



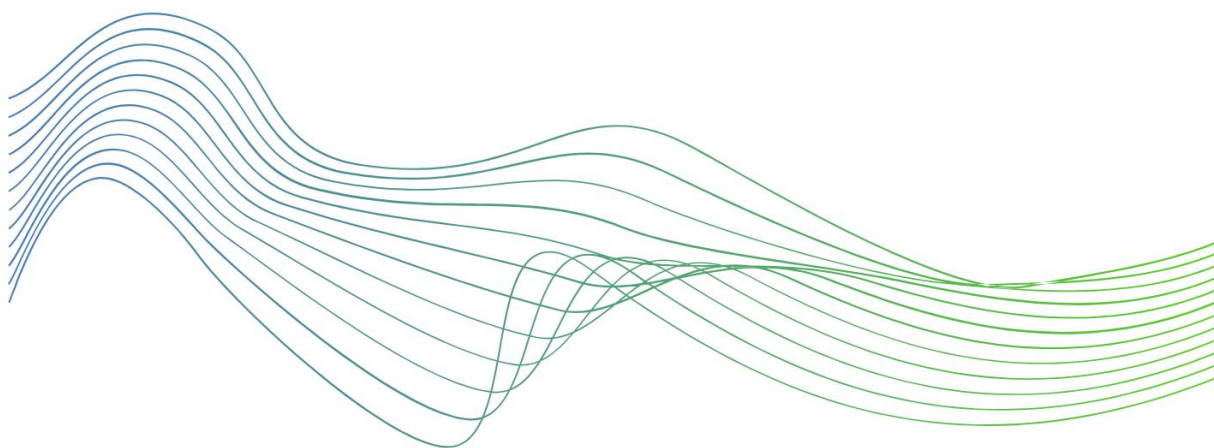
Green Host
CoVE Project



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Agenda for Innovation and Collaboration

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- MTBG - Ministry of Tourism – Bulgaria (<http://www.tourism.government.bg>);
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- MAG – Magnetar (<http://www.magnetar.com.cy>);
- NTB - Nicosia Tourism Board (<http://www.ntb.org.cy>)

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- EPIHAL - Chamber of Halkidiki (<http://www.epihal.gr>)
- TIHC - Technical Institute of Heraklion Chamber of Commerce & Industry (<http://www.katartisi.gr>)
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- AETHNIC - ETHNIC Sustainable Tourism Association (<https://www.aethnic.org/aethnic/>)
- CCI Girona - Cambra de Comerç, Indústria i Navegació de Girona (<http://www.cambragirona.cat>)

Date: July 2025

Executive Summary

This document aims to identify relevant programs aligning with organizational goals and outlines key EU funding programs aimed at strengthening innovation, skills development, and sustainable transitions across Europe. The initiatives focus on fostering collaboration between education, industry, and research to address pressing economic, environmental, and societal challenges. To achieve this objective, several consortium partners had identified potential EU calls that could be suitable for the objectives of the innovation project proposal (Task 2.4). However, this analysis did not consider the date of the call because it is impossible to know which calls will be open next year. Therefore, it is expected that the calls analysed will have further editions.

Each partner analysed the following EU call:

Partner	Call
CETT – Barcelona School of Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy	Erasmus+ Alliances for innovation - Lot 1: Alliances for Education and Enterprises
CCI Girona – Cambra de Comerç, Indústria i Navegació de Girona	Erasmus+ Centres of Vocational Excellence
AETHNIC – ETHNIC Sustainable Tourism Association	Erasmus+ FORWARD-LOOKING PROJECTS - Topic 3: Vocational Education and Training: Development of joint VET qualifications and modules
Frederick University	Interreg NEXT MED Programme
University of Macedonia	Erasmus+ Alliances for innovation - Lot 2: Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills
OECON Group – Business and Development Consultants	Horizon Europe – Cluster 2 - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive society
TIHC – Technical Institute of Heraklion Chamber of Commerce & Industry	Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training (VET) 2026
EPIHAL - Chamber of Halkidiki	LIFE Programme for the Environment and Climate Action
AITR – Associazione Italiana Turismo Responsabile	Single Market Programme
CSL – Centro Studio e Lavoro La Cremeria	
AITR – Associazione Italiana Turismo Responsabile	European Climate Initiative - EUKI call
CSL – Centro Studio e Lavoro La Cremeria	
AITR – Associazione Italiana Turismo Responsabile	Interreg Central Europe
CSL – Centro Studio e Lavoro La Cremeria	

PCCI - Plovdiv Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Digital Europe Programme
SŠGT MB – Srednja šola za gostinstvo in turizem Maribor	Erasmus+ Teacher Academies
Escola Superior de Hotelaria e Turismo, Instituto Politécnico do Porto	Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills (implementing the 'Blueprint')
MAG – Magnetar	Horizon Europe – Cluster 5: Climate, Energy and Mobility

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1. Introduction

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements, climate challenges, and evolving labour market demands, the European Union has prioritized fostering innovation, skills development, and sustainable growth.

The main goals of all the calls presented in this agenda are to enhance Europe's innovation capacity by promoting cooperation between higher education (HE), vocational education training (VET), and industry; to address skills gaps in ecosystems; to support democratic governance, cultural heritage, and social transformations; to achieve climate neutrality via capacity-building, policy implementation, and cross-border networks and to create a European tourism data space to improve sustainability and innovation. These initiatives collectively aim to drive innovation, social equity, and environmental resilience, positioning Europe as a global leader in sustainable development.

At the front of this endeavour is the Erasmus+ Alliances for Innovation program, which seeks to close the gap between research, industry, and education to enhance Europe's potential for innovation. By tackling significant gaps in digital and green competences, promoting the shift to a circular economy, and quickening the adoption of deep tech advancements like artificial intelligence, this project aims to improve talent and skills development. The program seeks to develop innovative curriculum, improve employability, and encourage entrepreneurial mindsets throughout the EU by encouraging cooperation between HE, VET, and businesses.

Alliances for Education and Enterprises, which unites companies, academic institutions, and providers of vocational training to address urgent societal and economic issues ranging from digitalization and climate change to social inclusion and labour market resilience, is a crucial part of this endeavour. These collaborations create Professional Excellence Centres that promote innovation, regional growth, and cross-border collaboration on a national and worldwide scale. In addition to Erasmus+, other EU financial initiatives that invest in digital transformation, inclusive societal development, and green transitions include the LIFE Programme, Horizon Europe, Interreg NEXT MED, and the Single Market Programme. These programs work together to provide a coherent plan, to increase cross-border mobility and qualification recognition and to create collaborative VET programs that offer mobility and work-based learning options. By forming skills alliances, sectoral ecosystems (such as agrifood, digital, and tourism) are strengthened and encourage competitive and sustainable economies by means of international collaboration.

An outline of these important financial opportunities, their goals, and their potential influence on creating a more creative, competent, and resilient Europe can be found in all the calls presented. These initiatives are essential to advancing the EU's twin green and digital transitions while guaranteeing long-term economic and social development because they match education with industry demands and promote cross-sector cooperation.

2. Call: Erasmus+ Alliances for innovation - Lot 1: Alliances for Education and Enterprises

2.1. Brief description

The call *Erasmus+ - Alliances for innovation* aim to strengthen Europe's innovation capacity by boosting innovation through cooperation and flow of knowledge among higher education, vocational education and training (both initial and continuous), and the broader socio-economic environment, including research.

They also aim to boost the provision of new skills and address skills mismatches by designing and creating new curricula for higher education (HE) and vocational education and training (VET), supporting the development of a sense of initiative and entrepreneurial mind-sets in the EU and implement a set of sectoral or cross-sectoral activities.

To boost innovation, the focus will be on talent and skills development. Firstly, digital competences have become increasingly important in all job profiles across the entire labour market. Secondly, the transition to a circular and greener economy needs to be underpinned by changes to qualifications and national education and training curricula to meet emerging professional needs for green skills and sustainable development. Thirdly, the twin digital and green transition requires an accelerated adoption of new technologies, in the highly innovative deep tech domains, across all sectors of our economy and society.

Within *Erasmus+ - Alliances for innovation*, the *Lot 1: Alliances for Education and Enterprises* aim to foster innovation in higher education, vocational education and training, enterprises and the broader socio-economic environment. This includes confronting societal and economic challenges such as climate change, changing demographics, digitisation, the emergence of new, disruptive (deep tech) technologies such as artificial intelligence and rapid employment changes through social innovation and community resilience as well as labour market innovation.

Alliances for Education and Enterprises bring together enterprises and both higher education and vocational training providers to work together in partnership. Operating within one economic sector or several different economic sectors, they create reliable and sustainable relations and demonstrate their innovative and transnational character in all aspects. While each partnership must include at least one VET and one higher education organisation, they can address either both or one of these educational fields. The cooperation between VET and higher education organisations should be relevant and should benefit both sectors.

More information can be found in the following [link](#).

2.2. Call date

The information of *Erasmus+ - Alliances for innovation - Lot 1: Alliances for Education and Enterprises* belongs to the call ERASMUS-EDU-2025-PIALL-INNO-EDU-ENTERP, which is currently closed. The dates for these calls were the following:

Opening date: 05 December 2024

Deadline date: 06 March 2025

There is still no available information on the future dates of the next call.

2.3. Goals

Alliances for Education and Enterprises aim to foster innovation in higher education, vocational education and training, enterprises and the broader socioeconomic environment. This includes confronting societal and economic challenges such as climate change, changing demographics, digitisation, the emergence of new, disruptive (deep tech) technologies such as artificial intelligence and rapid employment changes through social innovation and community resilience as well as labour market innovation. Specifically, the **objectives** of this call are the following:

- fostering **new, innovative and multidisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning**: fostering innovation in education design and delivery, teaching methods, assessment techniques, learning environments and/or developing new skills
- **supporting skills development in the deep tech domains**; supporting Europe's innovation capacity by broadening its talent pool in these new, disruptive technologies
- fostering the **setting up of incubators** within education and training institutions across Europe
- fostering **corporate social responsibility** (e.g. equity, inclusion, climate change, environmental protection and sustainable development)
- stimulating a **sense of initiative and entrepreneurial attitudes, mind-sets and skills in learners**, educational staff and other workers, in line with the [Entrepreneurship Competence Framework \(EntreComp\)](#)
- improving the **quality and relevance of skills** developed and certified through education and training systems (including new skills and tackling skills mismatches)
- facilitating the **exchange and co-creation of knowledge** between higher education and vocational education and training, research, the public sector and the business sector
- building and supporting effective and efficient **higher education and vocational education and training systems**, which are connected and inclusive, and contribute to innovation

2.4. European Commission Priorities

The European Commission's priorities for 2024-2029 focus on several key areas:

1. **Competitiveness**: Enhancing Europe's economic growth, enterprise, and innovation to ensure prosperity and fairness.
2. **Security and Defense**: Building a European Defense Union, enhancing crisis management, and ensuring a safer Europe.
3. **European Social Fairness**: Promoting social justice and equality across the EU.
4. **Quality of Life**: Improving the well-being of European citizens through various initiatives.
5. **Democracy and Our Values**: Upholding democratic principles and core European values.
6. **A Global Europe**: Strengthening the EU's role and influence on the global stage.
7. **EU Budget and Reform**: Ensuring a sustainable and effective EU budget and institutional reforms.

These priorities aim to address challenges such as rising living costs, housing shortages, and migration management, while fostering innovation and sustainable development.

In alignment with these priorities, especially priority 1, 3 and 4, the Erasmus+ call on "Alliances for Innovation" Alliances for Education and Enterprises seeks to:

- **Boost Innovation:** Strengthen Europe's innovation capacity through enhanced cooperation and knowledge exchange among higher education institutions, vocational education and training (VET), and businesses.
- **Develop New Skills:** Address skills mismatches by designing new curricula for higher education and VET, fostering a sense of initiative and entrepreneurial mindsets.
- **Promote Knowledge Flow:** Stimulate the exchange of knowledge between education sectors and enterprises to drive innovation and economic growth.

