

EN

Annex XI

Horizon Europe

Work Programme 2026-2027

11. Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area

DISCLAIMER

This draft has not been adopted or endorsed by the European Commission. Any views expressed are the preliminary views of the Commission services and may not in any circumstances be regarded as stating an official position of the Commission. The information transmitted is intended only for the Member State or entity to which it is addressed for discussions and may contain confidential and/or privileged material.

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Introduction

This part of the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026-2027 addresses the area “Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area” (WIDERA). The work programme includes two components:

I: Widening participation and spreading excellence;

II: Strengthening the European Research Area (ERA) by reforming and enhancing the European research and innovation system.

The European Commission adopted the **Communication on a New ERA for Research and Innovation** (2020) to improve the European research and innovation (R&I) landscape, to accelerate the European Union's transition towards climate neutrality and digital leadership, to support recovery from the coronavirus crisis, and to strengthen resilience against future crises¹. The **Communication on the implementation of the ERA** (2024) takes stock of the progress made since 2020 and highlights areas further actions to achieve ERA's objectives².

Aligned with the Competitiveness Compass, the ERA sets sights on a single, borderless market for research, innovation and technology across the European Union, that fosters Europe's competitiveness and accelerates the green and digital transitions³. It helps Member States to act more effectively together by aligning their research policies and programmes. The free circulation of researchers and knowledge enables better cross-border cooperation, building of critical mass and continent-wide competition. It promotes inclusive gender equality, research ethics and integrity, mobility, skills and career development opportunities within the European Union.

The Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe (Pact for R&I, 2021) demonstrates Member States' commitment to the ERA⁴. It defines priority areas for joint action, sets out ambitions for investments and reforms, and introduces simplified coordination and monitoring. It also outlines common values and principles to guide research and innovation in the European Union and its collaboration with the rest of the world.

The calls and other actions in the 2026-2027 WIDERA work programme are designed to contribute toward the implementation of the four priority areas of the Pact for R&I:

Priority I: Deepening a truly functioning internal market for knowledge;

Priority II: Taking up together the green transition and digital transformation and other challenges with impact on society, and increasing society's participation in the ERA;

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0628&from=EN>.

² https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/1bde0a38-7c86-4e6c-a4b8-7f9605d9e7e7_en?filename=com_2024_490_en.pdf.

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0030>.

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H2122>.

Priority III: Enhancing access to R&I excellence across the Union and enhancing interconnections between innovation ecosystems across the Union;

Priority IV: Advancing concerted R&I investments and reforms.

The component **“Widening participation and spreading excellence”** aims to tackle the R&I gap to move towards a truly integrated and cohesive R&I ecosystem in the European Union, addressing especially the third priority area of the Pact for R&I. Disparities between leading and less advanced countries in terms of R&I performance should be tackled through structural policy reforms at national and regional level aimed at, for example, improving the attractiveness of research careers, internationalisation, effectiveness of management and governance of R&I institutions or matching activities with EU initiatives (e.g., Seals of Excellence). Call topics are bottom-up but applicants are encouraged to take into account key aspects of the political guidelines of the European Commission published in July 2024⁵ and the Competitiveness Compass⁶.

In this component, the less advanced countries eligible for hosting coordinators of widening actions are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and all Associated Countries with equivalent characteristics in terms of R&I performance (Albania, Armenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Kosovo⁷, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine, and once associated Morocco), as well as the Outermost Regions (defined in Art. 349 TFEU). Hereinafter, these countries, including the Outermost Regions, will be named 'Widening Countries'.

The component **“Strengthening the European Research Area by reforming and enhancing the European research and innovation system”** is designed to support the implementation of the second **ERA Policy Agenda**, which outlines ERA Structural Policies and ERA Actions for the period 2025-2027⁸. It aims to build R&I capacity at the level of institutions and ecosystems to foster the adoption of shared EU values and principles outlined in the Pact for R&I, such as evidence-informed policymaking, freedom of scientific research, societal responsibility, gender equality and inclusiveness.

The WIDERA work programme also supports the key strategic orientations presented in the **Horizon Europe strategic plan 2025-2027** by building up Europe’s R&I capacity to address global challenges and boost its competitiveness⁹. Synergies with national, regional and other European programmes, in particular under the cohesion policy, will increase the impact of actions implemented under this work programme.

⁵ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf.

⁶ [EU Compass to regain competitiveness](#)

⁷ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

⁸ <https://european-research-area.ec.europa.eu/era-policy-agenda-2025-2027>.

⁹ <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/092911>.

Calls

Call - Teaming Synergies

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-01

Overview of this call¹⁰

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) ¹¹	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2026		
Opening: 23 Apr 2026 Deadline(s): 24 Sep 2026				
Destination: Widening participation and spreading excellence				
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-01-WIDENING-01: Teaming Synergies	CSA	7.00	Around 7.00	1
Overall indicative budget		7.00		
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.			

¹⁰ 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.

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

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

Call - Twinning

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-02

Overview of this call¹²

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)		Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) ¹³	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2026	2027		
Opening: 08 Jan 2026 Deadline(s): 09 Apr 2026					
Destination: Widening participation and spreading excellence					
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-02-WIDENING-01: Twinning	CSA	216.50	41.50	0.80 to 1.50	210
Overall indicative budget		216.50	41.50		

General conditions relating to this call

¹² 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.

¹³ Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

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

Call - Excellence Hubs

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-03

Overview of this call¹⁴

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)		Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) ¹⁵	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2026	2027		
Opening: 02 Sep 2026 Deadline(s): 04 Mar 2027					

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

Destination: Widening participation and spreading excellence					
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-03-WIDENING-01: Excellence Hubs	CSA	15.00	85.00	1.50 to 4.50	30
Overall indicative budget		15.00	85.00		

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

Call - Hop-on Facility

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-04

Overview of this call¹⁶

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution	Indicative number of
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¹⁶ 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.

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		2026	per project (EUR million) ¹⁷	projects expected to be funded
<p style="text-align: center;">Opening: 13 Jan 2026 Deadline(s): 24 Sep 2026</p>				
Destination: Widening participation and spreading excellence				
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-04-WIDENING-01: Hop-On Facility	RIA	30.00	0.20 to 0.60	60
Overall indicative budget		30.00		

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

Call - Research Management Facility

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-05

¹⁷ Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

Overview of this call¹⁸

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) ¹⁹	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2026		
Opening: 23 Apr 2026 Deadline(s): 24 Sep 2026				
Destination: Widening participation and spreading excellence				
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-05-WIDENING-01: Research Management Facility	CSA	7.00	Around 7.00	1
Overall indicative budget		7.00		

General conditions relating to this call	
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B.
<i>Financial and operational capacity and exclusion</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex C.
<i>Award criteria</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex D.
<i>Documents</i>	The documents are described in General Annex E.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

	Annex F.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G.

Call - ERA Fellowships

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-06

Overview of this call²⁰

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million)	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2026		
Opening: 09 Apr 2026 Deadline(s): 09 Sep 2026				
Destination: Widening participation and spreading excellence				
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-06-WIDENING-01: ERA Fellowships	TMA Postdoctoral Fellowships - European Fellowships	8.00		50
Overall indicative budget		8.00		

General conditions relating to this call

<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B.
<i>Financial and operational capacity and</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex

²⁰ 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.

<i>exclusion</i>	C.
<i>Award criteria</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex D.
<i>Documents</i>	The documents are described in General Annex E.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G.

Call - Enhancing the European R&I system

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07

Overview of this call²¹

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) ²²	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2026		
Opening: 10 Dec 2025 Deadline(s): 24 Mar 2026				
Destination: Reforming and enhancing the European research and innovation system				
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-01: Pillar I: Accelerating open access and research assessment reforms in ERA	CSA	6.00	2.00 to 4.00	2
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-02: Pillar	CSA	9.00	1.50 to 2.00	6

²¹ 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.

²² Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

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I: Building institutional capacities for ethical, equitable, open, and inclusive ERA				
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-03: Pillar II: Strengthening ecosystems for open, ethical, and sustainable ERA	CSA	6.00	Around 2.00	3
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-04: Pillar II: Piloting innovative approaches to support academic startups and spinoffs	CSA	4.00	Around 2.00	2
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-05: Pillar III: Fostering citizen engagement for more responsible and democratic R&I	CSA	2.00	Around 1.00	2
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-06: Pillar III: European Citizens' Hackathon Championship	CSA	3.00	Around 3.00	1
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-07: Pillar III: Science comes to town 2028	CSA	6.00	Around 6.00	1
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-08: Pillar IV: Advancing Knowledge for ERA	RIA	16.00	1.50 to 2.50	8
Overall indicative budget		52.00		

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

<i>Agreements</i>	
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Call - EIC Pre-accelerator - Widening

HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-01

Overview of this call²³

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) ²⁴	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2027		
Opening: 05 May 2027 Deadline(s): 18 Nov 2027				
Destination: Widening participation and spreading excellence				
HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-01-WIDENING-01: EIC Pre-accelerator - Widening	CSA	40.00	0.30 to 0.50	100
Overall indicative budget		40.00		

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

²³ 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.

²⁴ Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

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

Call - ERA Chairs and Research Managers

HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-02

Overview of this call²⁵

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million) 2027	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) ²⁶	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
Opening: 06 Apr 2027 Deadline(s): 14 Sep 2027				
Destination: Widening participation and spreading excellence				
HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-02-WIDENING-01: ERA Chairs	CSA	175.00	1.50 to 2.50	80
HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-02-WIDENING-02: ERA Research Managers	CSA	65.00	1.50 to 2.50	30

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

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Overall indicative budget		240.00		
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General conditions relating to this call	
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B.
<i>Financial and operational capacity and exclusion</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex C.
<i>Award criteria</i>	The criteria are described in General Annex D.
<i>Documents</i>	The documents are described in General Annex E.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G.

Call - ERA Fellowships

HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-03

Overview of this call²⁷

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million)	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2027		

²⁷ 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.

Opening: 07 Apr 2027 Deadline(s): 08 Sep 2027				
Destination: Widening participation and spreading excellence				
HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-03-WIDENING-01: ERA Fellowships	TMA Postdoctoral Fellowships - European Fellowships	8.00		50
Overall indicative budget		8.00		

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

Call - Enhancing the European R&I system

HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04

Overview of this call²⁸

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

²⁸ 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.

Horizon Europe - Work Programme 2026-2027
Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) ²⁹	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2027		
Opening: 08 Dec 2026 Deadline(s): 11 Mar 2027				
Destination: Reforming and enhancing the European research and innovation system				
HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-ERA-01: Pillar I: Facilitating development of institutional open access policies through the retention of intellectual property rights	CSA	2.00	Around 2.00	1
HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-ERA-02: Pillar II: Talent ecosystems for attractive early research careers	CSA	30.00	2.00 to 4.00	12
HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-ERA-03: Pillar III: Science comes to town 2029	CSA	6.00	Around 6.00	1
HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-ERA-04: Pillar III: Promoting public engagement in R&I and scientific literacy	CSA	2.00	Around 1.00	2
Overall indicative budget		40.00		

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

²⁹ Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

Horizon Europe - Work Programme 2026-2027
Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area

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

DRAFT

Destination: Widening participation and spreading excellence

The ERA Communication established the need to improve access to excellence as one of the four main strategic goals. Striving towards excellence requires a stronger R&I system where best practice is disseminated faster across the European Union.

The European Union's R&I system needs to promote a more inclusive approach in which all can participate and from which all can benefit. Existing disparities between R&I leading and lagging countries should be tackled by introducing structural policy reforms. Closer links between research and innovation and institutional cooperation to produce high-quality knowledge are key to help bridge these disparities. By building on their excellence pockets and connecting them to broader networks of excellence countries will be able to upgrade their R&I systems, and allowing the European Union as a whole to advance together.

This destination will deploy a portfolio of complementary actions to build up and strengthen R&I capacities in widening countries enabling them to advance to the competitive edge at European and international level. It will contribute to the development of pan-European innovation ecosystems. In addition, particular attention will be paid to cross-cutting objectives set for Horizon Europe, such as gender equality and open science practices.

Expected impact

- Increased science and innovation capacities for all actors in the R&I system in widening countries;
- Structural changes leading to modernised and more competitive R&I systems with increased attractiveness and retention of research talents;
- Mobilisation of national and European resources for strategic investments;
- Higher participation in Horizon Europe and more leadership roles in collaborative projects;
- Stronger linkages between academia and business and improved career permeability;
- Greater involvement of regional actors in the R&I process;
- Excellent talents attracted to institutions including research infrastructures;
- Balanced circulation of R&I talents including intersectoral mobility, and improved gender equality and inclusiveness;
- Improved linkages and increased mobility between academic and business, notably by overcoming sectoral barriers;
- Free circulation of knowledge and expertise in line with ERA priorities.

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-01-WIDENING-01: Teaming Synergies

Call: Teaming Synergies	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 7.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 7.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, participation as coordinators to the call is limited to legal entities established in Widening Countries, as defined in the Horizon Europe regulation, that have experience as coordinator of a past or current Teaming action.</p>

Expected Outcome: The Synergy action for Teaming Centres of Excellence (CoE) responds to the need to ensure the sustainability of CoE funded under the Teaming calls³⁰. The establishment of CoE in Widening Countries, supported by a significant investment in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, has created new opportunities for scientific, societal, and economic impact. However, to fully capitalise on this investment and enhance the sustainability and international competitiveness of these CoE, it is essential to facilitate stronger collaboration and strategic joint initiatives among them.

Proposals are expected to contribute to all the following outcomes:

- Stronger long-term collaboration among Teaming CoE through structured joint initiatives and clustering efforts to enhance mutual learning, resource sharing, and collective research and innovation capacity;
- Strategic transformation of R&I systems by enhancing institutional cooperation and supporting structural reforms at national and regional levels;
- Promotion of multidisciplinary and transnational cooperation that will enable CoE to address critical European and global challenges, and EU policy priorities;

³⁰ In June 2022, the European Court of Auditors in its report recommended the Commission to ensure the sustainability of the Teaming Centres of Excellence.

- Promote ERA priorities such as responsible AI usage, knowledge valorisation, commercialization, and entrepreneurial activities, such as SMEs and start-ups, within the CoE to maximise economic and societal impact;
- Stronger visibility of CoE and their recognition at national, regional, and European levels through structured engagement with industry, policymakers, and society;
- Improved synergies between CoE and national and EU programmes to leverage additional funding opportunities and policy support.

Scope: The call topic aims at fostering collaboration among existing and future Teaming Centres of Excellence in view of supporting their efforts towards sustainability and increased impact at the regional, national and European level.

Proposals are expected to include at least the following activities:

Strategic Clustering for thematic collaboration: Conducting an in-depth analysis of CoE capacities, research domains, innovation potential, and their role in national and regional quadruple helixes. The aim is to define strategic clusters addressing common research and innovation challenges, supporting EU priorities, and contributing to policy reforms.

Pilot implementation of thematic clusters: Establish clusters and support the coordinated implementation of activities, building e.g. on geographically distributed research capacities and infrastructures, interdisciplinary research collaborations, policy support for national and/or institutional R&I reform, or entrepreneurship-focused activities.

Capacity building for knowledge valorisation: Offering specialised training, peer learning, expert coaching, and workshops to improve CoE expertise in knowledge valorisation.

Networking and matchmaking: Organising dedicated matchmaking events, policy forums, and startup pitching events to connect CoE with industry, investors, and policymakers, supporting their market outreach and strategic partnerships.

Teaming online platform: Developing a digital networking platform to improve cooperation among CoE, provide access to shared resources, showcase success stories, and facilitate continuous interaction between research institutions, industry, and policymakers.

Teaming conference: Establish the conference as an internationally recognized event, stimulating cross-fertilization of scientific ideas, promoting industry-academia collaborations, attracting international talents and rewarding early-career researchers through Teaming awards.

Entrepreneurship and tech transfer support: Encouraging the creation of spin-offs and start-ups, licensing opportunities, and investment-readiness initiatives to ensure research outputs lead to marketable innovations.

To achieve the expected outcomes, the consortium is expected to provide a comprehensive range of expertise commensurate with the proposed activities. A core of the consortium

should be able to demonstrate successful implementation of sustainability strategies of a Teaming CoE. Complementary members of the consortium can provide specific expertise on e.g. communication, training, knowledge valorisation and IPR issues. The consortium has to demonstrate a geographical coverage of its activities that is able to reach all past, existing and future Teaming CoEs that wish to participate in the activities and benefit from the services offered by the consortium. The consortium is encouraged to maximise the use of existing services and facilities, such as the Widening Dissemination and Exploitation Support Facility, to avoid duplication and creation of competing services.

In order to assess the efficient and effective implementation of the proposed activities a set of key performance indicators tailored to the objectives of the action should be outlined in the proposal.

The duration of this action should be 5 years.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-02-WIDENING-01: Twinning

Call: Twinning	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 0.80 and 1.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 258.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, participation as coordinators to the call is limited to legal entities established in Widening Countries, as defined in the Horizon Europe regulation.</p> <p>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding as a beneficiary with zero funding, or as an associated partner. The JRC will not participate in the preparation and submission of the proposal - see General Annex B.</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following rules for dealing with ex-aequo applications apply: in the first place, ex-aequo proposals will be prioritised according to</p>

	geographical diversity criteria, defined as proposals with coordinators established in a Widening Country, not otherwise represented as coordinator higher up the ranking list. The method described in Points 1), 2), 3) and 5) of General Annexes Part F (Procedure/Evaluation procedure and ranking) will then be applied to the remaining equally ranking proposals in the group. This rule establishing the priority order serves to better spread the impact of the action and to strengthen the efficiency of the ‘Widening participation and spreading excellence’ programme.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>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) ³¹.</p>
<i>Evaluation and award procedure</i>	<p>Evaluation process by the evaluation committee: Proposals will be first evaluated and scored individually by at least four expert evaluators with respect to the award criteria. The score for each award criterion will be the median of the evaluators’ scores. The overall score from this individual evaluation phase will be the sum of the three median scores from the three award criteria.</p> <p>These individual assessments/reports of the 4 evaluators will then be quality checked and, if necessary, further discussed at the panel review.</p> <p>The Evaluation Summary Report will comprise the final score, a collation of the comments from the four individual assessments/ reports, including a comment that summarises the assessment by the evaluation committee.</p>

Expected Outcome: Twinning actions aim to enhance networking activities between the research institutions and research infrastructures of the Widening Countries acting as co-ordinators and top-class leading counterparts at European Union level by linking it with at least two research institutions from two different Member States or Associated Countries. Twinning actions intend to raise the research profile of the institution from the Widening Country and its staff, including strengthening the research management capacity.

³¹ This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) 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

Proposals are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Improved research excellence and capacities in Widening Countries closing the research and innovation gap within the European Union;
- Enhanced strategic collaboration between the research institutions or higher education establishments of the Widening countries and at least two internationally leading research institutions or higher education establishments at European Union level;
- Raised reputation, research profile and attractiveness of the coordinating institution, and improved research profile of its staff;
- Strengthened research management capacities of the coordinating institution;
- Development of novel approaches in R&I collaboration with increased mobility (inwards and outwards) of researchers.

Scope: Twinning proposals should clearly outline the strategy for stepping up and stimulating scientific excellence and innovation capacity in a defined area of research and innovation as well as the scientific excellence of the partners involved. This strategy should include arrangements for formulating joint research and innovation activities and projects in the scientific area of choice and describe how Twinning will take this research to a new level.

This should be supported by a comprehensive set of activities such as, but not limited to, short-term staff exchanges, expert visits and short term on-site or virtual trainings, workshops; conference attendance, organisation of joint summer schools, dissemination and outreach activities. As far as appropriate these activities should take into account the gender equality plans of the participants.

Proposals should also focus on strengthening the research management capacities of the coordinating institution This should take the form of a dedicated work package or task, placing emphasis to specific activities, in view of helping the staff of the coordinating institution to improve their broader research management capacities as defined in the European Competence Framework for Research Managers³², including establishing/upgrading a dedicated team within the coordinating institution. This will be achieved by fully utilising the experience and best practices of the internationally leading partners and is expected to be a concrete deliverable of the Twinning exercise.

A research and innovation component not exceeding 30% of the total Horizon Europe grant (including the indirect costs) may be included, which should be presented in a dedicated workpackage (WP1) entitled 'Research component'. At least 50% of the budget for this component should be allocated to the coordinator. A research and innovation component involves the development and implementation of new ideas, methods, or technologies and advances the current state of the art in a particular field by pushing the boundaries of

³²

[RM Comp: The European Competence Framework for Research Managers - European Commission](#)

knowledge and creating novel solutions. All training related to research and innovation that advances beyond the state of the art should be budgeted and included in this work package.

The proposals should illustrate quantitatively and qualitatively the expected impact of the twinning exercise within the coordinating institution (and possibly at regional/national level) based on indicators such as scientific production and peer recognition, collaboration agreements with the non-academic sector, attracting and mobilising investments from the private sector, intellectual property developed, new innovative products or services, number of international students, number of female scientists and their roles in the research institutions.

The proposal should demonstrate how the leading scientific institutions in the consortium will contribute in terms of provision of access to new research avenues, creativity and the development of new approaches, as well as acting as a source for increased gender equality, inclusiveness and mobility (inwards and outwards) of qualified scientists and young researchers including doctoral candidates.

This action is open for participation of the JRC that can contribute with specific expertise, where relevant, for the development of R&I strategies depending on the R&I domain chosen by the project, technology transfer and IPR management as well as linking up to regional smart specialisation strategy.

