EN

Annex X

Horizon Europe

Work Programme 2026-2027

10. European Innovation Ecosystems (EIE)

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Introduction

The European Union (EU) faces complex challenges, including the climate emergency, a relatively slow economic growth and a problematic geopolitical situation, particularly given the war of aggression in Ukraine. Among other factors, Europe's ability to respond to these challenges is closely linked to its capacity to innovate and become more competitive. Notably, deep tech[1] innovations, emerging from a growing cohort of startups in Europe, have the potential to deliver transformative solutions that can strengthen Europe's economic and environmental sustainability, as well as its global standing.

Cross-border collaboration is crucial to boost innovation and enhance Europe's competitiveness. Despite the competitive advantages of the European innovation ecosystems, much of the knowledge produced by researchers working in Europe remains unexploited. As has been highlighted by the Draghi report, a key reason behind this failure is the fact that researchers in Europe are less well integrated into networks of universities, start-ups, large companies and venture capitalists, which account for a large share of successful commercialisations in high-tech sectors.[2] Strengthening these networks, providing them with the infrastructure and resources they need, is a crucial step to putting research and innovation at the heart of our economy, as stated in the Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024-2029.[3]

Against this background, the European Innovation Ecosystems work programme promotes better connected and more efficient innovation ecosystems[4], creating framework conditions that would allow Europe to become a startup powerhouse, as foreseen by the EU *Startup and Scaleup Strategy*.[5] In line with this strategy, this work programme aims to address some critical obstacles faced by many startups and scaleups throughout their journey, notably linked to the high level of market fragmentation in Europe, which include limited access to capital, slow innovation uptake and underutilised potential of public procurement.

The work programme contains actions under the destination CONNECT. The actions under this destination focus on building interconnected and inclusive innovation ecosystems across the EU. Drawing on the existing strengths of national, regional and local ecosystems and encouraging the involvement of all actors and territories, this destination aims to reinforce network connectivity for sustainable business growth and to define and achieve ambitious collective goals for the benefit of society, including green, digital, and social transitions.

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1 Deep tech is a technology that is based on cutting-edge scientific advances and discoveries and is characterised by the need to stay at the technological forefront by constant interaction with new ideas and results from the lab. Deep tech innovations are understood to be those that have the potential to deliver transformative solutions, rooted in cutting-edge science, technology and engineering, including innovation that combines advances in the physical, biological and digital spheres. Deep tech is distinct from 'high tech' which tends to refer only to R&D intensity.

2 The future of European competitiveness – A competitiveness strategy for Europe

3 Ursula Von der Leyen, Europe's Choice: Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024-2029.

4 Definition as per Article 2(47) of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

5 EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy

This work programme contributes to all key strategic orientations and impact areas of Horizon Europe[6] and to increasing innovation cohesion. Furthermore, it works in complementarity with several other EU initiatives, including: the European Innovation Council (EIC), the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), including the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) the Digital Europe Programme, as well as other relevant funding and policy initiatives at EU, national, regional and local level[7], such as the Enterprise Europe Network[8].

At the policy level, the EIC Forum[9] will continue to work in a flexible manner to foster enabling framework conditions and flows of information, knowledge, talent and best practices among actors of innovation ecosystems and the EIC, to fully harness the potential of innovation. Overall, it will enhance the exchange of best practices and coordination of national innovation policy initiatives, including by providing policy orientations. By promoting a coherent and inclusive approach to EU innovation ecosystems' policy, it operates in complement to the actions in this work programme.

The National Contact Points for the European Innovation Ecosystems work programme are supported under the EIC work programme.

Proposals are invited against the following two calls for proposals:

6 Horizon Europe strategic plan 2025-2027 - European Commission (europa.eu)
7 Where applicable, funding from Member States / State resources must be compliant with State aid rules.
8 More information under "Enterprise Europe Network."
9 More information under "EIC Forum."

Calls

Call - Interconnected Innovation Ecosystems (2026.2)

HORIZON-EIE-2026-02

Overview of this call[10]

Proposals are invited against the following Destinations and topic(s):

Topics	Type of Action	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million)[11] 2026	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million)[12]	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
HORIZON-EIE-2026-02-CONNECT-01: From lab to market: Strengthening the role of Technology Transfer Offices in bringing knowledge to the market	CSA	5.00	Around 1.00	5
HORIZON-EIE-2026-02-CONNECT-02: European Startup and Scaleup Hubs pilot	CSA	20.00	Around 10.00	2
Overall indicative budget		25.00		

General conditions relating to this call	
Admissibility conditions	The conditions are described in General Annex A.
Eligibility conditions	The conditions are described in General Annex B.
Financial and operational capacity and exclusion	The criteria are described in General Annex C.
Award criteria	The criteria are described in General Annex

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11 Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

12 Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

	D.
Documents	The documents are described in General Annex E.
Procedure	The procedure is described in General Annex F.
Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements	The rules are described in General Annex G.

Call - Interconnected Innovation Ecosystems (2027.1)

HORIZON-EIE-2027-01

Overview of this call[13]

Proposals are invited against the following Destinations and topic(s):

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million)[14]	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2027		
Opening: 01 Jun 2027 Deadline(s): 15 Sep 2027				
Destination CONNECT: Interconnected Innovation Ecosystems				
HORIZON-EIE-2027-01-CONNECT-01: Startup Europe	CSA	18.00	Around 2.00	9
HORIZON-EIE-2027-01-CONNECT-02: Reinforcing synergies between experimentation spaces and innovation procurement	PCP	10.00	Around 10.00	1

[13] The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening.
The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.
All deadlines are at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.
The budget amounts are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for 2026 and 2027

[14] Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

HORIZON-EIE-2027-01-CONNECT-03: Enhancing cooperation with philanthropic organisations	CSA	5.00	Around 1.00	5
Overall indicative budget		33.00		

General conditions relating to this call	
Admissibility conditions	The conditions are described in General Annex A.
Eligibility conditions	The conditions are described in General Annex B.
Financial and operational capacity and exclusion	The criteria are described in General Annex C.
Award criteria	The criteria are described in General Annex D.
Documents	The documents are described in General Annex E.
Procedure	The procedure is described in General Annex F.
Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements	The rules are described in General Annex G.

