ICONS

INNOVATION STRATEGIES

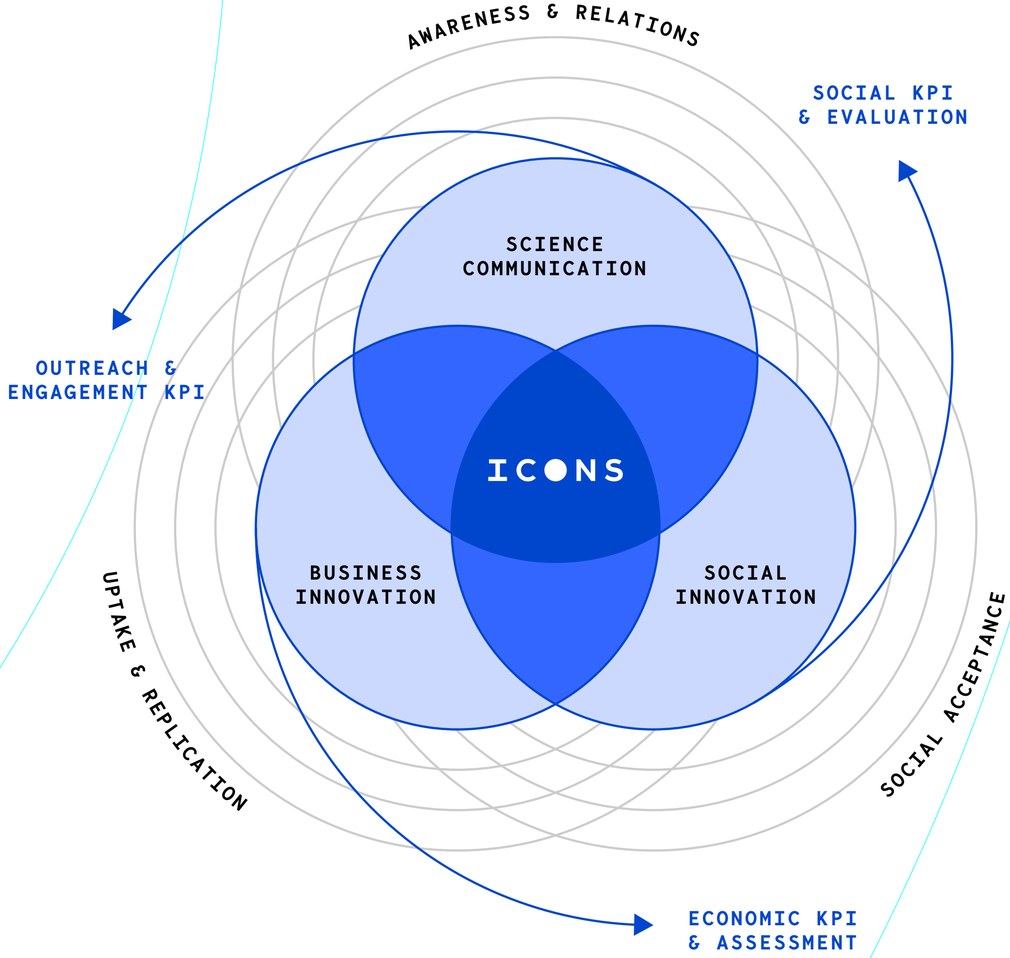
ICONS

We offer integrated support for Research & Innovation projects

With **over 25 years of expertise**, ICONS is a trusted and strategic partner in impact-driven Research & Innovation projects.

We support consortia in shaping, delivering, and demonstrating credible impact and uptake across the full project lifecycle and beyond.

By integrating **science communication**, **social innovation**, and **business innovation**, we help transform research into results that create societal value, are credible to stakeholders, and robust under evaluation criteria.



ICONS

We are a strategic partner for impact-driven European R&I

We help consortia translate research concepts into well-structured projects and transform project activities into credible societal impact and uptake.

→ From the set-up of the visual identity and communication channels, to the creation and distribution of contents.

→ From the analysis of user needs and requirements, to the involvement of stakeholders in participatory processes.

→ From the positioning of research results in the market, to the design of tailored exploitation strategies and sustainable business plans.



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OUR EXPERTISE

It spans three complementary and interconnected areas that support impact, uptake and sustainability across the project lifecycle.

Science Communication

FROM VISIBILITY TO MEASURABLE ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT

With decades of experience in communication for European research, ICONS supports consortia in designing and implementing **impact-driven science communication strategies**.

