



Call for Expressions of Interest to participate in the SCAR-Engage Programme



Application submission deadline:

Monday 29th of July 2024, 17:00 CEST



Invitation of selected countries to participate in the Programme:

Thursday 15th of August 2024, 17:00 CET



**Funded by
the European Union**



About RefreSCAR

RefreSCAR is a Horizon Europe funded Coordination and Support Action providing targeted support to the Working Groups (WGs) of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR). The WGs are the backbone of SCAR. They provide strategic policy advice, highlight priority research and innovation (R&I) topics and develop strategic R&I agendas across themes relating to agriculture, fisheries, food systems, forestry and the wider bioeconomy. RefreSCAR aims to strengthen the strategic functioning and capacities of SCAR WGs in order to facilitate the improved coordination of national and European R&I programmes. The project runs from September 2023 to August 2027 and brings together a consortium of 18 organisations from 14 European countries.



Are you a member of a national delegation to the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) - <https://scar-europe.org> ? Would you like to increase your country's representation in SCAR Working Groups and accelerate your country's research and innovation (R&I) agenda in alignment with European priorities? If your answer is yes, we hope you will apply to the RefreSCAR SCAR-Engage Programme!

Are you an expert, eager to meet peers to exchange knowledge and learn from them? Contact your country's SCAR delegate and request to join one of the Working Groups or Task Forces supported through the SCAR-Engage Programme!

The SCAR Working Groups form an inspiring network of motivated peers. They offer unique platforms to develop R&I agendas, co-construct European R&I partnerships, and exchange experiences and best practices. Moreover, being a member of the SCAR helps delegates and scientists implement national research priorities at the European level, and helps align national and European R&I agendas.

1. BACKGROUND

SCAR is a European committee of **more than 35 countries** in the area of **agriculture, fisheries, food systems, forestry, and the wider bioeconomy**. It is composed of delegates from the 27 EU Member States (MS), with representatives of Associated Countries (AC) and Candidate Countries as observers. The European Commission, specifically representatives of the Directorate-Generals (DGs) for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), and Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), preside over SCAR and provide the SCAR Secretariat. SCAR's mission is to:

- Advise the EC, EU MS and AC on R&I priorities to address Europe's challenges in agriculture, fisheries, food systems, forestry, and the wider bioeconomy
- Co-create impactful R&I strategies, working closely with the EC
- Inspire R&I through foresight studies and by providing recommendations
- Strengthen the European Research Area (ERA). It is a key platform for co-creating Horizon Europe Partnerships, ambitious instruments that align EU and national R&I agendas to achieve actionable results in key Green Deal priority areas.

The **SCAR Working Groups (WGs)** are the backbone of the SCAR. Focusing on specific priority areas, they provide policy advice, highlight priority R&I topics based on needs and gaps, and develop strategic R&I agendas. Three kinds of Working Groups exist: **Collaborative Working Groups (CWGs)**, with a focus on thematic coordination, **Strategic Working Groups (SWGs)**, with a focus on strategic policy advice, and ad-hoc Working Groups or **Task Forces (TFs)** to tackle specific challenges, as required.

2. ABOUT THE SCAR-ENGAGE PROGRAMME

The SCAR-Engage Programme is a RefreSCAR initiative designed to support and empower new SCAR WG members and to increase country-level visibility within the SCAR WGs. It addresses a core objective of the RefreSCAR project to enhance inclusiveness within SCAR WGs and support the active engagement of WG members. We believe in empowering new SCAR WG members, especially those from countries which are under-represented or less visible in SCAR, with knowledge, supports and connections to enable their active participation and smooth integration into WG activities.

To achieve this, new WG members from up to **four countries per year** will be provided with tailored support under the SCAR-Engage Programme. By participating in the programme, new WG members from those four countries will benefit from a comprehensive support system including **peer-to-peer guidance, networking opportunities, knowledge exchange, country-level Individual Action Plans and financial support for attending physical SCAR WG meetings**. They will also have the chance to engage in networking events with Working Groups of interest and connect with relevant stakeholders across the SCAR community. It is envisaged that the programme will run four times (four annual programmes), thereby supporting members from up to 16 countries in total.

3. BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAMME

Peer-to-peer support and networking

A fundamental aspect of the SCAR-Engage Programme is to foster and encourage peer-to-peer support, networking, collaboration, and the exchange of knowledge among participants. Various networking and support meetings during the SCAR-Engage Programme year will be arranged, including country-level meetings, coupled with a virtual training webinar and a comprehensive Induction Pack.

Country-level Individual Action Plans

To account for the unique challenges and opportunities encountered by different MS/AC, the SCAR-Engage Programme will incorporate country-level feedback from SCAR-Engage participants as well as existing WG Members on the particular circumstances and needs of their country. This feedback will play a crucial role in developing Country-specific Action Plans tailored to address both immediate needs and long-term ambitions regarding participation in future SCAR activities. Through Individual Action Plans, the Programme will determine the barriers preventing deeper engagement in SCAR Working Groups and address the specific research and innovation requirements and interests of each country.

Financial support for attendance at physical WG meetings

Financial assistance is available to support new SCAR WG members to travel to physical WG meetings. The Programme will offer a fixed rate attendance fee of €600 per new WG member per physical meeting up to a maximum of three physical meetings per WG member per year, which can be used as a contribution towards any costs involved in attending these meetings. Planning of attendance at meetings will be discussed as part of the Individual Action Plan of each country, taking into account the indicative schedule of virtual/physical meetings of the respective SCAR WG.

Alumni Involvement and Certificate of Completion

After the completion of the 12-month SCAR-Engage Programme, participants can join the SCAR-Engage Alumni Network and will receive a certificate of completion from RefreSCAR as recognition of completing the SCAR-Engage Programme. Alumni will be invited to volunteer as mentors for new members to their respective Working Groups or Task Force and can get involved in the launch meetings for subsequent programmes to share their knowledge and experiences.

4. LIST OF CURRENT SCAR WORKING GROUPS/TASK FORCES

There are currently seven SCAR Strategic Working Groups, two SCAR Collaborative Working Groups and one Task Force:

- SCAR Agroecology SWG
<https://scar-europe.org/agroecology-mission-and-aims>
- SCAR AKIS SWG – Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems
<https://scar-europe.org/akis-mission-and-aims>
- SCAR ARCH SWG – European Agricultural Research towards greater impact on global CHallenges / International Facility
<https://scar-europe.org/arch-mission-and-aims>
- SCAR Bioeconomy SWG
<https://scar-europe.org/bsw-mission-aims>
- SCAR FISH SWG – Fisheries and Aquaculture Research
<https://scar-europe.org/fish-mission-and-aims>
- SCAR Food Systems SWG
<https://scar-europe.org/food-mission-and-aims>
- SCAR FOREST SWG – Forests and Forestry Research and Innovation
<https://scar-europe.org/forest-mission-and-aims>
- SCAR SAP CWG – Sustainable Animal Production
<https://scar-europe.org/spa-mission-and-aims>
- SCAR AHW CWG – European Animal Health and Welfare Research
<https://scar-europe.org/ahw-mission>
- Protein Task Force



5. WHO CAN APPLY?

Applications are invited from **national delegations to SCAR**, including from EU Member States, Associated Countries and Candidate Countries. As SCAR WG members are nominated by national delegates in the SCAR Plenary (SCAR's governing body), applications must be submitted by Plenary level delegates and will not be accepted from SCAR WG members.

Only one application per country is allowed – if there is more than one national delegate in the SCAR Plenary, a discussion should take place at the national level in order to agree on the submission of an application to the programme and to decide on the experts to be nominated as new SCAR WG members.

A Lead Contact Person should be nominated in the application form, who will serve as the main contact point to inform following the assessment of applications.



6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants will fall into one of two categories:

Category A Applicants: countries with members in **four SCAR WGs or less**. This category represents the **main target** of the programme. Category A applicants will be invited to nominate **new members in up to five WGs** of their choosing. Financial support will be offered to new members of up to five WGs to each attend a maximum of three physical WG meetings per year. Induction, peer-to-peer and networking support will also be provided (see Section 3. Benefits of the Programme).