Destinations

Destination CONNECT: Interconnected Innovation Ecosystems

Today's challenges are inherently complex and systemic and cannot be solved by individual actors or territories in isolation. Enhancing the innovation ecosystems across the European Union (EU) requires a holistic approach that is nuanced, collaborative and inclusive, connecting diverse actors along the research and innovation cycle.

Interconnectedness is particularly crucial to boost Europe's competitiveness. Despite the competitive advantages of the European innovation ecosystems, much of the knowledge produced in Europe remains unexploited. As has been highlighted by the Draghi report, a key reason behind this failure is the fact that researchers in Europe are less well integrated into networks of universities, startups, large companies and venture capitalists, which account for a large share of successful commercialisations in high-tech sectors.[15] This indicates that strengthening the links between resources, organisations and investors is a crucial step to putting research and innovation at the heart of our economy.

Such effectively connected ecosystems can provide innovative companies with the necessary support and conditions to thrive through access to capabilities, data, customers, knowledge, and talent. Network connectivity within and between innovation ecosystems greatly contributes to sustainable business growth with high societal value. In line with the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy the European Innovation focuses on helping innovators, founders and investors to Choose Europe! by improving the conditions for startups and scaleups, enabling them to capitalise on new geopolitical opportunities and reducing the reasons to relocate outside the EU.

Therefore, the actions of this destination aim to shift the European economy towards a more entrepreneurial, innovative model by strengthening and expanding cooperation between innovation players. They aims to create a dynamic ecosystem to better support the next generation of innovative companies whose solutions will lead the shift towards a more competitive EU and a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient world.

In addition to stronger innovation performance, increased competitiveness and faster transitions to a green and digital society, ecosystem integration can provide innovation actors and companies with access to new resources, markets, customers, and contribute to disruptive and innovative solutions. By being actively engaged in their local, regional, national, and European networks, companies can increase their overall growth potential.

Accordingly, this destination offers a holistic package of actions that:

[15] The future of European competitiveness – A competitiveness strategy for Europe

- Increase the capacity to convert knowledge generated in Europe into innovative products and services, leading to a higher rate of successful commercialization of these solutions by companies based in the Member States and Associated Countries;

- Reinforce EU strategic autonomy and increase resilience in the supply chains by opening up opportunities for innovative companies to access the public procurement market and scale up their business;

- Establish robust, pan-European alliances of top-tier deep tech startup and scaleup hubs embedded in research and higher education ecosystems;

- Facilitate market expansion for deep tech startups across regions and sectors, thus enhancing cohesion and competitiveness across the EU;

- Strengthen less-connected innovation ecosystems by integrating them into a Europe-wide collaborative network;

- Increase the level of public and private investments in innovative companies, particularly startups and scaleups, through strengthened links with investors, including foundations;

- Establish stronger links between innovation "leaders" and "strong" innovator regions with "moderate" and "emerging" innovator regions across the EU and Associated Countries;

- Promote a better alignment of the innovation policies of the Member States and Associated Countries, in line with the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy, through the EIC Forum;

- As a result of the above, achieve an increased level of retention of promising startups and scaleups in Europe, particularly in the deep tech sector and strategic sectors like life sciences, artificial intelligence, clean tech, biotech, security, defence (including dual use technologies), robotics, advanced and raw materials, quantum technologies, cybersecurity, and many others.

Where appropriate, the applicants should consider and actively seek synergies with possibilities for further funding from other relevant EU, national and/or regional innovation programmes, including Cohesion Policy funds, the Recovery and Resilience Fund and other public and private funds or financial instruments.

Expected impact

Proposals for topics under this destination should set out a credible pathway to strengthening robust interconnected innovation ecosystems and creating a favourable environment to promote the scalability of businesses, including in the deep tech sector, and more specifically covering one or several of the following impacts:

- More competitive and more efficient European innovation ecosystems which provide favourable framework conditions for the development and market uptake of innovative solutions, drawing on the existing strengths of national, regional, and local ecosystems;
- Enhanced cross-border network connectivity and inter-regional collaboration to untap Europe's potential for successful commercialization of innovative products and services, notably through reinforced links between resources, organizations, investors and policymakers;
- Improved access to funding by European startups and scaleups, notably in the deep-tech and strategic sectors, through diverse sources, including innovation procurement and philanthropy;
- Enhanced knowledge and technology transfer and capacity building within the European innovation ecosystems, providing innovative companies with the necessary conditions to thrive;
- Increased participation of less represented R&I stakeholders and less advanced innovation territories in the R&I cycle, capitalizing on the experience and vision of an increasingly diverse range of people, companies and territories while promoting social cohesion and gender balance;
- Improved systemic conditions to tackle key EU strategic priorities, including the green and digital transitions, through building innovative capacities;
- Increased coordination of innovation policy and networking activities by the Member States and Associated Countries through the EIC Forum.

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

HORIZON-EIE-2026-02-CONNECT-01: From lab to market: Strengthening the role of Technology Transfer Offices in bringing knowledge to the market

Call: Interconnected Innovation Ecosystems (2026.2)	
Specific conditions	
Expected EU contribution per project	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 1.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
Indicative budget	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 5.00 million.
Type of Action	Coordination and Support Actions
Eligibility conditions	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:

	The following additional eligibility criteria apply: This action requires the participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three (3) partners from at least three (3) different Member States or Associated Countries that are universities, higher education institutions or research technology organisations (RTOs).
Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply: Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025) [16].

Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Increased commercialisation of academic research results, by facilitating access of industry, startups and scaleups to intellectual assets of academic research;
- Strengthened collaboration between industry and academia, reflected in an increased number of technology transfer deals and joint R&D projects resulting in market-ready innovations;
- Introduced more startup friendly intellectual asset transfer/licensing policies in universities/RTOs;
- Increased number of spinoffs by enabling researchers to overcome the barriers to commercialising their intellectual assets;
- Reduced transaction costs related to IPR negotiations by establishing more standardised asset transfer policies across universities/higher education institutions/RTOs;
- Optimised transfer/licensing processes by universities/ higher education institutions/RTOs based on grouping intellectual assets in portfolios that can be commercialised in package deals that are more attractive for industry and investors.