The duration of the Twinning project should be up to 3 years.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-03-WIDENING-01: Excellence Hubs

Call: Excellence Hubs	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.50 and 4.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 100.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply: The page limit of the application is 40 pages.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply: In order to achieve the expected outcomes, participation as coordinators to the call is limited to legal entities established in Widening countries

	<p>as defined in the Horizon Europe regulation.</p> <p>Proposals must involve at least two R&I ecosystems from two different Widening countries.</p> <p>Each Widening country R&I ecosystem must comprise four different categories of actors i.e. a) academic institutions (universities and/or non-university research centres or labs), b) business entities, c) public authorities or authorised agencies operating at regional or local level and d) societal actors (e.g. civil society organisations, citizens, end users, media, cultural actors etc.).</p> <p>A proposal may demonstrate involvement of a Widening country R&I ecosystem by either:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The participation, as a beneficiary, by one or more umbrella organisations, whose membership comprises the four different categories of Widening country R&I actors for the relevant Widening country; or 2. The participation, as beneficiaries, of individual legal entities representing each of the four categories of actors for the relevant Widening country. In the case of representative individual entities, at least one of the business entities per R&I ecosystem needs to be an established firm with turnover. More specifically, such business entities must at the time of the submission of the proposal be established for already at least two consecutive years with a proven operational turnover, i.e. by providing balance sheets and/ or business reports as annex(es) to the proposal. These documents must be submitted in one of the EU official languages.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following rules for dealing with ex-aequo applications apply: in the first place, ex-aequo proposals will be prioritised according to geographical diversity criteria, defined as proposals with coordinators established in a Widening Country, not otherwise represented as coordinator by a more highly ranked proposal. The method described in Points 1), 2), 3) and 5) of General Annexes Part F (Procedure/Evaluation procedure and ranking) will then be applied to the remaining equally ranking proposals in the group. This rule establishing the priority order serves to better spread the impact of the action and to strengthen the efficiency of the ‘Widening participation and spreading excellence’ programme.</p>
<i>Legal and</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions</p>

<i>financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>apply:</p> <p>Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties. 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 60 000.</p> <p>The funding rate is 70 % of the eligible costs.</p>
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Expected Outcome: Excellence Hubs allow innovation ecosystems in Widening Countries and beyond, to team up and create better linkages between academia, business, government and society. This will foster a place-based innovation culture in Widening Countries based on a strategic agenda aligned with regional or national smart specialisation strategies, and clearly identified expectations for economic and societal impacts. Projects should contribute to the following outcomes:

- Excellent and sustainable regional R&I ecosystems in Widening Countries and beyond in relevant domains of cutting-edge science and innovation;
- Long term joint R&I strategies underpinned by concrete action plans of European relevance;
- Common investment plans for R&I leveraging national, regional and European funds as well as private capital in a synergetic manner;
- R&I pilot projects alongside a joint strategy and in line with regional and national strategies, notably regional innovation strategies for smart specialisation (RIS3);
- New competencies and skills for researchers, entrepreneurs and professionals in R&I intensive domains;
- Strengthened linkages between science, businesses and;
- New business opportunities for SMEs, university spin-offs and start-ups, especially in deep tech areas.

Scope: The projects will foster a regional innovation culture in Widening Countries, aligned with regional or national smart specialization strategies. Consortia should seek synergies and avoid overlaps with relevant initiatives such as European Innovation Ecosystems, EIC Pathfinder, the KICs of the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT), in particular the EIT Community Hubs established in Widening Countries, the JRC's 'Partnerships for Regional Innovation' and the Widening Dissemination and Exploitation Facility. This action supports the ERA's third priority of translating R&I results into the economy, aiming to enhance European competitiveness in the global technology race while improving the environment for business R&I investment, technology deployment, and the uptake of research results in society.

The action targets regions as R&I actors, as they are where innovation and industrial ecosystems thrive, strengthening the connective tissue between higher education institutions,

businesses, in particular SMEs and start-ups, research centers, and local communities and citizens. Regional ecosystems across the EU can drive new European strategic value chains.

Excellence Hubs are networks of innovation ecosystems in Widening Countries, involving larger communities based on the quadruple helix principle. Legal entities from non-widening countries may join if the consortium demonstrates that this is necessary to achieve the expected impacts.

Projects should include a well-balanced package covering at least the following activities:

- Design and implementation of a cross-border joint R&I strategy aligned with regional smart specialization strategies and European priorities;
- R&I collaboration strengthening academia-business linkages and providing evidence for strategy building and investment. The research component should be developed through joint research projects, closing knowledge gaps and advancing science and technology with market potential. The description of R&I component should include a long-term vision beyond the state of the art of the chosen R&I domain. The R&I component must be presented in a distinct work package in the proposal. The R&I component should however not constitute the dominant part of the project;
- Development of investment plans to implement the strategy, including business models for commercially sustainable products and services, leveraging private investments, as well as possibly national, regional and European funds,;
- Conceptual design and pre-planning for pilots and demonstrators in line with the strategy, financed by sources other than the Union contribution provided by the Excellence Hub grants. Proposals should outline how other financial resources will be accessed at a later stage;
- Complementary activities to promote knowledge transfer, visibility, mutual learning, skills development, and engagement with local governments and citizens. Secondments and staff exchanges should foster long-term collaboration.

Proposals should clearly illustrate the expected impact of the project, including new local and international partnerships, institutional changes, increased R&I intensity and other relevant indicators.

The expected duration of the projects is up to 4 years.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-04-WIDENING-01: Hop-On Facility

Call: Hop-on Facility	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 0.20 and 0.60 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed

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<i>project</i>	appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 30.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposal must include only: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One legal entity, as a beneficiary, established in a Widening Country. • One legal entity which is the coordinator of an ‘eligible already funded action’. 2. The proposal must be submitted by the coordinator of the ‘eligible already funded action’. No more than 10% of the maximum grant amount can be allocated to the coordinator as a coordination fee for the integration of the new widening beneficiary. No less than 90% of the max grant amount must be allocated to the widening beneficiary. <p>An ‘eligible already funded action’ refers to an action stemming from a Horizon Europe grant agreement that also meets the following conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No legal entity established in a Widening Country is already a beneficiary, affiliated entity or associated partner in the Horizon Europe grant agreement. 2. At the time of submission of the proposal (and for any grant agreement signature), the granting authority of the Horizon Europe grant agreement is the European Commission or an Executive Agency. 3. The Horizon Europe grant agreement was awarded to Horizon Pillar II ‘main’ Work Programme or EIC Pathfinder collaborative R&I actions. 4. The first reporting period of the Horizon Europe grant agreement is ongoing at the submission deadline. Furthermore, the ongoing grant agreement is between 1 to 12 months from its starting date by the submission deadline.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions

	<p>apply:</p> <p>In the first place, ex-aequo proposals will be prioritised according to geographical diversity criteria, defined as proposals with the additional beneficiary established in a Widening Country, not otherwise represented as a beneficiary higher up the ranking list. The method described in Points 1), 2), 3) and 5) of General Annexes Part F (Procedure/Evaluation procedure and ranking) will then be applied to the remaining equally ranking proposals in the group. This rule establishing the priority order serves to better spread the impact of the action and to strengthen the efficiency of the ‘Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area’ programme.</p> <p>If the proposal is successful, the next stage of the procedure will be a grant agreement amendment preparation.</p> <p>If the outcome of amendment preparations is an award decision, the coordinator of the consortium of the eligible already funded action will be invited to submit an amendment to the grant agreement, on behalf of the beneficiaries.</p>
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Expected Outcome: The Hop-on Facility allows for legal entities from Widening Countries to join already funded Horizon Pillar II ‘main’ work programme and EIC Pathfinder collaborative R&I actions, subject to the agreement of the respective consortium and provided that legal entities from such countries are not yet participating as beneficiary, associated partner, or affiliated entity. The scheme aims to improve the inclusiveness of Horizon Europe. Selected consortia will be invited to submit a grant agreement amendment request of the eligible already funded action.

Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- At system level, mobilise excellence in the Widening Countries, increase visibility of the beneficiaries from the widening countries, improve knowledge circulation, and boost their participation in specific thematic domains;
- At consortium level, open up established networks to new connections and partnerships, improve research excellence of the Widening Country’s institutions in specific fields, enlarge outreach of the participants’ R&I actions and provides access to new talent pools;
- At the level of the Widening beneficiary, develop new competencies and skills for working in transnational projects including research management and dissemination and exploitation.

Scope: The Hop-on Facility integrates one additional beneficiary from a Widening Country to an ongoing project under Pillar 2 or the EIC pathfinder scheme who contributes a relevant task, work package or another visible and distinguishable activity.

Applications must demonstrate the R&I added value of the new beneficiary for the eligible already selected action. The proposal should include a detailed description of the profile of the new beneficiary and its R&I role and complementarity in the existing project.

The additional beneficiary and activities should be presented in a dedicated proposal template with the Description of the Action (DOA) of the ongoing action uploaded as an annex. In case of a successful evaluation, the consortia (coordinator) of the eligible already funded action (i.e. relevant existing grant agreement) will be invited to submit an amendment request for accession of the Widening beneficiary, modification of the description of the action. If budget is reserved for the coordinator, the proposal should justify the amounts in terms of integration efforts for the new participant.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-05-WIDENING-01: Research Management Facility

Call: Research Management Facility	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 7.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 7.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply: Applications must be submitted by a consortium including participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three independent legal entities: Each established in a different Member State or Associated Country; and two of which are established in a Member State.</p>

Expected Outcome: Excellent capacities in research management are essential for institutions and national R&I systems to enhance their research excellence and capitalize on their R&I activities in a knowledge-based economy and society. The Research Management Facility aims at providing institutions in Widening Countries that want to establish or upgrade their research management capacities with tailored support. The Research Management Facility also advises on an implementation strategy to introduce changes in the institutional set-up, in line with the ERA priorities. However, the action does not provide support for the implementation of the strategy.

Strong research management ensures effective grant acquisition, resource allocation, compliance with funding regulations, and strategic planning. It supports high-quality research by streamlining administrative processes, facilitating interdisciplinary collaborations,

attracting and retaining international high-profile researchers, and optimizing the use of research infrastructures.

Proposals are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Encourage the establishment of stronger research management capacities in Widening Countries to enhance their participation in the European Research Area;
- Support institutional reforms in research institutions and national R&I systems to strengthen governance, efficiency, and alignment with European research and innovation priorities;
- Strengthen human capital with entrepreneurial and well-trained researcher managers;
- Promote and support multidisciplinary and transnational cooperation in the field of research management to foster knowledge exchange, capacity building, and alignment of best practices across institutions and countries;
- Promote of ERA priorities such as research integrity and responsible research and innovation (ethics, public engagement, gender equality, science education, open access) and knowledge valorisation, thereby strengthening the institution's overall research ecosystem.

Scope: This action aims at creating a research management facility to provide support services including trainings to research institutions and their staff in Widening Countries that want to establish or upgrade existing capacities and competencies in research management. The project should establish a facility inviting research performing organisations from Widening Countries to support them in assessing their needs for excellent research management capacities, and develop implementation plans to improve their institutional capacity. The facility may also support successful applicants of ERA Research Manager actions in identifying leading research manager internationally.

Proposals are expected to cover at least the following activities:

- Support the assessment of institutional needs in research management, administration and training with the research performing institutions requesting their services;
- Support the development of a tailor-made implementation plans to establish or upgrade research management capacities at institutional level.

Proposals are expected to cover at least the following activities:

- Support the assessment of institutional needs in research management, administration and training in close collaboration with the research performing institutions that express interest in their expertise;
- Support the development of a tailor-made implementation plans to establish or upgrade research management capacities at institutional level;

- Facilitate peer exchange and best practice sharing between Widening Countries and more experienced institutions to support sustainable capacity building;
- Deliver training modules for research managers in Widening Countries to strengthen their skills and professional competences, in line with the European Competence Framework for Research Managers³³;
- Facilitate networking opportunities for research managers from Widening Countries at European and international levels, to strengthen peer exchange, promote best practice sharing, and enhance their integration into the broader research management ecosystem.

Proposals should provide an estimate on the number of institutions and individuals they target during the action that is commensurate to the requested Union contribution. They should describe how they plan to prioritise their services if the demand exceeds the project's resources. In their proposals, applicants should demonstrate how they will ensure the full geographical coverage of their services for all Widening Countries including Outermost Regions and the relevant Associated Countries.

Documentation and reporting on the services provided, their follow-up and impacts are considered key to the Research Management Facility. Proposals should include a methodology on documentation and feedback to the European Commission on the profiles of the institution supported, the services provided including recommendations developed, follow-up actions implemented by the institutions, and impacts achieved. In view of continuous improvement of services, and gathering and communicating of transferable outcomes, adequate dissemination and communication activities need to be part of the activities.

Proposals should demonstrate the collective competences and capacities, including relevant experiences in the field that are necessary to carry out the activities and achieve the expected outcomes.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-06-WIDENING-01: ERA Fellowships

Call: ERA Fellowships	
Specific conditions	
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 8.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	TMA Postdoctoral Fellowships - European Fellowships
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:

³³

[RM Comp: The European Competence Framework for Research Managers - European Commission](#)

	To be eligible to this call the host organisation must be located in a Widening country.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Seals of Excellence will be awarded to applications exceeding all of the evaluation thresholds set out in this work programme but which cannot be funded due to lack of budget available to the call.</p>
<i>Other conditions</i>	<p>For application of the general award criteria, including weighting and thresholds, see the specific conditions at the end of the MSCA Work Programme part.</p> <p>For admissibility, eligibility criteria, procedure and legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreement see exceptions and specific conditions for MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships - European Fellowships in the MSCA Work Programme part.</p> <p>The MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2026 model grant agreement will be used to the ERA Fellowships.</p> <p>The expected EU contribution depends on the number of person-months requested. For the applicable unit contributions, see specific conditions for MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships - European Fellowships in the MSCA Work Programme part.</p> <p>In order to apply for the ERA Fellowships call, applicants must submit their proposal to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) Postdoctoral Fellowships 2026 . The application to the (MSCA) Postdoctoral Fellowships 2026 will be automatically resubmitted to this call in case the proposal fails to reach an adequate place in the ranking to be funded. This simplified submission procedure to the ERA Fellowships call presents applicants moving to Widening countries with an additional funding opportunity but there is the possibility to opt out during the application stage.</p> <p>ERA Fellowships will be implemented applying the award criteria, scoring and threshold for Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions. The ranking order for the ERA Fellowships call will follow the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2026 call scores and evaluation procedure and proposals will also retain the scores and comments included in the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) of this call.</p> <p>The proposals submitted under the ERA Fellowships must fulfil all the admissibility and eligibility conditions of the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2026 and pass all the thresholds for that call.</p>
<i>Other</i>	The part of the MSCA Work Programme referring to synergies with the

<i>requirement</i>	Euratom Research and Training Programme 2021-2025 does not apply to the ERA Fellowships.
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Expected Outcome: This action builds on the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2026 action (HORIZON-MSCA-PF-2026). The target group are host organisations located in Widening Countries.

Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

For supported ERA Fellows:

- Increased set of research and transferable skills and competences, leading to improved employability and career prospects of fellows within academia and beyond;
- New mind-sets and approaches to R&I work forged through international, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary experience;
- Enhanced networking and communication capacities with scientific peers, as well as with the general public, that will increase and broaden the research and innovation impact;

For participating organisations in the Widening Countries:

- Increased alignment of working conditions for researchers in accordance with the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers³⁴;
- Enhanced quality and sustainability of research training and supervision;
- Increased global attractiveness, visibility and reputation;
- Stronger R&I capacity and output; better transfer of knowledge.

For Widening Countries:

- More postdoctoral researchers attracted to Widening Countries with competitive grants and attractive working and employment conditions.

Scope: Fellowships should be provided to excellent researchers, undertaking cross-border mobility. Applications must be made jointly by the researcher together with a legal entity in the academic or non-academic sector located in a Widening Country.

ERA Fellowships should take place in a Widening Country. Fellowships are open to researchers of any nationality who wish to engage in R&I projects by either coming to the EU from any country in the world or moving within the EU to a Widening Country.

³⁴ Charter for Researchers, annexed to the Council recommendation C/2023/1640 of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe (OJ C, C/2023/1640, 29.12.2023), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C_202301640.

Secondments

Researchers receiving an ERA Fellowship may opt to include a secondment phase, within the overall duration of their fellowship in any country worldwide. The secondment phase can be a single period or be divided into shorter mobility periods. Secondments cannot exceed one third of the standard fellowship duration and should be in line with the project objectives, adding significant value and impact to the fellowship.

Placements in the non-academic sector

ERA Fellowships can provide an additional period of up to six months to support researchers opting for a placement at the end of the project to work on R&I projects in an organisation from the non-academic sector established in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country. While this possibility is also available to fellows recruited in the non-academic sector, such a placement should be implemented at a different non-academic host organisation established in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country. The request for such a non-academic placement should be an integral part of the proposal, explaining the added value for the project and for the career development of the researcher, and will be subject to evaluation. This incentive aims at promoting career moves between sectors and organisations and thereby stimulate innovation and knowledge transfer while expanding career opportunities for researchers.

Training activities

The training activities implemented under the ERA Fellowships should include training for key transferable skills³⁵, foster innovation and entrepreneurship, (e.g. commercialisation of results, Intellectual Property Rights, communication, public engagement and citizen science), foster good scientific conduct such as research integrity and promote Open Science practices (open access to publications and to other research outputs, including data, FAIR data management, societal engagement and citizen science, etc.).

Career Development Plan

In order to equip ERA Fellows with skills that enhance and expand their career opportunities inside and outside academia, a Career Development Plan should be established jointly by the supervisor(s) and the researcher. In addition to research objectives, this plan should comprise the researcher's training and career needs, including training on transferable skills, teaching, planning for publications and participation in conferences and events aiming at opening science and research to citizens. The plan has to be submitted as a project deliverable at the beginning of the action and can be updated when needed.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-01-WIDENING-01: EIC Pre-accelerator - Widening

Call: EIC Pre-accelerator - Widening

³⁵ As an illustration, Eurodoc published a list of such transferable skills at: <http://eurodoc.net/skills-report-2018.pdf>

Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 0.30 and 0.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 40.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applications may only be submitted by one legal entity (mono-beneficiary).</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply:</p> <p>Beneficiaries must be a small and medium enterprise (SME) established in a Horizon Europe Widening country.</p>
<i>Award criteria</i>	<p>The criteria are described in General Annex D. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additions to the general award criteria apply:</p> <p>The proposals will be evaluated by 3 independent evaluators following the award criteria for EIC Transition Open at first evaluation step, EIC Work Programme 2027. These are:</p> <p>Excellence (Threshold: 4/5)</p> <p>Technological breakthrough: Does the technology have a high degree of novelty and higher performance compared to other technologies available or in development? Does the technology indicate high commercial potential?</p> <p>Objectives: How credible and feasible are the objectives for the planned technology development and maturation? How credible and feasible are the objectives and KPIs for the planned business development process?</p> <p>Methodology: Is the timing right for this technology/innovation (i.g. feasibility, minimum technological readiness level (TRL), unique selling points)?</p> <p>Impact (Threshold: 4/5)</p> <p>Credibility of the impacts: To what extent the expected commercial impact(s) described in the proposal are credible and substantial within</p>

	<p>the project and beyond (e.g. one or several sectors, setting new standards, etc.)?</p> <p>Economic and/or societal benefits: To what extent does the proposed innovation have scale up potential including high capacity to gain or create new European or global markets? To what extent is the proposed innovation expected to generate positive impacts for the European Union, Member States or Associated Countries (e.g. strategic autonomy, employment etc.)?</p> <p>Investment readiness and go to market strategy: To what extent the proposal and its activities contribute to make the technology and the team investment ready (including through IP protection and market validation)? Is there a well-defined and convincing go-to-market strategy and pathway, including what regulatory approvals may be needed (if relevant), time to market, possible business and revenue model?</p> <p>Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Threshold 3/5)</p> <p>Quality and motivation of the team: To what extent does the (project) team have the necessary high-quality capabilities and high motivation to move decisively towards market? To what extent does the applicant have the necessary expertise to create a unique commercial value from the emerging technology and develop an attractive business and investment proposition?</p> <p>KPIs and Milestones: Are both milestones and KPIs present, relevant and clearly defined (measurable, timed, comparable etc.) to track progress along the pathway towards objectives? Have the main risks (e.g. technological, market, financial etc.) been identified, together with measures to mitigate in order to achieve the project objectives?</p> <p>Workplan and allocation of resources: How appropriate and effective is the allocation of resources (person-months and equipment) between work packages?</p> <p>The following rules for dealing with ex-aequo applications apply: in the first place, ex-aequo proposals will be prioritised according to geographical diversity criteria, defined as proposals with coordinators established in a Widening Country, not otherwise represented as coordinator higher up the ranking list. The method described in Points 1), 2), 3) and 5) of General Annexes Part F (Procedure/Evaluation procedure and ranking) will then be applied to the remaining equally ranking proposals in the group. This rule establishing the priority order serves to better spread the impact of the action and to strengthen the efficiency of the ‘Widening participation and spreading excellence’</p>
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	programme.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Seals of Excellence will be awarded to applications exceeding all of the evaluation thresholds set out in this work programme but which cannot be funded due to lack of budget available to the call.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>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) ³⁶.</p> <p>The funding rate is 70 % of the eligible costs.</p>

Expected Outcome: This call will increase the innovation potential of deep-tech startups in the widening countries and enable them to better attract private investments and scale up. It will further strengthen the innovation dimension of the widening component and increase the overall competitiveness of these countries.

The specific outcome expected of this action is increased business, investor, and technology readiness of high potential deep-tech startups in widening countries to a level where they will:

1. be successful in applying and attracting the EIC Accelerator funding and/or;
2. manage to secure other private investment and/or;
3. attract successfully national or regional funding as alternative funding sources (e.g. through Seal of Excellence programmes).

Scope: This action focuses on early-stage deep-tech startups which 1) have high-impact innovation technology, product, service, or business model that could create new markets or disrupt existing ones, and 2) have the ambition and commitments to scale up.

The successful applicants need to work on deep tech innovation. Such companies often struggle to attract financing because the technology and investment risks are too high.

³⁶ This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) 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

In the framework of this call, **deep-tech**³⁷ is 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 intensity³⁸.

This EIC Pre-accelerator - Widening call is designed to enable promising deep-tech startups to develop further their innovations (from TRL 4 to TRL 5/6)³⁹, attract the investment amounts needed for scale up in a shorter timeframe and successfully apply and attract funding from EIC Accelerator or other sources.