By focusing on these areas, the Erasmus+ Alliances for Innovation contribute to the European Commission's overarching goals of enhancing competitiveness, promoting social fairness, and improving quality of life across Europe.

2.5. Eligible Organizations

The applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities, if applicable) must be public or private organisations established in an EU Member state or third country associated to the Programme such as:

- Higher education institutions
- VET providers
- networks of VET providers
- small and medium-sized or large enterprises (including social enterprises)
- research institutes
- non-governmental organisations
- public bodies at local, regional or national level
- organisations active in education, training and youth
- intermediaries that represent education, training or youth organisations or enterprises
- accreditation, certification, recognition or qualification bodies
- Chambers of commerce, industry or labour, chambers of skilled crafts
- European or national social partners
- hospitals or other care institutions, including long-term care
- authorities responsible for education, training or employment at regional or national level
- employment services
- national statistics offices
- economic development agencies
- sectoral or professional associations
- sector skills councils
- bodies providing career guidance, professional counselling, information services and employment services

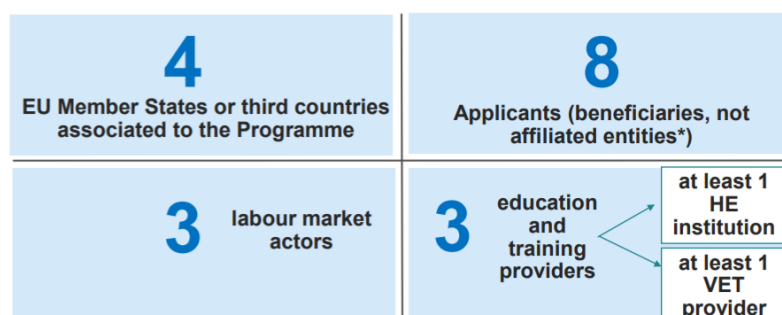
Organisations from third countries not associated to the Programme in Regions 1 -to 3 may also participate as full beneficiaries, affiliated entities or associated partners. Organisations from other third countries not associated to the Programme can only participate as associated partners. As a exception for this call, organisations from Belarus (Region 2) are not eligible to participate in this action.

Higher education institutions established in an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme must hold a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE). An ECHE is not required for participating HEIs in third countries not associated to the Programme.

2.6. Consortium composition

Erasmus+ - Alliances for innovation - Lot 1: Alliances for Education and Enterprises must cover at least 4 EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme, involving a minimum of 8 applicants (beneficiaries, not affiliated entities) (Figure 1). The consortium must include at least 3 labour market actors (enterprises or companies, or representative intermediary organisations, such as chambers, trade unions or trade associations) and at least 3 education and training providers (VET and HEIs), as applicants (beneficiaries, not affiliated entities). There should be at least one HE institution and one VET provider involved as applicants (beneficiaries, not affiliated entities) in each proposal. Affiliated entities and associated partners do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for the consortium composition and cannot be coordinators (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number and profile of participating organisations (minimum requirements)



**Affiliated entities and associated partners do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for the consortium composition and cannot be coordinators.*

Source: EACEA (2024)

Organizations can participate in this call through three different statuses:

- **Applicants** (beneficiaries and their possible affiliated entities) (compulsory): Any participating organisation or informal group of young people that submits a grant application. Applicants may apply either individually or on behalf of other organisations involved in the project. In the latter case, the applicant is also defined as coordinator. For actions managed by the Executive Agency EACEA, the applicants are those participants who will become beneficiaries and affiliated entities in the Grant Agreement if their application is funded.
- **Affiliated entities** (optional): the Affiliated Entities must comply with the eligibility and non-exclusion criteria, and where applicable also with the selection criteria applying to applicants

but they do not count toward the minimum eligibility criteria for the consortium composition (if any). One entity + its affiliated entity = 1 full partner. The following can be considered Affiliated Entities:

- o Legal entities having a legal or capital link with beneficiaries; this link is neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation.
- o Several entities which satisfy the criteria for being awarded a grant and together form one entity which may be treated as the sole beneficiary, including where the entity is specifically established for the purpose of implementing the action.
- **Associated partners** (optional): Entities from the public or private sector that contribute to the implementation of specific project tasks/activities or support the promotion and sustainability of the project, but that for contractual management aspects are not considered to be beneficiaries, and do not receive any funding from the Programme as part of the project (they do not have the right to charge costs or claim contributions).

Finally, it is also important to consider the eligible countries for this call. The applicants need to belong to the 27 EU member states, or third countries associated to the Programme (Figure 2)

Figure 2: Eligible countries

APPLICANT	PARTICIPANT
EU MEMBER STATES AND THIRD COUNTRIES ASSOCIATED TO THE PROGRAMME:  EU Member states (27) + Iceland Liechtenstein Norway Republic of North Macedonia Republic of Serbia Republic of Türkiye	EU MEMBER STATES AND THIRD COUNTRIES ASSOCIATED TO THE PROGRAMME + THIRD COUNTRIES NOT ASSOCIATED TO THE PROGRAMME (see page 293 of the E+PG): Organisations from third countries not associated to the Programme in Regions 1 to 3 may also participate as beneficiaries, affiliated entities or associated partners, but not as coordinator. Organisations from other third countries not associated to the Programme can only participate as associated partners. (List of Regions is available at page 33 of the E+PG) <i>Exception: organisations from Belarus (Region 2) are not eligible to participate in this action.</i>

Source: EACEA (2024)

2.7. Characteristics

The *Erasmus+ - Alliances for innovation -Lot 1: Alliances for Education and Enterprises* Alliances are transnational, structured and result-driven projects, in which partners share common goals and work together to foster innovation, new skills, a sense of initiative and entrepreneurial mind-sets.

They aim to foster innovation in higher education, vocational education and training, enterprises and the broader socio-economic environment. This includes confronting societal and economic challenges such as climate change, changing demographics, digitisation, the emergence of new, disruptive (deep tech) technologies such as artificial intelligence and rapid employment changes through social innovation and community resilience as well as labour market innovation.

Alliances for Education and Enterprises bring together enterprises and both higher education and vocational training providers to work together in partnership. Operating within one economic sector or several different economic sectors, they create reliable and sustainable relations and demonstrate their innovative and transnational character in all aspects. While each partnership must include at least one VET and one higher education organisation, they can address either both or one of these educational fields. The cooperation between VET and higher education organisations should be relevant and should benefit both sectors.

At least one of the following **outcomes** must be achieved: boosting innovation; developing a sense of initiative and entrepreneurial mind-sets, competences and skills; stimulating the flow and exchange of knowledge between higher education, VET, enterprises and research; identifying resilience-related, market needs and emerging professions.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the scoring system to accept or reject the proposals. There are three criteria with different requirements:

1) Relevance:

- Link to EU policy and initiatives
- Purpose
- EU values
- Consistency and problem-based approach
- Digital skills
- Green skills
- Resilience skills
- Deep tech skills
- Innovation
- European added value
- Education & training representation

2) Quality of the project design and implementation:

- Coherence: Consistency between activities and results
- Structure: Quality of the work programme (and its phasing)
- Methodology: use of the EU tools and skills when relevant
- Management
- Work Plan
- Quality of arrangements for the recognition and validation of qualifications
- Budget: Cost-effectiveness and allocation of appropriate resources
- Financial and Quality control measures to ensure that the project implementation is of high quality

3) Quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements:

- Configuration: composition in line with objectives
- Commitment: complementary contributions
- Involvement of Third Countries not associated to the Programme: brings added value?
- Tasks
- Collaboration/Team spirit
- Reward

4) Impact, dissemination and sustainability

- Exploitation
- Impact
- Dissemination
- Open access
- Sustainability

The scoring system for assessing the proposals within this call is specified in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Scoring system and award criteria

Criteria	Maximum points	Minimum pass points
Relevance of the project	25	13
Quality of the project design and implementation	30	16
Quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements	25	13
Impact	20	11
Total score: Maximum 100 points To be considered for funding: 1. Minimum total score 70 points AND 2. Minimum pass points per criterion		

Source: EACEA (2024)

2.8. Advantages

The advantages identified within the call refer to the following domains:

Multisectoral innovation and educational integration with the:

- Encouragement of deep collaboration between Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) institutions.
- Creation of a link between education, research, and the labor market, benefiting both sectors.
- Enhancement of the curriculum relevance across educational fields, including STEM, business, digital, environmental, and social sciences.

Expected outcomes aligned with societal needs

Since the project must aim to achieve the following outcomes indicated:

- Boosting innovation.
- Developing entrepreneurial mindsets, skills, and competences.
- Stimulating knowledge exchange among HE, VET, enterprises, and research.
- Identifying resilience-related market needs and emerging professions.

Strategic alignment with EU priorities since the proposal

- Supports EU-wide goals for: digital transformation, Green and sustainable development, resilience building, and deep technology skill development.
- Promotes European values such as equity, inclusion, sustainable development, among others.

Robust evaluation and quality assurance framework

The proposals are rigorously evaluated under a transparent **scoring system based on:**

- **Relevance** (e.g., alignment with EU priorities, digital/green/deep tech skills)
- **Project design and implementation** (e.g., methodology, cost-effectiveness)
- **Quality of partnership** (e.g., collaboration, stakeholder complementarity)
- **Impact and sustainability** (e.g., dissemination, exploitation, long-term value)

Transnational & long-term collaboration

Transnational and long-term collaboration promotes sustainable large partnerships across Europe and beyond, fostering institutional innovation through the establishment of incubators and initiatives that drive broader system-level impact.

2.9. Disadvantages

The main disadvantages found refer to

High Entry Barriers

- Complex application processes and strict evaluation criteria can be difficult for smaller institutions.
- Requirement to meet at least one specific measurable outcome adds pressure.

Demanding project requirements

The project entails demanding requirements that necessitate meticulous planning to ensure alignment with established EU tools and frameworks. These frameworks provide essential guidance for fostering entrepreneurial competencies and facilitating the recognition and transferability of qualifications across member states. Additionally, the project must adhere to rigorous quality assurance standards to guarantee credibility and consistency of outcomes. Effective execution will also depend on a well-

structured, cost-effective budget and a comprehensive work plan among the large consortium partners that clearly outlines deliverables, responsibilities, and timelines to support smooth implementation and long-term sustainability.

Coordination and administrative load

Coordination and administrative load can become significant challenges when managing collaborations across multiple partners, sectors, and countries. The complexity of aligning diverse institutional priorities, regulatory environments, and operational procedures often places considerable strain on both human and financial resources. Without robust management structures, clear communication channels, and reliable financial control systems, projects risk inefficiencies, delays, or even failure. However, such systems are not always in place or adequately resourced, making it difficult to ensure smooth coordination and accountability across the partnership.

Potential imbalance between partners

The risk of unequal contributions between Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) partners poses a significant challenge to collaborative efforts. Disparities in institutional capabilities, visibility, and leadership can lead to an imbalance in decision-making power and resource allocation.

Long term sustainability

Sustainability and scalability remain critical concerns for high-impact educational and research initiatives. While such projects often demonstrate promising short-term outcomes, their long-term viability frequently hinges on continued external funding, which may not be guaranteed. Without stable institutional or governmental support, integrating project outcomes into systemic frameworks—such as national curricula or standardized training pathways—can be challenging. As a result, successful models risk remaining isolated or short-lived, limiting their broader influence and diminishing the return on initial investment.

2.10. Duration of the project

Projects should normally last 24 (with a maximum EU grant of 1 million €) or 36 months (with a maximum EU grant of 1,5 million €).

The duration has to be chosen at the application stage, based on the objective of the project and on the type of activities planned over time.

