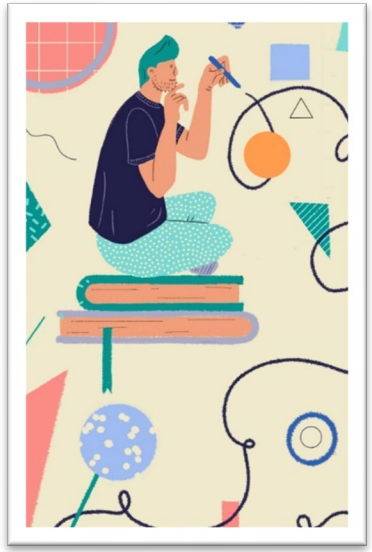
8 SR topics + 1 monitoring CSA

Societal Readiness pilot topics: list

- HORIZON-CL5-2025-06-D1-06: Fostering equity and justice in **climate policies** – Societal Readiness Pilot
- HORIZON-CL5-2025-02-D3-04: Development of **hydropower technologies** and water management schemes allowing for win-win situation of flexible hydropower and biodiversity improvement – Societal Readiness Pilot
- HORIZON-CL5-2026-02-D4-02: **Smarter buildings** as part of the energy system for increased efficiency and flexibility – Societal Readiness Pilot
- HORIZON-CL5-2025-04-D5-01: Efficient wireless stationary bidirectional charging solutions for road **Light Duty Vehicles** (2ZERO Partnership) – Societal Readiness Pilot
- HORIZON-CL5-2025-04-D6-01: Advancing remote operations to enable the **sustainable and smart mobility** of people and goods based on operational and societal needs (CCAM Partnership) – Societal Readiness Pilot
- HORIZON-CL5-2025-04-D6-02: Preparing for large-scale **CCAM demonstrations** (CCAM Partnership) – Societal Readiness Pilot
- HORIZON-CL5-2025-04-D6-11: Innovative **air mobility and services** for sustainable and smart urban, peri-urban transport – Societal Readiness pilot
- HORIZON-CL5-2025-04-D6-12: Safe **Human-Technology Interaction (HTI) in the vehicle systems** of the coming decade – Societal Readiness Pilot

What is Societal Readiness (SR)?

- SR IS about:
- the readiness of **R&I practices**
- forcing R&I processes that facilitate an **inclusive and society-focussed approach**
- supporting all R&I actors to do societally relevant and engaging R&I
- focusing on **mindsets, processes, practices and outcomes** so that project results are most relevant to societal challenges



- SR IS NOT about:
- the acceptance from societies on projects' outcomes at the latest stage of the solution's development
- rating technological solutions

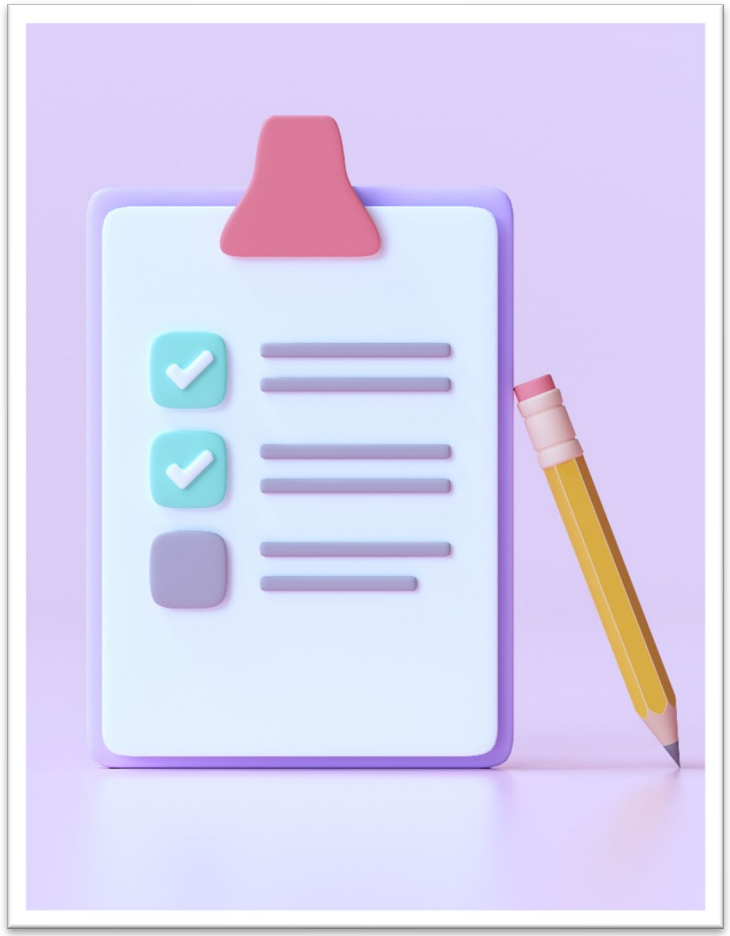
SR is connected to the design and implementation of R&I, to generate better understandings so that the research would be ready to be acted upon by society.