The applicants are expected to demonstrate in their application that they:

- have developed technology validated in the lab (at least TRL 4);
- possess the necessary Intellectual Property Rights to ensure freedom to operate and adequate protection of the idea;
- have a clear vision on the intended pathway and route to market. This includes specific milestones together with concrete and verifiable KPIs to assess progress towards the market.

The support will be awarded by grants max at 70% funding of the eligible costs. 30% co-funding to be covered by the beneficiary through its own resources.

An amount between EUR 300.000 and max EUR 500.000 in the form of a lump sum for a period of up to 2 years is considered appropriate.

The requested grant is expected to be used for:

- addressing the investor and market readiness towards commercialisation and deployment (market research, value proposition, business case and business model, prospects for growth, intellectual property protection, competitor analysis etc.) and if relevant, aspects of regulation, certification and standardisation, aimed at getting both the technology and the business idea investment ready **and/or**;
- the maturation and validation of novel technologies beyond proof of concept to viable demonstrators of the technology in the intended field of application (i.e., from minimum TRL 4 up to TRL 6).

³⁷ Deep-tech ventures have the following characteristics: positioning at the knowledge frontier with long and uncertain R&I cycles; relates to tangible products and industrialisation processes; linked to the ecosystem and especially higher education institutions, problem orientated, or mission driven, focused on the creation of an option space and a dynamic de-risking cycle.

³⁸ Ratio of a firm's R&D investment to its revenue.

³⁹ Completed TRL 5 (Technology validated in relevant environment – industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies) or TRL6 (Technology demonstrated in relevant environment - industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies).

At the end of the EIC Pre-accelerator project, it needs to:

- demonstrate that the technology component of their innovation has been tested and validated in a laboratory and other relevant environment (e.g. at least completed all aspects of TRL 5);
- be ready to apply for EIC Accelerator and/or to seek other investors or sources of funding, to enter licensing or collaboration agreements with third parties, or other routes to market deployment.

Successful applicants and those awarded the Seal of Excellence will be granted free access to the EIC Business Acceleration Services⁴⁰, such as coaching and specific events tailored to their needs (e.g. for improving investor and market readiness).

This will be complemented by access to the EIC Accelerator Fast Track for submissions to the Accelerator programme following a project review in the second half of the project.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-02-WIDENING-01: ERA Chairs

Call: ERA Chairs and Research Managers	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.50 and 2.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 175.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>To achieve the expected outcomes, participation as coordinators to the call is limited to legal entities established in Widening Countries, as defined in the Horizon Europe regulation.</p> <p>Applications may only be submitted by one legal entity (mono-beneficiary) established in a Widening Country.</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply:</p> <p>To allow for the assessment of the commitment of the future ERA Chair holder and of the coordinator institution, proposals must include:</p> <p>1) a letter signed by the prospective ERA Chair holder expressing their</p>

⁴⁰ See EIC Work Programme 2027. More information is available also here: https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/business-acceleration-services_en.

	<p>commitment to the proposal corresponding to at least 50% full time equivalent (FTE) at least until the appointment of a research group leader on a permanent basis by M36, and their willingness to take on the underlying tasks and obligations and agreed contractual arrangements including salary and on-site presence at the host institution</p> <p>2) a letter from the head of the coordinator institution committing to the proposal and support to the ERA Chair holder with adequate support for their tasks and duties including, for example, access to research facilities, supervision of researchers, teaching duties (if any) and freedom to apply to national and international funding.</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Seals of Excellence will be awarded to applications exceeding all of the evaluation thresholds set out in this work programme but which cannot be funded due to lack of budget available to the call.</p> <p>The following rules for dealing with ex-aequo applications apply: in the first place, ex-aequo proposals will be prioritised according to geographical diversity criteria, defined as proposals with coordinators established in a Widening Country, not otherwise represented as coordinator higher up the ranking list. The method described in Points 1), 2), 3) and 5) of General Annexes Part F (Procedure/Evaluation procedure and ranking) will then be applied in numerical order of the remaining equally ranking proposals in the group. This rule establishing the priority order serves to better spread the impact of the action and to strengthen the efficiency of the ‘Widening participation and spreading excellence’ programme.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>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) ⁴¹.</p>

Expected Outcome: Progress in strengthening links between research and innovation actors across the European Research Area (ERA) is essential for Europe to capitalize on excellence.

⁴¹ This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) 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

ERA Chairs aim to attract outstanding scientists and innovators to universities, research organisations or research infrastructures in Widening Countries, fostering brain circulation and creating pockets of excellence that enhance institutional culture and performance.

The ERA Chair holder's leadership and the establishment of a permanent, high-quality research group will boost excellence, visibility, and integration within the ERA, improving competitiveness in research and promoting institutional reforms aligned with ERA priorities.

Projects are expected to contribute to some of the following outcomes:

At system level:

- Increased international, interdisciplinary, and intersectoral mobility of R&I talent towards widening countries;
- Institutional reforms in research institutions and national R&I systems;
- Strengthened human capital with more entrepreneurial and well-trained researchers;
- Better communication of R&I results to society;
- Enhanced research capacity, competitiveness, and economic growth.

At organisation level:

- Strengthened research excellence in ERA Chair fields;
- Increased attractiveness to top international researchers;
- Establishment of a lasting, high-performing research group with institutional benefits;
- Improved success in EU and global competitive funding.

Scope: Research organisations or research infrastructures in Widening countries seeking to establish an ERA Chair should submit a proposal with a prospective ERA Chair holder - an outstanding researcher or innovator in any scientific domain. The research institution will act as the sole applicant (mono-beneficiary), and ERA Chair holders may be from any country.

Proposals should include a Curriculum Vitae (CV) in Europass form⁴² of the prospective ERA Chair holder, detailing their scientific and technical contributions to the coordinating institution. The CV should be uploaded as an Annex to the proposal.

Proposals should also describe any relevant investments of the coordinator in research projects, facilities and infrastructures and how those will be achieved and/or a better use of the installed research capacity (in particular of EU co-funded research infrastructures & facilities). Existing or foreseen arrangements for compliance with ERA priorities⁴³ including

⁴² <https://europa.eu/europass/en/create-europass-cv>.

⁴³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2012:0392:FIN>

the European Charter for Researchers & Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers⁴⁴ should be outlined in the proposal.

ERA Chair holders should be excellent researchers and/or innovators in the chosen field of research⁴⁵. They should establish a research team fully integrated in the coordinator's institution to significantly improve its research performance in the scientific domain of choice and to be more successful in obtaining competitive funding. The recruitment of the research team must follow an open, transparent and merit-based process and should be conducted by an international panel chaired by the ERA Chair. The ERA Chair holder should have a position within the organization enabling them to ensure resource allocation, supervision, and to submit funding applications. Teaching duties may be included where appropriate.

ERA Chair holders may relocate permanently or temporarily to the coordinating institution, with secondments, sabbaticals, or part-time arrangements possible. A minimum 50% full-time equivalent (FTE) commitment, including on-site presence, must be ensured, at least until the appointment of a research group leader on a permanent basis. In such cases, a description of the transition phase between the team leader and the ERA chair holder should be provided in the proposal. All contractual arrangements, time commitment and the timeline of the ERA Chair's on-site presence at the coordinator should be indicated in the proposal, as well as the salary (gross amount), travel and daily allowances and/or other perks to be offered. If employment is the preferred option, contractual details must be provided.

The leader of the newly created research group should be appointed on a permanent basis within the institution within the first three years of the project through an open recruitment process monitored by the European Commission.

To ensure long-term sustainability, the ERA Chair research team should be structured for continuity beyond Horizon Europe funding. The proposal should clearly describe and detail the team composition in terms of the profiles, the researcher levels, the salaries, and the recruitment timelines. Since the research group will be newly established, the names of the researchers who will be recruited cannot be known at the proposal stage and therefore should not be indicated. At least 20% of the research group should have permanent positions and no more than 50% should have any prior contractual links to the host institution.

The grant covers salaries, recruitment, travel and consumables and equipment (up to 10% of the EU contribution), as well as administrative expenses⁴⁶. Proposed structural reforms should be outlined in the proposal, such as improving working conditions, career prospects, HR policies, research governance, grant management and knowledge transfer. Gender equality should be addressed in alignment with ERA objectives and institutional commitments.

⁴⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2005/251/oj>

⁴⁵ Corresponding to profiles R3 or R4 of researchers careers as set out in the "European Framework for Research Careers" provided at https://cdn5.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/policy_library/towards_a_european_framework_for_research_careers_final.pdf

⁴⁶ that can be considered under the category of "other goods, works and services"

Proposals should quantify expected impacts, including new research partnerships, institutional changes, increased research output, and improved research management. Additional relevant impact indicators are encouraged.

The expected duration of the actions is 5 years.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-02-WIDENING-02: ERA Research Managers

Call: ERA Chairs and Research Managers	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.50 and 2.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 65.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>To achieve the expected outcomes, participation as coordinators to the call is limited to legal entities established in Widening Countries, as defined in the Horizon Europe regulation.</p> <p>Applications may only be submitted by one legal entity (mono-beneficiary) established in a Widening Country.</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply:</p> <p>To allow for the assessment of the commitment of the future ERA Research Manager and of the coordinator institution, proposals must include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) a letter signed by the prospective ERA Research Manager expressing their commitment to the proposal corresponding to at least 50% full time equivalent (FTE) at least until the appointment of a research management leader on a permanent basis by M36, and their willingness to take on the underlying tasks and obligations and agreed contractual arrangements including salary and on-site presence at the host institution 2) a letter from the head of the coordinator institution committing to the proposal and support to the ERA Research Manager with adequate support for their tasks and duties including, for example, access to research facilities, supervision of researchers, teaching duties (if any) and freedom

	to apply to national and international funding.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Seals of Excellence will be awarded to applications exceeding all of the evaluation thresholds set out in this work programme but which cannot be funded due to lack of budget available to the call.</p> <p>The following rules for dealing with ex-aequo applications apply: in the first place, ex-aequo proposals will be prioritised according to geographical diversity criteria, defined as proposals with coordinators established in a Widening Country, not otherwise represented as coordinator higher up the ranking list. The method described in Points 1), 2), 3) and 5) of General Annexes Part F (Procedure/Evaluation procedure and ranking) will then be applied in numerical order of the remaining equally ranking proposals in the group. This rule establishing the priority order serves to better spread the impact of the action and to strengthen the efficiency of the ‘Widening participation and spreading excellence’ programme.</p>

Expected Outcome: Excellent capacities in research management are essential for institutions and national R&I systems to capitalize on their R&I activities. ERA Research Managers aim to attract experienced research managers to universities, research organisations or research infrastructures in Widening Countries, establishing or upgrading institutional capacities for research management, fostering brain circulation and creating pockets of excellence that enhance institutional culture and performance.

Research management capacities are crucial for research-performing institutions as they increase efficiency, competitiveness, and impact, thereby enhancing research excellence. Strong research management ensures effective grant acquisition, resource allocation, compliance with funding regulations, and strategic planning. It supports high-quality research by streamlining administrative processes, facilitating collaborations, and optimizing the use of research infrastructure.

The ERA Research Manager’s leadership and the establishment of a permanent, high-quality research management group will boost excellence, visibility, and integration within the ERA, improving competitiveness in research funding and promoting institutional reforms aligned with ERA priorities.

Projects are expected to contribute to some of the following outcomes:

At system level:

- Increased international, interdisciplinary, and intersectoral mobility of research management talent towards widening countries;

- Institutional reforms in research institutions and national R&I systems;
- Strengthened human capital with more entrepreneurial and well-trained research managers;
- Better communication of R&I results to society;
- Enhanced research capacity, competitiveness, and economic growth.

At organisation level:

- Strengthened research management capacities;
- Increased attractiveness to top international research managers, and subsequently researchers;
- Establishment of a lasting, high-performing research management group with institutional benefits;
- Improving the institution's global visibility and success in securing competitive funding;
- Promote practices in agreed ERA priorities such as ethics, open science and data, gender equality, thus strengthening the institution's overall research ecosystem:

Scope: Research organisations in Widening countries seeking to establish an ERA Research Manager should submit a proposal aimed at establishing or upgrading research management capacities in the institution and ensuring that the conditions are in place to foster excellent research management aligned with ERA priorities.

Proposals should include a Curriculum Vitae (CV) in Europass form⁴⁷ of the prospective ERA Research Manager, detailing their managerial and technical contributions to the coordinating institution. The CV should be uploaded as an Annex to the proposal.

Proposals should include a self-assessment of the beneficiary's existing institutional capacities and its needs in research management and administration. An implementation strategy should be designed to enhance the existing institutional capacities, with targeted actions and trainings. This strategy may be continuously adapted throughout the project duration. This plan will include all necessary measures to introduce institutional changes in research management. These measures should be realistic and feasible within the duration of the project. Proposals should also describe any alternative/additional/other relevant investments in research management capacity building, projects, staffing, facilities and infrastructures and how those will be achieved.

ERA Research Managers should be excellent research managers with international experience⁴⁸. The ERA Research Manager will establish/expand a research management team

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<https://europa.eu/europass/en/create-europass-cv>

fully integrated in the coordinator's institution to significantly improve its overall performance in R&I. The team's recruitment will be led by an international panel chaired by the ERA Research Manager. The ERA Research Manager should hold a position within the organisation, allowing resource allocation, supervision, and funding applications. Teaching duties may be included where appropriate.

ERA Research Manager may relocate permanently or temporarily to the coordinating institution, with secondments, sabbaticals, or part-time arrangements possible. A minimum 50% full-time equivalent (FTE) commitment, including on-site presence, must be ensured, at least until the appointment of a research management leader on a permanent basis. In such cases, a description of the transition phase between the team leader and the ERA Research Manager should be provided in the proposal. All contractual arrangements, time commitment and the timeline of the ERA Research Manager's on-site presence at the coordinator should be indicated in the proposal, as well as the salary (gross amount), travel and daily allowances and/or other perks to be offered. If employment is the preferred option, contractual details must be provided.

Proposals should outline all contractual arrangements including salary, travel, daily allowances and other benefits. If employment is the preferred option, contractual details must be provided.

The permanent leader of the newly created or reinforced research management group should be appointed on a permanent basis within the first three years through an open recruitment process monitored by the European Commission.

To ensure long-term sustainability, the ERA Research Managers team should be structured for continuity beyond Horizon Europe funding. The proposal should detail team composition, research management levels, salaries, and recruitment timelines. No more than 50% of the team should have prior contractual links to the institution.

The grant covers salaries, recruitment, travel and consumables and equipment (up to 10% of the EU contribution), as well as administrative expenses⁴⁹. Proposed structural reforms should be outlined in the proposal, such as improving working conditions, career prospects, HR policies, research governance, grant management, knowledge transfer, and simplifying procedures like IPR. Gender equality should be addressed in alignment with ERA objectives and institutional commitments.

Proposals should quantify expected impacts, including institutional changes, increased research output (publications, IPR protection, knowledge valorisation), and improved research management. Additional relevant impact indicators are encouraged.

The expected duration of the actions is 5 years.

⁴⁸ Corresponding to advanced or expert level of research managers careers as set out in the "European Competence Framework for Research Managers" provided at [RM Comp: The European Competence Framework for Research Managers - European Commission](#)

⁴⁹ that can be considered under the category of "other goods, works and services"

HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-03-WIDENING-01: ERA Fellowships

Call: ERA Fellowships	
Specific conditions	
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 8.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	TMA Postdoctoral Fellowships - European Fellowships
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>To be eligible to this call the host organisation must be located in a Widening country.</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Seals of Excellence will be awarded to applications exceeding all of the evaluation thresholds set out in this work programme but which cannot be funded due to lack of budget available to the call.</p>
<i>Other conditions</i>	<p>For application of the general award criteria, including weighting and thresholds, see the specific conditions at the end of the MSCA Work Programme part.</p> <p>For admissibility, eligibility criteria, procedure and legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreement see exceptions and specific conditions for MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships - European Fellowships in the MSCA Work Programme part.</p> <p>The MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2027 model grant agreement will be used to the ERA Fellowships.</p> <p>The expected EU contribution depends on the number of person-months requested. For the applicable unit contributions, see specific conditions for MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships - European Fellowships in the MSCA Work Programme part.</p> <p>In order to apply for the ERA Fellowships call, applicants must submit their proposal to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA) Postdoctoral Fellowships 2027. The application to the (MSCA) Postdoctoral Fellowships 2027 will be automatically resubmitted to this call in case the proposal fails to reach an adequate place in the ranking to be funded. This simplified submission procedure to the ERA Fellowships call presents applicants moving to Widening countries with an additional funding opportunity but</p>

	<p>there is the possibility to opt out during the application stage.</p> <p>ERA Fellowships will be implemented applying the award criteria, scoring and threshold for Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions. The ranking order for the ERA Fellowships call will follow the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2027 call scores and evaluation procedure and proposals will also retain the scores and comments included in the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) of this call.</p> <p>The proposals submitted under the ERA Fellowships must fulfil all the admissibility and eligibility conditions of the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2027 and pass all the thresholds for that call.</p>
<i>Other requirement</i>	The part of the MSCA Work Programme referring to synergies with the Euratom Research and Training Programme 2021-2025 does not apply to the ERA Fellowships.

Expected Outcome: This action builds on the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2027 action (HORIZON-MSCA-PF-2027). The target group are host organisations located in Widening Countries.

Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

For supported ERA Fellows:

- Increased set of research and transferable skills and competences, leading to improved employability and career prospects of fellows within academia and beyond;
- New mind-sets and approaches to R&I work forged through international, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary experience;
- Enhanced networking and communication capacities with scientific peers, as well as with the general public, that will increase and broaden the research and innovation impact;

For participating organisations in the Widening Countries:

- Increased alignment of working conditions for researchers in accordance with the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers⁵⁰;
- Enhanced quality and sustainability of research training and supervision;
- Increased global attractiveness, visibility and reputation;
- Stronger R&I capacity and output; better transfer of knowledge.

⁵⁰ Charter for Researchers, annexed to the Council recommendation C/2023/1640 of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe (OJ C, C/2023/1640, 29.12.2023), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C_202301640.

For Widening Countries:

- More postdoctoral researchers attracted to Widening Countries with competitive grants and attractive working and employment conditions.

Scope: Fellowships should be provided to excellent researchers, undertaking cross-border mobility. Applications must be made jointly by the researcher together with a legal entity in the academic or non-academic sector located in a Widening Country.

ERA Fellowships should take place in a Widening Country. Fellowships are open to researchers of any nationality who wish to engage in R&I projects by either coming to the EU from any country in the world or moving within the EU to a Widening Country.

Secondments

Researchers receiving an ERA Fellowship may opt to include a secondment phase, within the overall duration of their fellowship in any country worldwide. The secondment phase can be a single period or be divided into shorter mobility periods. Secondments cannot exceed one third of the standard fellowship duration and should be in line with the project objectives, adding significant value and impact to the fellowship.

Placements in the non-academic sector

ERA Fellowships can provide an additional period of up to six months to support researchers opting for a placement at the end of the project to work on R&I projects in an organisation from the non-academic sector established in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country. While this possibility is also available to fellows recruited in the non-academic sector, such a placement should be implemented at a different non-academic host organisation established in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country. The request for such a non-academic placement should be an integral part of the proposal, explaining the added value for the project and for the career development of the researcher, and will be subject to evaluation. This incentive aims at promoting career moves between sectors and organisations and thereby stimulate innovation and knowledge transfer while expanding career opportunities for researchers.

Training activities

The training activities implemented under the ERA Fellowships should include training for key transferable skills⁵¹, foster innovation and entrepreneurship, (e.g., commercialisation of results, Intellectual Property Rights, communication, public engagement and citizen science), foster good scientific conduct such as research integrity and promote Open Science practices (open access to publications and to other research outputs, including data, FAIR data management, societal engagement and citizen science, etc.).

Career Development Plan

⁵¹ As an illustration, Eurodoc published a list of such transferable skills at: <http://eurodoc.net/skills-report-2018.pdf>

In order to equip ERA Fellows with skills that enhance and expand their career opportunities inside and outside academia, a Career Development Plan should be established jointly by the supervisor(s) and the researcher. In addition to research objectives, this plan should comprise the researcher's training and career needs, including training on transferable skills, teaching, planning for publications and participation in conferences and events aiming at opening science and research to citizens. The Plan has to be submitted as a project deliverable at the beginning of the action and can be updated when needed.

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Destination: Reforming and enhancing the European research and innovation system

The guiding policy framework of this destination is the Communication "A New ERA for Research and Innovation"⁵², the Council Recommendation on the Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe (Pact for R&I)⁵³, and the European Research Area (ERA) Policy Agenda (2025-2027)⁵⁴. The funded actions will strengthen the ERA by promoting the freedom of movement of researchers, scientific knowledge, and technology and by providing new evidence for better-informed policymaking. More details on the ERA policy framework are in the introduction to the WIDERA work programme 2026-2027.

The EU Member States, Associated Countries, R&I stakeholders, and the Commission work together to implement the ERA. This process is steered by the ERA Policy Agenda, which identifies specific ERA Actions (time-limited initiatives) and Structural Policies (long-term policies) designed to tackle concrete challenges faced by R&I communities in Europe. This work programme is designed to support this process. The funded actions will build knowledge and capacities at the level of institutions and ecosystems to adopt reforms and practices in line with the ERA Policy Agenda, thereby contributing to the implementation of the ERA.

The destination will be implemented in synergy with the European Higher Education Area and the European Education Area, especially in relation to R&I careers and institutional changes in universities and research organisations. Several call topics and other actions will also contribute to the implementation of the European framework for research careers⁵⁵.

The destination includes two calls with 12 topics in total as well as other actions, targeting a wide range of R&I stakeholders, e.g., universities, research performing and funding organisations, research evaluation agencies, networks of researchers, publishers, industry and start-ups, policymakers, local authorities, and public bodies.