3. Call: Erasmus+ Centres of Vocational Excellence

3.1. Brief description

This action supports the gradual creation and development of international collaboration networks of professional excellence centres.

The professional excellence centres will operate at two levels:

1. At the national level, with the participation of many local stakeholders who create capacity ecosystems for local innovation, regional development, and social inclusion, while working with professional excellence centres from other countries through international collaboration networks;
2. At the international level, bringing together professional excellence centres that share a common interest in:
 - a. specific sectors or industrial ecosystems,
 - b. innovative approaches to addressing economic and social challenges (for example, climate change, digitalization, artificial intelligence, the Sustainable Development Goals, the integration of migrants and disadvantaged groups, improving the skills of people with low qualification levels, etc.), or
 - c. innovative approaches to increase the reach, quality, and effectiveness of existing professional excellence centres.

Link: [Centres of Vocational Excellence - Erasmus+](#)

3.2. Call date

Applicants must submit their grant application by 11 June at 17:00:00 (Brussels time).

3.3. Goals

The Centres of Vocational Excellence aim at achieving the following objectives:

- to ensure high quality skills through flexible and learner-centred VET provisions that lead to quality employment and career-long opportunities, swiftly responding to the needs of an innovative, inclusive and sustainable economy as well as to societal needs
- to support and act as drivers for local and regional development, innovation and social inclusion in the context of the green and digital transitions
- to contribute to upward convergence on VET excellence, to increase the quality of VET at system level in more and more countries
- to ensure that outputs and results are taken into use and have impact beyond the project partner organisations and beyond the project period

3.4. European Commission Priorities

Link to policy: the proposal demonstrates how a transnational cooperation network of Centres of Vocational Excellence will contribute to achieve the goals of the policy priorities covered by the Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, as well as the Osnabrück Declaration

EU values: the proposal is relevant for the respect and promotion of shared EU values, such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, as well as fighting any sort of discrimination

Consistency: the extent to which the proposal addresses the objectives of the call; the goals are clearly defined, realistic and address issues relevant to the participating organisations; the extent to which the proposal delivers an adequate needs analysis

Innovation: the proposal considers state-of-the-art methods and techniques, and leads to innovative results and solutions for its field in general, or for the geographical context in which the project is implemented (e.g. content; outputs produced, working methods applied, organisations and persons involved or targeted)

Regional dimension: the proposal demonstrates its contribution to regional development and smart specialisation strategies, based on the identification of local/regional needs and challenges in each of the participating countries

Cooperation and partnerships: the extent to which the proposal adequately identifies and involves the most relevant partners, that are necessary to realise the objectives of the project, and explains how it will establish strong and enduring relationships at both local and transnational levels, between the VET community and businesses (can be represented by chambers or associations), in which interactions are reciprocal and mutually beneficial

European added value: the proposal clearly demonstrates the added value at the individual (learner and/or staff), institutional and systemic levels, generated through results that would be difficult to attain by the partners acting without European cooperation

Internationalisation: the proposal demonstrates its contribution to the international dimension of VET excellence, including the development of strategies to foster VET transnational mobility of learners and staff, as well as sustainable partnerships

Digital skills: the extent to which the proposal foresees activities related to digital skills development (e.g. skills anticipation, innovative curricula and teaching methodologies, guidance, etc.) related to the development of digital skills

Green skills: the extent to which the proposal foresees activities (e.g. skills anticipation, innovative curricula and teaching methodologies, guidance, etc.) linked to the transition to a circular and green economy

Social dimension: the proposal includes a horizontal concern throughout the various actions to address diversity and promote shared values, equality, including gender equality, and non-discrimination and social inclusion, including for people with special needs/fewer opportunities

3.5. Eligible Organizations

To be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities, if applicable) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme)
- be active in the field of vocational education and training or in the world of work

Organisations active in the field of vocational education and training or in the world of work from third countries not associated to the Programme in Regions 1 to 3 may also participate - as beneficiary or affiliated entity but not as coordinator. Organisations from other third countries not associated to the Programme may participate as associated partners.

Exception: organisations from Belarus (Region 2) are not eligible to participate in this action.

Participating organisations can be, for example (non-exhaustive list):

- VET providers
- VET provider representative organisations
- Companies, industry, other employers or sector representative organisations
- National/regional qualification authorities
- Research institutes
- Innovation agencies
- Regional development authorities
- International organisations active in the VET field

3.6. Consortium composition

The partnership must include at least 8 applicants (beneficiaries) from a minimum of 4 EU Member States, or third countries associated to the Programme.

Each EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme must include:

1. at least 1 enterprise, industry, other employers or sector representative organisation, and
2. at least 1 vocational education and training provider (at secondary and/or tertiary level)

Affiliated entities and associated partners do not count in this minimum configuration of the consortium. They cannot be the coordinating organisation.

The coordinating organisation must be from an EU Member State, or a third country associated to the Programme.

Organisations from eligible third countries not associated to the Programme from regions 1 to 3 can also participate as beneficiaries or affiliated entities, to the extent it is demonstrated that their participation brings an essential added value to the project.

Exception: organisations from Belarus (Region 2) are not eligible to participate in this action.

3.7. Characteristics

The applicant must address 3 clusters of activities (providing details on the concrete actions and deliverables). For each cluster, a minimum number of activities must be selected from the list below:

- at least 4 activities under Cluster 1 – Teaching and learning,
- at least 3 activities under Cluster 2 – Cooperation and partnership, and
- at least 2 activities under Cluster 3 – Governance and funding.
- The Clusters are described below in the section “Setting up a project”.

Vocational education and training activities, at any EQF levels from 3 to 8, including the upper-secondary level, the post-secondary non-tertiary level as well as the tertiary level (e.g. Universities of applied sciences, Polytechnic institutes, etc.) are eligible. However, applications cannot include only activities that target learners at tertiary level; if they focus on VET at post-secondary level (EQF levels 6 to 8), they must include at least one other VET qualification level between EQF levels 3 to 5, as well as a strong work-based learning component.

About the budget, this call follows a lump sum funding model. The amount of the single lump sum contribution will be determined for each grant based on the estimated budget of the action proposed by the applicant. The amount will be fixed by the granting authority on the basis of the estimated project budget, evaluation result and a funding rate of 80%.

The maximum EU grant per project is EUR 4 000 000.

Financial support to third parties in the form of grants or prizes is not allowed.

Costs for financial audits are not allowed.

3.8. Advantages

Substantial funding available: The call has an indicative budget of 400 million euros to fund 100 projects between 2021 and 2027, with yearly budget increases (e.g., from 46 million in 2021 to 58 million in 2024).

Diversity: The funded projects can be very diverse, in terms of topics, sectors, size, and geographical scope, allowing for a wide range of initiatives adapted to different contexts.

Increase in the number of selected projects: In 2024, up to 16 projects are expected to be funded, the highest number compared to previous years (e.g. 13 in 2021), offering more opportunities for participants.

Geographical coverage: Many countries are involved, both in applications (up to 63 countries in 2024) and in selected projects (32 countries in 2024), which promotes international collaboration and the exchange of good practices.

Ongoing support: The call includes funding for pilot projects, allowing new ideas to be tested before being implemented on a larger scale.

3.9. Disadvantages

High competition: Despite the budget increase, the number of applications has also grown significantly (from 84 in 2021 to 132 in 2024), increasing competition and reducing chances of success.

Complex selection process: Despite the diversity of projects, the selection process can be very rigorous, given the variety of criteria that must be met to be eligible and secure funding.

Large number of countries involved: While this can be an advantage in terms of collaboration, it can also make project coordination and management more complex, especially if partners from many countries are involved.

Prolonged evaluation time: The increase in the number of applications and projects could extend the time needed to receive a response or evaluation for the project.

3.10. Duration of the project

Projects should normally last 48 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment of the grant agreement).

4. Call: Erasmus+ FORWARD-LOOKING PROJECTS - Topic 3: Vocational Education and Training: Development of joint VET qualifications and modules

4.1. Brief description

This initiative aims to cultivate innovation, creativity, and active participation across various educational and training domains, whether within specific sectors or spanning multiple disciplines. It also seeks to nurture social entrepreneurship. A core objective of this particular topic is to facilitate the creation and implementation of joint VET qualifications and/or their constituent modules, or to enhance existing ones. This crucial step is designed to streamline the mutual recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes, thereby helping to dismantle obstacles to both professional and academic mobility within the European Union.

The overarching goals of this priority are multifaceted, contributing to several key areas. Firstly, it strives to eliminate barriers to internal mobility for individuals pursuing work or study, making it easier to recognize qualifications and learning outcomes across borders. Secondly, the initiative is dedicated to fostering the development of a highly skilled, well-qualified, and mobile workforce, which in turn creates expanded opportunities for learners, workers, and businesses alike. Lastly, by supporting these collaborative developments, the priority endeavours to enhance the overall quality, relevance, and attractiveness of Vocational Education and Training itself.

More specifically, this priority's objective is to champion the development and delivery of joint VET qualifications or individual modules that form part of a qualification, or to refine existing ones. This concerted effort is intended to significantly aid in the mutual recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes, consequently reducing impediments to work and study mobility throughout the EU. These joint qualifications and modules are expected to incorporate a work-based learning component and include a mobility window, allowing a specified number of VET learners to participate in exchanges or rotations among partner organizations. This structured mobility is vital for ensuring the recognition of the joint qualification and/or modules among all participating entities.

4.2. Call date

The submission period for this project officially opens on December 18, 2024. The deadline for proposals is May 27, 2025, with submissions required by 17:00:00, Brussels time.

4.3. Goals

This initiative aims to cultivate innovation, creativity, and active participation, as well as social entrepreneurship, across various fields of education and training, whether within specific sectors or spanning multiple disciplines.

- The goal is to support transnational cooperation projects that implement a coherent and comprehensive set of sectoral or cross-sectoral activities. These activities will either:
- Foster innovation in terms of their scope, ground-breaking methods, and practices, and/or
- Ensure a transfer of innovation across countries, policy sectors, or target groups. This approach guarantees the sustainable utilization of innovative project results at a European level and/or their adaptability to different contexts and audiences.

General Objectives

The overarching goals of these projects are as follows:

- Implementing innovative initiatives with a strong impact on education and training reforms in specific strategic policy areas.
- Contributing to the strengthening of Europe's innovation capacity by promoting innovation in education and training.
- Creating systemic change by fostering innovation at both the practical and policy levels.
- Supporting forward-looking ideas that focus on key topics and priorities at the EU level, with a clear potential to be mainstreamed in one or more sectors.
- As fully innovative, ground-breaking educational methods and practices and/or transfers of innovation, these projects aim to ensure the sustainable exploitation of innovative project results at the EU level and/or their transferability into different contexts and audiences.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of these initiatives include:

- Identifying, developing, testing, and/or assessing innovative approaches that have the potential to be widely adopted to improve education and training systems, as well as the effectiveness of policies and practices in this field.
- Launching pilot actions to test solutions and address future challenges, with the goal of creating sustainable and systemic impact.
- Supporting transnational cooperation and mutual learning on forward-looking issues among key stakeholders, empowering them to develop innovative solutions and promote the transfer of those solutions into new settings, including building the capacity of relevant stakeholders.

4.4. European Commission Priorities

The Erasmus+ Forward-Looking Projects call, particularly Topic 3, aligns with several key European Commission priorities for 2024-2029. These priorities underscore the EU's commitment to a competitive, skilled, and inclusive future:

- **A new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness:** This priority is directly addressed by the call's focus on tackling the skills and labour gaps. Developing joint VET qualifications helps to create a more responsive and skilled workforce, essential for European competitiveness and economic growth. The call also implicitly supports leading the way in digital technology by encouraging the integration of digital learning and assessment into VET programs, thereby equipping the workforce with crucial digital skills. Furthermore, by fostering innovation in VET, the call contributes to putting research and innovation at its heart
- **Supporting people, strengthening our societies and our social model:** This priority is met through the call's emphasis on promoting social fairness in the modern economy and ensuring equal opportunities for all. By developing mutually recognized VET qualifications, the project facilitates the mobility of learners and workers across Member States, reducing barriers to employment and study, and contributing to greater social inclusion and solidarity among citizens. The call also aligns with strengthening Europe's Human Capital by directly investing in the development and quality of VET.

