



CODECO Innovation and Research Community Engagement Programme – Guidelines for Applicants



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Project Partners



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Table of Contents

1	Introduction	5
2	Concept	5
2.1	What is IRCEP?	5
2.2	Challenges	6
2.3	Submission Period	7
3	Application	7
3.1	Language	8
3.2	Documentation formats	8
3.3	Conflict of Interest	8
3.4	Awards	8
3.5	Timeline	9
3.6	Evaluation	9
3.7	Re-use of Challenge Content	9
4	Data Preservation, Storage and Privacy	9
4.1	Data Storage and Backup	9
4.2	Data Selection and Preservation	9
4.3	Data Destruction	10
5	Ethics	10
5.1	Code of Conduct	10
5.2	GDPR Compliance	11
6	Contact Information	11



List of Figures

Figure 1: IRCEP Pillars 5

Figure 2: CODECO IRCEP Target Groups..... 6

Figure 3: CODECO IRCEP Application Process. 7

List of Tables

Table 1: IRCEP CODECO Challenges..... 7

1 Introduction

This document provides comprehensive guidelines for the CODECO Innovation and Research Community Engagement Programme (IRCEP), aiming to offer clarity and direction on its practical implementation. It has been developed in the context of WP7, Task 7.2, which began in April 2024 (M16) and will continue until the end of the project (M36).

The document begins by exploring the theoretical foundations of the IRCEP concept, then shifts to the various variables that emerge from this concept and shape its main variables, which are the Experimentation and Validation Challenges.

Reporting activities are emphasized as crucial for collecting, analysing, and presenting essential data related to the programme, with a focus on clear and transparent communication. Data handling is addressed through strategies aimed at preserving data integrity and ensuring secure storage. Additionally, mechanisms for protecting privacy are explored, in line with applicable regulations and ethical standards.

Ethical considerations are integrated throughout the document, highlighting their relevance at every stage of the programme. The ethical implications of data collection, analysis, and dissemination are critically examined, with an emphasis on responsible use, transparency, and the mitigation of potential harms.

2 Concept

2.1 What is IRCEP?

The aim of IRCEP, supported by the pillars in Figure 1, is to further exploit the CODECO ecosystem by targeting the CODECO stakeholder groups. To do so, a series of activities will be made available to interested parties, with their evaluation being carried out under the following principles: (i) creativity and innovation; (ii) transparency; (iii) fairness and impartiality; (iv) confidentiality and ethics; (v) timely implementation and concrete deadlines.



Figure 1: IRCEP Pillars

Activities made available by IRCEP will be tailored towards specific target groups, which should, ideally, be closely connected to the 4 categories of use-cases across the domains of

Smart Cities, Manufacturing, Energy and Smart Buildings, but also allow for external elements to propose extensions and experimentation across other domains. These specific groups, as displayed by Figure 2, can then be summarized into the below typologies: (i) Small and Medium Enterprises; (ii) Early Developers; (iii) Researchers and (iv) Students in relevant areas.



Figure 2: CODECO IRCEP Target Groups

Prospective participants always need to fit within the preceding target groups, but this is not the only criterion at hand. In tandem with the target groups categorization, they need to have demonstrable expertise and their activities must generate co-relations with CODECO, and their motivation needs to be sufficiently elaborated upon and, essentially, they should align with CODECO's end goals.

The above information can also be found on the project's website, more specifically at: <https://he-codeco.eu/ircep/>

2.2 Challenges

CODECO's Innovation and Research Community Engagement Programme (IRCEP) promotes a series of **Experimentation and Validation challenges**, which are made available through a dedicated page on the CODECO website. These challenges were developed in order to ensure alignment with the project's evolving focus areas and to maximize engagement from the identified target groups.

The challenges are designed to foster practical involvement across CODECO's key domains and may take various forms, including:

- (i) **Targeted experiments.**
- (ii) **Co-creation activities.**
- (iii) **Solution validation exercises.**
- (iv) **Thematic competitions.**

Challenges were initially proposed by INO, with input and suggestions welcomed from all project partners, with this procedure having shaped the final list of challenges. Once a proposal is approved by the project coordinator, FOR, it becomes part of the official IRCEP programme and should proceed to be announced through the project's website and social media channels.

Each published challenge includes detailed information on the following:

- **Target thematic areas.**
- **Location and timeline (if applicable).**
- **Technical partner of the consortium.**
- **Available budget and support mechanisms.**
- **Challenge scope and objective.**
- **Participation requirements.**
- **Submission procedures and evaluation criteria.**

The table below presents the challenges that are made available under the scope of IRCEP, along with the mention of the main consortium partner responsible for its creation and ongoing support for implementation:

Table 1: IRCEP CODECO Challenges

Challenge Name	Lead Partner(s)
CODECO deployment and scalability	ICOM
CODECO scheduling against K8s	FORTISS
CODECO Data generator	UPRC
CODECO PDLC and placement strategies	I2CAT
CODEF and benchmarking	ATH and UPRC
CODECO secure connectivity	UC3M
CODECO Energy-awareness strategies	FORTISS
CODECO Resilience strategies	FORTISS

Detailed descriptions of each of the aforementioned challenges are present on the project's website, more specifically at: <https://he-codeco.eu/ircep/ircep-challenges/>.