The effective contribution of social sciences and humanities (SSH) disciplines is encouraged under this destination, including the involvement of SSH experts, institutions, and the inclusion of relevant SSH expertise, to enhance the societal impact of project activities.

The [ERA Platform](#) showcases results from Horizon Europe-funded projects, making them available to a wide range of stakeholders to facilitate progress in ERA policy areas. Applicants are encouraged to consider these results as well as propose new tools, resources and visual material that can be featured on the platform.

All topics in the 2026 and 2027 ERA calls are organised around four pillars, designed to enable the funded projects to strengthen R&I capacities across four complementary dimensions while addressing selected ERA Actions and Structural Policies. The table below

⁵² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0628&from=EN>.

⁵³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H2122>.

⁵⁴ <https://european-research-area.ec.europa.eu/era-policy-agenda-2025-2027>.

⁵⁵ Council Recommendation of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj>.

summarises this approach, making it easier for applicants to choose their preferred policy area and type of activity. Each call topic title refers to its corresponding pillar.

2026 and 2027 ERA calls: pillar structure

Pillar I: Institutional changes for ERA	Pillar II: Ecosystems for ERA
<p><u>Type:</u> coordination and support actions</p> <p><u>Focus:</u> capacity building and support to foster adoption of ERA policies/practices within institutions.</p> <p><u>Activity types:</u> tools, resources, training, services, policy advice.</p> <p><u>Policy areas:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity in open science • Inclusive gender equality • Research assessment reform • Research ethics and integrity • Open access policies 	<p><u>Type:</u> coordination and support actions</p> <p><u>Focus:</u> building and reinforcing networks and partnerships to foster broad uptake of ERA policies/practices.</p> <p><u>Activity types:</u> exchange of knowledge and practice, networking and cooperative actions.</p> <p><u>Policy areas:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research ethics and integrity • Environmentally sustainable science • Knowledge valorisation • Open science • Research careers
Pillar III: Citizens and Science in ERA	Pillar IV: New knowledge for ERA
<p><u>Type:</u> coordination and support actions</p> <p><u>Focus:</u> connecting R&I with citizens and other stakeholders.</p> <p><u>Activity types:</u> implementing and promoting participatory approaches, such as citizen engagement and citizen science.</p> <p><u>Policy areas:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust in science • Knowledge valorisation • Citizen and societal engagement 	<p><u>Type:</u> research and innovation actions</p> <p><u>Focus:</u> creating new knowledge that supports design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and practices.</p> <p><u>Activity types:</u> conducting analyses, developing and testing new methods and practices.</p> <p><u>Policy areas:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open science • Research ethics and integrity • Inclusive gender equality • Research careers

Proposals under this destination should set out a credible pathway to one or several of the following expected impacts:

- Effective and sustainable structural institutional changes aligned with ERA priorities;
- Sustainable ecosystems established around ERA priorities through enhanced cooperation, coordination and alignment;
- Increased trust in science and alignment of R&I with society's needs;
- Strengthened evidence base for advancing the implementation of the ERA;
- Increased reproducibility, trustworthiness and transparency of scientific research;
- A more open, equitable and inclusive research and innovation ecosystem;
- A research ethics and integrity ecosystem continually enhanced with robust methodologies that encourage benefit sharing and prevent ethics dumping;
- Systemic reform of research assessment through the recognition of the diverse outputs, practices, and activities which maximise the quality and impact of research;
- Improved research careers and mobility, based on the European framework for research careers, fostering knowledge flows and career interoperability across sectors and countries;
- Stronger translation of R&I results into society and economy;
- Enhanced gender equality and inclusiveness, leading to research excellence and more innovative, socially relevant, and economically impactful outcomes;
- Increased uptake, effectiveness and impact of environmentally sustainable research;
- More resilient and future-proof R&I policies and long-term strategies with effectively integrated strategic intelligence and strengthened foresight communities.

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-01: Pillar I: Accelerating open access and research assessment reforms in ERA

Call: Enhancing the European R&I system	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 2.00 and 4.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 6.00 million.

<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applications must be submitted by a consortium including participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three independent legal entities: Each established in a different Member State or Associated Country; and two of which are established in a Member State.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Beneficiaries must provide financial support to third parties. 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 60 000.</p>
<i>Evaluation Procedure</i>	<p>To ensure a balanced portfolio covering different ERA policy areas, as outlined in the expected outcomes and scope, grants will be awarded to proposals not only in order of ranking, but at least also to proposals that are the highest ranked within each area, provided that proposals pass all thresholds.</p>

Scope: This topic aims to foster effective and sustainable structural institutional changes within R&I organisations in alignment with ERA priorities. Through financial support to third parties (cascading grants), it will enable a variety of capacity-building activities, such as the provision of tools, resources, guidelines, training, and quality assurance programmes.

Applicants should select and clearly identify one area being addressed, choosing from the two areas outlined below. Each area is designed to contribute toward the implementation of an ERA policy: Area 1 – ERA Action “Equity in Open Science; Area 2 – ERA Structural Policy “Research Assessment”. Proposals should develop the activities outlined for the selected area as well as propose additional activities that contribute to achieving the expected outcomes.

While focusing on one area, applicants are encouraged to consider synergies with other topics of this Call. For example, applicants that choose Area 1 on non-profit open access publishing models may propose activities linked to research assessment (Area 2 of this topic), peer review (Area 4 of topic HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-02), or reproducibility in research (Area 1 of topic HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-08). Any such synergies should be clearly explained.

Proposed activities should reach large communities of stakeholders, ensuring a wide geographical coverage, inclusivity, and broad participation over the course of the project. Proposals should describe their target group in terms of its scope and size. In project activities, particular attention should be paid to promoting inclusive gender equality and addressing gender-specific challenges.

The open calls for cascading grants should ensure objective and transparent selection procedures.

Expected project duration is up to 3 years without prejudice to a longer duration if justified.

Area 1: Supporting the transition of scholarly societies to non-profit open access publishing models

Expected outcome: Proposals under Area 1 will deliver on the impact “A more open, equitable and inclusive research and innovation ecosystem”, contributing to the ERA Action “Equity in Open Science”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Publishing activities of scholarly societies in a range of disciplines and scientific fields have transitioned into non-profit open access publishing models, ensuring broader dissemination of research and more equitable and inclusive access to publishing services by eliminating author fees;
- Improved capacities, skills, and resources for scholarly societies that are essential for transitioning their scientific publishing venues into sustainable, non-profit open access publishing models;
- Greater awareness of and commitment to open science principles and practices among scholarly societies and their underlying communities, support to the reform of research assessment and the European Charter for Researchers⁵⁶.

Scope: Area 1 supports the transition of journals/books/monographs of national and/or European scholarly societies⁵⁷ into non-profit open access publishing models without author fees.

At least two thirds of the funding should be allocated as cascading grants to calls for pilot actions, targeting scholarly societies in all six [Frascati](#) fields⁵⁸ of science and technology. At least one third of the grants should be distributed to scholarly societies in the Humanities/Arts and Social Sciences. Proposals should take into account results from past and ongoing projects on non-profit institutional open access publishing and related infrastructures⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/hrexcellenceaward/european-charter-researchers#the-european-charter-for-researchers>.

⁵⁷ Scholarly societies (also called learned societies) are organisations dedicated to advancing a specific academic discipline or field of study, set scientific standards, and enable multilingualism and bibliodiversity. They typically serve as central hubs for researchers, educators, and practitioners to share knowledge, collaborate, and uphold standards in their field. They often have significant scientific publishing activities and play a role in scientific publishing.

⁵⁸ 1) Natural Sciences; 2) Engineering and Technology; 3) Medical and health sciences; 4) Agricultural and veterinary sciences; 5) Social sciences; 6) Humanities and the arts.

⁵⁹ Including relevant projects funded under [HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-43](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01-42](#), [HORIZON-INFRA-2022-EOSC-01-02](#), and [HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-01-08](#).

Consortia should comprise, e.g., scholarly societies, research performing and funding organisations, libraries, non-profit scholarly publishers, and other research-relevant organisations, among others. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities, targeting scholarly societies:

- Develop business models to support sustainable non-profit open access publishing for scholarly societies beyond the project;
- Produce guidelines, training materials and lessons learnt to support capacity-building for such transitions of scholarly societies in the future;
- Launch open call(s) for grants supporting pilot actions for transitioning at least 30 scholarly societies across Europe to open access non-profit publishing models;

Area 2: Sustainable institutional reforms to improve research assessment systems

Expected outcome: Proposals under Area 2 will deliver on the impact “Systemic reform of research assessment through the recognition of the diverse outputs, practices, and activities which maximise the quality and impact of research”, contributing to the ERA Structural Policy “Research Assessment”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Institutional changes in research performing and funding organisations (including accreditation and quality assurance agencies) in favour of more responsible research assessment systems in line with the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment (ARRA);
- Implementation of Action Plans of signatories of the ARRA;
- Increased awareness and trust among researchers and research organisations about reforms of research assessment.

Scope: Area 2 aims to support institutional changes, raise awareness, and assess the level of progress made in terms of reforming research assessment, in line with the ARRA. The cascading grants are expected to effect changes in 50-60 institutions of different types and from different geographical areas. Proposals should build on past or ongoing relevant initiatives and projects at European or national level⁶⁰.

Project activities should involve actors such as higher education institutions, research performing and funding organisations, research evaluation agencies, accreditation and quality assurance agencies, notably those engaged in the [CoARA](#) approach. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

⁶⁰ Including projects funded under [HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ERA-01-07](#), [HORIZON-INFRA-2022-EOSC-01-01](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-45](#).

- Launch open call(s) providing grants that support institutional changes for reforming research assessment;
- Develop or reform research assessment and evaluation criteria and processes in alignment with the CoARA Agreement commitments;
- Implement reforms aiming to establish qualitative peer-review at the centre of research assessment practices and to move away from the use of traditional bibliometric journal and publication-based indicators (in particular the Journal Impact Factor and h-index);
- Implement institutional changes in the assessment of research that recognise the diversity of activities and roles of researchers; and, enhance the recognition of diverse research practices as part of assessment systems (e.g., public engagement, citizen science, and science for policy);
- Analyse the outcomes of research assessment reforms and identify relevant barriers.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-02: Pillar I: Building institutional capacities for ethical, equitable, open, and inclusive ERA

Call: Enhancing the European R&I system	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.50 and 2.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 9.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applications must be submitted by a consortium including participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three independent legal entities: Each established in a different Member State or Associated Country; and two of which are established in a Member State.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>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</p>

	Community (2021-2025) ⁶¹ .
<i>Evaluation Procedure</i>	To ensure a balanced portfolio covering different ERA policy areas, as outlined in the expected outcomes and scope, grants will be awarded to proposals not only in order of ranking, but at least also to proposals that are the highest ranked within each area, provided that proposals pass all thresholds.

Scope: This topic aims to foster effective and sustainable structural institutional changes within R&I organisations in alignment with ERA priorities. It supports the adoption of ERA policies and practices within institutions through capacity-building activities, such as the provision of tools, resources, recommendations, training, and exchange of good practices.

Applicants should select and clearly identify one area being addressed, choosing from the four areas outlined below. Each area is designed to contribute toward the implementation of an ERA policy: Area 1 – ERA Action “A harmonised framework to support integrity and ethics in R&I in the face of emerging challenges”; Area 2 – ERA Structural Policy “Strengthening gender equality and inclusiveness in the ERA”; Area 3 and Area 4 – ERA Action “Equity in Open Science”. Proposals should develop the activities outlined for the selected area and propose additional activities that contribute to achieving the expected outcomes.

While focusing on one area, proposals are encouraged to consider synergies with other topics of this Call. For example, applicants that choose Area 3 on equity and inclusion in Open Science may propose links to peer-review for scientific publishing (Area 4 of this topic), non-profit open access publishing models (Area 1 of topic HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-01), or reproducibility in research (Area 1 of topic HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-08). Any such synergies should be clearly explained.

Proposed activities should reach large communities of stakeholders, ensuring a wide geographical coverage, inclusivity, and broad participation over the course of the project. Proposals should describe their target group in terms of its scope and size. In project activities, particular attention should be paid to promoting inclusive gender equality and addressing gender-specific challenges.

Expected project duration is 2-3 years without prejudice to a longer duration if justified.

Area 1: Capacity booster for ethics and integrity: addressing digital transition and ensuring digital inclusion for all

Expected outcome: Projects under Area 1 will deliver on the impact “A research ethics and integrity ecosystem continually enhanced with robust methodologies that encourage benefit sharing and prevent ethics dumping”, contributing to the ERA Action “A harmonised

⁶¹ This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) 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

framework to support integrity and ethics in R&I in the face of emerging challenges”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- A reinforced institutional ethics and integrity framework that supports researchers and ethics and integrity bodies in addressing challenges related to AI and the digitalisation of research, ensuring a high level of protection for children, adolescents, seniors, as well as effective mitigation of new digital vulnerabilities;
- Establishment of multidisciplinary networks, fostering responsible and ethical research in the digital domain;
- Increased awareness of the ethical challenges of digital research and the strategies needed to overcome them.

Scope: Area 1 aims to promote research ethics and integrity principles while preventing breaches in an increasingly digitalised world by developing ethical guidelines in the EU and beyond to foster institutional change. The objective is to build a robust ethics and integrity framework to help researchers address ethical challenges and prevent and/or mitigate risks of digital exclusion related to the rapid spread of AI and digitalisation in research, while protecting vulnerable populations, including children.

Proposals should build on the results of relevant past or ongoing projects at European and/or national level⁶². Structured cooperation with the [Embassy of Good Science](#) and relevant European networks should be included⁶³. Project activities should target researchers, research integrity/ethics committees, European networks in research ethics, research management/integrity offices, ethics officers in research performing organisations, as well as policymakers. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Develop an institutional ethics and integrity framework based on standard operating procedures and operational guidance;
- Develop training programmes for researchers, ethics experts, and local ethics bodies/committees to safeguard responsible and trustworthy research in a digital context;
- Conduct targeted communication and dissemination actions on ethical challenges in the digital domain in order to build understanding among researchers, developers, and the broader public about risks, and to promote responsible innovation and commitment to the European Charter for Researchers, through activities such as workshops, surveys, public communication campaigns, and tailored ethics dialogues.

⁶² Including projects funded under [H2020 SwafS-27-2017](#), [H2020 SwafS-03-2018](#), [H2020 SwafS-29-2020](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-90](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-91](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01-91](#), [HORIZON HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ERA-01-12](#), [HORIZON HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-01-12](#); See also Cordis Results Pack: [Ethics and integrity: Building bridges for trust and excellence in research and innovation](#).

⁶³ E.g., the European Network of Research Ethics Committees and Research Integrity Offices ([ENERI](#)), The Anna Lindh Foundation ([ALF](#)), and the Network of Education on Research Quality ([NERQ](#)).

Area 2: Mutual learning and mentoring for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of inclusive gender equality plans

Expected outcome: Proposals under Area 2 will deliver on the impact “Enhanced gender equality and inclusiveness, leading to research excellence and more innovative, socially relevant, and economically impactful outcomes;”, contributing to the ERA Structural Policy “Strengthening gender equality and inclusiveness in the ERA”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Increased capacity of R&I organisations to design, implement, monitor and evaluate inclusive gender equality plans (GEPs) through the availability of new or updated methods, guidance and tools;
- Increased uptake, quality and effectiveness of inclusive GEPs and policies in organisations that are less advanced in their implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Scope: Area 2 will support the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of inclusive GEPs through a peer-mentoring scheme, matching organisations and teams with a strong track record in developing and implementing inclusive GEPs with those that need guidance, particularly from – but not limited to - countries classified as emerging or moderate innovators by the [EU Innovation Scoreboard](#).

Project activities should target research performing organisations, higher education institutions, and public bodies and build on existing knowledge, expertise, and tools⁶⁴. Project consortia are expected to justify their collaboration based on their alignment in terms of common challenges, similar contexts and/or specific thematic focus. Proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Implement actions in organisations that are less advanced in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of inclusive GEPs, guided by an intersectional approach, targeting underrepresented or socially disadvantaged groups, integrating gender dimension into R&I content, ensuring thorough monitoring and evaluation of inclusive GEPs, and other measures;
- Exchange good practices and materials tailored to individual organisations’ needs for the development, monitoring and evaluation of inclusive GEPs;
- Build capacities through activities such as on-site visits, training, workshops, and networking with relevant projects, initiatives and stakeholders in the area of gender equality and inclusiveness beyond the project consortia.

Area 3: Address equity and inclusion in capacities for Open Science

⁶⁴ [GEAR Tool](#); Projects funded under [H2020 SwafS-13-2018](#), [H2020 SwafS-08-2017](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-80](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-81](#), and [HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-01-11](#).

Expected outcome: Proposals under Area 2 will deliver on the impact “A more open, equitable and inclusive research and innovation ecosystem”, contributing to the ERA Action “Equity in Open Science”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Consolidated evidence base on equity and inclusion in Open Science;
- Support for researchers with diverse profiles and needs in adopting Open Science practices, including more equitable access to Open Science infrastructures;
- Training material for the practice of Open Science addressing specific equity needs and profiles.

Scope: Area 3 aims to generate actionable recommendations and toolkits in order to support capacities for Open Science by prioritising an equitable contribution to, and benefits from, Open Science through policy and institutional practice.

Proposals should build on any past or ongoing relevant initiatives and projects at European or national level⁶⁵. Project activities should involve actors such as research performing and funding organisations, research assessment agencies, research infrastructures, universities, researchers, innovators, and policymakers. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Take stock of equity and inclusion barriers in relation to Open Science practices and access to Open Science infrastructures, notably in connection to scientists’ personal circumstances (like career stage, employment stability and contract type, financial circumstances, country of origin or residence, and factors such as gender, ethnicity);
- Develop and disseminate shared tools, training methods, and services tailored to equity needs, thereby boosting Open Science skills and capacities in collaboration with stakeholders;
- Support the professionalisation of Open Science-related profiles, such as data stewards, non-profit academic editors, and non-profit academic journals’ reviewers;
- Provide recommendations for developing a common ERA approach to equity in Open Science in its different practices.

Area 4: Improving quality, efficiency and equity in peer-review for scientific publishing

Expected outcome: Proposals under Area 4 will deliver on the impact “A more open, equitable and inclusive research and innovation ecosystem”, contributing to the ERA Action “Equity in Open Science”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

⁶⁵ Including project [ON-MERRIT](#), funded under [H2020 SwafS-20-2018-2019](#), and projects funded under [HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01-44](#).

- Improved quality and increased transparency, recognition, equity, and non-bias in the peer-review process and editorial review system in different disciplines among publishers (including non-profit, institutional, scholarly societies, and commercial publishers) and editors/editorial boards;
- Increased awareness among researchers, research performing organisations, scholarly societies, editors/editorial boards and publishers, of the need for a transparent and equitable peer review process as an integral part of high-quality research.

Scope: Peer-review has recently come under scrutiny and is being reimaged to better serve scientific integrity, openness, and fairness. To this end, this area aims to contribute towards enhancing its various aspects and to explore different peer-review models.

Proposals should cover disciplines from at least two of the six [Frascati](#)⁶⁶ fields of science and technology as well as consider the emerging challenge of AI in peer-review. Project activities should involve actors such as editors/editorial boards, scholarly societies, research performing organisations, and national research evaluation agencies. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Pilot policies and processes in different scientific fields that will improve the peer-review process, mindful of the challenges introduced by AI;
- Draft recommendations for transitioning scholarly publishing in different scientific fields to improved, more efficient, transparent, equitable, and non-biased peer-reviewed processes;
- Address new forms of peer-review, such as open peer-review, and innovative publishing models, including “publish-review-curate”, where the review is conducted on publicly available preprints;
- Address attitudes to and effectiveness of peer review practices in different scientific fields, considering geographic, gender, and career stage biases in the process.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-03: Pillar II: Strengthening ecosystems for open, ethical, and sustainable ERA

Call: Enhancing the European R&I system	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 2.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a

⁶⁶ 1) Natural sciences; 2) Engineering and technology; 3) Medical and health sciences; 4) Agricultural and veterinary sciences; 5) Social sciences; 6) Humanities and the arts.

	proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 6.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applications must be submitted by a consortium including participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three independent legal entities: Each established in a different Member State or Associated Country; and two of which are established in a Member State.</p> <p>Legal entities established in non-associated third countries may exceptionally participate in this coordination and support action as an associated partner.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>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) ⁶⁷.</p>
<i>Evaluation Procedure</i>	To ensure a balanced portfolio covering different ERA policy areas, as outlined in the expected outcomes and scope, grants will be awarded to proposals not only in order of ranking, but at least also to proposals that are the highest ranked within each area, provided that proposals pass all thresholds.

Scope: This topic aims to promote the adoption of ERA policies and practices, contributing to sustainable ecosystems established around ERA priorities through enhanced cooperation, coordination and alignment. The topic helps to create new or enhance existing ecosystems through activities such as networking and cooperative action, knowledge exchange and dissemination, tools, training, and policy advice.

Applicants should select and clearly identify one area being addressed, choosing from the three areas outlined below. Each area is designed to contribute toward the implementation of an ERA policy: Area 1 – ERA Action “A harmonised framework to support integrity and ethics in R&I in the face of emerging challenges”; Area 2 – ERA Structural Policy “Enabling

⁶⁷ This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) 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

open science via sharing and re-use of data, including through EOSC"; Area 3 – “Green transition”, as set out in the Pact for R&I in Europe. Proposals should develop the activities outlined for the selected area as well as propose additional activities that contribute to achieving the expected outcomes.

Project activities should reach large communities of stakeholders, engaging also those beyond academia, ensuring a wide geographical coverage, inclusivity, and broad participation over the course of the project. Proposals should describe the target group in terms of its scope and size. In order to achieve the expected outcomes, international cooperation is welcomed. The involvement of entities from non-associated third countries in the consortium must be clearly explained and justified.