Scope: Academic knowledge producing organisations (universities, higher education institutions and RTOs) are acting as innovation engines by fuelling startups and industries. This potential can be nurtured with efficient intellectual management strategies and effective Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs). However, Europe's potential of research valorisation is underutilised.

[16] This decision is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf

Currently, it is challenging for industrial actors to identify and access academic results that have potential for commercialisation. On one hand a relatively complex fragmented landscape of TTOs generates high transaction costs discouraging companies, especially startups from engaging in collaboration or accessing academic research for commercialisation. On the other hand, the lack of financial and non-financial incentives for academic researcher hampers their commitment. Indeed, researchers cannot fully appropriate royalties from the licensing of intellectual assets and technology transfer activities are not recognised for their career progression.

In this regard, the Draghi report recommends European universities/RTOs to adopt a more coordinated, commercialisation minded, and startup friendly intellectual asset management approach based on good practices from EU countries that have started tackling this issue[17].

The objectives of the action are to:

- strengthen the adoption of startup-friendly intellectual asset management strategies;
- accelerate the commercialisation of academic research under fair and transparent conditions in an attractive way for innovative companies and investors, in particular for critical technology areas related to the EU's economic security;
- reinforce incentives for researchers to do the effort to protect intellectual assets and reinforce rewards that result from successful transfer and/or licensing;
- improve support for researchers to engage with innovators for commercialising research results;
- enhance intellectual asset management impacts of different universities by establishing a portfolio approach that markets intellectual assets in package deals;
- facilitate the collaboration between researchers, startups and innovative companies.

In terms of deliverables, project participants shall:

1. Harmonise intellectual asset management approaches on licensing, royalties, and technology transfer.
2. Standardize IPR negotiation templates and licensing agreements to reduce transaction costs for startups and corporates.
3. Conduct a comparative analysis of existing tech transfer models and develop a best-practice guide.
4. On this basis, create a common set of tools for start-up friendly licensing/transfer[18] to be adapted to the specific national/regional context with templates, strategies, successful

[17] For example, through the use of virtual shares or licensing conditions that compensate the university/RTO only at the time when sales/profits are made from the product that commercialises the IPR or when investors exit the company and/or by leaving IPR ownership with the professor/researcher

case studies and business models. The toolbox would include standardised rules and processes together with flexible and adaptable clauses to support negotiation, conclusion and implementation of licensing agreements.

5. Implement a common incentives and benefit-sharing model ensuring incentives for researchers to engage in commercialisation with a fair distribution of revenues from intellectual assets; establish the set of KPIs for knowledge valorisation and technology transfer; establish a collaborative space, enabling to match needs of the industry with researcher's interests and where the toolbox can be tested.

6. Using the licensing/transfer tools and benefit-sharing models, implement at least three pilot cases that incentivize researchers to engage in successful commercialization activities using the toolbox approach.

The participation of innovation agencies and/or national and regional authorities that can help universities/higher education institutions/RTOs in adapting their intellectual asset management policy and implementation is encouraged. Beneficiaries should ensure to consult relevant stakeholders in particular startups and SMEs to carry out the action.

HORIZON-EIE-2026-02-CONNECT-02: European Startup and Scaleup Hubs pilot: A Pan-European Alliance for Deep Tech Scaling

Call: Interconnected Innovation Ecosystems (2026.2)	
Specific conditions	
Expected EU contribution per project	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 10.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
Indicative budget	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 20 million.
Type of Action	Programme Co-fund Action
Eligibility conditions	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply: Projects must apply as networks of 3 or more hubs: consequently, this action requires the participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three legal entities from different Member States or Associated Countries[, of which at least 25% are established in 'moderate' or 'emerging' innovator

[18] In order to avoid duplication of work, the project should collaborate and build further where ever possible on results from other EU funded projects in the knowledge valorization domain[18]. This includes in particular projects from calls HORIZON-CL4-2023-HUMAN-01-31 and HORIZON-CL4-2024-HUMAN-02-35

	region.] The Regional Innovation Scoreboard is taken as a reference, and in the case of national authorities, the European Innovation Scoreboard. The applicants must use as a reference the latest version of the documents mentioned above at the time of the call opening. Associated Countries which are not included in the European Innovation Scoreboard and are ranked below 25 on the latest Global Innovation Index are considered as 'moderate' or 'emerging' innovators. In cases of Associated Countries not included in any of the previously mentioned references, the participation rank of the country in the Horizon Europe programme (Horizon Europe country profile) will be taken as a reference and countries ranked below the average will be considered as 'moderate' or 'emerging' innovators. The consortium must provide a single letter of intent at the moment of submission of the proposal indicating the source of the required 50% of complementary funding (e.g. national and/or regional funding, EU funding, or private investments).
Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply: Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties. The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants or vouchers. The maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 60 000.

Expected Outcome**:** Projects under this topic will contribute to the following outcomes:

1. Establish robust, pan-European alliances of top-tier deep tech startup and scaleup hubs embedded in research and higher education ecosystems.
2. Enable cross-border support and acceleration of deep tech startups and scaleups, including those funded by the EIC.
3. Facilitate market expansion for deep tech startups across regions and sectors, thus enhancing cohesion and competitiveness across the EU.
4. Increase the number and success rate of European deep tech startups scaling into globally competitive companies.
5. Strengthen less-connected innovation ecosystems by integrating them into a Europe-wide collaborative network.
6. Mobilise greater private and public capital into deep tech ventures across participating regions.

Scope:

This action builds upon the EU's strategic vision outlined in the *EU Competitiveness Compass*[19], the *EIC scaling strategy*, and the goals of the *Startup and Scaleup Strategy*[20]. It aligns with the objectives of strengthening Europe's deep tech capabilities, increasing regional innovation cohesion and supporting the growth of globally competitive companies.