4.5. Eligible Organizations

This project is open to a wide range of organizations, including:

- Education and training institutions
- Non-profit organizations (NPOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Private companies
- Public bodies (national, regional, local, and EGTCs)
- Research institutions, like universities
- Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

4.6. Consortium composition

To submit a proposal, a consortium must include at least 3 applicants (beneficiaries, not affiliated entities) from a minimum of 3 different EU Member States or countries associated with the Erasmus+ Program.

Eligibility Requirements for Organizations

To be eligible, all applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must meet specific criteria:

- They must be legal entities (either public or private) actively engaged in education, training, research, innovation, or the world of work. For Topic 4, "Adult Learning: Support to the Pact for Skills," these bodies must also be registered members of the Pact for Skills.
- They must be established in one of the eligible countries. This includes all EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories) and non-EU countries listed as EEA countries or those officially associated with the Erasmus+ Programme.
- Higher education institutions (HEIs) established in an Erasmus+ Programme Country must hold an ECHE certificate (Erasmus Charter for Higher Education).

Organizations from countries not associated with the Erasmus+ Programme can only participate as associated partners (not as beneficiaries or affiliated entities). However, organizations from Belarus and the Russian Federation are not eligible to participate in this action.

Specific Requirement for Topic 3

For Topic 3, "Vocational Education and Training: Development of joint VET qualifications and modules," at least 2 of the applicants (who are beneficiaries, not affiliated entities) must be VET providers offering qualification programmes at EQF ISCED level 3-4.

4.7. Characteristics

Forward-Looking Projects are large-scale initiatives designed to identify, develop, test, and/or assess innovative (policy) approaches that hold the potential to become widely adopted, thereby enhancing education and training systems. They are intended to support forward-looking ideas that address key European priorities. These projects should provide valuable input for improving education and training systems and deliver a substantial innovative effect in terms of methods and practices across all types of learning and active participation settings, ultimately strengthening Europe's social cohesion.

Here are some of their characteristics:

- **Focus on innovation and systemic impact:** These are large-scale projects designed to identify, develop, test, and/or assess innovative policy approaches in VET that have the potential to be mainstreamed and improve education and training systems across Europe. They aim to bring substantial innovative effects in terms of methods and practices.
- **Development of joint VET qualifications and modules:** The core activity involves creating new, or improving existing, transnational VET qualifications and/or modules that are part of qualifications. This specifically facilitates the mutual recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes.
- **Transnational partnerships:** Projects must be implemented by a mixed partnership of organizations, typically involving at least three partners from different EU Member States or Erasmus+ Programme Countries. For Topic 3, at least two applicants must be VET providers offering qualification programmes at EQF ISCED level 3-4. These partnerships should be based on excellence, state-of-the-art knowledge, and the capacity to innovate.
- **Work-based learning and mobility components:** The projects should ideally incorporate work-based learning and mobility activities for VET learners, to test the newly developed or adopted qualifications. This often involves exchanges of teachers and trainers among project partners.

Integration into curricula and certification: A key characteristic is the integration of joint training module(s) into VET program curricula and cooperation with qualification authorities for certification and automatic recognition of learning outcomes from mobility periods abroad.

4.8. Advantages

The development of joint VET qualifications and modules through this call offers numerous advantages:

- **Enhanced employability and mobility:** By creating mutually recognized qualifications, the projects directly contribute to removing barriers to internal mobility for work and study purposes within the EU, thereby increasing the employability of VET learners and workers across different Member States. This supports the EU level target of 12% VET mobility participation by 2030.
- **Addressing skills shortages:** The development of relevant and up-to-date VET qualifications, often aligned with identified skills needs, helps to address labor shortages in key sectors across the EU, contributing to a highly skilled and qualified workforce.
- **Improved quality and attractiveness of VET:** Through transnational cooperation and the integration of innovative practices, the call strengthens the overall quality, relevance, and

attractiveness of VET systems, making them more responsive to the evolving needs of the labour market.

- Promotion of innovation and best practices: Forward-Looking Projects foster innovation in terms of scope, ground-breaking methods, and practices, enabling the transfer of these innovations between countries or sectors, and generating systemic changes that can be adopted more widely at a European level.
- Strengthening European cooperation: These projects inherently promote deeper cooperation among VET providers, businesses, and other stakeholders across Europe, fostering mutual trust and shared understanding of VET systems.

4.9. Disadvantages

While the advantages are substantial, there can also be challenges and potential disadvantages associated with these complex projects:

- Complexity of transnational cooperation: Managing partnerships across different countries with varying legal, administrative, and educational systems can be complex, requiring significant coordination efforts and cultural understanding.
- Challenges in mutual recognition: Despite the aim, achieving full automatic recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes can still face hurdles due to differing national regulations, quality assurance frameworks, and varying interpretations of learning outcomes.
- Sustainability of project results: Ensuring that the newly developed qualifications and modules are truly integrated into national VET systems and sustained beyond the project funding period can be a challenge, requiring strong commitment from national authorities and VET providers.
- Resource intensity: Developing joint VET qualifications, implementing mobility activities, and ensuring rigorous testing and evaluation can be highly resource-intensive in terms of time, personnel, and financial investment from participating organizations.

Ensuring relevance and quality across diverse contexts: Designing qualifications that are equally relevant and of high quality across diverse national labour markets and educational contexts requires careful planning, robust needs analysis, and continuous adaptation.

4.10. Duration of the project

The duration for this project ranges between 24 and 36 months.

5. Call: Interreg NEXT MED Programme

5.1. Brief description

Interreg NEXT MED is an EU-funded program supporting transnational cooperation in the Mediterranean to address socio-economic, environmental, and governance challenges. This call focuses on green transition projects aimed at sustainability, energy efficiency, climate change adaptation, and circular economy initiatives.

Key Details:

Total EU Funding Available: €83.7 million

Eligible Countries: 15 Mediterranean nations, including EU and non-EU states.

Project Duration: 24 to 36 months.

Funding Contribution: Up to 89% of total eligible costs, with at least 11% co-financing.

Project Types:

Green Transformation Projects: Large-scale initiatives demonstrating low-carbon/climate-friendly solutions.

Eco-Youth Projects: Youth-led initiatives (max 20% of the budget).

Who Can Apply?

Partnerships must include at least three eligible countries, including one EU and one non-EU Mediterranean country.

Institutions, NGOs, businesses, and research organizations in eligible regions.

Link: <https://www.interregnextmed.eu/apply-for-funding/second-call-for-proposals/>

5.2. Call date

If the call is not open yet, please indicate what was the concrete call used to fill the report. And if you have that information, indicate the expected date that the call will open.

The Call for Green Transition Projects provides €83.7 million in European Union's funding to tackle climate challenges across the Mediterranean region.

Proposals must be submitted **by 15 April 2025 (1 pm, CET).**

5.3. Goals

The Interreg NEXT MED program aims to promote transnational cooperation in the Mediterranean region by funding projects that address key socio-economic, environmental, and governance challenges. Its main objectives include:

1. Enhancing Competitiveness & Innovation – Supporting research, technological development, and SME growth.
2. Advancing Green Transition – Promoting energy efficiency, climate change adaptation, water management, and circular economy practices.
3. Fostering Social Inclusion – Improving access to education, training, and healthcare.

4. Strengthening Governance & Cooperation – Encouraging cross-border partnerships and governance models for regional development.

The program seeks to create a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive Mediterranean through collaborative projects between EU and non-EU countries.

5.4. European Commission Priorities

The Interreg NEXT MED program aligns well with the EU Commission's 2019-2024 priorities in multiple ways:

Identification of European commission priorities

1. The European Green Deal

The program funds green transition projects, focusing on energy efficiency, climate change adaptation, water management, and circular economy solutions. Supports the decarbonization of Mediterranean economies by promoting low-carbon technologies and climate resilience. Encourages eco-youth projects, engaging young people in sustainability initiatives.

2. A Europe fit for the digital age

While not explicitly focused on digital transformation, the program supports innovation and research in sustainable technologies. Promotes the uptake of advanced technologies in green transformation projects, which may include digital solutions for energy efficiency, climate monitoring, and smart water management.

3. An economy that works for people

Boosts the competitiveness of SMEs by funding projects that create sustainable business models and green jobs. Encourages entrepreneurship and employment, especially among youth through eco-youth projects. Promotes investment in sustainable infrastructure, making the Mediterranean region more attractive for business and innovation.

4. A stronger Europe in the world

Strengthens EU leadership in climate action and sustainability through cross-border cooperation in the Mediterranean. Promotes multilateral partnerships between EU and non-EU Mediterranean countries, fostering regional stability and collaboration. Encourages shared environmental and economic goals across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

5. Promoting our European way of life

Supports inclusive development by ensuring equal access to resources, education, and healthcare in Mediterranean communities. Encourages governance models that emphasize transparency, participation, and regional cooperation. Helps reduce socio-economic inequalities by focusing on disadvantaged regions.

6. A new push for European democracy

Promotes participatory governance and community involvement, especially through the eco-youth strand. Strengthens cross-border cooperation to tackle shared challenges democratically. Encourages partnerships between civil society, local governments, and businesses, fostering greater civic engagement.

In sum, the Interreg NEXT MED program is strongly aligned with the EU's 2019-2024 priorities, particularly in climate action, sustainable economic growth, and strengthening global partnerships. While not primarily focused on digitalization or democracy, it still supports innovation, governance, and youth participation, making it a comprehensive tool for regional development and EU integration goals.

5.5. Eligible Organizations

To participate in the Interreg NEXT MED call for proposals, organizations must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the program.

1. Who Can Apply?

Applicants and project partners must be established in one of the 15 participating countries (EU Mediterranean Countries and Mediterranean Partner Countries). The minimum partnership requirement is:

- At least three (3) eligible countries, including
 - At least one (1) EU Mediterranean Country (EUMC)
 - At least one (1) Mediterranean Partner Country (MPC)

In summary, eligible organizations must have a legal presence in one of the 15 participating countries and be capable of contributing to the green transition objectives through research, innovation, policy, business support, or community engagement. Partnerships should include a mix of public and private sector actors to ensure effective project implementation and impact.

5.6. Consortium composition

The following organizations can apply as Lead Partner (Applicant) or Project Partners:

- Public authorities (national, regional, and local governments)
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Research institutions and universities
- Chambers of commerce and business support organizations
- Public or private enterprises (including SMEs) working on sustainability and green innovation
- Civil society organizations
- Associations working on environmental, social, and economic development
- International organizations with operations in eligible regions

3. Special Criteria for Eco-Youth Projects

For eco-youth projects, the partnership must include at least:

- Two organizations where the majority of staff involved in project management are aged 18-30 OR
- Two organizations with a core mission focused on youth development (with at least two years of experience in youth-related projects).

4. Funding Restrictions & Participation Rules

- A single organization can apply only once as a Lead Partner under each Specific Objective.
- There is no limitation on participation as a project partner in multiple projects.
- No more than two organizations from the same country can be part of a single project.
- Advisory Partners from non-eligible regions (within the 15 participating countries) can participate under specific conditions if their activities benefit the Mediterranean region.