In project activities, particular attention should be paid to promoting inclusive gender equality and addressing gender-specific challenges. Where relevant, proposals should consider the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity⁶⁸ and the TRUST Code⁶⁹.

Applicants must demonstrate in their proposal a viable plan for achieving self-sustainability after the end of the grant agreement, with a clear description of a minimum set of activities that will be maintained by the consortium with own or other resources.

Expected project duration is up to 3 years without prejudice to a longer duration if justified.

Area 1: Equitable, sustainable, and ethical research

Expected outcome: Proposals under Area 1 will deliver on the impact “A research ethics and integrity ecosystem continuously enhanced with robust methodologies and knowledge that encourage benefit sharing and prevent ethics dumping”, contributing to the ERA Action “A harmonised framework to support integrity and ethics in R&I in the face of emerging challenges”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- A reinforced research ethics and integrity ecosystem that supports sustainable and equitable research partnerships across lower- and high-income settings, based on the values of the TRUST Code;
- Enhanced expertise in benefit sharing and practical and effective methods to prevent ‘ethics dumping’;
- Creation of an international community of practice to promote “ethics-by-design” in support of researchers, research participants, local communities, local/national ethics and research integrity bodies, and other key stakeholders.

Scope: Area 1 promotes research ethics and integrity principles in an increasingly digitalised world to prevent breaches and address barriers to implementing ethical guidelines in the EU

⁶⁸ [european-code-of-conduct-for-research-integrity_horizon_en.pdf](#).

⁶⁹ The TRUST Code A Global Code of Conduct for Equitable Research Partnerships, <https://www.globalcodeofconduct.org/>.

and beyond. The objectives are twofold: first, to reinforce an ecosystem that supports a long-lasting approach to benefit sharing, also accounting for the growing prevalence of AI; and second, to address imbalances in research, especially in high-risk or highly contingent settings, by incorporating due diligence and beneficence for research participants and local communities.

Proposals should build on the results of relevant past or ongoing projects at European and/or national level⁷⁰. Structured cooperation with the [Embassy of Good Science](#) should be included. Cooperation with university or research networks to enrich ethics-related curricula is desirable⁷¹. Project activities should target researchers, local/national research integrity and ethics committees, European networks of (early career) researchers and educators in research ethics, research management and integrity offices, ethics officers in research performing organisations, as well as policymakers. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should include the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Develop toolkits to facilitate partnerships that guarantee the premise of ‘do no harm’ as well as fair and just practice from conception to the implementation of actions;
- Develop training programmes, including a quality assurance system, for researchers and for ethics experts and committees to promote the coherence of the ethics review process;
- Increase awareness and disseminate knowledge of ethical values and norms for responsible R&I, including at the local level.

Area 2: Global cooperation for the uptake of Open Science practices

Expected outcome: Proposals under Area 2 will deliver on the impact: “A more open, equitable and inclusive research and innovation ecosystem”, contributing to the ERA Structural Policy “Enabling open science via sharing and re-use of data, including through the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Strengthened international collaboration for aligning policies and strategies that enable open access, and the secure and trusted sharing and re-use of digital research objects and tools in line with the FAIR principles;
- New standards, recommendations, and methodologies necessary for applying the FAIR principles and supporting the EOSC ecosystem in alignment with global best practices;
- Improved interoperability of digital research objects, tools, and services across various thematic, discipline-specific, and national data and digital research infrastructures worldwide.

⁷⁰ Including projects funded under [H2020 SwafS-27-2017](#), [H2020 SwafS-03-2018](#), [H2020 SwafS-29-2020](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-90](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-91](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01-91](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ERA-01-12](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-01-12](#); See also Cordis Results Pack: [Ethics and integrity: Building bridges for trust and excellence in research and innovation](#).

⁷¹ For example, EUA, YERUN, LERU, CESAER, EARMA, ALF.

Scope: Area 2 supports efforts to ensure that open science practices and skills are rewarded and taught, becoming the ‘new normal’. The main goal is to foster a global ecosystem that promotes cooperation and alignment on Open Science practices. It will facilitate the development of standards, tools, and services that empower researchers to find, access, re-use, and combine research findings, especially through EOSC.

Proposals should build on activities by related projects⁷² and activities in the context of the EOSC Partnership aimed at fostering the international dimension of EOSC. The project activities should target actors such as research organisations and their associations, research community-driven associations, research infrastructures, service providers, and higher education institutions. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Implement initiatives to facilitate cooperation and connections between developments within the European context and international initiatives that promote the reusability of digital research outputs;
- Engage with international stakeholders to contribute to the development and adoption of globally recognised data practices and standards;
- Provide support for defining and developing EOSC policies and technical specifications by aligning with global, community-driven initiatives and scientific best practices;
- Promote knowledge sharing, capacity building, and skills acquisition, enabling researchers and organisations to actively contribute to Open Science and the development of Global Open Research Commons.

Area 3: Environmentally sustainable science

Expected outcome: Projects under Area 3 will deliver on the impact “Increased uptake, effectiveness and impact of environmentally sustainable research”, contributing to the green transition. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Effective knowledge sharing and support for researchers and R&I organisations in implementing environmentally sustainable practices and policies;
- Enhanced culture and awareness of environmental sustainability within the scientific community;
- Increased integration of environmental sustainability considerations in European and national research funding programmes and other initiatives.

Scope: Area 3 contributes toward reducing environmental footprint of research. The aim is to set up a network dedicated to driving the transformation of research practices and research organisations toward environmental sustainability, considering various measures, such as

⁷² Projects funded under [HORIZON-INFRA-2022-EOSC-01-04](#) and [HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-41](#).

energy-efficient, low-waste laboratories, and sustainable data storage and computing facilities. Special attention should be given to energy-intensive digital technologies like AI.

Proposals should build on existing approaches and methodologies and collaborate with relevant projects, networks and initiatives⁷³. Project activities should target actors such as higher education institutions, research performing and funding organisations, industry, policymakers, and grassroots initiatives. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Map existing approaches for assessing and reducing environmental footprint and develop sustainability guidelines, considering various disciplines and research contexts;
- Offer evidence-based recommendations to integrate sustainability into research funding and evaluation, with attention to different institutional frameworks and engagement at all institutional levels;
- Promote awareness and adoption of sustainability policies and practices through knowledge exchange, collaboration, and trainings that leverage existing resources and expertise.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-04: Pillar II: Piloting innovative approaches to support academic startups and spinoffs

Call: Enhancing the European R&I system	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 2.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 4.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applications must be submitted by a consortium including participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three independent legal entities: Each established in a different Member State or Associated Country; and two of which are established in a Member State.</p>

⁷³ See for example, [Green Labs](#), [MSCA Green Charter](#), [Sustainable European Laboratories](#), [Science Europe Working Group on Greening Research](#), [Heidelberg Agreement](#); ALLEA (2022), “[Towards Climate Sustainability of the Academic System in Europe and beyond](#)”; Nature (2024), “[Spotlight on Green Labs](#)”; EC (2024) “[Greening research: Decarbonisation and beyond](#)”.

<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>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) ⁷⁴.</p>
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Expected Outcome: Proposals will deliver on the impact of “Stronger translation of R&I results into society and economy”, contributing to the ERA Structural Policy “Upscaling knowledge valorisation capacities and activities”. Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Upgraded guidance and services for supporting early-stage academic spinoffs and startups to bring their innovative solutions to market;
- Tested and shared innovative valorisation best practices addressing the needs of early-stage academic spinoffs and startups for engaging with industry, societal actors and end-users.

Scope: The objective of this topic is to strengthen ecosystems for knowledge valorisation and innovation by supporting academic startups and spinoffs to benefit from end-user feedback and links to industry and society. The topic supports the objectives of the Startup and Scaleup Strategy⁷⁵ by fostering the market uptake of innovative solutions.

Academic startups and spinoffs need access to excellent support services to commercialise their research and bring their innovations to market. Beyond technology validation, there is a need to test the desirability of their products and services with a broader public, learn from citizens’ feedback, and adapt and improve their value propositions to improve their prospects for collaborating with industrial partners, attracting investors, and growing locally and internationally.

A variety of organisations – such as science parks, technology parks, living labs, hubs, and practitioners in citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation – engage societal actors in experimentation practices that aim to support, at an early stage, the market uptake and growth of university spinoffs and startups. To be effective, such practices need to align with the fast pace of innovation and integrate skills and methods from different areas, drawing also from the social sciences and humanities, and the arts and design. To achieve the expected

⁷⁴ This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) 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

⁷⁵ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/jobs-and-economy/eu-startup-and-scaleup-strategy_en.

outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- At least 20 pilot actions across Europe enabling university spinoffs and technology startups to link up to end-users, societal actors, industry, and other stakeholders to boost market uptake and growth.
- Development of guidance and services, including methodologies and best practices to support spinoffs and startups, where testing and validating their innovative solutions to better fit society and the market is important.

Proposals should describe their target group in terms of its scope and size. A wide geographical coverage, inclusivity, and broad participation should be ensured. In project activities, particular attention should be paid to promoting inclusive gender equality and addressing gender-specific challenges.

Projects are expected to contribute to the [EU Knowledge Valorisation Platform](#), which highlights best practices for knowledge valorisation. Additionally, projects are expected to establish synergies with ongoing projects under the topic “Experimentation and exchange of good practices for value creation”⁷⁶, taking their results into account.

Expected project duration is up to 2 years without prejudice to a longer duration if justified.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-05: Pillar III: Fostering citizen engagement for more responsible and democratic R&I

Call: Enhancing the European R&I system	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	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.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applications must be submitted by a consortium including participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three independent legal entities: Each established in a different Member State or Associated Country; and two of which are established in a Member State.</p>

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Funded under [HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ERA-01-03](#) and [HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-01-05](#).

<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	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) ⁷⁷ .
<i>Evaluation Procedure</i>	To ensure a balanced portfolio covering different ERA policy areas, as outlined in the expected outcomes and scope, grants will be awarded to proposals not only in order of ranking, but at least also to proposals that are the highest ranked within each area, provided that proposals pass all thresholds.

Scope: This topic aims to connect R&I with citizens and other stakeholders by fostering greater citizen engagement, participation, and science communication. Proposals will contribute to the impact of “Increasing trust in science and alignment of R&I with society’s needs, expectations and values”, thereby enhancing the democratic character and impact of science in the ERA.

Applicants should select and clearly identify one area being addressed, choosing from the two areas outlined below, both supporting the implementation of the ERA Structural Policy “Enhancing Trust in Science through Citizen Participation, Engagement and Science Communication”. Proposals should develop the activities outlined for the selected area and propose additional activities that contribute to achieving the expected outcomes.

Project activities should reach large communities of stakeholders ensuring a wide geographical coverage, inclusivity, and broad participation over the course of the project. Proposals should describe their target group in terms of its scope and size. In project activities, particular attention should be paid to promoting gender equality and addressing gender-specific challenges, where relevant.

Expected project duration is up to 3 years without prejudice to a longer duration if justified.

Area 1: Citizen science for enhancing democratic governance

Expected outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following outcomes:

- Improved framework conditions for integrating citizen science in democratic governance, considering issues of institutional feasibility and preparedness, including protocols and working modalities that foster the use of citizen science data in policies;

⁷⁷ This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) 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

- Improved data practices employed by researchers and experts in citizen science initiatives;
- Increased awareness about the valuable scientific knowledge generated by citizen science and its contributions to tackling societal challenges.

Scope: Area 1 aims to improve framework conditions and provide adequate standards and working modalities with a view to improving the links between citizen science and democratic governance.

Proposals should build on the findings of the [Mutual Learning Exercise on Citizen Science](#) and on any past or ongoing relevant initiatives and projects at European or national level. Project activities should include actors such as research performing and funding organisations, universities, researchers and innovators, research infrastructures, civil society organisations, and policymakers. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Provide evidence-based recommendations on how to set up protocols supporting data quality (including validation mechanisms), comparability, and inter-operability in citizen science for policies;
- Demonstrate how citizen science can be introduced in institutions through greater preparedness and coherence across different levels of governance, while also addressing issues of equity in public participation;
- Provide evidence of the impact of citizen science on policy change;
- Raise awareness among relevant stakeholders on incentives for the research community to engage in citizen science.

Area 2: Guiding principles for inclusive engagement in R&I

Expected outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following outcomes:

- Enhanced institutional and organisational capacities in relation to public engagement and science-society links;
- Common ERA approaches for researchers, policymakers, public engagement professionals, and communication experts to boost public engagement in R&I and science communication;
- Actionable pathways for strengthening the co-creation of R&I by society, and evidence of the impacts of public engagement.

Scope: Area 2 aims to develop common ERA approaches for public engagement in R&I and science communication to make the R&I ecosystem more participatory, trustworthy, democratic, open and responsible and improving its capacity to tackle societal challenges.

Proposals should build on the findings of the [Mutual Learning Exercise on Public Engagement in R&I](#), the [code of practice](#) on citizen engagement for knowledge valorisation, and any past or ongoing relevant initiatives and projects at European or national level⁷⁸. The target groups for this action are research performing organisations and funding organisations, universities, researchers and innovators, policymakers, science communicators, public engagement professionals, and members of the media. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Provide actionable recommendations for mechanisms (e.g., guidelines, funding schemes, co-creation methodologies) for sustainable citizen participation and engagement in R&I of diverse groups of citizens, including those not habitually involved in science;
- Provide recommendations to support institutional capacity building, organisational structures, and careers (in research performing organisations) for facilitating interaction with society through innovative science communication, engagement, and participation of diverse groups of citizens;
- Establish an evidence base on the effectiveness and impact of public engagement in R&I and science communication; identify evaluation indicators for different policy settings;
- Offer guidance for developing ethical guidelines for citizen engagement, participation, and science communication, ensuring their inclusion in institutional ethics and integrity committees and frameworks;
- Propose pathways to tackle issues of equity and inclusion in public engagement in R&I.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-06: Pillar III: European Citizens' Hackathon Championship

Call: Enhancing the European R&I system	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 3.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:

⁷⁸ Including projects funded under [HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01-40](#) and [HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01-60](#).

	Applications must be submitted by a consortium including participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three independent legal entities: Each established in a different Member State or Associated Country; and two of which are established in a Member State.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Beneficiaries must provide financial support to third parties. The financial support to third parties can only be provided in the form of prizes. The maximum amount to be awarded to each third party is EUR 20 000.</p> <p>Subcontracting is not restricted to a limited part of the action.</p>

Expected Outcome: Proposals will deliver on the impact of “Stronger translation of R&I results into society and economy”. Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Hundreds of innovative solutions resulting from the co-creation in transdisciplinary teams of researchers and citizens, supported through mentoring, business and technical advice and training to enter the market;
- Upgraded skills for innovation and entrepreneurship among researchers and citizens across Europe, promoting business mindsets and contributing to new business startups that are given exposure and opportunities to grow at European level;
- Increased awareness of societal challenges and R&I for new solutions to address them;
- Increased trust in science and broader use of participatory and citizen engagement approaches to create value for market and society.

Scope: This topic focuses on connecting R&I with citizens and other stakeholders in order to upscale knowledge valorisation, while also contributing to increased trust in science and alignment of R&I with society’s needs, expectations and values.

It aims to accelerate knowledge valorisation through citizen engagement by driving the co-creation of innovative solutions that address citizens' needs, in joint teams of researchers and citizens, thereby supporting their market uptake.

The topic will enable researchers and citizens from across Europe to work together in transnational, transdisciplinary teams to address societal challenges through existing research results and to create new businesses to bring their innovative solutions to market. Municipalities, regional and city councils, research organisations, business and innovation centres, and other entities are invited to jointly implement, for three consecutive years (2027-2029), an annual, year-long competition, the “European Citizens’ Hackathon Championship”, with impact at local, regional and European level.

Each annual competition will consist of a first-phase of hackathons taking place as physical meetings in several locations (cities and communities) across Europe, addressing issues that affect people's lives. The detailed programme of activities, including the theme of the first annual competition, must be delivered within 3 months of start of the grant agreement and be approved by the granting authority. Subsequent themes will be agreed with the granting authority at the latest in month 14 and 26 of the action.

The winning teams of these first-phase hackathons will then compete at the European level for the title of European Champion. The total financial award of EUR 60 000 per year will be shared equally among the three winning teams of each annual competition.

The final event should also engage broad groups of stakeholders, including citizens, researchers, industry, public authorities, investors, and business developers.

Proposals should describe the plan for rolling out the competition over three consecutive years and supporting winning teams in the uptake of their solutions.

The three cities hosting the yearly European-level hackathons should be members or associated partners of the consortium. The first-phase hackathons should take place in at least 14 physical locations across Europe and be open to participating teams from all Member States and Associated Countries.

Wherever possible, synergies should be sought with other programmes such as “Science comes to town”, the European Researchers’ Night, the New European Bauhaus Festival, and others at every step of the championship.

In project activities, particular attention should be paid to promoting inclusive gender equality and addressing gender-specific challenges, where relevant.

Expected project duration is up to 4 years to ensure sufficient time to support winning teams.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-07: Pillar III: Science comes to town 2028

Call: Enhancing the European R&I system	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 6.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 6.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:

	<p>Applications must be submitted by a consortium including participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three independent legal entities: Each established in a different Member State or Associated Country; and two of which are established in a Member State.</p> <p>The participating city that the proposal designates as host for EUCYS 2028 must provide as part of the proposal the commitment from its respective National EUCYS Organiser to run the 2028 competition as part of the project (EUCYS National Organiser must either participate as a beneficiary or associated partner, or provide a commitment letter).</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Subcontracting is not restricted to a limited part of the action.</p> <p>Beneficiaries must provide financial support to third parties. The financial support to third parties can only be provided in the form of prizes. The maximum amount to be awarded to each third party (recipient) is EUR 60 000.</p>

Expected Outcome: The successful proposal will deliver on the impact “Increased alignment of research with society’s needs, expectations and values”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Strengthened capacity, networks and involvement of the participating cities in science communication and citizen engagement in science;
- More informed, evidence-based policymaking and increased public engagement through inclusive and participatory discussions and debates on science and R&I policy;
- Improved attractiveness of diverse careers in R&I for younger generations.

Scope: This topic supports a small group of cities in organising and hosting a joint 1-year programme “Science comes to town 2028”. The programme should have a robust concept and brand focusing on connecting citizens and science while involving all relevant stakeholders (e.g., researchers, research funders, policymakers, publishers, citizens, civil society organisations, and business community).

Various events and activities should be organised, highlighting the latest R&I developments and their contribution to society (including projects supported by national/regional/EU funds). Applicants should experiment with novel formats that are inclusive and participatory and engage diverse age and social groups at local, regional, and European levels. In project activities, particular attention should be paid to promoting inclusive gender equality and addressing gender-specific challenges. Special emphasis should be placed on exploring and supporting citizen science to promote both science education and multiple forms of public engagement with science.

In addition, the programme of activities should include the following two components:

- EUCYS (European Union Contest for Young Scientists): science competition, awarding prizes and awards, for 14- to 20-year-olds who are first prize winners of national science contests for school science projects.
- EU TalentOn (European Union Contest for Early Career Researchers): science competition, awarding prizes and awards, bringing together at least 100 early-career researchers, 21-35 of age, to work on scientific solutions to societal challenges.

The 2028 editions of EUCYS and EU TalentOn will take place in the third quarter of 2028, customarily in September⁷⁹.

Applicants are encouraged to establish synergies with the European Researchers' Night and the Researchers at School initiative, funded by Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions⁸⁰. Programmed activities should create a link with the preceding⁸¹ and subsequent edition of "Science comes to town", fostering cohesion and growth of the initiative.

The programme should take place in a minimum of 3 and maximum of 6 cities located in at least 3 different Member States and/or Associated Countries, with the majority located in Member States. The consortium can include organisations that can represent the host cities and/or join them in designing and implementing the project activities. Local partners that provide a connection to R&I should be included.

Applicants should provide commitment letters from the public authorities of each participating city, signed by the highest authorities (such as the mayor or equivalent city governance representative), demonstrating strong commitment for the activities included in the proposal. The proposal should clearly explain how the city will contribute to the initiative and outline its specific roles, resources, and support.

Proposals should demonstrate the consortium's ability to mobilise substantial resources beyond the Union contribution, including monetary or in-kind sponsorships, to support and expand the planned activities. Applicants may choose to further increase the impact and added value by incorporating additional events and activities, financed by other resources, by engaging 'satellite' cities to reach more communities. The consortium will report on the implementation of the planned activities and events not covered by the grant but will not report or declare the related costs, in order to limit administrative effort.

Proposals should include the overall concept for the programmed activities, detailing the focus and scope of activities, the outreach strategy, and the contribution to the long-term vision for the cities, while specifying clearly:

⁷⁹ More information can be found on the contest websites (see also specific organisational aspects in the respective background notes), https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/eucys_en, https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/eu-talenton_en.

⁸⁰ <https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/actions/msca-citizens>.

⁸¹ See "Science comes to town 2027" in WIDERA work programme 2025 and "Science comes to town 2029" in WIDERA work programme 2026-2027.

a) events (including EUCYS and EU TalentOn) and activities (e.g., overall coordination and communication activities) that will be funded partially or fully by the Union contribution;

b) activities and events that will be financed by the participating cities, ‘satellite’ cities, sponsorship and other resources (i.e., activities not funded by the Union contribution).

Proposals should present a breakdown of all additional resources. Annexes should be used only for commitment letters, not for extra budget related details.

The consortium will submit a detailed draft programme of activities for approval by the granting authority, no later than three months prior to the official programme launch.

The financial support to third parties can only be provided in the form of prizes to the total amount of €70 000 for EUCYS and €100 000 for EU TalentOn.

The expected duration of the project is between 24 and 30 months.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-08: Pillar IV: Advancing Knowledge for ERA

Call: Enhancing the European R&I system	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.50 and 2.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 16.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Award criteria</i>	<p>The criteria are described in General Annex D. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additions to the general award criteria apply: The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the three individual scores, will be 12.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>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) ⁸².</p>

⁸² 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:

<i>Evaluation Procedure</i>	To ensure a balanced portfolio covering different ERA policy areas, as outlined in the expected outcomes and scope, grants will be awarded to proposals not only in order of ranking, but at least also to proposals that are the highest ranked within each area, provided that proposals pass all thresholds.
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Scope: This topic aims to generate new information and knowledge contributing to strengthening the evidence base for advancing the ERA. Applicants should propose diverse R&I activities that can support the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of ERA policies and practices.