Our approach goes beyond visibility. We combine **tailored communication**, **dissemination** and **stakeholder engagement activities** to make sure research results are understood, used and engaged with by scientific, policy, industry and societal audiences.

ICONS applies the **Community Engagement Index (CEI)**, a **proprietary impact-measurement methodology**, to measure stakeholder engagement with project communication across channels and audiences. CEI enables continuous optimisation of communication strategies, ensuring that outreach efforts translate into **real engagement**, **awareness** and **uptake potential**.

OBJECTIVES

- → Help science connect with society, drive innovation, and amplify impact.
- → Raise awareness of EU-funded research and maximize engagement through accessible and inclusive communication.
- → Reach scientific, industry, policy, and societal audiences through tailored channels.
- → Measure, optimise and evidence communication performance through CEI.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Ensuring visibility, clarity, and credibility of research results

- → Visual identity and content strategy aligned with project objectives and target audiences
- → Web design and digital platforms development
- → Ethical and inclusive communication tools
- → Social media management and targeted campaigns
- → Journalism, data storytelling, infographics
- → Multimedia storytelling (video, podcasts, audiovisual formats)
- → Strategic media distribution

DISSEMINATION & ENGAGEMENT

Designing and executing knowledge transfer strategies

- → Stakeholder mapping and prioritisation
- → Targeted content creation and dissemination strategy aligned with project maturity
- → Actionable knowledge tools (technical briefs, results-packs, policy briefs, handbooks, infographics, learning platforms)
- → Networking with scientific, industry, policy and societal stakeholders
- → Events, workshops, and capacity building activities

IMPACT MEASUREMENT

Demonstrating outreach and engagement impact

- → Measurement of communication and engagement performance
- → CEI (Community Engagement Index) to assess stakeholder engagement
- → Analysis of stakeholders' perception and engagement quality
- → Evidence-based optimisation of communication strategies
- → Support to impact reporting for reviews and evaluations

Social Innovation

ENABLING HUMAN-CENTRIC, INCLUSIVE, AND SOCIALLY GROUNDED INNOVATION

Innovation does not progress through technology alone. In European R&I projects, **social value**, **legitimacy**, **inclusiveness** and **alignment with real user and societal needs** are critical conditions for long-term impact, uptake and sustainability.

ICONS supports consortia in integrating **human-centric** and **participatory approaches** throughout the project lifecycle, ensuring that research and innovation processes are informed by users, citizens, workers, and stakeholders. Through social innovation, we help generate meaningful social impacts that go beyond acceptance, shaping solutions that are relevant, inclusive, usable and legitimate in real societal contexts.

OBJECTIVES

- → Integrate Social Science and Humanities (SSH) in R&I projects
- → Support citizen and stakeholder engagement and dialogue
- → Facilitate co-design and co-creation
- → Measure and evaluate social acceptance and impacts via social KPIs

SOCIAL INNOVATION STRATEGIES

Embedding participation and co-creation

- → Context analysis and deep dives into stakeholder needs and user requirements
- → Participatory design and co-creation models
- → Tailored engagement and co-creation roadmaps aligned with project objectives
- → Training and capacity building on the implementation of social innovation strategies
- → Engagement tools and methods; facilitation of participatory workshops and Living Labs
- → Support to policy design

APPLIED SOCIAL RESEARCH

Human-centric evidence to inform project design and implementation

- → User research
- → Theory of Change (ToC) to link activities, outputs, and societal outcomes
- → Impact assessment
- → Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research
- → Data analysis to inform implementation choices

EVALUATION RESEARCH

Assessing social impact, acceptance, and policy relevance

- → Measurement frameworks for social impact and knowledge valorisation
- → Indicators and metrics for stakeholder engagement and policy uptake
- → Social Acceptance (i.e. TAM, UTAUT) and behavioural change analysis
- → Evidence to support impact reporting and evaluation

Business Innovation

FROM RESEARCH RESULTS TO UPTAKE, REPLICATION, AND LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

In European R&I projects, impact depends on the ability to translate research results into **usable**, **adoptable** and **sustainable outcomes**, whether through market uptake, policy use, standardisation or further research and development. ICONS supports consortia in structuring **exploitation** and **sustainability strategies** that are realistic, evidence-based and aligned with the nature and maturity of project results. Our work covers both commercial and non-commercial pathways, helping partners anticipate market and organisational barriers to uptake and scalability.

By integrating business innovation thinking throughout the project lifecycle, we help consortia strengthen impact credibility, reduce post-project risks, and **prepare results for real-world deployment and replication**.