2.3 Submission Period

CODECO's IRCEP programme is launching its **Experimentation and Validation challenges**, with the first challenges planned to open for submission in **June 2025**. These challenges are scheduled to remain open until **late October to early November 2025**, providing an extended window for participation and engagement across CODECO's target communities.

3 Application

Stakeholders interested in participating in a challenge supported by CODECO's IRCEP Programme must go through a structured application process, as illustrated in Figure 3. This process is designed to ensure that the evaluation committee receives all relevant information needed to carry out a thorough and effective assessment of each submission.

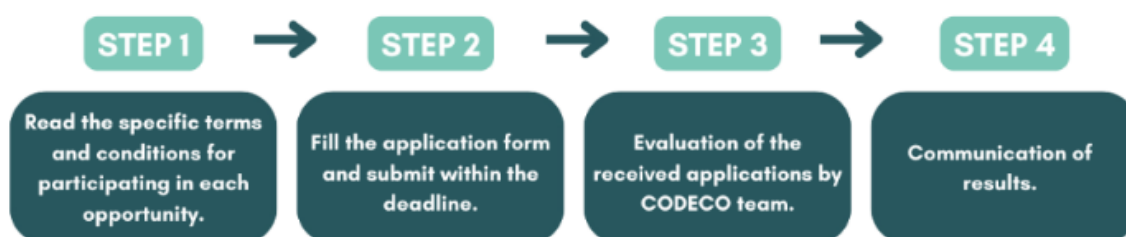


Figure 3: CODECO IRCEP Application Process.

Submissions can be accessed via the IRCEP menu on the CODECO website at the following link: <https://he-codeco.eu/ircep/ircep-challenges/>. Considering the scope of the challenges, the process is entirely online and will follow a three-stage process:

- (i) Filling of a EUSurvey (linked in the individual page of each challenge), where all the necessary administrative information needs to be filled, such as name, contact, organisation of any given applicant. Moreover, applicants are expected to answer fields such as their co-relationship with CODECO and motivation to take part in the challenge.
- (ii) Analysis by INO of the received applications to ensure transparency and validity of all received applications, before proceeding to the proper challenge.

- (iii) Forwarding of the approved applications to the technical partner responsible for each challenge. Each partner is responsible for supporting the applicant in the completion of each challenge, providing them with all the necessary technical platforms.

3.1 Language

English is the official language for CODECO IRCEP. Submissions done in any language other than English will not be eligible or evaluated.

Moreover, English is the only official language during the whole implementation of the IRCEP program. This means that any requested submission of documentation and deliverables will be done in English to be eligible.

3.2 Documentation formats

Any documentation requested in any of the phases of IRCEP must be submitted electronically.

3.3 Conflict of Interest

Applications will not be accepted from individuals or entities who are partners (beneficiaries) or linked-third parties in the CODECO consortium or who are formally linked in any way to the partners/linked-third parties of the CODECO consortium, and their employees and permanent collaborators. Any entity with a previous link to a CODECO beneficiary (e.g., spin-off), will not be accepted, unless a minimum of 2 years has passed since the termination of the link.

Applicants must not have any current and/or potential conflict of interest with the CODECO IRCEP program and during the whole program. Applicants must formally and immediately notify the CODECO project coordinator of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interest and take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

All cases of conflict of interest will be assessed case by case. Applicants must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective evaluation and implementation of the project is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

If a conflict of interest is discovered and confirmed at the time of the evaluation process, the proposal will be considered as non-eligible and will not be evaluated.

3.4 Awards

For each IRCEP challenge, a **maximum of three submissions** are expected to be awarded. Each selected submission will receive a **financial award of €2,800**. This amount will be transferred **only after** the submission has been formally evaluated and approved by **two independent reviewers** from within the project consortium.

To enable the administrative processing of the financial award, **selected participants are required to complete a Statement of Discharge form**, which will be provided by INO.



3.5 Timeline

The IRCEP challenges are scheduled to **open for submissions in June 2025**. Applications will be **accepted and evaluated on a rolling basis** until the **early part of November 2025**. After this period, the submission window will close, and **no further applications or evaluation activities will be accepted or conducted** beyond the established deadline.

Participants are encouraged to submit their proposals well in advance to allow sufficient time for the evaluation and administrative processes.

3.6 Evaluation

The evaluation of submissions under the IRCEP challenges will be conducted in **two distinct phases**.

In the **first phase**, the **technical partner responsible for supporting the applicant** will carry out a preliminary assessment of the submission. This initial evaluation focuses on the technical relevance, feasibility, and alignment with the challenge objectives, with each variable having a maximum score of 5.

In the **second phase**, the submission—along with the initial evaluation—will be reviewed by **two designated reviewers** from **different organisations within the project consortium**. These reviewers will validate the assessment and provide **final results** to **INO**, which will oversee the administrative aspects of the process.

The entire evaluation procedure is expected to take approximately **2 to 3 weeks** from the date of submission. Selected awarded parties will be contacted by email by the team at INO.