Applicants should select and clearly identify one area being addressed, choosing from the six areas outlined below. Each area is designed to contribute toward the implementation of an ERA policy: Area 1 – ERA Structural Policy “Enabling open science via sharing and re-use of data, including through EOSC”; Area 2 – ERA Action “A harmonised framework to support integrity and ethics in R&I in the face of emerging challenges”; Area 3 and Area 4 – ERA Structural Policy “Strengthening gender equality inclusiveness in the ERA”; Area 5 and Area 6 – ERA Structural Policy “Making research careers more attractive and sustainable”. Proposals should develop all the activities outlined for the selected area, as well as additional activities contributing to the selected area’s expected outcomes.

In project activities, particular attention should be paid to promoting inclusive gender equality and addressing gender-specific challenges.

Expected project duration is up to 3 years without prejudice to a longer duration if justified.

Area 1: Assessing reproducibility in research by direct replication of scientific findings

Expected outcome: Proposals under Area 1 will deliver on the impact “Increased reproducibility, trustworthiness and transparency of scientific research”, contributing to the ERA Structural Policy “Enabling open science via sharing and re-use of data, including through EOSC”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- New knowledge and methodologies through independent, direct replication studies of selected high-impact research findings are available to researchers, citizens, and policymakers;
- New innovative approaches are available to researchers and open science experts to conduct and incentivise the replication of scientific findings;
- Sustainable engagement and collaboration in replication of scientific findings have been established across research communities.

Scope: Area 1 aims to support the replication of significant findings across different scientific fields, addressing technical and societal challenges related to research reproducibility. Proposals must build on prior art in replication practices and demonstrate their capacity to perform and conclude the replication of the findings within the means and duration of the project. Funded actions are expected to adhere to the best practices in open science and reproducibility.

Activities should involve all relevant actors, including researchers, scientific service and infrastructure providers, and open science experts. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Conduct independent, direct replication of the findings of specified high-impact, influential studies from selected research domains, using state-of-the-art methodologies; these should cover both experimental and computational studies, including cases where the original findings have been controversial, or where replication studies are needed to confirm or refine the results;
- Develop innovative approaches to replication studies and solutions that can be generalised or adapted to multiple fields, considering the distinct challenges of different scientific fields and the challenges that cut across the selected research domains;
- Assess the findings of the replication studies and develop and disseminate best practices and concrete, field-specific recommendations for increased reproducibility of scientific findings, based on the replication studies, as well as policy-related recommendations;
- Develop and test innovative models to incentivise researchers to participate in replication studies;
- Foster community-building to support long-term collaborations on replication practices.

Area 2: Ethics of emerging technologies with high socio-economic impact: space exploration/exploitation

Expected outcome: Proposals under Area 2 will deliver on the impact “A research ethics and integrity ecosystem enhanced with robust methodologies and knowledge in the field of space exploration/exploitation”, contributing to the ERA Action “A harmonised framework to support integrity and ethics in R&I in the face of emerging challenges”. Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Researchers and ethics professionals have generated new knowledge about the ethical and societal impact of emerging technologies in space exploration/exploitation;
- A robust ethics and integrity framework supports researchers, ethics experts, and policy makers in applying responsible governance to emerging technologies in space exploration/exploitation;

- Key stakeholders, e.g., policymakers, researchers, innovators, and the public, have increased awareness and understanding of the ethical aspects of emerging technologies in space exploration/exploitation.

Scope: Area 2 aims to define the ethical challenges and design a robust framework to address the risks to fundamental rights, human integrity, and environmental harm of space exploration/exploitation.

Proposals should build on the results of relevant past or ongoing initiatives and projects at European and/or national level addressing ethics-related aspects.⁸³ Proposals should include structured cooperation with the Embassy of Good Science,⁸⁴ as well as relevant European networks⁸⁵, and liaise with international initiatives (e.g., UNESCO). Actions should target researchers, ethics experts, members of national and local ethics committees/bodies, policy makers, and the general public. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Identify and study the ethical challenges and implications in relation to R&I on space exploration and exploitation, e.g., the risks and benefits for the integrity and dignity of human beings, approaches to minimise harm and maximise beneficence, and approaches to ensure a responsible and sustainable use of space resources;
- Develop a robust research and integrity framework and training materials to support actors at the EU, national, and local levels in applying an ‘ethics by design’ principle;
- Develop and implement communication tools to provide open and transparent information on project outcomes to enable public trust.

Area 3: Mapping and promoting inclusive gender equality and policies in R&D intensive firms

Expected outcome: Proposals under Area 3 will deliver on the impact “Enhanced gender equality and inclusiveness, leading to research excellence and more innovative, socially relevant, and economically impactful outcomes”, contributing to the ERA Structural Policy “Strengthening gender equality and inclusiveness in the ERA”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Better understanding by researchers, research organisations, ERA stakeholders, and policymakers of the current state of inclusive gender equality in R&D intensive firms;
- Researchers, research organisations, ERA stakeholders, and policymakers have access to effective methods, strategies, and tools to overcome the challenges and to promote and support the adoption of inclusive gender equality policies in R&D intensive firms;

⁸³ For example, projects funded under [H2020 SwafS-18-2016](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-01-12](#).

⁸⁴ The Embassy of Good Science is the one-stop-shop platform supported by the European Commission for sharing knowledge and training tools on ethics and research integrity, https://embassy.science/wiki/Main_Page.

⁸⁵ E.g., European Network of Research Ethics Committees ([EUREC](#)), European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities ([ALLEA](#)).

- Increased capacity of R&D intensive firms to implement inclusive gender equality plans, policies and practices.

Scope: Area 3 aims at increasing knowledge on policies and strategies addressing persistent gender and diversity gaps in R&D intensive firms⁸⁶.

Project activities should target research performing organisations, higher education organisations, and other R&I stakeholders (networks, etc.). Participation of private sector organisations, including R&D intensive firms, is encouraged. Proposals should build on and complement outcomes of any relevant past or ongoing initiatives and projects⁸⁷.

Proposals are invited to focus on specific (sub)fields of research and development⁸⁸ with persisting gender and diversity gaps, focusing in particular on small and medium-sized enterprises, start-ups, and scale-ups. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Comprehensively map inclusive gender equality policies and practices in R&D intensive firms, involving a literature review, data collection and analysis, and identify gaps, challenges, needs, impacts, and conditions that enable or hinder their implementation;
- Explore methods and strategies to overcome the challenges and enhance the engagement of R&D intensive firms in actions aimed at increasing the participation of women and underrepresented groups;
- Develop and disseminate tailored capacity building, tools, and resources for R&D intensive firms that facilitate adoption and effective implementation of inclusive gender equality plans, policies and practices.

Area 4: Advancing gender-responsive R&I through budgeting, expenditure tracking, and evaluation of the sex and/or gender analysis in R&I content

Expected outcome: Proposals under Area 4 will deliver on the impact “Enhanced gender equality and inclusiveness, leading to research excellence and more innovative, socially relevant, and economically impactful outcomes”, contributing to the ERA Structural Policy “Strengthening inclusive and intersectional gender equality in the ERA”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Research organisations and policymakers at national and EU level have improved capacity to monitor, evaluate, and strengthen the integration of the gender dimension, including an intersectional perspective, in R&I content;

⁸⁶ See, e.g., [The 2024 EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard](#).

⁸⁷ Including projects funded under [SwafS-26-2020](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-80](#), and [HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01-80](#).

⁸⁸ Refer to Frascati Manual: https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2015/10/frascati-manual-2015_g1g57dcb/9789264239012-en.pdf.

- Research organisations at national and EU level have access to standardised principles, methodologies, and tools for gender-responsive budgeting and expenditure tracking;
- Stakeholders and policymakers benefit from improved access to high-quality disaggregated data and transparent reporting on the gender dimension in R&I content, including an intersectional perspective, and in R&I expenditure, supporting more inclusive decision-making and socially relevant innovations.

Scope: Area 4 aims to define principles and develop a methodology for gender budgeting and expenditure tracking in R&I, and to develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation approach to assess the integration of gender dimension in R&I content, including the intersectional perspective.

Project activities should target research performing and funding organisations, higher education institutions, research infrastructures, and public bodies. Proposals should build on the results of relevant past or ongoing initiatives and projects⁸⁹. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Review existing knowledge, frameworks, and practices employed by relevant stakeholders;
- By 2027, in collaboration with the ERA Forum sub-group on inclusive gender equality⁹⁰, develop: 1) guidelines, criteria, and metrics to assess and guide the integration of the gender dimension in R&I content and 2) principles for gender budgeting and expenditure tracking, including a standardised methodology, with an intersectional approach to be applied to both;
- Design monitoring and reporting mechanisms, such as a publicly accessible database, that provide disaggregated data on gender equality and intersectional characteristics in R&I expenditure and showcase related outcomes;
- Cooperate with key stakeholders, employ engagement activities and participatory approaches to involve under-represented groups, where relevant, and build capacity and foster mutual learning through targeted workshops, seminars, and training sessions.

Area 5: Assessing trends and effects of research careers in the private sector and of inter-sectoral research careers

Expected outcome: Proposals under Area 5 will deliver on the impact “Improved career research careers and mobility on the basis of the European framework for research careers, fostering knowledge flows and career interoperability across sectors and countries”,

⁸⁹ Including projects funded under [SwafS-02-2016](#), [SwafS-08-2017](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-80](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-81](#); projects [BUDGET IT](#) (funded under [HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01-81](#)) and [LeTSGEPs](#) (funded under [SwafS-09-2018-2019-2020](#)); [GEAM tool](#).

⁹⁰ See the Commission expert group, <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?lang=en&groupID=103813>.

contributing to the ERA Structural Policy “Making research careers more attractive and sustainable”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Improved knowledge regarding the structure and deployment of research careers in the private business sector and of careers that deploy across various sectors;
- Better awareness of the types of knowledge flows triggered by inter-sectoral mobility and careers;
- Stakeholders and policymakers benefit from an improved set of tools to conceptualise, measure, and assess research careers in the private business sector and careers that span across various sectors.

Scope: Area 5 aims to build new evidence to support informed policymaking, with the potential to foster the interoperability of research careers across sectors and countries, and broaden the spectrum of research career opportunities.

The objective is to collect empirical and conceptual knowledge on the specific characteristics and career trends of EU-based researchers working in the private business sector (48% of total employed researchers⁹¹). Universities and other research performing organisations are expected to implement the activities in cooperation with business sector actors, where relevant. Results should benefit policymakers, as well as research organisations and individual researchers. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Conduct quantitative and/or qualitative analyses which may build on or complement the insights and data provided by the Research and Innovation Careers Observatory⁹²;
- Analyse the logics underpinning research careers in the private sector, as well as those spanning over private and public sectors;
- Analyse the role played by research careers in the private sector and the intersectoral mobility of researchers in the diffusion and valorisation of knowledge across the ERA;
- Provide policy recommendations to improve the attractiveness and interoperability of research careers.

Area 6: Mapping research careers and talent flows within global research networks

Expected outcome: Proposals under Area 6 will deliver on the impact of “Improved career research careers and mobility on the basis of the European framework for research careers, fostering knowledge flows and career interoperability across sectors and countries”, contributing to the ERA Structural Policy “Making research careers more attractive and

⁹¹ EUROSTAT Data, Researchers by sectors of performance – head count. Latest data available from 2021. [Database - Eurostat](#).

⁹² <https://ec.europa.eu/era-talent-platform/reico/>.

sustainable”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Improved knowledge regarding the role played by research collaboration networks, which span across the EU and the rest of the world, in the configuration of research careers;
- Stakeholders and policymakers benefit from a better understanding of the international dimension of research careers and the impact these careers, in turn, have in shaping research collaboration networks and knowledge flows.

Scope: International research communities and networks provide the scope for research careers that deploy internationally, which in turn may contribute to strengthening international ties and communities.

Area 6 aims at increasing empirical and conceptual knowledge regarding this co-evolution between stable international research collaboration networks⁹³ and international research careers. Applicants may propose a variety of empirical approaches and strategies, for example, the mapping of collaborative projects structures and international co-publication networks, or the design of specific case studies.

Universities and other research performing organisations are expected to implement the action, in cooperation with additional stakeholders, where relevant. Results should benefit policymakers in national and international administrations, as well as research organisations and individual researchers. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Analyse the relevance of research collaboration networks involving the EU and Associated and/or third countries in the shaping of research careers across the world and in the EU's capacity to build and attract research talent;
- Analyse the relevance of careers deploying within such global research collaboration networks in the development of the international collaboration ties and in encouraging knowledge flows across the EU and the rest of the world;
- Provide policy recommendations at European, national and stakeholders level to improve the attractiveness of research careers.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-ERA-01: Pillar I: Facilitating development of institutional open access policies through the retention of intellectual property rights

Call: Enhancing the European R&I system
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⁹³ Stable international research collaboration networks are to be intended as medium to long-term networks, involving, for example, researchers and research performing organisations. Short-term initiatives, such as a standalone project of limited duration, should not be considered as a stable research network.

Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 2.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applications must be submitted by a consortium including participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three independent legal entities: Each established in a different Member State or Associated Country; and two of which are established in a Member State.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>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) ⁹⁴.</p>

Expected Outcome: Proposals will deliver on the impact “A more open, equitable and inclusive research and innovation ecosystem”, contributing to the ERA Structural Policy “Enabling open science via sharing and re-use of data, including through the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Increased number of EU research performing organisations (RPOs) with well-developed policies on open access publications, which include clause(s) for rights retention;
- Higher share of research publications in open access across the EU and Associated Countries, especially in low-performing countries with respect to open access;
- Increase of access to and preservation of scientific information through institutional infrastructures, such as repositories.

⁹⁴ This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) 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

Scope: While the EU is making progress on its open access objectives, recent reports show that there is still significant room for improvement. There is variable progress across Member States and Associated Countries, and less growth in open access through repositories compared to open access publishing.

Rights retention⁹⁵ strategies, embedded in institutional or funder policies and requirements, have been identified as non-legislative measures with very good potential to support the uptake of open access. At the same time, such strategies empower researchers and institutions to safeguard their rights. The cOAlition S of research funders has supported the implementation of relevant policies among funding organisations to enable open access, while research institutions in some EU and Associated Countries have started to implement rights retention strategies and policies with increasing success.

This topic aims to support RPOs across the EU to work strategically on rights retention policies to boost open access and reuse of scientific information. Proposals should enable RPOs to adopt and/or expand their policies on open access and rights retention tailored to specific national legal and policy contexts. They should also consider related issues such as research assessment and its reform, the costs of providing open access, and different disciplinary practices and needs, among others.

Consortia may comprise RPOs, libraries, policy-makers, funders, and others.

To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address at least the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Develop networks of research institutions working towards aligned institutional policies to enable open access through rights retention;
- Produce comprehensive guidance, tools and training materials, and document lessons learnt and best practice to support RPOs to adopt and expand policies on rights retention;
- Design strategies to maximise approval and adoption of rights retention and open access policies by researchers.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-ERA-02: Pillar II: Talent ecosystems for attractive early research careers

Call: Enhancing the European R&I system	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR

⁹⁵ Rights retention means that authors or their institutions retain copyright and sufficient rights over scholarly works under publication to make them immediately available and reusable under an open license, that is a CC BY or equivalent license, independent of publisher policies. Such rights retention may apply to either the final publishable form (Version of Record) and/or the version accepted for publication, including all changes made during the peer review process (Author Accepted Manuscript).

<i>contribution per project</i>	2.00 and 4.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 30.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applications must be submitted by a consortium including participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three independent legal entities: Each established in a different Member State or Associated Country; and two of which are established in a Member State.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>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) ⁹⁶.</p>

Expected Outcome: Proposals will deliver on the impact of “Improved research careers and mobility, based on the European framework for research careers, fostering knowledge flows and career interoperability across sectors and countries”⁹⁷. Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Creation of talent ecosystems, as integrated networks where cross-sectoral public and private organisations have established close and coordinated cooperation, fostering among others the employability, skills, career development, mobility, career interoperability, and well-being of researchers and other R&I staff;
- All participating organisations have implemented organisational changes to mainstream the principles of the European framework for research careers and of the European Charter for Researchers, resulting in researchers benefitting from attractive working and employment conditions and diversified career development opportunities, with spillover effects on other R&I staff;

⁹⁶ This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) 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

⁹⁷ Council Recommendation of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe; includes Charter for Researchers, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj>.

- Well-connected talent ecosystems through regular cooperation between different projects established under this topic and other ongoing actions⁹⁸;
- Enhanced talent ecosystems, enabling a substantial number of researchers and other R&I staff to develop attractive careers and attracting international talents and European diaspora scientists.

Scope: The topic supports consortia in creating ‘talent ecosystems’ where both training providers and employers of researchers, especially from the non-academic sector, cooperate closely to promote attractive and sustainable careers for researchers, in particular for early-career researchers.

Cooperation between actors should focus on ensuring, on the one hand, that a large pool of researchers, and where relevant other R&I staff, benefits from attractive working and employment conditions as a result of the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers at organisational level; on the other hand, making sure that researchers and other R&I staff are trained according to the needs of businesses, industry, and, more generally, to the needs of the labour market. This should help close existing gaps between R&I talents and the labour market, ensuring that businesses and industry benefit from a substantial and highly skilled workforce, especially in sectors with high demand for talent or specific R&I skills. Cooperation should create conditions for interoperable careers for researchers and for continuous and multidirectional talent circulation between the various sectors within the ecosystem.

A talent ecosystem may be established around a specific sector (e.g., AI, health, digital, climate, clean tech, energy, deep tech, automotive, defence, space) or be comprehensive in nature. The talent ecosystems and the cooperation among partners and sectors are expected to be designed to last beyond the duration of the project and benefit researchers and other R&I staff both within the consortium and beyond.

Participating organisations are expected to have received the HR Excellence in Research Award⁹⁹ or commit to applying the new Charter for Researchers and commit to its implementation (i.e., start the process towards the Award) within the grant duration, as far as relevant for their operations related to the employment of researchers¹⁰⁰. This action does not support salaries and mobility of individual researchers or teams of researchers.

Activities may include (non-exhaustive list) mapping challenges, developing action plans to bring the organisations in line with the Charter for Researchers, upskilling (including on the basis of [ResearchComp](#) and [RM Comp](#)), involving the non-academic sector in the design and implementation of training programmes for researchers and other R&I staff, establishing

⁹⁸ See projects funded under HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-02-03.

⁹⁹ <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/hrexcellenceaward>.

¹⁰⁰ The European Charter for Researchers, while being applicable to all organisations employing researchers, is particularly relevant for those organisations which, because of their size, structure, and number of researchers employed, need to have dedicated expertise, capacity, and resources to manage and implement institutional human resources strategies and policies. This is typically linked to those organisations having a human resources department.

career development and mentoring services, developing services for the well-being of researchers and other R&I staff, creating conditions for interoperable careers between countries and sectors, supporting incoming mobile researchers, networking and relationship-building to connect talent ecosystem partners, and outreach activities to attract international researchers to the ecosystem.

Expected project duration is up to 3 years without prejudice to a longer duration if justified.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-ERA-03: Pillar III: Science comes to town 2029

Call: Enhancing the European R&I system	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 6.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 6.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The participating city that the proposal designates as host for EUCYS 2029 must provide as part of the proposal the commitment from its respective National EUCYS Organiser to run the 2029 competition as part of the project (EUCYS National Organiser must either participate as a beneficiary or associated partner, or provide a commitment letter).</p> <p>Applications must be submitted by a consortium including participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three independent legal entities: Each established in a different Member State or Associated Country; and two of which are established in a Member State.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Subcontracting is not restricted to a limited part of the action.</p> <p>Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties. The financial support to third parties can only be provided in the form of prizes. The maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 60 000.</p>

Expected Outcome: The successful proposal will deliver on the impact “Increased alignment of research with society’s needs, expectations and values”. Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Strengthened capacity, networks and involvement of the participating cities in science communication and citizen engagement in science;
- More informed, evidence-based policymaking and increased public engagement through inclusive and participatory discussions and debates on science and R&I policy;
- Improved attractiveness of diverse careers in R&I for younger generations.

Scope: This topic supports a small group of cities in organising and hosting a joint 1-year programme “Science comes to town 2029”. The programme should have a robust concept and brand focusing on connecting citizens and science while involving all relevant stakeholders (e.g., researchers, research funders, policymakers, publishers, citizens, civil society organisations, and business community).

Various events and activities should be organised, highlighting the latest R&I developments and their contribution to society (including projects supported by national/regional/EU funds). Applicants should experiment with novel formats that are inclusive and participatory and engage diverse age and social groups at local, regional, and European levels. In project activities, particular attention should be paid to promoting inclusive gender equality and addressing gender-specific challenges. Special emphasis should be placed on exploring and supporting citizen science to promote both science education and multiple forms of public engagement with science.

In addition, the programme of activities should include the following two components:

- EUCYS (European Union Contest for Young Scientists): science competition, awarding prizes and awards, for 14- to 20-year-olds who are first prize winners of national science contests for school science projects.
- EU TalentOn (European Union Contest for Early Career Researchers): science competition, awarding prizes and awards, bringing together at least 100 early-career researchers, 21-35 of age, to work on scientific solutions to societal challenges.

The 2029 editions of EUCYS and EU TalentOn will take place in the third quarter of 2029, customarily in September¹⁰¹.

Applicants are encouraged to establish synergies with the European Researchers’ Night and the Researchers at School initiative, funded by Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions¹⁰². Programmed activities should create a link with the preceding¹⁰³ and subsequent edition of “Science comes to town”, fostering cohesion and growth of the initiative.