OBJECTIVES

- → Assess innovation potential and develop frameworks for knowledge valorisation, IPR management, and economic feasibility.
- → Analyse market and policy dynamics to support strategic decision-making.
- → Design sustainability strategies, replication, and commercialization roadmaps.
- → Provide evidence-based recommendations and strategic guidance for upscaling.

INNOVATION MANAGEMENT & UPTAKE

Turning research results into adoptable solutions

- → Identification and characterisation of Key Exploitable Results (KERs)
- → Innovation potential assessment and maturity analysis
- → Knowledge and IPR management strategies
- → Market, ecosystem, and value chain mechanisms
- → Identification of uptake barriers & enablers
- → Upscaling, go-to-market or adoption roadmaps aligned with result maturity

BUSINESS MODELLING, SCALABILITY & REPLICATION

Ensuring viability beyond the project lifetime

- → Business models and scenario analysis (commercial and non-commercial)
- → Business and sustainability planning
- → Funding and financing schemes identification
- → Economic impact models
- → Replicability and transferability frameworks

STRATEGIC CONSULTING & CAPACITY BUILDING

Strengthening partners' ability to plan and deliver impact

- → Evidence-based recommendations for exploitation and sustainability
- → Strategic support to industry actors, research organisations, and public bodies
- → Capacity building, training and upskilling on post-project planning

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PROPOSAL SUPPORT SERVICES

ICONS | PROPOSAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Supporting consortia before funding

FROM PROJECT IDEA TO COMPETITIVE PROPOSAL

Preparing a successful Horizon Europe proposal requires more than technical excellence.

ICONS supports coordinators and consortia in structuring credible, evaluator-oriented proposals, ensuring coherence between project objectives, impact pathways, stakeholder engagement, and exploitation strategies.

Building on our experience as partner in EU-funded projects, we help translate project ideas into clear, consistent and convincing proposals, fully aligned with call requirements and evaluation criteria.



OUR SUPPORT CAN BE ACTIVATED ACROSS THE FULL PROPOSAL LIFECYCLE OR SELECTIVELY, DEPENDING ON CONSORTIUM NEEDS, INTERNAL CAPACITY AND ROLE DISTRIBUTION.

Modular support aligned with proposal preparation phases

FRAME

Understanding the opportunity, call context, and strategic positioning

- → Opportunity and topic analysis
- → Strategic positioning and fit with call objectives
- → Concept clarification and compliance check
- → Partner profiling & consortium building support

SHAPE

Structuring a coherent, evaluator-oriented proposal narrative

- → Proposal narrative and overall logic
- → Structuring Excellence, Impact and Implementation sections
- → Work plan and governance design
- → Pathways to impact, C&D plan, and exploitation framing
- → Writing support and consolidation of proposal sections

DELIVER

Consolidating, reviewing and finalising the proposal submission

- → Evaluator-lens review and consistency check
- → Budget consolidation and Part A completion
- → Final quality check and submission support

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ABOUT US

Who we are

ICONS is a strategic partner in **EU-funded Research** & **Innovation projects**, supporting consortia in maximising the impact, uptake and sustainability of research results through **integrated communication**, **social innovation** and **business innovation approaches**.

Founded in 1999, ICONS has contributed to **140+ EU-funded projects** and to **multiple service contracts** for the European Commission. Our work **spans the full project lifecycle**, from early positioning and stakeholder engagement to exploitation, replication and post-project sustainability.

ICONS is also a contracting partner of the **Horizon Results Booster**, the European Commission's flagship initiative to accelerate dissemination and exploitation of EU research outcomes.

Why consortia work with us

140+

EU projects supported across Horizon Europe, H2020, FP7

80+

Horizon Europe projects, including RIAs, IAs, CSAs, Missions

- → Strategic consultancy for different **EC DGs** and **EU Agencies**
- → Strategic advisory partner for **innovation management** and **knowledge valorisation**
- → Contracting partner of the **Booster** (DG RTD)
- → Responsible partner for the communication and dissemination activities and technical social innovation expert of the **BRIDGE** and **ETIP SNET Secretariat** (DG ENER/CINEA)
- → Official Partner of the **New European Bauhaus**
- → Associate Partner of **EIT Culture & Creativity**

Research domains that we cover

- CITIES & COMMUNITIES
- BUILT ENVIRONMENT
- BATTERIES
- AGRICULTURE & SOIL
- ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE
- SOCIETY
- ENERGY & RENEWABLES
- TRANSPORT
- FOOD
- SECURITY
- CIRCULAR ECONOMY
- INDUSTRY
- EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES & ROBOTICS
- BIOECONOMY
- HEALTH

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INNOVATION STRATEGIES

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