5.7. Characteristics

1. Thematic Focus

Projects must address one of the four program priorities and fit within one of the nine specific objectives:

- A more competitive and smarter Mediterranean (Research, innovation, SME competitiveness)
- A greener, low-carbon, and resilient Mediterranean (Energy efficiency, climate change adaptation, water management, circular economy)
- A more social and inclusive Mediterranean (Education, training, healthcare access)
- A better cooperation governance for the Mediterranean (Cross-border governance and partnerships)

2. Types of Projects

There are two main types of projects under this call:

1. Green Transformation Projects
 - Demonstration and pilot projects for low-carbon/climate-friendly solutions.
 - Must test, scale-up, or implement innovative environmental approaches.
 - Focus on mitigating climate change and improving sustainability.
2. Eco-Youth Projects
 - Youth-led or youth-focused projects.
 - Must involve at least two youth-led organizations or organizations focused on youth development.
 - Max 20% of the total budget (€16 million).

3. Project Size and Budget

- Green Transformation Projects:
 - EU funding: €1.78M - €3.115M
 - Total eligible costs: Up to €3.5M
- Eco-Youth Projects:
 - EU funding: €623K - €1.78M
 - Total eligible costs: Up to €2M
- Co-financing:
 - EU covers up to 89% of project costs.
 - At least 11% co-financing from applicants or other public/private sources.
- At least 50% of the total budget must be used in Mediterranean Partner Countries.

4. Geographic Scope

- Projects must be implemented in one or more of the 15 eligible Mediterranean countries (EU and non-EU).
- Must involve a minimum of three partners from at least three countries, including:
 - One EU Mediterranean Country (EUMC)
 - One Mediterranean Partner Country (MPC)

5. Duration & Implementation

- Projects must last between 24 and 36 months.
- Activities should be scalable and sustainable beyond the project period.
- Focus on long-term impact and fostering regional cooperation.

6. Eligible Activities

- Research & innovation for green technologies.
- Pilot actions and testing of climate adaptation strategies.
- Training & capacity-building for sustainable practices.
- Cross-border collaboration to share best practices.
- Engagement of youth and local communities in sustainability efforts.

In sum, Interreg NEXT MED projects must be collaborative, impactful, and scalable. They should promote innovation, climate resilience, and regional cooperation while ensuring significant benefits to the Mediterranean region.

5.8. Advantages

1. Strong Financial Support
 - Up to 89% of project costs covered by EU funding.
 - Large budget (€83.7 million) supports ambitious projects.
2. International Collaboration
 - Encourages partnerships across EU and non-EU Mediterranean countries.
 - Promotes knowledge-sharing and regional integration.
3. Focus on Sustainability
 - Supports climate change mitigation, energy efficiency, circular economy, and water management.
 - Aligns with EU Green Deal and global sustainability goals.
4. Encourages Youth Participation
 - Eco-Youth strand supports youth-led initiatives.
 - Provides funding and leadership opportunities for young professionals.
5. Capacity Building and Innovation
 - Promotes technological advancements and green business models.
 - Helps organizations scale up successful pilot projects.
6. Long-Term Impact
 - Encourages sustainable economic growth and job creation.
 - Improves resilience to climate-related challenges.

5.9. Disadvantages

1. Complex Application Process
 - Requires detailed proposals, partnerships, and co-financing.
 - Strict eligibility and documentation requirements.
2. High Competition
 - Large number of applicants may reduce the chances of selection.
 - Only projects with strong, well-developed concepts are likely to succeed.
3. Co-Financing Requirement
 - Applicants must secure at least 11% of project funding from other sources.
 - Some organizations (especially small NGOs) may struggle to meet this requirement.
4. Long Implementation Timeline
 - Projects must last at least 24 months and up to 36 months.
 - Requires long-term commitment and resource allocation.
5. Geographical Restrictions
 - Only organizations from specific Mediterranean countries can apply.
 - Partnerships must include at least one EU and one non-EU partner, limiting flexibility.
6. Administrative Burden
 - Strict reporting, monitoring, and compliance requirements.
 - May require experienced project managers to handle bureaucracy.

5.10. Duration of the project

Project Duration: 24 to 36 months.

6. Call: Erasmus+ Alliances for innovation - Lot 2: Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills

6.1. Brief description

Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills aim to create new strategic approaches and cooperation for concrete skills development solutions – both in the short and the medium term – in areas implementing a major action of the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, the Pact for Skills (https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index_en).

Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills seek to tackle skills gaps on the labour market that hamper growth, innovation and competitiveness in specific sectors or areas, aiming both at short term interventions and long-term strategies. These Alliances will be implemented in the 14 industrial ecosystems identified in the New Industrial Strategy for Europe.

Link to call:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/ERASMUS-EDU-2025-PI-ALL-INNO-BLUEPRINT> (currently closed, but most probably will be published again next year)

6.2. Call date

Opening date: 05 December 2024

Deadline date: 06 March 2025

Currently closed, but will be published again next year, most probably on a similar date.

6.3. Goals

The main objective of the call is to mobilise and incentivize all relevant stakeholders to take concrete actions for the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce, by pooling efforts and setting up partnerships, also at EU level, addressing the needs of the labour market, supporting green and digital transitions as well as national, regional and local skills and growth strategies. Therefore, the deliverables of Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills, i.e. sectoral skills intelligence, skills strategies, occupational profiles, training programmes, and long-term planning, will be an important contribution to the work of the ecosystem-based large-scale partnerships that have joined the Pact for Skills.

6.4. European Commission Priorities

- A new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness
- Supporting people, strengthening our societies and our social model
- A global Europe: Leveraging our power and partnerships

6.5. Eligible Organizations

The applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities, if applicable) must be: public or private organisations established in an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme.

Organisations from third countries not associated to the Programme in Regions 1 to 3 may also participate as beneficiaries, affiliated entities or associated partners, but not as coordinator.

Organisations from other third countries not associated to the Programme can only participate as

associated partners, with the Exception of organisations from Belarus (Region 2) are not eligible to participate in this action.

6.6. Consortium composition

It must cover at least 4 EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme, involving a minimum of 8 applicants (beneficiaries, not affiliated entities).

The consortium must include at least 3 labour market actors (enterprises or companies, or representative intermediary organisations, such as chambers, trade unions or trade associations) and at least 3 education and training providers (VET and HEIs), as applicants (beneficiaries, not affiliated entities). There should be at least one HE institution and one VET provider involved as applicants (beneficiaries, not affiliated entities) in each proposal.

6.7. Characteristics

Drawing on evidence regarding skills needs with regard to occupational profiles, Blueprint Alliances support the design and delivery of transnational education & training content, as well as teaching and training methodologies, for quick takeup at regional and local level and for new occupations that are emerging. For this, Alliances should base their proposals on existing work of Centres of Vocational Excellence, of regions implementing smart specialization strategies, of European Cluster Partnerships and of Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) of the European Institute of Technology (EIT) that are active in the same industrial ecosystem.

6.8. Advantages

Proposals in this call should include the design of continuing vocational training programmes to address urgent skills needs of people in working age, as well as developments of emerging occupational profiles, related qualifications, which should cover upper and post-secondary VET levels (EQF levels 3 to 5) and tertiary levels (EQF levels 6 to 8). Furthermore, proposals should include the design of related core curricula and education and training programmes leading to those qualifications. All of the above are included to a degree in the GreenHost project, therefore this is an advantage.

6.9. Disadvantages

This call provides large-scale partnerships established under the Pact for Skills with the opportunity to support the development of sector skills strategies, which means that if the interested partnerships are not established under the Pact for Skills it is a disadvantage.

6.10. Duration of the project

Projects should normally last 24 or 36 months (extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment).

7. Call: Horizon Europe - Cluster 2 - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive society

7.1. Brief description

Cluster 2, 'Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society' aims to meet EU goals and priorities on enhancing democratic governance and citizens participation, on the safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage, and to respond to and shape multifaceted social, economic, technological and cultural transformations. Cluster 2 mobilises multidisciplinary expertise of European social sciences and humanities (SSH) for understanding fundamental contemporary transformations of society, economy, politics and culture. It aims to provide evidence-based policy options for a socially just and inclusive European green and digital transition and recovery.

Link to call: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/cluster-2-culture-creativity-and-inclusive-society_en

7.2. Call date

This call includes various sub-calls, with most of them having the following dates:

Opening: 15 May 2025

Deadline(s): 16 Sep 2025

7.3. Goals

Proposals are invited against the following three (3) destinations:

Activities contributing to the destination "Innovative Research on Democracy and Governance", will provide knowledge, data and scientifically robust recommendations to reinvigorate and defend democratic governance and improve trust in democratic institutions. In the long-term, this will contribute to help safeguard fundamental rights to empower active and inclusive citizenship. By doing so, they will also strengthen accountability, transparency, effectiveness and trustworthiness of rule of law-based institutions and policies.

Activities contributing to the destination "Innovative Research on the European Cultural Heritage and the Cultural and Creative Industries", will support research and innovation to boost sustainable growth and job creation through the cultural and creative industries. R&I actions will promote artificial intelligence for creativity and innovation, better access and engagement with cultural heritage and improve its protection, enhancement and restoration.

At the same time, through the destination "Innovative Research on Social and Economic Transformations", actions will help tackle social, economic and political inequalities, support human capital development and contribute to a comprehensive European strategy for inclusive growth. Activities will improve the understanding of how technological, climate, economic and demographic changes impact society.

7.4. European Commission Priorities

- A new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness
- Supporting people, strengthening our societies and our social model
- Protecting our democracy, upholding our values
- A global Europe: Leveraging our power and partnerships

7.5. Eligible Organizations

Any legal entity, regardless of its place of establishment, including legal entities from non associated third countries or international organisations (including international European research organisations) is eligible to participate (whether it is eligible for funding or not), provided that the conditions laid down in the Horizon Europe Regulation have been met, along with any other conditions laid down in the specific call/topic.

7.6. Consortium composition

The consortium must include at least three legal entities independent from each other and each established in a different country as follows:

- at least one independent legal entity established in a Member State;
- at least two other independent legal entities, each established in different Member States or Associated Countries.

7.7. Characteristics

Many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have an important impact on culture, creativity, and inclusive society, notably: SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), with their specific targets to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.

7.8. Advantages

The advantage of this call is that it includes so many different sub-calls (around 32 in total) in the field of culture, creativity, and inclusive societies, that it will not be difficult to find a suitable funding opportunity.

7.9. Disadvantages

According to Horizon Europe, the maximum funding rates are as follows:

- Research and innovation action: 100%
- Innovation action: 70% (except for non-profit legal entities, where a rate of up to 100% applies)
- Coordination and support action: 100%
- Programme co-fund action: between 30% and 70%
- Innovation and market deployment: 70% (except for non-profit legal entities, where a rate of up to 100% applies)
- Training and mobility action: 100%
- Pre-commercial procurement action: 100%
- Public procurement of innovative solutions action: 50% Other funding rates may be set out in the specific call/topic conditions

This means that in the cases where the funding rate is 70% (or even 30% in one extreme example), it can be challenging for some organizations to implement the project(s).

7.10. Duration of the project

Given the sub-call selected, the expected duration of the project(s) can be from a minimum 2 to a maximum of 10 years.

8. Call: Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Vocational Education and Training (VET) 2026

8.1. Brief description

Capacity building projects are international cooperation projects based on multilateral partnerships between organisations active in the field of VET in EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme, and third countries not associated to the Programme. They aim to support the relevance, accessibility, and responsiveness of VET institutions and systems in third countries not associated to the Programme as a driver of sustainable socio-economic development.

Through joint initiatives that foster cooperation across different regions of the world, this action intends to increase the capacity of VET providers - especially in the fields of management, governance, inclusion, quality assurance, and innovation - so that they are better equipped to engage with private sector/enterprises/business associations to explore employment opportunities and jointly develop responsive VET interventions. International partnerships should contribute to improving the quality of VET in the third countries not associated to the Programme, notably by reinforcing the capacities of VET staff and teachers as well as by strengthening the link between VET providers and the labour market.