¹⁰¹ More information can be found on the contest websites (see also specific organisational aspects in the respective background notes), https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/eucys_en; https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/eu-talenton_en.

¹⁰² <https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/actions/msca-citizens>.

¹⁰³ See “Science comes to town 2028” in WIDERA work programme 2026-2027.

The programme should take place in a minimum of 3 and maximum of 6 cities located in at least 3 different Member States and/or Associated Countries, with the majority located in Member States. The consortium can include organisations that can represent the host cities and/or join them in designing and implementing the project activities. Local partners that provide a connection to R&I should be included.

Applicants should provide commitment letters from the public authorities of each participating city, signed by the highest authorities (such as the mayor or equivalent city governance representative), demonstrating strong commitment for the activities included in the proposal. The proposal should clearly explain how the city will contribute to the initiative and outline its specific roles, resources, and support.

Proposals should demonstrate the consortium's ability to mobilise substantial resources beyond the Union contribution, including monetary or in-kind sponsorships, to support and expand the planned activities. Applicants may choose to further increase the impact and added value by incorporating additional events and activities, financed by other resources, by engaging 'satellite' cities to reach more communities. The consortium will report on the implementation of the planned activities and events not covered by the grant but will not report or declare the related costs, in order to limit administrative effort.

Proposals should include the overall concept for the programmed activities, detailing the focus and scope of activities, the outreach strategy, and the contribution to the long-term vision for the cities, while specifying clearly:

- a) events (including EUCYS and EU TalentOn) and activities (e.g., overall coordination and communication activities) that will be funded partially or fully by the Union contribution;
- b) activities and events that will be financed by the participating cities, 'satellite' cities, sponsorship and other resources (i.e., activities not funded by the Union contribution).

Proposals should present a breakdown of all additional resources. Annexes should be used only for commitment letters, not for extra budget related details.

The consortium will submit a detailed draft programme of activities for approval by the granting authority, no later than three months prior to the official programme launch.

The financial support to third parties can only be provided in the form of prizes to the total amount of €70 000 for EUCYS and €100 000 for EU TalentOn.

The expected duration of the project is between 24 and 30 months.

HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-ERA-04: Pillar III: Promoting public engagement in R&I and scientific literacy

Call: Enhancing the European R&I system
Specific conditions

<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	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.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applications must be submitted by a consortium including participation, as beneficiaries, of at least three independent legal entities: Each established in a different Member State or Associated Country; and two of which are established in a Member State.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>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) ¹⁰⁴.</p>

Scope: This topic aims to promote the adoption of ERA policies and practices delivering innovative approaches for enhancing science-society links and promoting scientific literacy. Proposals will contribute to the impact “Increasing trust in science and alignment of R&I with society’s needs, expectations and values”, thereby enhancing the democratic character and impact of science in the ERA.

Applicants should select and clearly identify one area being addressed, choosing from the two areas outlined below. Both areas are designed to contribute towards the implementation of the ERA Structural Policy “Enhancing Trust in Science through Citizen Participation, Engagement and Science Communication”. Proposals should develop the activities outlined for the selected area and propose additional activities that contribute to achieving the expected outcomes.

Project activities should reach large communities of stakeholders ensuring a wide geographical coverage, inclusivity and broad participation over the course of the project. Including stakeholders outside academia may be considered, for example, through citizen science. Proposals should describe their target group in terms of its scope and size.

¹⁰⁴ This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) 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

In project activities, particular attention should be paid to promoting inclusive gender equality and addressing gender-specific challenges where relevant.

Expected project duration is up to 3 years without prejudice to a longer duration if justified.

Area 1: Youth, science and democracy

Expected outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Innovative ways for engaging young people in science and promoting scientific literacy;
- Common ERA approaches in engaging and communicating with young people in relation to R&I.

Scope: Society increasingly faces complex problems that require citizens to have the capacity to participate in processes incorporating scientific analysis with deliberation about societal goals. In particular, involving young people in participatory scientific activities aimed at tackling social challenges fosters their scientific skills and scientific literacy. At the same time, it allows them to develop their civic and democratic skills, as civic engagement and scientific practice share characteristics like understanding systems, considering alternative explanations, and debating critically within a community.

Area 1 promotes innovative ways to effectively and inclusively engage and involve young people in R&I. Additionally, it invites public engagement and science communication practitioners to build on best practices in the field and develop handbooks and guidelines, co-creating with relevant stakeholders, considering also previous EU-funded activities¹⁰⁵.

Project activities should target actors such as research performing organisations, universities, researchers and innovators, civil society organisations working with youth, science communicators, and policymakers. To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should address the activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Engage young people, in different national settings, in participatory science activities that tackle complex social issues (e.g., climate change, biodiversity loss, digital skills inequalities, economic effects of AI transitions, energy poverty, social inclusion), ensuring the inclusion of those not habitually involved in science;
- Create communities of practice that include public engagement experts, science communicators, citizen scientists, youth organisations, researchers and innovators, and policymakers with a view to co-developing handbooks and guidelines on engaging youth in science;
- Provide recommendations for developing common ERA approaches to engage and communicate with young people regarding R&I.

¹⁰⁵ Notably projects funded under the H2020 Swafs programme and building on the findings of the [Mutual Learning Exercise on Public Engagement in R&I](#) and the [Mutual Learning Exercise on Citizen Science](#).

Area 2: Scaling up science engagement at EU level

Expected outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following outcomes:

- Scaling-up national initiatives on public engagement in R&I to ERA level taking into consideration different audiences, languages and contexts;
- Improved engagement and cooperation of researchers and innovators, science communicators, and public engagement experts with civil society;
- Increased understanding of the value of scientific processes by society and the importance of public needs and values in addressing societal challenges through R&I.

Scope: Area 2 promotes scientific literacy and dialogue and constructive interactions between scientists and the wider public. To achieve this, it supports visits by researchers, for example, to civil society organisations, workplaces or community youth centres, enabling dialogue and collaboration between researchers and civil society and fostering mutual understanding. Event participants can thus enhance their knowledge of different scientific fields and research focuses, gain insights on the conduct of research and different research career pathways. Through these interactions, researchers can enhance their understanding of audiences and incorporate their knowledge and values into their work and communication.

To achieve the expected outcomes, proposals should include the following activities outlined below and propose any additional, complementary activities:

- Develop online dialogue platforms, in different national (language) settings, containing profiles of researchers and innovators, their availability for public visits, and the scientific issues to be discussed; the platforms should also facilitate the arrangement of meetings between the researchers and interested organisations or institutions;
- Implement the meetings while taking care to reach out to and include members of the public not habitually involved in science, and adapting the science communication and public engagement for different audiences, languages and contexts;
- Take stock of all visits and provide lessons learned and recommendations for the future development of similar activities.

PRIZES

1. EU Award for Gender Equality Champions 2026

The “EU Award for Gender Equality Champions” is a recognition prize scheme designed as a booster and a complement to the Gender Equality Plans (GEP) eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe¹⁰⁶, and as a tool for advancing inclusive GEPs and policies within the framework of the ERA Policy Agenda.

Expected Outcomes:

- Recognition of organisations with the most significant impact resulting from the implementation of their GEP, serving as role models for others;
- Strengthened gender equality and inclusiveness in the ERA.

The Prize will be awarded to four organisations, and contestants can apply to one of the following three prize categories:

- Sustainable Gender Equality Champions: Organisations that can demonstrate a significant and sustained record of activity and a high level of achievement through the implementation of their GEP(s);
- Newcomer Gender Equality Champions: Organisations without a sustained record of activity in gender equality that have recently completed the implementation of their first GEP and can demonstrate significant progress achieved through its implementation;
- Inclusive Gender Equality Champions: Organisations that have developed the most innovative inclusive GEP – i.e., a GEP addressing intersections between gender and at least two other social categories, such as racial or ethnic origin, social origin, sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTIQ) or disability – and can demonstrate concrete results obtained through its implementation.

In addition to the complete application, contestants may be asked at a later stage to provide further documents (for legal entity validation, bank account validation, ethics review, declaration of honour, etc.) or to submit a short video message on their achievements in the chosen Prize category. This video will be used for communication purposes only.

Essential award criteria: Eligible applications will be evaluated in each category by a jury consisting of a group of independent experts.

The prize will be awarded, after closure of the contest, to the contestants who in the opinion of the jury best address the following cumulative award criteria:

¹⁰⁶ See General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme (Gender equality plans and gender mainstreaming in Annex Part B – Eligibility)

- Sustainable Gender Equality Champions: Criterion 1: Sustainable Impact; Criterion 2: Inspirational Model;
- Newcomer Gender Equality Champions: Criterion 1: Progress Achieved; Criterion 2: Stakeholder Engagement;
- Inclusive Gender Equality Champions: Criterion 1: Progress achieved; Criterion 2: Innovative Inclusiveness.

Eligibility criteria: Contestant must be private entities, public bodies, non-profit or for-profit organisations, including higher education establishments, located in a Member State, an Associated Country¹⁰⁷, or a candidate country for the accession to the EU¹⁰⁸.

Applicants that have already received an EU or Euratom prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.

The specific rules of the contest will be published each year by the European Commission (on the [Funding & Tenders Portal](#) but also actively publicised elsewhere to maximise participation), which will directly launch and manage the contest and award the prize based on the judgement of independent experts.

Form of Funding: Prizes

Type of Action: Recognition Prize

Indicative timetable: Q2 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 0.40 million from the 2026 budget

2. EU Award for Gender Equality Champions 2027

The “EU Award for Gender Equality Champions” is a recognition prize scheme designed as a booster and a complement to the Gender Equality Plans (GEP) eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe¹⁰⁹, and as a tool for advancing inclusive GEPs and policies within the framework of the ERA Policy Agenda.

Expected Outcomes:

- Recognition of organisations with the most significant impact resulting from the implementation of their GEP, serving as role models for others;
- Strengthened gender equality and inclusiveness in the ERA.

¹⁰⁷ In accordance with the Horizon Europe Rules for participation, due to the specific policy requirements, to the nature and objectives of the action, the type of legal entity and the place of establishment are limited to research performing organisations among legal entities falling under the eligibility criterion on the requirement to have a Gender Equality Plan in place (see General Annexes to Horizon Europe).

¹⁰⁸ https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/eu-enlargement_en.

¹⁰⁹ See General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme (Gender equality plans and gender mainstreaming in Annex Part B – Eligibility)

The Prize will be awarded to four organisations, and contestants can apply to one of the following three prize categories:

- Sustainable Gender Equality Champions: Organisations that can demonstrate a significant and sustained record of activity and a high level of achievement through the implementation of their GEP(s);
- Newcomer Gender Equality Champions: Organisations without a sustained record of activity in gender equality that have recently completed the implementation of their first GEP and can demonstrate significant progress achieved through its implementation;
- Inclusive Gender Equality Champions: Organisations that have developed the most innovative inclusive GEP – i.e., a GEP addressing intersections between gender and at least two other social categories, such as racial or ethnic origin, social origin, sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTIQ) or disability – and can demonstrate concrete results obtained through its implementation.

In addition to the complete application, contestants may be asked at a later stage to provide further documents (for legal entity validation, bank account validation, ethics review, declaration of honour, etc.) or to submit a short video message on their achievements in the chosen Prize category. This video will be used for communication purposes only.

Essential award criteria: Eligible applications will be evaluated in each category by a jury consisting of a group of independent experts.

The prize will be awarded, after closure of the contest, to the contestants who in the opinion of the jury best address the following cumulative award criteria:

- Sustainable Gender Equality Champions: Criterion 1: Sustainable Impact; Criterion 2: Inspirational Model;
- Newcomer Gender Equality Champions: Criterion 1: Progress Achieved; Criterion 2: Stakeholder Engagement;
- Inclusive Gender Equality Champions: Criterion 1: Progress achieved; Criterion 2: Innovative Inclusiveness.

Eligibility criteria: Contestant must be private entities, public bodies, non-profit or for-profit organisations, including higher education establishments, located in a Member State, an Associated Country¹¹⁰, or a candidate country for the accession to the EU¹¹¹.

Applicants that have already received an EU or Euratom prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.

¹¹⁰ In accordance with the Horizon Europe Rules for participation, due to the specific policy requirements, to the nature and objectives of the action, the type of legal entity and the place of establishment are limited to research performing organisations among legal entities falling under the eligibility criterion on the requirement to have a Gender Equality Plan in place (see General Annexes to Horizon Europe).

¹¹¹ https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/eu-enlargement_en.

The specific rules of the contest will be published each year by the European Commission (on the [Funding & Tenders Portal](#) but also actively publicised elsewhere to maximise participation), which will directly launch and manage the contest and award the prize based on the judgement of independent experts.

Form of Funding: Prizes

Type of Action: Recognition Prize

Indicative timetable: Q2 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 0.40 million from the 2027 budget

DRAFT

GRANTS TO IDENTIFIED BENEFICIARIES

1. COST (European Co-operation in Science and Technology) - Specific Grant under Framework Partnership Agreement¹¹²

The European Commission funds almost the entire programme under a Framework Partnership Agreement with underlying Specific Grant Agreements. In these agreements, the COST Association commits to a mandatory conditionality to spend at least 50% of the budget for the benefit of researchers from Widening countries and to run 80% of the activities with a significant widening dimension.

This specific grant agreement has the objective to support the transition of the COST programme towards a more efficient implementation while focusing activities on the interdisciplinary research networks called COST Actions. The applicant should outline in its proposal how the measures proposed to increase efficiency and limiting activities to core activities around the COST actions allow to reduce the implementation costs¹¹³ for the financial support to third parties to a level that reaches around 50% of the level of the first specific grant agreement under the current Framework Partnership Agreement.

This specific grant covers the expenditures for a duration of two years.

The personnel costs operations incurred by the COST Association as the implementing structure are eligible as direct cost up to a maximum of [EUR ... million] as far as they are necessary for the implementation of the COST networking actions and related other support activities. For the same purpose cost for other goods and services and subcontracting are eligible up to a cumulated maximum of [EUR million], and costs for travel and subsistence are eligible up to a cumulated maximum of [EUR million].

COST networking actions will be implemented by third party grant holders receiving financial support to third parties.

Financial support provided by the participants to third parties is the primary aim of this action. Therefore, the 60 000 EUR threshold provided for in Article 137(1)(c) of the Financial Regulation No 966/2012 and Article 210(a) of the Rules of Application Regulation No 1268/2012, does not apply.

The COST Association will organise competitive open calls and an independent evaluation and selection procedure according to its own rules in agreement with the European Commission. At proposal stage at least 50% of the participants must be located in Widening countries.

¹¹² COST (European Co-operation in Science and Technology) - Specific Grant under Framework Partnership Agreement

¹¹³ Implementation costs are in this context defined as the ratio of the total grant amount minus financial support to third parties, to the financial support provided to third parties.

This grant will be awarded without a call for proposals according to Article 198(e) of the Financial Regulation and Article 24(3)(b) of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

Legal entities:

COST Association, Avenue du Boulevard - Bolwerklaan 21, 1210 Brussels

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

Type of Action: Grant to identified beneficiary according to Financial Regulation Article 198(e) - Coordination and support action

The general conditions, including admissibility conditions, eligibility conditions, award criteria, evaluation and award procedure, legal and financial set-up for grants, financial and operational capacity and exclusion, and procedure are provided in parts A to G of the General Annexes

Indicative timetable: Q2 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 120.00 million from the 2026 budget

2. Futures Hubs for the R&I foresight community

This action takes place within the broader context of the Pact for R&I in Europe, particularly the priority given to anticipatory policy-making. It supports the continued operation of the Futures4Europe platform and the further development of the EU-wide foresight community, inter alia by expanding its scope and adding dedicated thematic hubs. Stronger thematic and capacity-building elements will be included and delivery methods and media formats will be updated. Thematic “Futures Hubs” will be set up, i.e., online platforms to facilitate the interaction between the European R&I foresight practitioners, policymakers, the scientific community, as well as citizens. Audiovisual and multi-media formats for foresight literacy and dissemination will be pioneered in these Futures Hubs to connect the foresight community with wider segments of society, especially young generations. By financing this additional capacity building in the R&I foresight landscape, this action is expected to generate sufficient achievements and momentum for Member States and Associated Countries to increasingly support the resulting network and infrastructure.

The action will deliver on the impact: “More resilient and future-proof R&I policies and long-term strategies with effectively integrated strategic intelligence and strengthened foresight communities”. Project results are expected to contribute to the following expected outcomes:

- Strengthened cooperation, networking, capacities, and co-creation within the European foresight community (including through roadshows and virtual "Futures Hubs");
- Improved foresight literacy among policymakers, researchers, and citizens;
- Increased awareness of foresight as a tool for education, policy, and careers, and increased engagement of younger generations;

The applicant must demonstrate in their proposal a viable plan for achieving self-sustainability after the end of the grant agreement, with a clear description of a minimum set of activities that will be maintained by the consortium with own or other resources.

The action, previously published through an open call for proposals¹¹⁴, successfully established a robust network that has demonstrated its ability to deliver outcomes effectively and efficiently while collaborating closely with the European Commission.

The evaluation committee will be composed fully by representatives of EU institutions.

This grant will be awarded without a call for proposals according to Article 198(e) of the Financial Regulation and Article 24(3)(b) of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

Legal entities:

Consortium coordinated by Unitatea Executiva pentru Finantarea Invatamantului Superior, a Cercetarii, Dezvoltarii si Inovarii (UEFISCDI), Str D. I. Mendeleev 21-25, Bucuresti 010362, Romania

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

Type of Action: Grant to identified beneficiary according to Financial Regulation Article 198(e) - Coordination and support action

The general conditions, including admissibility conditions, eligibility conditions, award criteria, evaluation and award procedure, legal and financial set-up for grants, financial and operational capacity and exclusion, and procedure are provided in parts A to G of the General Annexes

Indicative timetable: Q4 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 1.50 million from the 2026 budget

3. Promotion and valorisation of the ERA Policy Agenda results and related activities

The implementation of the activities of the ERA Policy Agendas and related ERA policies are supported with a range of actions under Horizon Europe, and in particular, the WIDERA work programme. Many of these actions will produce results that require a broad uptake by Member States, Associated Countries, and their stakeholders. In addition, the [ERA Forum](#) (Commission expert group) and its subgroups are supporting the implementation and coordination of ERA activities. This action will support these efforts by widely disseminating results at national and regional level, facilitating their use, tailoring them to the needs of different communities, and continuing to build a community of practitioners that supports mutual learning and exchange.

The implementation and valorisation of the ERA activities will deliver on the impact of “Sustainable ecosystems established around ERA priorities by enhancing cooperation,

¹¹⁴ Project “Eye of Europe”, funded under [HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ERA-01-02](#).

coordination and alignment”. Project results are expected to contribute to the following expected outcomes:

- An engaged and interconnected community of R&I practitioners and stakeholders, in particular at national and regional level, aware of the opportunities in the ERA and the activities of the ERA policy agendas;
- Increased visibility of the ERA at national level with results of the ERA Policy Agenda activities being taken up across Member States and Associated Countries;
- Effective coordination and sharing of information across Member States, Associated Countries, and stakeholders through suitable formats, such as mutual learning from their implementation of the ERA policy agenda activities;
- A coherent approach to communication on the ERA as a recognisable and lasting concept by contributing to the [ERA Policy Platform](#) as the centralised access point for information and its visual identity;
- Improved availability and access to policy feedback from the ERA community and R&I practitioners on the implementation of the ERA Policy Agendas and related activities.

In order to support the achievement of the ERA objectives across the EU, the applicant needs to demonstrate that it covers the Member States in a geographically comprehensive way, as well as the capacity to provide or access expertise related to all relevant ERA activities.

Annual work plans should be submitted and agreed with the granting authority, at the latest in month 2 for Year 1, month 14 for Year 2, and month 26 for Year 3.

The action, previously published through an open call for proposals¹¹⁵, successfully established a robust network that has demonstrated its ability to deliver outcomes effectively and efficiently while collaborating closely with the European Commission.

The evaluation committee will be composed fully by representatives of EU institutions.

This grant will be awarded without a call for proposals according to Article 198(e) of the Financial Regulation and Article 24(3)(b) of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

Legal entities:

Consortium coordinated by DEUTSCHES ZENTRUM FÜR LUFT - UND RAUMFAHRT EV, Linder Höhe, 51147 Köln

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

Type of Action: Grant to identified beneficiary according to Financial Regulation Article 198(e) - Coordination and support action

¹¹⁵ Project “INSPIRING ERA”, funded under [HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ERA-01-05](#).

The general conditions, including admissibility conditions, eligibility conditions, award criteria, evaluation and award procedure, legal and financial set-up for grants, financial and operational capacity and exclusion, and procedure are provided in parts A to G of the General Annexes

Indicative timetable: Q3 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 3.00 million from the 2026 budget

4. Advancing operational excellence of EURAXESS

This action will transform [EURAXESS](#), an EU initiative that provides researchers with information and services on jobs, funding, and mobility across Europe and beyond, making it more efficient, responsive, and digitally connected. By streamlining internal processes and strengthening collaboration among network members, EURAXESS will be better equipped to support research professionals and organisations.

At least one-third of the financial resources will be directed towards new elements, including new governance and operational models, which should be explored and implemented in close collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. Simplification will be key, including but not limited to greater digitalisation. Work should also continue on areas such as career development, talent attraction, international and intersectoral mobility and integration support, supporting research professionals at risk, and promoting gender equality. The action must foster engagement, cohesion, and exchange among network members, ensuring tangible benefits for all participants. A network-wide outreach strategy should be developed and tested to ensure that efforts across EURAXESS are coordinated and effectively increase its visibility among target audiences. Publication and dissemination channels for new content should be clearly defined to ensure maximum impact.

While the action focuses on internal improvements, the EURAXESS Europe network must also strengthen its collaboration with EURAXESS Worldwide and other initiatives within the [ERA Talent Platform](#). Furthermore, EURAXESS will explore collaboration and synergies with other networks and initiatives that support research professionals and research organisations in areas beyond its expertise, such as entrepreneurship and targeted talent scouting.