Category B Applicants: countries with members in more than four WGs but which are missing engagement and membership within a **particular WG(s) that is of strategic importance to them**. Justification must be given for the importance of the WG(s) to their national priorities. Financial support will be offered to support the attendance of new WG member(s) at a maximum of three physical meetings of the identified WG(s). Induction, peer-to-peer and networking support will also be provided (see Section 3. Benefits of the Programme).

Figure 1 shows the representation of EU MS/AC in SCAR WGs, and the Protein Task Force based on information provided on representatives formally nominated as of January 2024. It is, however, worthwhile considering that the listed members may not all be contributing and active. Therefore, consideration will be given to cases where listed members are not active provided that details and justification are provided.

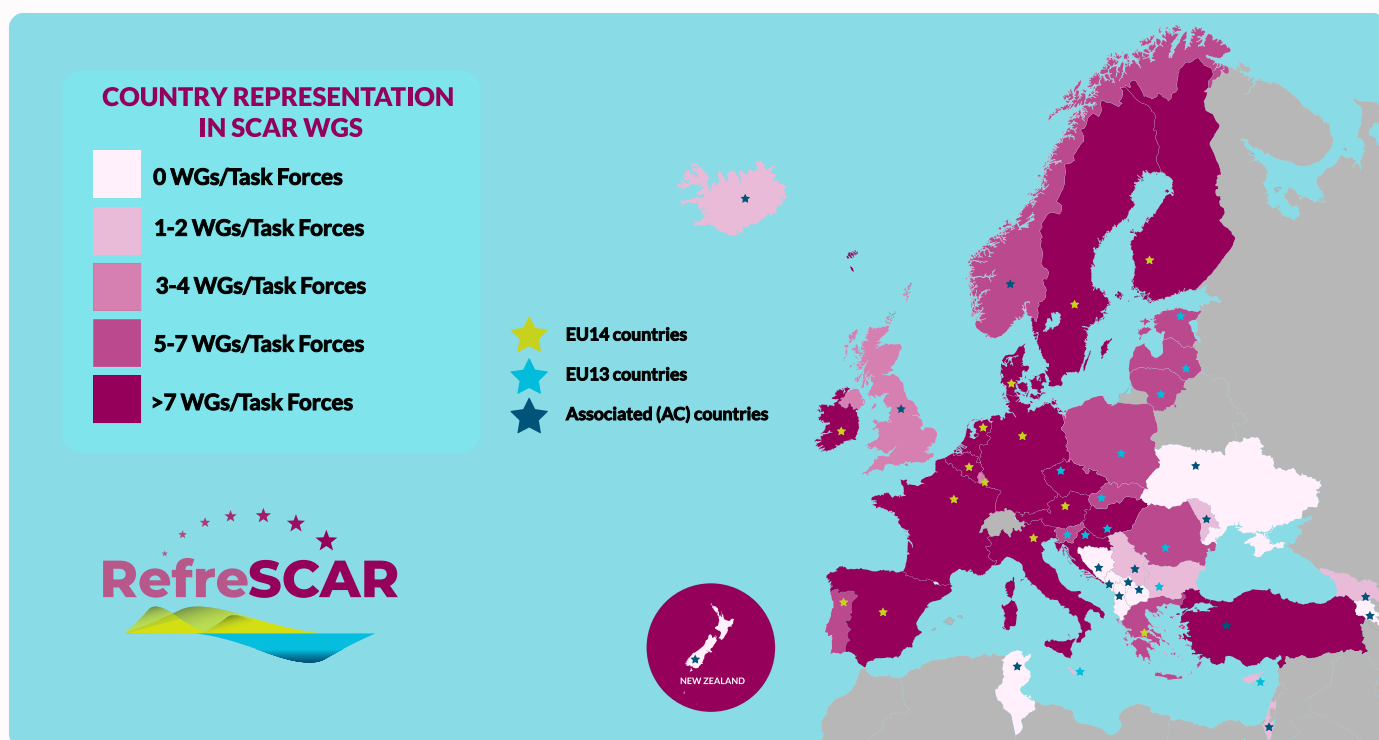


Figure 1. Country representation in the SCAR WGs and Protein Task Force (number of members formally nominated as of 30.01.2024.)