Link to call: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/organisations/cooperation-among-organisations-and-institutions/capacity-building-vet> (*currently closed, but most probably will be published again next year*)

8.2. Call date

Opening date: 05 December 2024

Deadline date: 27 February 2025

Currently closed, but will be published again next year, most probably on a similar date.

8.3. Goals

It is envisaged that the capacity building projects VET contribute to the broader policy objectives that are being pursued between the European Commission and the third countries not associated to the Programme or region concerned, including Global Gateway investment packages and the development of Talent partnerships and the Talent pool as laid down in the Commission Communication on attracting skills and talent to the EU of April 2022.

In addition, the call aims to:

- Build capacity of VET providers to strengthen cooperation between private and public stakeholders in the field of vocational education and training for demand-oriented and opportunity-driven VET interventions;
- Improve the quality and responsiveness of VET to socio-economic opportunities and social developments to enhance the labour market relevance of skills provision;
- Align VET provision to local, regional and national development strategies.

8.4. European Commission Priorities

- A new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness
- Supporting people, strengthening our societies and our social model
- A global Europe: Leveraging our power and partnerships

8.5. Eligible Organizations

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities, if applicable) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies);
- be active in the VET field or in the labour market;
- and must be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e. EU Member State, third country associated to the Programme, third country not associated to the Programme from an eligible region.

The coordinator must be an organisation active in the VET field. It applies on behalf of all participating organisations involved in the project. It cannot be an affiliated entity. Organisations from third countries not associated to the Programme cannot be coordinators.

8.6. Consortium composition

The call is divided between different regions of the world (i.e. Western Balkans, Neighbourhood East, South Mediterranean countries, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Caribbean), which most of them participate in Erasmus+ as third countries.

Proposals must be submitted by a consortium of at least 4 applicants (beneficiaries, not affiliated entities) from minimum 3 eligible countries:

- at least 2 EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme (each of these participating countries must involve at least 1 organisation);
- at least 1 eligible third country not associated to the Programme (at least 2 organisations from the participating eligible third country/countries not associated to the Programme from the same region); (Organisations from different eligible regions cannot participate in the same projects. Cross-regional projects are not eligible).

The consortium must include at least one VET provider at non-tertiary education level. The number of organisations from EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme may not be higher than the number of organisations from eligible third countries not associated to the Programme.

8.7. Characteristics

In the context of this international worldwide action, project activities must focus on building and strengthening the capacities of organisations active in the field of VET principally in the third countries not associated to the Programme covered by the action.

8.8. Advantages

As it is described under 8.6. and under 8.7. this call is exceptionally addressed and focused on providing capacity building activities to specific regions of the world, with the expected participation of organizations based on the third countries of these regions. As most of these countries are not included in the European Union, this is an advantage for their organizations to have the opportunity to

participate in such a call, cooperate with organizations from EU countries, benefit and exchange good practices.

8.9. Disadvantages

On the other hand, since this call is exceptionally addressed and focused on providing capacity building activities to specific regions of the world, with the expected participation of organizations based on the third countries of these regions, it is a disadvantage for projects like GreenHost, because in our consortium we don't have participating organizations from third countries, and therefore we would not be able to apply directly in this call.

8.10. Duration of the project

Projects should normally last 24 or 36 months.

9. Call: LIFE Programme for the Environment and Climate Action

9.1. Brief description

The LIFE Programme is implemented via four sub-programmes:

- Nature and Biodiversity
- Circular Economy and Quality of Life
- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation
- Clean Energy Transition

The programme supports demonstration, best practice, coordination and support actions, capacity building, and governance projects.

This includes large scale Strategic Integrated Projects and Strategic Nature projects, which support the implementation of environmental and climate plans, as well as programmes and strategies developed at regional, multi-regional or national level.

Link to call: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en

9.2. Call date

The LIFE calls for proposals 2025 were published on 24 April.

Most deadline dates are on 23 September 2025.

But there are also some calls that require the submission of a concept note until 4 September 2025 and, if approved, the submission of full proposals until 5 March 2026.

9.3. Goals

The LIFE programme aims to

- facilitate the shift towards a sustainable, circular, energy-efficient, renewable energy-based, climate-neutral and resilient economy
- protect, restore and improve the quality of the environment, including the air, water and soil
- halt and reverse biodiversity loss
- tackle the degradation of ecosystems

9.4. European Commission Priorities

- A new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness
- Supporting people, strengthening our societies and our social model
- Sustaining our quality of life: Food security, water and nature
- A global Europe: Leveraging our power and partnerships

9.5. Eligible Organizations

To be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
 - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
 - non-EU countries (listed EEA countries and countries associated to the LIFE Programme)

9.6. Consortium composition

To be eligible in most of the sub-calls, there aren't any specific consortium limitation, but usually the consortium shall include at least one organisation actively working on the specific fields addressed (e.g. marine restoration).

9.7. Characteristics

Most topics under this call for proposals concern projects aimed to:

- develop, demonstrate and promote innovative techniques, methods and approaches 'Innovative techniques, methods and approaches' means solutions which are new when compared to the state of the art at national and sector level and which are implemented at an operational scale and under conditions that allow the achievement of the impacts set out in the award criterion 'Impact' first paragraph (see below).
- contribute to the knowledge base and to the application of best practice 'Best practice' means solutions, techniques, methods and approaches which are appropriate, cost-effective and state of the art (at national and sector level), and which are implemented at an operational scale and under conditions that allow the achievement of the impacts set out in the award criterion 'Impact' first paragraph (see below).
- support the development, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of the EU legislation and policy, including by improving governance at all levels, in particular through enhancing capacities of public and private actors and the involvement of civil society.
- catalyse the large-scale deployment of successful technical and policy related solutions for implementing the EU legislation and policy by replicating results, integrating related objectives into other policies and into public and private sector practices, mobilising investment and improving access to finance.

9.8. Advantages

For environmental organisations and other entities working in the environment and climate field, LIFE offers a series of advantages, such as to:

- Pilot new environmental technologies or methodologies
- Test solutions that contribute directly to EU Green Deal objectives
- Generate measurable, replicable results that inspire broader change
- Scale up innovative conservation and sustainability approaches
- Strengthen the visibility and credibility of your work
- Build lasting European partnerships and cross-border collaborations

9.9. Disadvantages

Most topics under this call for proposals have a maximum 60% funding rate, which may be challenging for some organizations.

9.10. Duration of the project

Project duration: between 24 and 120 months indicatively (depending on the sub-call).

10. Call: Single Market Programme

10.1. Brief description

The Single Market Programme (SMP) is the EU funding programme that supports the single market in reaching its full potential and ensures Europe's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It has EUR 4.2 billion over the period 2021-2027.

The Single Market Programme brings together crucial activities funded by several programmes active between 2014 and 2020 (COSME, European Statistical Programme (ESP), Reporting and Auditing, enhancing consumers involvement in the EU policy making in the field of financial services, Food and Feed, Consumer Programme).

Objectives of the new single market programme:

- Maintain a high level of food safety
- Provide consumers with even better protection
- Increase the competitiveness of businesses, in particular SMEs
- Improve single market governance and enforcement
- Produce and disseminate high-quality statistics
- Develop effective European standards

The programme brings many activities together under one coherent umbrella to reduce overlaps. It focuses investment where it will have most impact.

More information on the programme on the website: https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/single-market-programme/overview_en

Here all information on call for proposals: https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/single-market-programme/overview/calls-proposals_en

10.2. Call date

In December 2023, a call was published under the Single Market Programme aimed at empowering tourism SMEs, aiming at transitioning to a more sustainable and resilient ecosystem. This call for proposals will aim at equipping and empowering SMEs to transition towards more sustainable and resilient practices as prioritised in the Tourism Transition Pathway. The deadline of the call was February 21st, 2024.

Link to the call:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/smp-cosme-2023-toursme-01>

10.3. Goals

The main objective of the call **“Transitioning to a more sustainable and resilient ecosystem - empowering tourism SMEs” (SMP-COSME-2023-TOURSME-01)** is to strengthen the **competitiveness and resilience** of SMEs operating in the tourism sector. Specifically, it aims to support them in adapting to the **twin transition** (sustainability and digitalization) while encouraging innovation and cross-sectoral cooperation.

Specific objectives of the call were:

1. To collect best practices regarding resilience, digital and sustainable changes relevant to tourism SMEs in the tourism ecosystem, with a view to disseminating them amongst the tourism stakeholders, including tourism SMEs.
2. To organise specific training sessions for key tourism stakeholders on increasing resilience, sustainability (in its environmental, social and economic aspects), as well as on digitalisation as an enabler for sustainability. The purpose of this training is to enable these key stakeholders to act as multipliers, by becoming trainers and transferring the knowledge in their local ecosystems, with a view to reaching a high number of tourism SMEs.
3. To enable tailored capacity building for tourism SMEs to increase their resilience, sustainability (in its environmental, social and economic aspects), as well as on digitalisation, namely regarding tools and management strategies towards sustainability, consulting on certification, and on available funding that contribute to those goals.
4. To support SMEs in the tourism ecosystem to develop and implement new business strategies, new products and cross sectoral approaches that promote and increase resilient practices in their daily activities.

The initiatives supported under this call were expected to focus on the following **key areas** (this list is not exhaustive):

- Encouraging diversification within the tourism sector, by:
 - Introducing and applying innovative and varied business approaches;
 - Addressing the issue of seasonal demand imbalances, whether these occur over the course of the year or across different geographical areas;
 - Reaching out to diverse customer segments, including variations in client type, origin, and revenue streams;
 - Engaging with a broader network of suppliers to enrich the tourism value chain.
- Promoting regenerative tourism experiences that uphold the genuineness and uniqueness of local offerings, contribute positively to the quality of life of resident communities, and foster cultural tourism, with an emphasis on both tangible and intangible heritage.
- Providing support to rural and remote areas within the European Union, taking into account their distinctive obstacles and needs during the shift toward a more sustainable and resilient tourism model.

10.4. European Commission Priorities

The call supports key European Commission priorities by promoting transformation and resilience in the tourism sector:

- **Sustainable Prosperity & Competitiveness:** It helps tourism SMEs grow and adapt through innovation, improved skills, and greener business models, contributing to a stronger and more competitive EU economy.
- **Green & Digital Transitions:** The call encourages the adoption of digital tools and environmentally responsible practices (e.g. EU Ecolabel, EMAS), aligning with the EU's climate and digital goals.

- **Cross-Sector & Cross-Border Cooperation:** It promotes collaboration between tourism and other ecosystems (like culture, agri-food, and social economy), and supports partnerships across EU regions.
- **Resilience & Crisis Preparedness:** By empowering SMEs with training, consulting, and funding, the call strengthens the sector's ability to face future disruptions and build long-term resilience.

Therefore, the call aligns with the EU's vision of a greener, more innovative, and more inclusive economy, starting from the transformation of its tourism SMEs.

10.5. Eligible Organizations

A diverse range of organisations may apply, provided they are based in:

- One of the **EU Member States** (including Overseas Countries and Territories), or
- Countries participating in the **Single Market Programme**, such as Norway, Ukraine, Türkiye, Albania, and others.

Entities that can apply include:

- SMEs and startups operating in the tourism industry
- Business support entities (BSOs)
- Destination management organisations (DMOs)
- Universities, research centres, and training bodies
- Non-governmental organisations and civil society actors
- Local, regional, or national authorities

Self-employed individuals may also be eligible, as long as their legal status complies with the programme rules.

10.6. Consortium composition

Proposals must be presented by a **consortium** comprising between **5 and 8 entities** from a **minimum of three eligible countries**. The required consortium structure includes:

- At least **two business support organisations** from separate countries
- A minimum of **two destination management organisations**, also from different countries
- At least **one educational or research institution**

This ensures a mix of practical, territorial, and knowledge-driven stakeholders, fostering multi-dimensional cooperation.