To achieve a well-developed Societal Readiness of R&I results, social and cultural perspectives need to be covered – SSH disciplines are key to achieve that!

SSH disciplines and expertise focus on Societal Readiness goals.

See definition in CL5 WP introduction

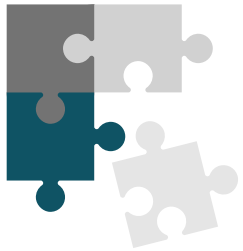
Instructions for the SR pilot



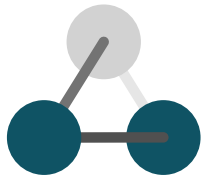
- 6-page instructions in CL5 WP 2025 main introduction including:
  - ✓ Implementation requirements
  - ✓ A list of ‘guiding questions’ following RRI processes (addressing ‘reflection’, ‘inclusion’, ‘anticipation’, ‘responsiveness’ dimensions)
  - ✓ Information on the evaluation aspect
  - ✓ Definitions of SR, SSH, RRI*

Responsible Research and Innovation

Key aspects of pilot



Interdisciplinarity



Project partners

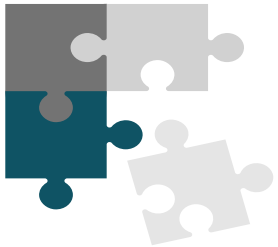
Flexibility

RRI* methodology

Monitoring and evaluation

**Responsible Research and Innovation*

1- Interdisciplinarity



Definition*

Interdisciplinarity focuses on specific **'real world' system problems** and, as a result, the research process forces participants (from a variety of unrelated disciplines) to **cross boundaries to create new knowledge**, based on a common language.

Interdisciplinary work

- **brings together capabilities from diverse perspectives** fostering creativity, and a common understanding of the challenges at stake
- allows for more **comprehensive problem-solving** by combining expertise from different fields
- **encourages collaboration** and often leads to new ideas and solutions that wouldn't arise from a single discipline alone
- **enhances adaptability** making it especially valuable in tackling multifaceted real-world problems from various angles

*Baum et al. 2020

2 - Projects' partners

Types of SR profiles	❑ experience in addressing **social and cultural perspectives** to e.g., design and lead **co-creation**, facilitate **inclusion**, support the consideration of and **responsiveness to societal needs and concerns**.
Involvement in proposal preparation	❑ from the **very beginning**! To enable the **appropriate design** of project objectives, methodology and tasks compatible with societal readiness.
Other partners	❑ should **meaningfully and actively collaborate** to SR activities **across all stages** of a project life cycle.

Contributions might be of different nature but have **equal value**.
All partners share responsibility for RRI*/SR activities !!

**Responsible Research and Innovation*

3 - Methodology

RRI dimensions:

- Reflexion
- Inclusion
- Anticipation
- Responsiveness

RRI categories:

- R&I goals
- Societal actors
- Benefits and burdens
- Objections and concerns

- ❑ Based on **Responsible Research and Innovation** (RRI) processes.
- ❑ The instructions include a set of **guiding questions** that are meant to bring project partners to **reflect**, **include**, **anticipate** and **respond** to the societal needs and concerns identified.
- ❑ Those four dimensions support **co-creation with societal actors** in different ways and offer a set of procedural interventions in policy makers and researchers' activities.
- ❑ They support the outreach of a **well-developed Societal Readiness.**

The guiding questions are a starting point for reflexion and it is possible to address other questions relating to RRI dimensions and categories.