Countries are eligible to nominate new members to **any of the SCAR WGs or the Protein Task Force**, up to the limits described for the Category A and B applicants above. For the avoidance of doubt, any reference made in this document to supports available to new SCAR WG members also pertains to new members of the Protein Task Force.

7. ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS

The countries to be supported in each year of the SCAR-Engage Programme will be selected based on the following criteria

- Number of members on a country-level already active in SCAR WGs/TFs (with countries having a low number of members present having a higher priority).
- Motivation for nominating new WG/TF members to participate in the programme
- Selection of and expertise of potential new WG/TF members
- National measures to support and monitor the participation of new WG/TF members
- Measures to increase awareness of the SCAR WGs/TFs in your country

Consideration will be given to the cohort of countries as a whole for a particular year. When choosing a country for a particular annual programme, efforts will be made to bring together countries with some prior experience and involvement in SCAR with countries taking part in SCAR for the first time. This strategy seeks to encourage information sharing and enable the horizontal transfer of support.

8. NOMINATION OF NEW SCAR WG/TF MEMBERS

Country delegations interested in applying to the SCAR-Engage Programme are encouraged to **identity their new SCAR WG/TF members at the time of application**. However, it is still possible to submit your application even if the expert(s) has/have not agreed to join the relevant SCAR WG/TF. In this case, it becomes more important to name additional potential experts (up to a maximum of three per SCAR WG/TF) in the application form. At the very latest, the names of new SCAR WG members will be required by **Thursday 15th August 2024**, when the countries selected to participate in the first year of the programme will be informed and new SCAR WG members will be invited to join the programme's activities.

Please note that **recently appointed SCAR WG/TF members**, i.e. in the **12 months preceding the call deadline**, will also be eligible for consideration as new WG/TF members.

7.1 Gender balance

The SCAR-Engage Programme aligns with the strategic goals of the European Commission and aims to provide and promote equal opportunities and gender equality. Thus, we urge national delegations to consider gender balance in their nomination process for new SCAR WG members. This is imperative as members will be supported within the SCAR-Engage Programme in various activities and financial mechanisms and thus, equal opportunities should be considered.

In order to promote positive alignments with gender equality activities, the SCAR-Engage Programme will collect testimonials in order to mainstream success stories and as such promote country, WG- and member-level achievements and involvement. Such testimonials will be a direct recognition of the contributions to SCAR WGs/TFs and their activ-

7.2 Skill sets and background to ensure successful participation

The SCAR-Engage Programme supports activities that aid the increased participation and representation of MS/AC in SCAR through enhanced involvement in Working Groups and Task Forces (active engagement and high visibility). To complement and expand the activities of SCAR Working Groups and Task Forces, SCAR-Engage applicants may wish to consider the following attributes, skill sets and background identified as important by SCAR WG/TF Chairs for new members:

- 1. Types of institutions/organisations** to consider when nominating new members to SCAR WGs/TFs – representatives of science/research performing organisations (RPOs); ministry representatives and national policymakers; funding organisations (FOs)
- 2. Competencies of members** so that efficiency in contributions to WG/TF activities is achieved – new members are expected to be familiar with the **working of EU-funded projects/initiatives** and international collaboration, possess some knowledge in international research and have a holistic view of activities related to their WG/TF; understand cross-cutting scientific issues with some familiarity of applied sciences
- 3. Level of engagement** expected from new WG/TF members – presence in meetings (on-line and physical) is required (the SCAR-Engage Programme provides support for physical meeting attendance); active participation and idea sharing during meetings is favourable and will be strengthened through peer-to-peer engagement; co-designing of ideas and activities is anticipated from new members.