10.7. Characteristics

A set of **mandatory activities** were requested:

A. Gather and disseminate examples of successful practices, while promoting awareness around the challenges and opportunities related to resilience, digitalisation, and sustainability within the tourism ecosystem, particularly as they affect tourism SMEs.

B. Develop and deliver capacity-building initiatives targeting key players in the tourism sector (such as business associations, destination management organisations (DMOs), and public authorities) through "train the trainer" programmes. These initiatives aim to empower intermediaries to continue raising awareness and spreading knowledge throughout the tourism ecosystem.

C. Offer customised advisory services and consulting, as well as technical assistance, to as many SMEs as possible in the relevant tourism subsectors (as defined by the NACE codes listed below under point C). The support should address their specific needs and have broad geographical reach, covering aspects such as sustainability management, digital skills, and the adoption of effective solutions already tested in EU tourism transitions (e.g., certification via Ecolabel or EMAS).

D. Set up a direct financial support scheme for tourism SMEs to help them design and implement new business ideas, launch or promote innovative products, and encourage cross-sector collaboration. This should lead to initiatives that enhance the resilience of the tourism sector and integrate it with other ecosystems like culture, agriculture and food, construction, social and proximity economy, and textiles, among others.

The estimated available call budget is EUR 8 500 000, 4 projects were expected to be funded.

10.8. Advantages

- **Funding rate:** With up to 90% of eligible costs covered by the grant (and up to 100% for financial support to third parties, such as sub-grants for SMEs), the call offers a highly advantageous financial structure. This significantly lowers the financial risk for participating organisations, making it more feasible for smaller actors and non-profits to get involved without requiring substantial co-financing.

- **Support mechanisms:** The programme goes beyond theoretical or policy-level frameworks by encouraging concrete, tailored support services for SMEs. This includes individualised mentoring, technical advice, and access to experts who can guide companies through challenges like digitalisation, sustainability certification, and innovative business planning. These services help ensure that the impact is tangible and long-lasting at the company level.

- **Dual transformation focus:** By targeting both the green transition (e.g., through sustainability certifications like the EU Ecolabel or EMAS) and the digital transformation (e.g., improving digital literacy or adopting tech solutions), the call addresses two of the most urgent and strategic priorities in the tourism industry today. It helps SMEs future-proof their operations and align with evolving market expectations and policy frameworks such as the European Green Deal and the Digital Decade strategy.

-Promotion of transnational and multi-stakeholder cooperation: The required consortium model fosters collaboration across borders and sectors, encouraging knowledge exchange, joint innovation, and shared resources among a diverse mix of actors, including business support organisations, DMOs, educational and research institutions, and public authorities. This opens the door to new partnerships and scalable pilot actions.

-Replication and scalability of successful models: One of the core goals of the call is to identify, share, and scale up best practices across Europe. This creates a multiplier effect, enabling proven initiatives to be adapted and rolled out in other regions or contexts. It also supports knowledge diffusion and contributes to building a more integrated, resilient, and innovation-driven tourism ecosystem across the EU.

10.9. Disadvantages

-Complexity in consortium setup and coordination: The call requires a consortium of at least five partners from five different eligible countries, which can be demanding in terms of administrative burden, coordination, and governance. Building a strong, balanced consortium that covers the required expertise and geographical scope, while ensuring effective collaboration and communication, can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, especially for less experienced coordinators.

-Broad scope may dilute focus: The call covers a wide range of themes—resilience, digital transformation, sustainability, cross-sector innovation, and more. While this offers flexibility, it may also lead to fragmented project designs, where activities become too generic or lack a coherent, focused narrative. Proposals that try to do “too much” might risk losing strategic clarity or fail to demonstrate depth in key areas.

-High expectations for outreach and impact: The call sets ambitious goals in terms of reaching a high number of SMEs and achieving wide geographic and sectoral coverage. While this is commendable, it may be challenging to deliver in practice, particularly for smaller consortia or those working in less-connected or rural areas. Demonstrating measurable results at this scale will require significant outreach capacity, established networks, and well-planned communication and dissemination strategies.

10.10. Duration of the project

Selected projects were expected to run for 30 to 36 months.

11. Call: European Climate Initiative - EUKI call

11.1. Brief description

European Climate Initiative – EUKI was launched by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK). The objective of the EUKI programme is to support the path towards climate neutrality in Europe by advancing the green transformation through climate action and collaboration across Europe. Projects should contribute directly (quantifiably, where possible) to the achievement of European climate goals, or deepen the understanding of EU climate and energy transformation and its instruments.

Main target groups are: Governments, municipalities, civil society, educational institutions, consumers and – if permissible under EU state aid law – enterprises.

Eligible project actions:

- Climate change mitigation: supporting the achievement of potential greenhouse gas emission savings; development of good climate-policy conditions.
- Capacity development: development of capacity at individual, organisational and systemic level, targeting public, civil society, academic institutions, business and education sectors.
- Creation of networks: projects can promote networks and climate partnerships, for instance between government institutions, municipalities, civil society, the academic community and enterprises.
- Implementing policies and measures, developing strategies and conducting feasibility studies: design, implementation and piloting of climate-policy instruments to analyse emission savings; devising practical solutions to remove barriers to energy strategies; developing geographically specific methods for the analysis and evaluation of mitigation projects.
- Awareness raising, education, media, dialogue formats, and dissemination measures

11.2. Call date

The 9th EUKI call opened on January 28th 2025, and closed on March 10th 2025.

Dates and deadlines of the 10th call are not published yet.

11.3. Goals

The overarching goal is to support the journey towards climate neutrality by 2050 by advancing the green transformation through climate action and collaboration across Europe. Projects should contribute to GHG emissions reductions and to the successful implementation of European climate policies and instruments, and must also facilitate a deeper understanding of and greater participation in the EU climate and energy transformation. Moreover, they should also contribute to strengthening civil society's role in climate action at all levels, including local and regional.

EUKI funds creative and pioneering solutions and projects at local level that are instrumental in shaping cleaner, healthier, fairer and more prosperous economies, societies and policies.

11.4. European Commission Priorities

Funded projects should relate to the 'Fit for 55' package implementation process and/or the post-2030 framework. They should also contribute to strengthening civil society's role in climate action at all levels, including local and regional, and help to promote cross-border European cooperation.

The call contributes to the European Green Deal.

11.5. Eligible Organizations

Organizations are eligible provided they are established in a European country or one of the following EU candidate countries or potential candidate countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia or Serbia.

Type of eligible organisations:

- Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
- Regional or local authority
- Non-profit enterprise
- University or other educational institution

11.6. Consortium composition

Each project must be conducted in at least two eligible countries. Only in exceptional cases is a project in only one country permitted. Bilateral and multilateral consortia have equal consideration; however, in addition to one implementer, the maximum number of implementing partners is four. In highly exceptional cases, this limit might be lifted for large projects.

The number of implementing partners should match the project's objectives, available budget, and the way responsibilities and tasks are shared.

11.7. Characteristics

While projects are international, activities can be undertaken at national, regional, or municipal level, or at multiple levels, within project countries.

Projects must address one of the following topics:

- Sustainable Economy

Under the Sustainable Economy theme, EUKI funds projects that promote climate-resilient circular economies, sustainable tourism, ethical financing approaches, support systems for green startups, and climate-related initiatives in healthcare. It also supports organizations and initiatives working to enhance economic policy frameworks.

- Carbon Removals and Sinks

The programme promotes activities such as protecting existing CO₂ storage and extracting additional CO₂ from the atmosphere. Avoiding and reducing CO₂ emissions needs to become a priority in climate action.

- Climate-Neutral Mobility

The topic of climate-neutral mobility focuses on plans and actions that promote eco-friendly transport, such as expanding electric vehicles, trains, and bike lanes. It also supports projects that help governments reduce emissions in transport and ensure a fair transition in the European car industry by combining climate action with social fairness.

- Climate Policy

Within the Climate Policy topic, EUKI supports projects that enhance local-level research, knowledge sharing, and advisory efforts, while also contributing to the development of national and EU climate policies. These projects might focus on creating climate neutrality strategies for cities and municipalities, promoting climate change awareness, or establishing cross-border networks focused on climate and energy issues.

- Energy Transition and Climate-Neutral Buildings

The energy transition and climate-neutral buildings topic supports non-investment projects that help tackle challenges in switching to clean energy and meeting EU 2030 targets. This includes things like advice on making buildings more energy-efficient and helping set up renewable energy communities.

- Just Transition

The Just Transition topic supports projects that tackle the social and economic challenges of moving toward a low-carbon future. This includes initiatives like training young people for green jobs and entrepreneurship. The goal is to reduce emissions quickly while ensuring that the transition is fair and socially inclusive.

Contributions vary from €120.000 to €1.000.000 for each selected project.

The funding distribution is peculiar: most of the project financing (>50%) must be allocated to implementing parties and implementing partners in the target countries, namely Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, including the six Western Balkan countries (POL, CZE, SVK, HUN, ROU, BUL, SVN, HRV, GRC, ALB, BIH, XK, MNE, MKD, SRB), and the Baltic countries (LVA, LTU, EST). The majority of EUKI-project funding must therefore be allocated to one target country or several target countries.

11.8. Advantages

- Supports cross-border cooperation and networking, fostering the exchange of knowledge and best practices, enhancing the effectiveness of climate policies and strategies. EUKI projects facilitate the development of skills and knowledge among stakeholders, enhancing their capacity to implement effective climate actions.
- Aligns with EU climate policies and goals: By supporting projects that contribute to the EU's climate objectives, EUKI ensures that funded initiatives are in line with broader European climate strategies, enhancing their relevance and impact.
- Provides substantial funding for non-profit climate action projects

- Encourages involvement of civil society and local authorities: EUKI promotes the active involvement of NGOs, local authorities, and other non-profit organizations in climate action, enhancing grassroots and policy-level impact.
- Two-step application (project outlines and full proposal in two different moments) may facilitate cooperation and project writing.

11.9. Disadvantages

- Competitive selection process with strict eligibility criteria: Projects must meet stringent eligibility criteria and demonstrate clear, measurable impacts on climate mitigation
- Limited Geographic Eligibility and geographical focus: Because EUKI funding prioritizes certain target countries, organizations from non-eligible countries or outside this focus area may find it harder to access support.
- Non-investment focus: EUKI only funds non-investment projects, excluding activities involving direct capital investments, which may limit the scope of some innovative solutions.

11.10. Duration of the project

The time span for projects is 18 to 29 months. The project outcome and outputs must be achieved within the proposed timeframe.

12. Call: Interreg Central Europe

12.1. Brief description

The call “Strategic call for capitalisation – Reducing the effect of borders on flows and functional linkages among central European regions” is a call under the Interreg Central Europe programme – a European Union funding programme that supports transnational cooperation; this call will be the last one under this programme for the financial period 2021-2027. The call will be launched in September 2025, but a preview of its goals and objective is already available at the time of writing this report.

The call invite organisations from across central Europe to submit transnational cooperation ideas for strategic projects for capitalisation. The overall objective of the call is to reduce the effects of borders on flows and functional linkages among central European regions, for a more competitive and resilient central Europe. In particular, strategic projects for capitalisation are to take up existing Interreg transnational and cross-border outputs and results, to meet existing and new needs and strengthen their territorial and policy impact in wider areas, also beyond border regions. They must go beyond a mere pooling or duplication of what already exists and they should further develop, improve, or adapt existing outputs and results by drawing on the experience of more projects.

With an indicative ERDF budget of €23 million, project proposals can be submitted under the following programme priorities:

- Priority 1: Cooperating for a smarter central Europe
- Priority 2: Cooperating for a greener central Europe
- Priority 3: Cooperating for a better connected central Europe
- Priority 4: Improving governance for cooperation in central Europe.