4 - Flexibility

RRI guiding questions are the starting point for a comprehensive consideration of all societally-related side aspects in the development of a given solution

- Partners are **free to choose in which way SR is integrated** in the proposal and in the project, and which societal actors to engage with.
- **No prescription of specific pathways,** the expertise lies within the consortium.
- **Creative options are encouraged**, no one-size-fits-all.

However, the horizontal instructions are common to all SR pilot projects and need to be entirely fulfilled.

5 - Monitoring and evaluation of the SR pilot

HORIZON-CL5-2026-01-D2-09: Monitoring and Evaluation of the Societal Readiness Pilot:

- Coordinating and Support Action (CSA) – 42 Months – EUR 1,5M
- Aims at learning from the pilots' implementation to improve future SR topics by:
    - analysing the way SR is addressed and integrated in piloted projects
    - supporting the designing of an efficient, clear, and impactful way of applying the SR approach in future EU funded R&I projects
- In addition, the CSA includes the following milestones:
    - **annual workshops** gathering SR pilot project partners
    - a **web platform** with tips and tricks supporting future EU projects
    - a **publication** to support effective **interdisciplinary** practices

SR deliverables

« A public report called **First report on Societal Readiness** should be delivered within the first six months of the project.

- The report will build on the Societal Readiness approach for the project as set out in the proposal.
- It should primarily focus on:
  - → the project's vision for and approach to Societal Readiness;
  - → reflections on initial impressions of societal needs and concerns as connected to the project;
  - → preliminary responses to the guiding questions;
  - → more detailed plans on how Societal Readiness will be addressed (e.g., time plans, roles and responsibilities, relation to tasks/work packages, anticipated results and how these will be integrated into the project activities).»

« A public report called **Final report on Societal Readiness** should be delivered within the last three months of the project.

- The report will reflect upon:
  - → the project's experience with implementing Societal Readiness approaches;
  - → any differences in experience between expected and actual outcomes;
  - → challenges and lessons learned from successful or unsuccessful efforts;
  - → ways in which different societal actors were identified and engaged in interdisciplinary or intersectoral activities, as well as these actors needs and concerns considered, identified, and responded to;
  - → recommendations for future projects on similar thematic areas.
- The Final report on Societal Readiness is expected to directly address the questions identified in the First report on Societal Readiness. »

Integration of the SR pilot in topic text

Consideration of SR is compulsory for all applicants

[IN EXPECTED OUTCOME]

Responsiveness to a deeper understanding of the needs and concerns of diverse social group involved in or potentially affected by the R&I development, thereby increasing the potential for beneficial societal uptake, and building trust in results and outcomes.

[IN SCOPE]

This topic is a Societal-Readiness pilot:

- Proposals should follow the instructions applying to the Societal readiness pilot, as described in the introduction of the Horizon Europe Main Work Programme 2025 for Climate, Energy and Mobility. They entail the use of an interdisciplinary approach to deepening consideration and responsiveness of research and innovation activities to societal needs and concerns.
- This topic requires effective contribution of the relevant SSH expertise, including the involvement of SSH experts in the consortium, to meaningfully support Societal Readiness. Specifically, SSH expertise is expected to facilitate the socio-technological interface and enable the design of project objectives with Societal Readiness related activities."

All SR pilot topics have an 'SSH-flag'

Application form

The standard template of the Application Form remains unchanged, and its **page limit is increased by two additional pages**. The proposed work is expected to **reflect an integration of Societal Readiness consideration into the overall project design**.

- The two additional pages are intended to accommodate the integration of SR in the proposal.
- They do not constitute a separate section, as SR is expected to be integrated across the whole project narrative.

References to SSH activities requested under section 1.2 Methodology of the standard Application Form remain valid → they should aim at achieving Societal Readiness goals

Summary of key points

- **SR is not penalising the project main goal, at the contrary!** → it fosters trust and legitimacy from involved actors
- **Requires real ownership/commitment from all partners** (trust in the process + proof of potential) → **No tick box exercise**
- **Collaboration at all levels**
- **Acknowledgment of the diverse array of R&I activities** and communities funded by the Commission
- **No extra administrative complexity:** no duplication with existing standards, full transparency on process

Contact and resources

Email of contact:

- EC-HE-SOCIETAL-READINESS@ec.europa.eu

Useful resources to support SR activities in piloted projects:

- Societal Readiness Think Tool – online tool
- Engaged Research report (IE) – report
- Transdisciplinary collaboration (NL) – report
- Other ideas?