This grant also encompasses the organisation of the EURAXESS Biennial Conferences to be held in 2026 and 2028, in close collaboration with the European Commission. The host cities for these conferences will be designated by the European Commission. The agenda for each conference will be jointly developed by the host country, the coordinator, and the European Commission. The grant may be used to cover eligible organisational costs, including, but not limited to, venue hire, travel, accommodation, and programme-related activities.

Finally, this action will strengthen support for researchers at risk by providing tailored risk assessment tools, facilitating relocation to Europe, and offering comprehensive integration

assistance, such as mentorship, career development, and access to support services. Project results are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- New governance and operational frameworks collaboratively implemented, achieved through the streamlining of processes and greater support for research professionals and organisations;
- Improved career development, international and intersectoral mobility and integration support, including targeted initiatives for research professionals at risk and promoting gender equality;
- Increased visibility and engagement of EURAXESS with target audiences.

Project results are expected to contribute to a highly efficient, inclusive and responsive EURAXESS network, delivering on the impact "Improved career opportunities and mobility for research professionals on the basis of the European framework for research careers, fostering the free flow of knowledge and expertise and the interoperability of research careers across sectors and countries".

The proposal should contain a detailed annual work plan for Year 1. Subsequent annual work plans should be submitted and agreed with the granting authority no later than Month 11 for Year 2 and Month 23 for Year 3.

Given the specific scope and objectives of the project, the consortium will be composed of organisations designated as EURAXESS Bridgehead Organisations.

Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties, such as EURAXESS Service Centres and EURAXESS Contact Points. 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 60 000.

Procedure: The evaluation committee will be fully composed by representatives of EU institutions.

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

Type of Action: Grant to identified beneficiary according to Financial Regulation Article 198(e) - Coordination and support action

The general conditions, including admissibility conditions, eligibility conditions, award criteria, evaluation and award procedure, legal and financial set-up for grants, financial and operational capacity and exclusion, and procedure are provided in parts A to G of the General Annexes

Indicative timetable: Q1 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 4.90 million from the 2026 budget

5. Support to the operations of CoARA

This action aims at continuing the support to the operations of the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), after the end of the ongoing Horizon Europe “CoARA Boost” project.

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

- Ensure the effective operations of the various bodies of CoARA;
- Raise awareness, disseminate information and promote mutual learning across the members of CoARA, its bodies, and beyond.

The action will deliver on the impact: “Systemic reform of research assessment through the recognition of the diverse outputs, practices, and activities which maximise the quality and impact of research”.

The action is expected to enable the functioning of the various bodies of the coalition and their interactions. In particular, it will support the work, meetings, and dissemination of deliverables of the CoARA General Assembly, Steering Board, Executive Committee, Working Groups, National Chapters, and Secretariat, during the period 2027-2029. It will equally facilitate awareness raising and the dissemination of knowledge, good practices and relevant information to CoARA members, its bodies, and relevant external stakeholders.

The European Science Foundation has a proven record of working closely with the European Commission, hosting CoARA’s Secretariat.

The evaluation committee will be composed fully by representatives of EU institutions.

This grant will be awarded without a call for proposals according to Article 198(e) of the Financial Regulation and Article 24(3)(b) of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

Legal entities:

European Science Foundation (ESF), 1, quai Lezay-Marnésia - BP 90015 67080 Strasbourg Cedex – France

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

Type of Action: Grant to identified beneficiary according to Financial Regulation Article 198(e) - Coordination and support action

The general conditions, including admissibility conditions, eligibility conditions, award criteria, evaluation and award procedure, legal and financial set-up for grants, financial and operational capacity and exclusion, and procedure are provided in parts A to G of the General Annexes

Indicative timetable: Q3 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 1.50 million from the 2026 budget

6. Policy coordination to support gender equality and inclusiveness in the ERA

This action will contribute to developing the network of representatives from Member States and Associated Countries, both from national authorities (e.g., R&I ministries) and national research funding organisations, to support the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of inclusive gender equality policies in the ERA.

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

- Enhanced policy coordination of Member States and Associated Countries to achieve the ERA objectives on inclusive gender equality, including stakeholder and citizen engagement and mainstreaming other ERA priority areas;
- Increased knowledge and capacities for the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of inclusive and intersectional gender equality policies across the ERA, as well as their increased uptake by Member States, Associated Countries, the European Commission, and relevant ERA stakeholders.

The action will deliver on the impact: “Enhanced gender equality and inclusiveness, leading to research excellence and more innovative, socially relevant, and economically impactful outcomes”.

The activities should target research performing and funding organisations, higher education institutions, and public bodies, building on existing knowledge, expertise and tools¹¹⁶. Close cooperation with relevant stakeholders, especially the ERA Forum sub-group on inclusive gender equality in the ERA¹¹⁷ should be ensured. At least the following activities should be included:

- Further develop the transnational network of R&I funding organisations and national authorities that operated under the [GENDERACTIONplus](#) project;
- Build capabilities and expertise among network members and representatives of the ERA Forum and its sub-groups, and develop activities to mainstream inclusive gender equality in other ERA priority areas through the network and stakeholder engagement;
- Devise a monitoring and evaluation approach for the effective implementation of inclusive gender equality plans through co-creation with the sub-group by the end of 2027;
- Develop guidelines for implementing intersectionality in R&I policy, including recommended indicators, through co-creation with the sub-group by the end of 2027;

¹¹⁶ Projects funded under the calls [H2020_SwafS-19-2016](#), [H2020_SwafS-08-2017](#), [HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-80](#), and [HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-01-11](#).

¹¹⁷ See the Commission expert group: <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?lang=en&groupID=103813>.

- Conduct monitoring and evaluation of the ERA Structural Policy on strengthening inclusive gender equality in the ERA in cooperation with the sub-group.

The applicant must demonstrate in their proposal a viable plan for achieving self-sustainability after the end of the grant agreement, with a clear description of a minimum set of activities that will be maintained by the consortium with own or other resources.

The identified beneficiary has a solid record of successful collaboration with the European Commission on gender equality in R&I¹¹⁸.

Legal entities:

Consortium coordinated by the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (ISAS), Jilská 1, 110 00, Praha 1 - Czechia

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

Type of Action: Grant to identified beneficiary according to Financial Regulation Article 198(e) - Coordination and support action

The general conditions, including admissibility conditions, eligibility conditions, award criteria, evaluation and award procedure, legal and financial set-up for grants, financial and operational capacity and exclusion, and procedure are provided in parts A to G of the General Annexes

Indicative timetable: Q1 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 2.00 million from the 2026 budget

7. Presidency conferences with a European regional dimension - WIRE 2028

Expected Outcome: Organisation of a two-day conference (WIRE) in 2028, under one of the Presidencies of the Council of the EU. WIRE - The Week of Innovative Regions in Europe is the main European policy forum for innovation and regional development. The event will gather actors active in the innovation and education ecosystem with the aim of improving science-based competitiveness.

Expected Impact: By bringing together diverse stakeholders, including education and research organizations, startups, clusters, and policymakers, the conference will debate knowledge-based regional development and will offer potential solutions of streamlining resources aimed for this. The collaborative discussions are expected to advance regional development and improve the overall effectiveness of innovation across users and society at large.

Scope: The event will focus on innovation and regional development, exploring trends, best practices, and future visions. It will serve as a key European policy forum for stakeholders involved in the R&I ecosystem.

¹¹⁸ Including projects [GENDERACTION](#) and [GENDERACTIONplus](#); participation in the ERA Forum Subgroup on Integrating Gender Equality in the ERA.

The evaluation committee will be composed fully by representatives of EU institutions.

This grant will be awarded without a call for proposals according to Article 198(e) of the Financial Regulation and Article 24(3)(b) of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

Legal entities:

Responsible government department or ministry, or a government-owned legal entity of the incumbent Presidency of the Council, or a legal entity designated by the responsible government department.

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

Type of Action: Grant to identified beneficiary according to Financial Regulation Article 198(e) - Coordination and support action

The general conditions, including admissibility conditions, eligibility conditions, award criteria, evaluation and award procedure, legal and financial set-up for grants, financial and operational capacity and exclusion, and procedure are provided in parts A to G of the General Annexes

Indicative timetable: Q4 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 0.25 million from the 2027 budget

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

1. Studies and communication

Activities should support the Pact for R&I and the implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda and may include studies, support and communication activities that are needed to analyse and enhance the EU R&I environment, for example:

- Collection of project feedback, in particular with respect to key exploitable results;
- Organisational support for consulting the R&I stakeholders community on R&I needs;
- Production and dissemination of communication material and organisation of events;
- Support to Member States ensuring coherent communication activities on ERA;
- Analysis of the expected impacts of the ERA Policy Agenda actions and of potential barriers to their development.

Contracts may be implemented on the basis of framework contracts in order to ensure appropriate and timely analyses. Cooperation with the presidencies of the Council of the European Union and stakeholders is envisaged and could include direct support to ERA-related presidency events.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q3 2026-Q3 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 1.75 million from the 2026 budget and EUR 1.50 million from the 2027 budget

2. Euraxess Worldwide - implementation

The EURAXESS WORLDWIDE Framework Contract covers the continued animation of the network and guarantees the continuity of the operations of the Euraxess Worldwide Hubs in the different locations around the world, allowing for the extension of the activities to new countries and tasks as appropriate.

This action aims to complement the European dimension of EURAXESS with an additional dimension and module addressing international and European researchers living and working outside of the European Union. It is expected to consist of the development of a portfolio of support services and associated tools, designed to create transnational ties with researchers and scientific communities within the global R&I ecosystem.

This action will build on the EURAXESS Worldwide structure of international hubs and it is expected to be a physical and virtual networking, knowledge-sharing and advocacy platform

of services and tools. It will serve as a diplomacy asset, will promote European R&I instruments, and will attract international talents to the European Union and European researchers back home.

The international dimension of EURAXESS should also be fostered through networking events, information sessions or training, as well as online instruments and tools.

EURAXESS WORLDWIDE officers are located in the following countries and regions: Africa, ASEAN, Australia & New Zealand, China, India, Japan, North America, South Korea, and Latin America.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q1 2026 and Q1 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 2.20 million from the 2026 budget and EUR 2.20 million from the 2027 budget

3. Administrative management of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers

The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)¹¹⁹ is the implementation mechanism of the European Charter for Researchers¹²⁰ and is key to the career development of researchers, as well as to generating, transferring, sharing, and disseminating knowledge about human resources best practices.

The contractor will be responsible, in collaboration with the Commission, the applicant institutions and the assessors, for organising the administrative management of the HR Excellence in Research process and for the applications' continuous assessment, including the organisation of desk-based assessments and site visits, the selection of assessors, the administrative validation of assessors' reports and institutions' submissions, as well as managing the communication with applicants, promoting the award, and providing feedback to the Commission for policy purposes.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q2-Q4 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 1.80 million from the 2026 budget and EUR 3.40 million from the 2027 budget

¹¹⁹ HR Excellence in Research Award, <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/hrs4r>.

¹²⁰ Charter for Researchers, annexed to the Council Recommendation of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj>.

4. Horizon Policy Support Facility

In order to make research and innovation deliver on their full potential to be the key drivers of economic growth and of the transition towards a sustainable society, ambitious policy reforms of national R&I systems and evidence-based R&I policies are necessary. Through the Policy Support Facility (PSF), the Commission assists Member States and Associated Countries in developing and implementing those reforms and supporting peer-learning in R&I policy design and deployment. At the request of national administrations with R&I competences, the PSF provides customer-oriented services through the mobilisation of high-level expertise and tailor-made advice. An overview of past activities can be found on a dedicated webpage¹²¹. The PSF has demonstrated that it serves as an enabler for concrete policy changes.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q1 2026 and Q1 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 1.50 million from the 2026 budget and EUR 1.50 million from the 2027 budget

5. Learning labs for value creation

The aim of the learning labs for value creation is to strengthen knowledge valorisation capacities and skills for university students, researchers, funding organisations and innovators and to facilitate sharing and replication of best practices across Europe. This action will provide online courses on intellectual asset management, standardisation, engagement with society, industry-academia co-creation, and use of new technologies for fostering knowledge valorisation. It will also include peer-learning, mentoring and exchanges with role models. In-depth modules on effective licencing schemes for greater societal impact focussing on one or two technology areas, such as biotechnology and advanced materials should be included.

The action will include the content development for the learning lab concept, implementation of a series of learning labs with a pan-European outreach and evaluation of the effectiveness of the action. The learning labs will build on the Guiding Principles for Knowledge Valorisation and the Codes of Practice¹²².

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q1 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 1.00 million from the 2026 budget

¹²¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/research-and-innovation/en/statistics/policy-support-facility>

¹²² https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/eu-valorisation-policy/knowledge-valorisation-platform/guiding-principles-knowledge-valorisation-and-implementing-codes-practice_en.

6. She Figures: Monitoring gender equality in R&I

The EU has progressively strengthened its commitment to gender equality, embracing intersectionality and promoting inclusivity across various sectors, disciplines, and geographical regions. There is a need to comprehensively track advancements made towards the individual ERA priorities and inform evidence-based policy-making. In cooperation with Member States and Associated Countries, the Commission will continue collecting and analysing comparable sex and/or gender disaggregated and intersectional data. This will be accompanied by the development and application of appropriate indicators to monitor the implementation of inclusive gender policies and actions at institutional, national, EU and, where available, global level. The study will update the data collection and introduce new indicators to measure progress towards gender equality and inclusiveness in R&I. It will follow the career trajectories of researchers and innovators – from the completion of doctoral studies to entry into the labour market to the attainment of leadership and decision-making roles. Additionally, it will assess variations in working conditions, career progression, and research output based on gender and, whenever possible, on other intersecting factors, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of systemic inequalities in R&I.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q4 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 0.50 million from the 2027 budget

7. Implementation of ERA monitoring

The Council Recommendation on a Pact for R&I has requested the Commission to set up an ERA Monitoring Mechanism to provide European, national and regional policy-makers, R&I practitioners, and all interested public with solid, EU-wide analytical tools to help monitor and evaluate progress towards the ERA objectives and assess the implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda.

The purpose of this action is to support the implementation and evaluation of the ERA Monitoring Mechanism, encompassing the preparation of the EU-level reports; regular reports on the progress of ERA implementation in each Member State and, if appropriate, in Associated Countries; and, an ERA Scoreboard to assess the overall consolidation and collective progress of ERA priorities at EU and national levels.

The action supports the development and maintenance of the [ERA Policy Platform](#) that has as its aim a consistent, robust and quality tested national reporting system. Moreover, the Platform provides for easy access to and information on ERA policies and activities.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q2-Q4 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 2.00 million from the 2027 budget

8. ERA Talent Platform: Enhancing research careers and mobility in Europe

The [ERA Talent Platform](#), including but not limited to initiatives of EURAXESS, RESAVER, HR Excellence in Research, ResearchComp, and the European Research and Innovation Careers Observatory, is one of the key initiatives enhancing research careers and is one of the operational instruments of the ERA. In particular, it contributes to removing the barriers to mobility, improving the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers, and making Europe more competitive.

This action will ensure continuous improvement and maintenance of the digital aspects of the ERA Talent Platform. This includes, but is not limited to, technical maintenance and development, and graphical and functional enhancements related to evolving user needs and political developments. Additionally, the creation of materials to increase the visibility of these ERA Talent Platform initiatives will be a key component, ensuring broader engagement and awareness among researchers, institutions, and policymakers. New initiatives part of the ERA Talent Platform might also be launched if needed by evolving policy context.

Awareness about the ERA and its priorities will be increased through promotion activities, including stakeholder dialogues, events, workshops, or conferences, such as the EURAXESS Conference, the HR Excellence in Research Info Days, and the Conference on Research Careers.

This action requires collaboration with a large group of stakeholders, including EURAXESS Bridgehead Organisations/National Coordinators, national portal administrators, EURAXESS Worldwide, HR Excellence in Research contractors and assessors, OECD, and RESAVER. Activities should also include services by external information system provider(s) who, on the basis of inputs provided by the responsible Commission services, guarantee the running of the platform. Online communication and promotion activities should also be implemented.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q2 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 2.50 million from the 2027 budget

9. EURAXESS Worldwide - Framework contract (2028-2031)

The objective of the procurement action is to ensure the continuity of the operations and the coordination of Euraxess Worldwide, allowing for the extension of the activities to new countries, regions, and tasks as appropriate in accordance with EU strategic policy priorities.

The Euraxess Hubs are expected to undertake physical and virtual promotion, networking and knowledge-sharing activities to promote the opportunities available for cooperation and mobility. The action will serve as a diplomacy asset, raising awareness of the attractiveness of Europe as a favourable environment for excellent R&I, to attract international talents to the EU and European researchers back from abroad, as well as promoting R&I cooperation between the EU and the world. This action will operate in solid alignment with the European dimension of Euraxess.

This framework contract will cover the period 2028-2031. Its estimated budget is EUR 12 million.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q2 2027

10. Gender Equality Competence Facility – Framework Contract (2028-2031)

This action aims to ensure the continuation and further development of a service to support the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of impactful inclusive Gender Equality Plans (GEP) across the ERA, and thus to facilitate inclusive structural change and enhance its sustainability within organisations.

A key aspect of this service is to support concerned organisations in complying with the EU policy requirements and priorities related to GEPs and any potential new or changed requirements for the next EU framework programme for R&I and possibly other new programmes under the post-2027 multiannual financial framework. This support includes providing guidance, conducting capacity building events, fostering mutual learning and exchanges, as well as raising awareness about the topic.

The EU Gender Competence Facility is expected to follow up and build on a series of supporting initiatives deployed since 2020 to help higher education establishments, research organisations, and public bodies across Member States and Associated Countries understand the requirements associated with the Horizon Europe GEP eligibility criterion and be prepared for its enforcement, as well as to mobilise expertise and commitment at national level for the development of GEPs. It must be implemented in synergy with ongoing related initiatives and in cooperation with concerned stakeholders, e.g., the ERA Forum subgroup on Inclusive Gender Equality in the ERA.

This framework contract will cover the period 2028-2031. Its estimated budget is EUR 6 million.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q3 2027

EXTERNAL EXPERT ACTIONS

1. Use of individual experts for ad hoc tasks related to the implementation of the Horizon Europe Ethics Appraisal

This action will support the use of independent experts to advise on or assist with the implementation of the Horizon Europe Ethics Appraisal scheme in view of ensuring and maintaining its quality and effectiveness, including for training.

A special allowance of EUR 450/day will be paid to the experts appointed in their personal capacity who act independently and in the public interest.

Form of Funding: Other budget implementation instruments

Type of Action: Expert contract action

Indicative timetable: Q1 2026 - Q1 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 0.10 million from the 2026 budget and EUR 0.10 million from the 2027 budget

2. Use of individual experts in support of the ERA's objectives

This action will support the provision of independent expertise to improve the evidence base and collect advice on various aspects related to the Reforming and Enhancing the European Union Research and Innovation System and the European Research Area. Individual experts will work in the following domains:

- Experts to contribute to monitoring of progress of the realisation of ERA's objectives;
- Experts on research careers, skills and services for researchers such as those of the EURAXESS services network, experts in legal matters related to research careers and employment-related aspects, and experts in legal matters related to cross-border institutional cooperation, notably higher education institutions and public research organisations;
- Experts to contribute to the analysis of the expected impacts of the ERA Policy Agenda actions, to the development of these actions, and to the analysis of potential barriers.

A special allowance of EUR 450/day will be paid to the experts appointed in their personal capacity who act independently and in the public interest.

Form of Funding: Other budget implementation instruments

Type of Action: Expert contract action

Indicative timetable: Q1 2026-Q4 2027

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

3. External expertise for evaluation and monitoring of Widening and ERA actions

This action will support the use of appointed independent experts for the evaluation and monitoring of actions (grant agreement, grant decision, public procurement actions, financial instruments, evaluation) funded under Horizon Europe and where appropriate, include ethics checks as well as compliance checks regarding the Gender Equality Plan eligibility criterion. A special allowance of EUR 450/day will be paid to the experts appointed in their personal capacity who act independently and in the public interest.

Form of Funding: Other budget implementation instruments

Type of Action: Expert contract action

Indicative timetable: Q1 2026-Q4 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 1.18 million from the 2026 budget and EUR 0.89 million from the 2027 budget

Budget¹²³

	Budget line(s)	2026 Budget (EUR million)	2027 Budget (EUR million)
Calls			
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-01		7.00	
	<i>from 01.020401</i>	<i>7.00</i>	
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-02		216.50	41.50
	<i>from 01.020401</i>	<i>216.50</i>	<i>41.50</i>
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-03		15.00	85.00
	<i>from 01.020401</i>	<i>15.00</i>	<i>85.00</i>
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-04		30.00	
	<i>from 01.020401</i>	<i>30.00</i>	
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-05		7.00	
	<i>from 01.020401</i>	<i>7.00</i>	
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-06		8.00	
	<i>from 01.020401</i>	<i>8.00</i>	
HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07		52.00	
	<i>from 01.020402</i>	<i>52.00</i>	
HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-01			40.00

¹²³

The budget figures given in this table are rounded to two decimal places.

The budget amounts are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for 2026 and 2027.

Horizon Europe - Work Programme 2026-2027
Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area

	<i>from 01.020401</i>		40.00
HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-02			240.00
	<i>from 01.020401</i>		240.00
HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-03			8.00
	<i>from 01.020401</i>		8.00
HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04			40.00
	<i>from 01.020402</i>		40.00
Other actions			
Prize		0.40	0.40
	<i>from 01.020402</i>	0.40	0.40
Grant awarded without a call for proposals according to Financial Regulation Article 198(e)		132.90	0.25
	<i>from 01.020401</i>	120.00	0.25
	<i>from 01.020402</i>	12.90	
Public procurement		8.26	13.60
	<i>from 01.020402</i>	8.26	13.60
Expert contract action		1.48	1.19
	<i>from 01.020401</i>	0.88	0.59
	<i>from 01.020402</i>	0.60	0.60
Estimated total budget		478.54	469.94