The EU must act decisively to close the innovation gap with other world regions by enabling more commercial successes based on its scientific excellence. While Europe generates world-class research, European deep tech startups often struggle to scale into global champions. The *European Startup & Scaleup Hubs (ESSH)* initiative will address this structural weakness by creating a connected network of Europe's leading and emerging startup ecosystems.

Empirical studies highlight that deep tech spinoffs, startups and scaleups flourish in strong innovation ecosystems that bring together universities, higher education institutions, research organisations, corporates, entrepreneurs and investors, while also encouraging these hubs to expand their activities. Furthermore, the Science, Research and Innovation Performance report 2024 of the EU highlights a need for more interregional R&I collaborations to build on existing complementarities between innovation hot spots in Europe.

The action aims to pilot 2 networks of around 5-7 European Startup & Scaleup Hubs (ESSHs) — highly capable startup and scaleup hubs deeply integrated with leading research and higher education institutions and strong track records in venture building, scaling, and investment attraction as well as providing entrepreneurial education. These hubs shall collaborate across borders to:

- Open ecosystems to non-local startups, enabling scaling through access to talent, corporates, capital, infrastructure, facilities and mentoring.
- Foster shared infrastructure and expertise, including access to labs, facilities, research departments, and innovation services.
- Support pan-European startup acceleration, for both local and network-partner startups, including EIC-funded ventures, by connecting startups to relevant services of the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), European Digital Innovation Hubs and other EU, national, regional or local instruments.
- Bridge regional gaps by integrating less-connected ecosystems into the network via mentoring, shared services, and capacity building.

Particular attention should be paid to enable deep tech spinoffs, startups and scaleups accessing resources and services not directly available in their local innovation hubs, as well as facilitating the expansion of their operations on the single market.

The selected pilot ESSHs will form a Champions League of startup hubs, committed to supporting each other's startups including EIC beneficiaries and Seal of Excellence holders, thus catalysing a new norm of intra-European scaling.

19 Competitiveness compass - European Commission
20 Choose Europe for your startup and scaleup - European Commission

The project duration is expected to be 2 years.

Selection criteria for ESSHs shall include:

- Proven track record in startup creation, scaleup success, venture capital mobilisation, and entrepreneurial education.
- Strong integration of at least one place-based research and/or higher education institution and/or research and technology organisation in each hub represented in the consortium.
- Sectoral strength in deep tech areas with relevance for European strategic sectors such as such as for example, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, advanced semiconductors, medical technology, biotechnology, bioeconomy applications, cleantech and energy (including nuclear technology), water and blue tech, security, defence, space, robotics and advanced materials.
- Demonstrated ability to federate the relevant actors of the local innovation ecosystem and cross-border collaboration capabilities.
- Commitment to opening infrastructure, facilities and services to startups and scaleups from other hubs.

KPIs during pilot phase:

- Minimum 100 startups newly supported by the startup hubs.
- 50% of supported startups raise seed financing or venture capital by the end of the project.
- 75% of supported startups engage in cross-border collaboration or infrastructure use.

The ESSHs should facilitate access of deep tech spinoffs, startups and scaleups to all the relevant dedicated services, structures and funding opportunities available in Europe. This encompasses for instance the services offered by the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and European Digital Innovation Hubs[21] (EDIH), activities supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) as well as opportunities offered by the EIC and the EIC Scaling Club initiative (EIC Scaling Club - Home[22]). For this purpose, the startup hubs are encouraged to liaise with experts from the EEN, EDIH, EIT, EIT KICs and EIC. Cooperation could also be established with Regional Innovation Valleys, Excellence Hubs[23], Hubs for Circularity[24], and Industry 5.0 System Innovation Hubs[25].The action may be implemented through financial support to third parties or directly by the consortium partners to allow companies to best benefit from the services described above. For consortia opting for the financial support to third parties scheme, the monitoring of the support to third parties

21 European Digital Innovation Hubs Network (europa.eu)
22 Horizon Europe Grant Agreement n°101114582.
23 Excellence Hubs - European Commission (europa.eu)
24 Hubs4Circularity (h4c-community.eu)
25 HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-65: Network of Industry 5.0 system innovation hubs in connected Regional Innovation Valleys (IA)

provided for each action, as well as the management of the financial support to third parties, will be ensured by the coordinator.

HORIZON-EIE-2027-01-CONNECT-01: Startup Europe

Call: Interconnected Innovation Ecosystems (2027.1)	
Specific conditions	
Expected EU contribution per project	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 2 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
Indicative budget	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 18.00 million.
Type of Action	Coordination and Support Actions
Eligibility conditions	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply: The following additional eligibility criteria apply: At least 50% of the beneficiaries in a consortium must be established in 'moderate' or ‘emerging’ innovator countries or regions. The Regional Innovation Scoreboard is taken as a reference, and in the case of entities representing national authorities, the European Innovation Scoreboard. The applicants must use as a reference the latest version of the documents mentioned above at the time of the call closure. Associated Countries which are not included in the European Innovation Scoreboard and are ranked below 25 on the Global Innovation Index 2024 are considered as ‘moderate’ or ‘emerging' innovators. In cases of Associated Countries not included in any of the previously mentioned references, the participation rank of the country in the Horizon Europe programme (Horizon Europe country profile) will be taken as a reference and countries ranked below the average will be considered as ‘moderate’ or ‘emerging' innovators.
Legal and financial set-up of the Grant	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions

Agreements	apply: Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties. The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants or vouchers[26]. The maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 60 000. Applicants opting for this non-compulsory financial support scheme must allocate at least 60% of the total proposed budget to financial support to third parties. Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025) [27].

Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Increasing the market footprint of European startups in strategic digital technologies and deep tech [28] innovation, notably Artificial Intelligence, Advanced Computing, Cybersecurity, Next Generation Internet, Blockchain, Internet of Things, Metaverse, Energy, Greentech, AgriTech, and Fintech;
- Better connection of startups and scaleups, including European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and European Innovation Council (EIC)-supported startups and Seal of Excellence holders, to relevant local and/or European ecosystems, communities, and potential new markets;
- A scaling up of capabilities in matching technology solutions developed by highly innovative European Union (EU)-funded digital and deep tech startups with investment and growth opportunities in collaboration with other initiatives such as: the EIC, the EIT and the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), InvestEU, the Digital Europe Programme, Women TechEU, public and private buyers, or investors and corporate innovation ventures.