3.7 Re-use of Challenge Content

The content provided as part of the CODECO Validation and Experimentation Challenge is intended solely for use within the scope of activities necessary to complete the challenge itself. Any use of this material beyond its original purpose—such as reproduction, distribution, or application in external contexts—must first be explicitly approved by the respective organisation responsible for supporting the creation of the specific challenge in question. Participants and third parties are expected to respect these boundaries to ensure proper use and attribution of the contributed resources.

4 Data Preservation, Storage and Privacy

4.1 Data Storage and Backup

All data gathered during each application process will be stored and controlled by the CODECO Coordinator (FOR) and the INO team (CODECO management team). This data will be stored according to the conditions set out under the project's official Data Management Plan (CODECO D21).

4.2 Data Selection and Preservation

Data inserted and shared by applicants will only be used for the purpose of analysing the received forms and proceeding with the evaluation procedure as well as being stored and



preserved for reporting purposes directly connected to CODECO. Moreover, only the data needed to carry out the defined purpose will be utilized and only for the strictly needed period for such.

4.3 Data Destruction

The different levels of data in CODECO are expected to live after the project lifetime. However, there may be cases where data expires, or one of the Partners (or external participants in the data collection) requests deletion of the data in accordance with Article 17 of the *General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR)*, which concerns the Right to erasure. In this case, the data responsible entity (rf. to Table 3) will handle a secure deletion process, after consultation with the CODECO Data Manager (INO) and the CODECO Coordinator (FOR). For this process, CODECO shall consider secure data erasure methods (e.g., specific software), ensuring that the deleted data will not be recoverable after destruction. Moreover, CODECO shall create an auditable report for the process.

5 Ethics

The data that will be collected during the CODECO project will be handled in line with the highest ethical standards and the applicable EU, international and national law on ethical principles. The CODECO data is under no specific legal requirements and will be shared after an embargo period, if applicable. No dataset containing confidential information, or any ethical or legal issues, will be deposited.

Particularly important is the CODECO third level of data, that might contain video and photography data of people. This needs to be anonymised as early as possible – preferably on the edge directly – and blur out faces and license plates. Only then can the researchers continue to process this data and make it available to external persons following FAIR principles.

Additionally, the CODECO internal Ethics Committee (ETC) exists to support the analysis of the proposed activities regarding data management and ethics assessment support. The procedure for reporting by the ETC is detailed in CODECO deliverable D1 - Handbook and Gender-Neutral Guidelines being summarized here for the sake of clarity. The ETC will continuously communicate with the CODECO Executive Board (rf. To D1), and report to the GeA findings on each plenary meeting, and on extraordinary meetings, if required. The ETC shall meet regularly with the project management team and consortium, every quartal, aligned with the plenary meetings, to oversee the right approach to the handling of the project related data. This is further described in D1. The ETC will follow the proposed DME and ensure that partners follow the proposed rules, making sure that they conform to the legislation regulations in force in the countries where the research will be carried out, as well as to the EC Ethical Legislation.

5.1 Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct for IRCEP establishes guidelines to ensure ethical, respectful, and productive collaboration among all participants. Core principles include respect, integrity, and inclusivity. Participants must respect diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and expertise, fostering an environment where every voice is valued. Integrity is crucial, requiring participants to adhere to honest and transparent practices in their research, reporting, and interactions. Inclusivity mandates the active engagement of all community members, ensuring that the benefits and burdens of innovation and research are equitably shared. Confidentiality is also



emphasized, with participants expected to protect sensitive information and intellectual property, respecting the privacy and contributions of all parties involved.

Furthermore, the Code encourages the dissemination of findings in accessible formats, promoting broad understanding and the potential for real-world application.

5.2 GDPR Compliance

The consortium is committed to conducting the project in accordance with any applicable local laws that apply such as GDPR (collectively referred to as the EU Data Protection Legislation).

To ensure GDPR compliance, no data will be collected or used without the explicit informed consent of the subjects (e.g., users) concerned. In this direction, users/subjects provided data must sign a proper informed consent form. The form will make explicit for what purpose data is collected, who has access to the collected data, as well as for how long the data will be securely stored and subsequently deleted. Users/subjects will be also free to access their own data whenever they like. This will empower the Individuals involved to make a voluntary informed decision about whether to participate in CODECO processes based on knowledge of the scope, purpose, procedures, and outcomes of the project. Moreover, CODECO actors (e.g., end-users) will also have the possibility to gain access to additional information about their personal data and the way they are processed. Likewise, they will be able to revoke their consent at any time.

6 Contact Information

If, after reading this guide, you have further questions regarding the process, please send Pedro Monteiro at pedro.monteiro@inova.business an email.

The CODECO consortium will provide information to the applicants via CODECO website, so that the information (question and answer) will be visible to all participants. No binding information will be provided via any other mean (e.g., telephone or email).

* In case of any technical issues, please include the following information in your message:

- your name and your email address;
- details of the specific problem (error messages you encountered, bugs descriptions, i.e. if a dropdown list isn't working, etc.);
- screenshots of the problem.