9. EXPECTED LEVEL OF SCAR WG MEMBER COMMITMENT TO THE PROGRAMME

New SCAR WG members from countries selected to participate in the Programme are encouraged to attend **three country-level virtual meetings** intended to facilitate networking among members from the same country and to foster synergies across WG thematic areas:

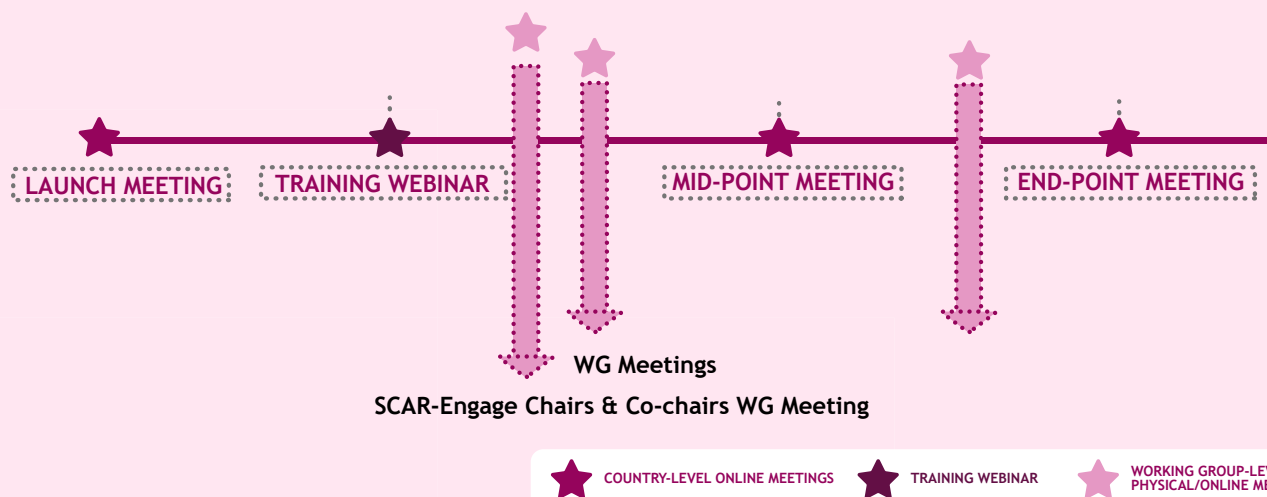
- **A launch meeting**, organised for each country at the start of that year's programme, involving all of the new WG members from that country,
- **Followed by a mid-term (6-month) and final (12-month) meeting.**

The new WG members will also be supported to meet virtually/physically with the (Co-)Chairs of the respective SCAR WG in order to introduce all parties and for the Chairs to brief the new delegates on the WG's activities.

New SCAR Working Groups and Task Force Members are expected to actively participate in activities related to their Working Group or Task Force. The scope of activities will vary depending on the WG/TF and it is advised that strong communication is maintained between members to ensure swift communication. Activities can include active idea sharing in meetings, leading topic discussions, participation at events and more.

The new WG members are encouraged to actively participate in training webinars and utilise the supporting information in the SCAR-Engage Induction Pack. Finally, the feedback of new WG members is important for the ongoing evaluation of the SCAR-Engage Programme. Short surveys will be disseminated at the end of the Programme to better understand the needs and preferences of the WG members, as well as country-level R&I priorities, and to ensure a successful Programme.

MEETINGS OF THE REFRESCAR SCAR-ENGAGE PROGRAMME



10. HOW TO APPLY?

An application form is available for completion <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LB6PCGC>. We kindly ask to complete and submit the form online by Monday 29th of July 2024, 17:00.

Timeline and activities

The Call for Expressions of Interest will close on Monday 29th of July 2024, 17:00 CEST. It will be followed by an assessment process, after which the Lead Contact Person for each country selected for the 1st year of the Programme will be informed of the decision and invited to provide the names of the new SCAR WG members to join the programme. Please, note that the SCAR-Engage Programme is to be launched for the second time by the end of 2024 and that applications submitted for the 1st year may be considered for participation in the subsequent Programme years.

11. CONTACTS & IMPORTANT DATES

More information: <https://scar-europe.org/home-scar/refrescar/scar-engage-programme>

Additional questions? Please contact: refrescar@teagasc.ie

About RefreSCAR: <https://www.scar-europe.org/refrescar>

Deadline for submission of applications: Monday 29th of July 2024, 17:00 CEST

Invitation of selected countries for the 1st year of the SCAR-Engage Programme:

Thursday 15th of August 2024, 17:00 CET

Programme Launch Virtual Meeting: TBD