[26] Vouchers correspond to small grants provided to the third party for a specific purpose such as purchasing specific services from knowledge providers such as universities, research centres and facilities or firms

[27] This decision is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf

[28] Deep tech is a technology that is based on cutting-edge scientific advances and discoveries and is characterised by the need to stay at the technological forefront by constant interaction with new ideas and results from the lab. Deep tech innovations are understood to be those that have the potential to deliver transformative solutions, rooted in cutting-edge science, technology and engineering, including innovation that combines advances in the physical, biological and digital spheres. Deep tech is distinct from 'high tech' which tends to refer only to R&D intensity.

In pursuit of the above outcomes the projects are expected to prioritise:

- Startups and scaleups that have already achieved market-product fit or scale ups that have raised at least a round of financing (seed or later); and
- Startups and scaleups established in 'moderate' or 'emerging' innovator countries and/or regions; or
- Women-led startups and scaleups[29]

Scope: This action will connect local digital, deep tech, and manufacturing startup and scaleup ecosystems and support cross-border acceleration activities for startups and scaleups that demonstrate traction (i.e. market-product fit or at least a seed round raised). Among the startup and scaleup ecosystems to be connected, specific attention will be given to the inclusion of ecosystems in 'moderate' or 'emerging' innovator countries and/or regions.

While cross-border acceleration activities are open to all European startups and scaleups demonstrating traction, the action will also target companies identified in Horizon Europe (e.g. though the EIC, including the EIC Scaleup 100 action, EIT-supported companies and companies supported through Regional Innovation Valleys) and the Digital Europe Programme (e.g. from European Digital Innovation Hubs), and the use of Innovation Radar intelligence[30] and other relevant data sets[31]. Targeting of companies funded by national programmes, particularly those part of "Plug-in" certified programmes (see EIC Work Programme 2025 Annex 4) should also be considered.

In terms of outreach and amplification, actions should be publicised where relevant in the EIC Community[32] and should actively engage with activities and events of the Europe Startup Nations Alliance[33]. Special attention will be given to support European digital and deep tech startups and scaleups in accessing innovation procurement opportunities (public or corporate procurers).

The action may be implemented through financial support to third parties or directly by the consortium partners to allow companies to best benefit from the services described above. For consortia opting for the financial support to third parties scheme, the monitoring of the support to third parties provided for each action, as well as the management of the financial support to third parties, will be ensured by the coordinator.

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29 Startups founded, or co-founded by women, holding a top management position (chief executive officer (CEO), chief technology officer (CTO), or chief scientific officer (CSO) or equivalent).

30 The EU Innovation Radar Platform (Actions can also have Application Programming Interface (API) access to the Innovation Radar data sets).More information under "The EIC Community."

31 Including the work of the Joint Research Centre in the areas of innovative Startups and scale-ups with high growth potential.More information under "New European Alliance to accelerate startups growth."

32 The EU Innovation Radar Platform (Actions can also have Application Programming Interface (API) access to the Innovation Radar data sets).More information under "The EIC Community."

33 Including the work of the Joint Research Centre in the areas of innovative Startups and scale-ups with high growth potential. More information under "New European Alliance to accelerate startups growth."

The actions implemented must ensure that the companies that excel in technology get appropriate support to also thrive in product-market-fit, financial alignment, business model and revenue generation, team dynamics and leadership, and adaptability to external factors including regulatory challenges, industry trends, market changes and other factors to make them investment-ready.

The applicants should put in place proper communication and publicity of the actions engaged, including success stories of funded companies and case studies about the impact of the project.

The projects must track the growth of the supported startups and scaleups with output indicators, and estimate the projects' societal impact with impact indicators. The projects must ensure that consortium partners track the growth of the supported companies for three years after the project ends with a robust set of indicators which include:

- Output indicators tracking growth: (1) average percentage increase in revenue over time of supported companies; (2) total market share expansion of supported companies; (3) percentage of companies securing follow-on funding after the support; (4) amount of follow-on funding secured after the support; (5) average profitability of companies graduated before and after the program; (6) increase in market share of supported companies; (7) survival rate of supported companies (6, 12, 18 months after end of support for startups, and 1, 2, 3 years for scaleups).
- Societal impact tracking indicators (where applicable): (1) systematic startup growth in the region/country; (2) percentage contribution to the national and/or EU GDP growth by the supported startups; (3) number of companies addressing EU priorities of the European Commission; (4) other measurable societal benefits by supported companies.

HORIZON-EIE-2027-01-CONNECT-02: Reinforcing synergies between experimentation spaces and innovation procurement

Call: Interconnected Innovation Ecosystems (2026.2)	
Specific conditions	
Expected EU contribution per project	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 10.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
Indicative budget	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 10 million
Type of Action	Pre-commercial Procurement
Legal and financial	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions

set-up of the Grant Agreements	apply: PCP/PPI procurement costs are eligible. The beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties to provide financial incentives to final end-users to adopt the solutions. The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. The maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 200 000 to ensure the deployment and impact of the project outcomes. The specific conditions for actions with PCP/PPI procurements in section H of the General Annexes apply to grants funded under this topic.

Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Advancing public sector modernization by capitalising on the transformational power of innovative technologies to improve the quality and efficiency of public services,
- Reinforce EU strategic autonomy and increase resilience in the supply chains by opening up opportunities for innovative companies, including notably SMEs and startups, to access the public procurement market and scale up their business.
- Improving opportunities for market uptake and economies of scale for the supply side through increased demand for innovative solutions and where relevant contribution to standardisation, regulation or certification.
- It is expected that if PCP results in the successful innovative solutions than at least one of those will be ready for deployment or even being already deployed in the project.

Scope: This topic aims to shorten the time to market for innovations by reinforcing synergies between innovation procurement and experimentation spaces such as test beds, livings labs or regulatory sandboxes. While public buyers often do not use experimentation spaces to test before they invest, companies also too often only start looking for potential customers, verifying regulatory compliance and product certification after R&D is finished, which delays commercialisation. This action enables innovators to develop and test innovative solutions immediately in cooperation with public buyers and where relevant also with competent regulatory and certification bodies.

This specific challenge tackles both the gap between supply and demand for innovative solutions and the lack of cooperation of buyers with test beds, living labs, regulatory authorities and certification bodies during R&D. It targets therefore consortia of public buyers with similar procurement needs to drive innovation from the demand side, by together challenging the market to develop innovative solutions and by cooperating with test beds, living labs and where applicable with regulatory and certification bodies to remove regulatory and/or certification barriers for innovative solutions to enter the market in Europe. Cooperating with regulatory authorities has the specific benefit that then the testing

environment of the PCP procurement can serve also as a regulatory sandbox. By fostering innovation procurement and opening a route to the market for innovative companies, including in particular also startups and scaleups, this topic contributes to the objectives of the EU Startup Scaleup Strategy and the European Innovation Act.

PCP actions target consortia of procurers with similar needs that want to procure together and with relevant competent regulatory and certification bodies that want to cooperate with the procurers during the PCP project. Therefore, this topic does not provide direct funding to developers, industry or research organisations to perform R&D. They will be able to respond to the call for tenders launched by consortia of procurers funded under this call, and the winning tenderers will receive procurement contracts from the procurers. Specific guidance on PCP actions and minimum eligibility requirements can be found in General Annexes H of the Horizon Europe work programme.

Joint pre-commercial procurement enables public buyers to share the effort and costs of procuring R&D and create a critical mass of demand that can trigger suppliers to commercialise promising research that can address concrete public sector needs. The aim of engaging in such more forward-looking R&D procurement strategies is to modernize the provision of public services faster, whilst creating also opportunities for industry and researchers in Europe to take international leadership in new markets. Establishing a cooperation between public buyers and suppliers during the development and testing of the solutions enables to tune developed solutions to concrete customer needs. When public buyers don't have themselves advance test environments to test innovative technologies, cooperating with experimentation spaces such as living labs or test beds can help public buyers overcome this issue. Cooperating where relevant also with regulatory and/or certification bodies enables these bodies to learn already during the PCP about the potential impact of emerging innovations and adapt where needed the regulatory/certification process to accommodate smooth arrival of those innovations on the market. Testing the compliance of innovation solutions by a transnational buyers' group in cooperation with regulatory/certification entities of different countries can also facilitate early identification of potential implications of ensuring the compliance of emerging innovations with regulations in a cross-border context.

This topic complements calls for PCP Actions foreseen in other Horizon Europe 2025 work programmes, by tackling challenges that are not addressed by or that cut across the scope of PCP action topics in other work programmes[34]: It is open to proposals for PCP actions in all areas of public sector interest requiring innovative solutions linked to the EU strategic priorities. It is open both to proposals that require improvements mainly based on one specific technology field, as well as to those that require end-to-end solutions that need combinations of different technologies.

The aim is to leverage PCP to encourage the development and to provide a first customer reference for the piloting, installation and validation of breakthrough innovations.

[34] For an overview of PCP actions in other work programmes see: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/support-policy-making/shaping-eu-research-and-innovation-policy/new-european-innovation-agenda/innovation-procurement/horizon-europe-funding-pcp-and-ppi_en

Involvement of procurement decision makers is thus needed to ensure that end solution(s) are adopted by procurers, increasing the societal impact of the R&D activities. Therefore, procurers should declare in the proposal their interest to pursue deployment of solutions resulting from the PCP in case the PCP delivers successful solutions and indicate whether they will (1) procure successful solution(s) as part of the project during or after the PCP procurement, (2) launch after the project a separate follow-up procurement after the PCP to buy such type of solutions, (3) adopt successful solutions without the need to procure them (e.g. in case of open source solutions), (4) foresee financial or regulatory incentives for others to adopt successful solutions (e.g. in case the final end-users of the solutions are not the procurers but for example citizens).

In these four cases, the procurers can implement the project as a fast-track PCP (see general annex H). In the first case, the procurers must foresee the budget in the proposal to purchase at least one solution during the project (either as part of the PCP procurement budget or as part of the budget for subcontracting, purchase of equipment or other costs). In the second case, the procurers should include in the proposal a deliverable that prepares the follow-up procurement to purchase such type of solution(s) after the PCP procurement. In the first and third case, the procurers must foresee sufficient time during the project to deploy and validate that the solutions function well after installation. In the fourth case, the procurers can use financial support to third parties to provide financial incentives to final end-users to adopt the solutions, with a maximum budget of EUR 200 000.

The project funded under this topic should demonstrate a greater degree of ambition in terms of innovation level and/or deployment scope. The selection of the third parties to be supported under the grant will be based on an external review by independent experts of the proposed work.

HORIZON-EIE-2027-01-CONNECT-03: Enhancing the involvement of philanthropic organisations in innovation ecosystems

Call: Interconnected Innovation Ecosystems (2027.2)	
Specific conditions	
Expected EU contribution per project	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 1 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
Indicative budget	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 5.00 million.
Type of Action	Coordination and Support Action
Eligibility conditions	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:

	The coordinator of the project is expected to be a higher education institution, RTO or a network of such organisations. Consortia must include at least three participants from three different member states or associated countries, including higher education institution(s) or research technology organisation(s) (RTOs) and philanthropy organisation(s) or network of philanthropy organisations.
Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply: Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025) [35].

Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Increase the collaboration of philanthropic organisations with higher education institutions, TTOs, innovative companies and Venture Capital (VCs) in supporting innovative projects and companies to develop and grow;
- Support the transition of academic research and innovations from higher education institutions to market-ready solutions.

Scope: There are currently more than 33000 philanthropic organisations in Europe with EUR 50 billion of annual philanthropic expenditure and EUR 567 billion pool of philanthropic assets[36]. [37].Philanthropic organisations and higher education institutions have been working together for many years in supporting the development of breakthrough research and technologies. At the same time, the EU still faces challenges in bringing technologies to the market. Therefore, this action aims at building on these established models of cooperation to support the transfer of developed technologies to the market by supporting facilities (like living labs and test beds) and/or engaging relevant stakeholders to further commercialize technologies with concrete common objective.

The purpose of this topic is to incentivise philanthropic organisations support to projects with high-potential, not only through financial resources, but also by providing access to expertise

[35] This decision is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf

[36] McKinsey and Philea

[37] In this topic, philanthropy refers to foundations, corporate funders and individuals using their own financial and non-financial resources for the public good

and networks of like-minded stakeholders and investors, as well as by being themselves first users of new technologies, allowing for their testing.

Higher education institutions are expected to propose a plan outlining how they intend to advance and commercialize the research and technologies they have developed. This plan should detail how they will engage with philanthropic organizations and/or venture capital investors to support early-stage companies, as well as with businesses that could adopt university-developed technologies. It should also include strategies for involving other relevant stakeholders who can help bringing these innovations to market. The cooperation could take place at the regional, national or European level with the participation of at least one higher education institution or network of such organisations, RTO and one philanthropic organisation or network of philanthropic organisations. Consortia could also include accelerator or investors networks and government organisations and/or other relevant innovation stakeholders.

The role of the philanthropic organisation in the consortia could include, but is not limited to:

- Providing access to other investors and networks of like-minded stakeholders;
- Increase the awareness of the project among relevant stakeholders;
- Accelerate the implementation and adoption of developed technologies by other stakeholders;
- Being first users of new developed technologies, allowing for their testing.

The collaboration of beneficiaries should lead to concrete results, where the activities could include, but are not limited to one or more of the following:

- Bringing together diverse research and innovation actors to collaboratively develop a technology or combination of technologies. By the end of the project, the consortium should demonstrate the application—or confirmed interest in application—of the developed technology or technologies in the creation of new, or the improvement of existing, products and/or services by at least one startup, scaleup, or corporate entity.
- Supporting the creation of experimentation spaces and testing environments like living labs, testing beds, incubators or accelerators.
- In collaboration with Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs), supporting the launch of multiple spin-offs that successfully secure venture funding. The funding should come from at least one of the following investor types: angel investors, accelerators, venture capital firms, corporate investors, philanthropic organizations, or National Promotional Banks. As a result, a number of signed deals are expected.
- Building one or several accelerators with the aim to attract a number of startups to venture funding.

The duration of the project depends on the proposed project but in order to have quality results, it is foreseen to be between one to three years.

For the purposes of this call, eligible philanthropic organization should meet the criteria set by Philea for "public-benefit foundation": Specifically, five criteria had been collectively defined to consider an organisation as a public-benefit foundation[38]:

1. They are independent, separately constituted non-profit bodies.
2. They have no members or shareholders.
3. They have their own established and reliable source of income, usually but not exclusively from an endowment.
4. They have their own governing board.
    a. They distribute their financial resources for educational, cultural, religious, social or other public-benefit purposes, either by Supporting associations, charities, and educational institutions or individuals; or,
    b. Operating their own programmes.

To support the work of higher education institutions in identifying relevant philanthropic organisations to collaborate with, the Commission will also launch a study to map and profile the relevant philanthropic organisations working in the area of research and innovation in Europe.

[38] Public-Benefit Foundations in Europe : Comparative Analysis and Aggregate Figures Across 26 Countries - https://philea.issuelab.org/resource/public-benefit-foundations-in-europe-comparative-analysis-and-aggregate-figures-across-26-countries.html#:~:text=This%20briefing%20presents%20an%20up-to-date%20picture%20of%20the,European%20countries%20in%20a%20study%20conducted%20by%20Philea.

Other actions not subject to calls for proposals

1. Renewal of the EU Intellectual Property Helpdesk

In the European Union (EU), Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), including startups, individual innovators, researchers, and European micro small and medium-sized enterprises do not always have sufficient knowledge of how to best use Intellectual Property (IP)[39] to facilitate the exploitation of research results, and more generally to manage, disseminate and valorise technologies and other IP rights and assets. A smart use of IP will help EU creators and inventors to obtain adequate reward for their intellectual efforts. It also enables SMEs to appropriately commercialise and take advantage of their intellectual assets in the EU. It may increase the chances that the scaling up and exploitation will take place in the EU. It is instrumental in securing better margins, organising technology transfers, collaboration, and attracting investors. It may thus boost the resilience of the European economy.

This action supports the better use of IP by SMEs by providing for an EU IP Helpdesk based on the experience of the previous initiatives, inspired by the activities of the existing IP Helpdesk[40], and possibly extending its scope. The IP Helpdesk should raise awareness on IP matters via a website, develop and conduct trainings including Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), as well as customised advice in relation to cross-border IP issues across the EU and developing an IP strategy. The IP Helpdesk should work seamlessly with the European Innovation Council (EIC) acceleration services, as well as selected other innovation ecosystem services. It should in particular coordinate its website offering with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)[41], the European Patent Office (EPO)[42] and other EU-funded IP support services (namely International IP Helpdesks[43] and IP Scan[44]) and implement promotional activities in coordination with the action "Awareness raising on IP management for European research and innovation (R&I)".[45]

The EU IP Helpdesk is currently active on a three years contract from September 2023 until September 2026 which has a clause to be extended for an additional 24 months, securing the service until September 2028. This extension should allow for a continuation of :

- Improving EU SME's knowledge about IP showing specifically how to use IP as a strategic and structuring element for business development;

39 On SME challenges with IP, see the joint European Patent Office (EPO)-European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) study .
40 More information under "European IP Helpdesk."
41 European Union Intellectual Property Office.
42 European Patent Office.
43 More information under "IP Helpdesk."
44 More information under "Horizon IP Scan."
45 Projects supported under HORIZON-CL4-2021-HUMAN-01-17.

- Supporting EU project applicants for IP issues that are relevant in cross-border research and commercial relationships supported by EU funds (IP rights management as to the results of common projects);

- Supporting the management, dissemination and/or valorisation of technologies and other intellectual assets. This involves the provision of guidance to enhance the capacity of SMEs (including startups and scaleups) to compete internationally, the protection of their intangible assets timely and adequately, the examination of ways to leverage their intangible assets for investments and their support with proof-of-concept IP advice;

- Increasing the participation of the target group(s): entrepreneurs, SMEs and startups (applicants, together with the universities), startup hubs, universities (applicants), National Contact Points, Enterprise Europe Network partners, Chambers of Commerce, professional associations, EIC coaches, Business accelerators (applicants providers) for all in particular by strengthening the linkages with local stakeholders in 'moderate' and 'emerging' innovator countries[46] and peripheral European countries;

- Supporting the promotion of socially responsible IP practices, identifying areas of particular societal concern where non-exclusive, royalty-free licences on the IP resulting from EU-funded research could be granted for a limited time to innovators/SMEs;

Supporting the identification of critical IP created through public funding and prevent it from leaving the EU without control and guarantees.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Last quarter of 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 2.6 million from the 2026 budget

2. Studies and Communication

Activities under this action will support the Commission with appropriate expertise in preparation of new policy initiatives in support of innovation ecosystems. These activities may include studies, support and communication activities that are needed to analyse and enhance the EU R&I environment. Contracts under this action may be implemented on the basis of framework contracts, in order to further ensure that the Commission is provided with appropriate and timely analyses.

This action will also support the activities of the EIC Forum and/or its working groups through the hiring of experts. Experts will gather new or more robust evidence and produce analyses in support of policy discussions.

[46] References: European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS), Global Innovation Index (GII)

A special allowance of EUR 450 in the form of a daily unit cost for each full working day spent will be paid to the individual experts appointed in their personal capacity who act independently and in the public interest.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative budget: EUR 0.35 million from the 2026 budget and EUR 0.35 million from the 2027 budget

3. Mapping of European philanthropic organisations

A unique characteristic of philanthropy is its ability to respond in real time to the critical challenges facing our societies, while simultaneously taking a longer-term view. There is considerable alignment between EU research and innovation policy and philanthropic organisations objectives. Philanthropic organisations support innovative research, forward-thinking ideas, and experimental projects. In order to facilitate further the collaboration with higher education institutions and the EIC, this action aims to map philanthropic organisations, which operate in EU or fund substantial amount of projects in the EU. The mapping should include information by country, activities, investments relevant for EU research and innovation priorities. The study should provide easily accessible information to be used by universities and higher education institutions in order to support them in identifying suitable philanthropic organisation for further collaboration.

The purpose of this mapping is to:

- Provide an overview of philanthropic organisations which could be potential partner for higher education institutions in conducting and commercializing the research
- Provide an overview of philanthropic organisations that are suitable for collaboration with the EIC
- Inform national and regional policy makers of potential of mobilizing philanthropic organisations in supporting research and innovation.

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Second quarter of 2026

Indicative budget: 0.1 million from 2026 budget

4. Use of individual experts on assisting with the monitoring of actions

This action will support the use of appointed independent experts for the monitoring of running actions (grant agreement, grant decision, public procurement actions, financial

instruments) funded under Horizon Europe and previous Framework Programmes and where appropriate include ethics checks, as well as compliance checks regarding the Gender Equality Plan eligibility criterion.

Form of Funding: Other budget implementation instruments

Type of Action: Expert contract action

Indicative budget: EUR 0.20 million from the 2026 budget and EUR 0.20 million from the 2027 budget

5. EUREKA membership fee

The European Union is a member of EUREKA and, as such, pays an annual contribution to the budget of the EUREKA Secretariat.

EUREKA is an international network established in 1985 as an agreement between 18 countries to foster European competitiveness and integration and to encourage Research & Development cooperation. Since then, it expanded to include over 45 countries in Europe and beyond who share the same goals and have national funding available to organisations who apply through our programmes.

Type of Action: Subscription action

Indicative timetable: First quarter of 2026 and first quarter of 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 0.40 million from the 2026 budget and EUR 0.40 million from the 2027 budget

6. Technical assistance to support the Regional Innovation Valleys and other innovation policy priorities

The Joint Research Centre (JRC) will provide assistance in the implementation of the Regional Innovation Valleys, fostering the interconnectedness of selected regions and facilitating the promotion of the interregional innovation projects.

JRC actions and scientific services will include, among others:

- Mapping and label award of the Regional Innovation Valleys through online tools, such as interactive maps, which will help to disseminate the results, as well as to attract new investments, partners, or clients for the interregional projects.
- Other types of innovation policy support.

Type of Action: Provision of technical/scientific services by the Joint Research Centre

Indicative budget: EUR 0.30 million from the 2027 budget

7. Benchmarking of national policy frameworks and investments on innovation procurement across Europe

European Council Conclusions[47] call on policy makers to strengthen the policy support for innovation procurement and to encourage public buyers to increase investments in innovation procurement. The Startup and Scaleup Strategy and the EIC Forum 2024 policy orientations highlight the importance of continuing the benchmarking of national policy frameworks and investments for innovation procurement across Europe. It provides a better understanding of what is the status across different countries of the implementation of policy measures that create a conducive ecosystem for innovation procurement, what are current levels of investment in innovation procurement across different sectors, what are good practices versus remaining barriers and how can they be overcome.

Regularly taking stock in a comparable way across Europe of the progress that different countries are making on innovation procurement, will enable policy makers to learn from each other to continue improving their performance and will help innovative companies that want to grow their business across borders to understand better the situation on innovation procurement in other countries.

This action provides the budget for the last year (year 2029) of the ongoing service contract for implementing the benchmarking of national policy frameworks and investments on innovation procurement across Europe. The action may also support activities to implement recommendations resulting from the benchmarking.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Last quarter of 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 1 million from the 2027 budget

[47] Council conclusions (29 November 2024) on Strengthening the competitiveness of the EU, reinforcing the European Research Area and overcoming its fragmentation