12.2. Call date

The call “Strategic call for capitalisation – Reducing the effect of borders on flows and functional linkages among central European regions” will be launched on 29 September 2025 and will close on 27th November 2025. The assessment will take place during the first half of 2026 and in the summer of 2026 the selected proposals will be announced.

More information can be found in the programme dedicated [page](#).

12.3. Goals

The overall objective of the call is “To reduce the effects of borders on flows and functional linkages among central European regions, for a more competitive and resilient central Europe”.

The call will support thematic projects that address the topics and specific objectives of the programme. In particular:

- Priority 1: Cooperating for a smarter central Europe
 - **SO 1.1: Strengthening innovation capacities in central Europe.**
Strong innovation capacities bear enormous relevance for central Europe considering its strong industrial base and the importance of sectors such as agriculture and food, or **tourism**. Innovation is also central for strengthening central Europe’s economic resilience.

Capacities for innovation need to be fostered especially in regions that are struggling with the transition to a more globalised, digitalised and green economy. Knowledge and technology transfer, especially for SMEs, is a critical need.

Potential fields to be addressed by project proposals under SO 1.1 are: green economy, bioeconomy; **cultural and creative industries and tourism**; silver economy; technology and innovation transfer to SMEs; innovative schemes for financing innovation; industry 4.0, robotisation, mechatronics, digital technologies, key enabling technologies; innovation in health (care); social innovation; interregional partnership along value chains.

- **SO 1.2: Strengthening skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship in central Europe.**

The strong industrial base of central Europe and its dependence on adequate skills underlines the strategic relevance of this specific objective. SMEs are the main providers of employment in central Europe and it is important to foster locally available human skills, especially for the transition to Industry 4.0, digitalisation and a green economy. Capacities need to be improved for an efficient entrepreneurial discovery process as well as for the preparation or updating of smart specialisation strategies. The place-based development of skills is also crucial for reducing urban-rural disparities. Overall, there is the need for a just transition process that is socially responsible.

Potential fields to be addressed by project proposals under SO 1.2 are: skills for sectors of relevance for smart specialisation (e.g. industry 4.0, digitalisation, green economy, bio-economy, silver economy, health and life sciences, **cultural and creative industries, sustainable tourism**); matching skills to labour market needs of regions in industrial and digital transition; capacity-building and institutional learning for smart specialisation; competences for innovation management in smes and entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship; counteracting regional (urban-rural) disparities of human capital and brain-drain.

- Priority 2: Cooperating for a greener central Europe

- **SO 2.1: Supporting the energy transition to climate-neutral central Europe**

Central Europe needs to speed up its performance related both to energy efficiency as well as the production and use of renewable energy to meet EU targets and climate objectives of the European Green Deal. Significant regional disparities between central European regions have to be tackled. Energy efficiency and renewable energy need to be promoted and exploited to reach wider geographical coverage.

Potential fields to be addressed by project proposals under SO 2.1 are: smart integration of carbon-neutral solutions across sectors; energy efficiency of buildings and public infrastructures; energy planning at local and regional levels; financing schemes for energy efficiency and renewable energy investments; renewable energy sources; reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from industry and other sectors; energy demand management and behavioural change; energy poverty.

- **SO 2.2: Increasing the resilience to climate change risks in central Europe**

Resilience to climate change risks is important for central Europe, especially in view of its significant environmental and socio-economic impacts. There is a need for integrated and cross-sectoral approaches to best adapt to climate change. In order to strengthen climate resilience, general approaches need to be locally adapted towards

workable and manageable, integrated solutions which can be proliferated across the entire central Europe area.

Potential fields to be addressed by project proposals under SO 2.2 are: climate change resilience and adaptation measures; resilience to weather extremes and related hazards (rainfall, floods, landslides, heat, droughts, water scarcity, wildfires etc.); socio-economic and health-related impacts of climate change; climate-proof landscape and urban planning; risk awareness, prevention and management.

o **SO 2.3: Taking circular economy forward in central Europe**

A climate-neutral, resource-efficient and competitive economy requires up-scaled circular approaches. This economic transformation has to pay attention to the fact that a circular economy will often require a re-arrangement of value chains, changes of interdependencies and the creation of new profit options. It is important that this socio-economic transformation happens across the entire territory of central Europe and does not concentrate on only a few regions.

Potential fields to be addressed by project proposals under SO 2.3 are: waste prevention and management, recycling and recovery of resources and raw materials; circular economy value chains; sustainable product design (e.g. eco-design) and product development processes; repair and re-use; clean production processes and closed loop systems; behavioural changes of producers, consumers, public buyers etc.

o **SO 2.4: Safeguarding the environment in central Europe**

The economic and environmental significance of natural assets and landscapes in central Europe calls for a coordinated valorisation and protection of biodiversity and ecosystems. There is a strong need to counteract negative effects of human action through integrated environmental management approaches.

Potential fields to be addressed by project proposals under SO 2.4 are: biodiversity conservation and recovery including urban green spaces; reduction of environmental pollution (air, water, soil, noise, light etc.) and their human health impacts; sustainable land management and landscape planning; restoration of degraded ecosystems; protection of natural heritage, ecosystems and valuable areas incl. Natura 2000 sites; integrated environmental management and sustainable use of natural resources; ecosystem services (e.g. production of food and water, clean air, recreational benefits); **sustainable tourism and the valorisation of natural heritage**

o **SO2.5: Greening urban mobility in central Europe**

A reduction of transport emissions is one of the key targets of the European Green Deal. Smart and greener urban mobility will need an integrated response. Many functional urban areas in central Europe face similar challenges when greening their mobility. The specific territorial need lies in the vast diversity of topics (e.g. pollution and congestion) that need to be addressed in an integrated approach. Furthermore, the topic does not only include different ways of mobility, but also urban as well as urban-rural logistics.

Potential fields to be addressed by project proposals under SO 2.5 are: sustainable urban mobility planning; smart traffic and mobility management, including commuting solutions; sustainable multimodal urban freight and logistic solutions (including the “last mile”); accessibility of urban public transport for everyone, especially for elderly and frail people; quality and efficiency of green, urban public transport services;

sustainable multimodal connections between urban and peri-urban areas; reduction of greenhouse gases and other air pollutants from urban transport; smart traffic and mobility management, including commuting solutions.

- **Priority 3: Cooperating for a better-connected central Europe**

- **SO 3.1 Improving transport connections of rural and peripheral regions**

The programme area is a relevant junction in Europe. This can strategically facilitate the participation in trade and increase competitiveness. Accessibility to larger transport corridors is, however, comparatively weak. There is a need to link especially peripheral regions to the nodes of the TEN-T core network corridors (CNC), to remove bottlenecks and to bridge missing transport links in order to ensure good accessibility across central Europe. Furthermore, there is the need to reduce transport emissions by 90% by 2050, which calls for smart and sustainable approaches to cross-border mobility, intermodality and the introduction of IT-supported solutions for mobility management.

Potential fields to be addressed by project proposals under SO 3.1 are: demand-responsive and flexible regional passenger transport; removal of transport barriers and bottlenecks across borders and beyond; multi-modal freight transport and logistic chains in rural and peripheral areas and connections to transport nodes; accessibility of rural and remote areas and their connectivity to main EU transport corridors; strategic regional transport and spatial planning.

- **Priority 4: Improving governance for cooperation in central Europe**

- **SO 4.1 Strengthening governance for integrated territorial development**

Central Europe is highly heterogeneous both in territorial as well as in socio-economic terms. A multitude of challenges and barriers hinders the economic, social and territorial development in central Europe, which are not necessarily bound to specific administrative units. They rather relate to areas with functional ties that are characterised by economic, social, and environmental linkages.

Addressing these territorial development challenges calls for integrated multi-level and multi-sectoral governance processes that consider functional linkages at the territorial level. There is a need to improve capacities of public authorities on all territorial levels for setting up and implementing integrated territorial development strategies. Cooperation should be encouraged within and between territories that are sharing functional ties.

Potential fields to be addressed by project proposals under SO 4.1 are: reduction of administrative barriers, better policymaking & cooperation beyond borders; multi-level & multi-sector governance among areas with functional ties beyond borders; digital governance; participatory decision-making processes (e.g. citizen involvement); integrated territorial development strategies, e.g. addressing demographic change, public services of general interest (such as health, education, social services) and **tourism and culture**.

12.4. European Commission Priorities

With the 4 priorities above mentioned, the Interreg Central Europe Strategic Call for Capitalisation aims to reduce the effects of borders on flows and functional linkages among central European regions, fostering competitiveness and resilience. This objective aligns with several of the European Commission's priorities for 2024–2029:

1.1.1. Making a Success of the Green and Digital Transitions

Priority 1 and 2 of the call (*Smart and Green Central Europe*) match this priority by promoting:

- 1.1.2. Innovation, Industry 4.0, and digitalisation
- 1.1.3. Climate resilience, renewable energy, circular economy
- 1.1.4. Green urban mobility and sustainable land use

1.1.5. A Prosperous and Competitive Europe

Call priorities around innovation capacities, skills development and SME support (Priority 1) directly support:

- 1.1.6. Economic competitiveness
- 1.1.7. Skills for industrial transition
- 1.1.8. Strengthened regional economies through innovation and entrepreneurship

1.1.9. A Stronger Europe in the World

By fostering cross-border cooperation and promoting territorial cohesion, the call contributes to:

- 1.1.10. European leadership in regional integration and cooperation
- 1.1.11. Exportable models of governance, sustainability and development

1.1.12. A More Democratic and Inclusive Europe

Priority 4 (*Improving Governance*) supports:

- 1.1.13. Multi-level governance
- 1.1.14. Citizen participation
- 1.1.15. Inclusive decision-making across borders and functional regions

1.1.16. A Union of Responsibility and Solidarity

The call tackles disparities across urban-rural and cross-border areas, aligning with:

- 1.1.17. The EU's cohesion goals
- 1.1.18. Support for vulnerable regions during transitions (economic, climate-related)

12.5. Eligible Organizations

The Interreg Central Europe programme finances transnational cooperation for the benefit of people in regions and cities of nine EU Member States: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The following organisations are eligible for funding in the Interreg CE Programme:

- National, regional and local public bodies;
- Private institutions, including private companies, having legal personality;
- International organisations acting under the national law of an EU Member State or (with restrictions) under international law (see below). International Organisations acting under international law are considered as eligible partners only when the following two conditions are met:

- Participation in the project through an operative seat located in one of the CE regions; and
- Explicit acceptance of all requirements deriving from the EU Treaty and the regulations applicable in the framework of the Interreg CE Programme.

12.6. Consortium composition

Partnerships shall consist of minimum three partners from three countries, with at least two partners located in the programme area. The number of partners shall reflect the scope of the project and be related to activities foreseen in the work plan.

The partnership should be composed of organisations:

- which were actively participating in the previous Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE or Interreg cross-border projects being capitalised (a same institution could also represent more than one of the projects to be capitalised);
- involved in the upstreaming or down streaming of existing outputs and results (e.g. organisations representing the new territories or sectors addressed, public actors in charge of policies).

Partners should own the outputs and results being capitalised or have the full rights to use them.

12.7. Characteristics

Strategic projects for capitalisation are to **take up existing Interreg transnational and cross-border outputs and results**, to meet existing and new needs and strengthen their territorial and policy impact in wider areas, also beyond border regions. They must go beyond a mere pooling or duplication of what already exists. Instead, **they should further develop, improve, or adapt existing outputs and results** by drawing on the experience of more projects.

These projects **unlock synergies, strengthen networks, boost visibility and attract political attention**, ensuring that successful ideas go further and reach wider. Above all, they must clearly show how they **add value beyond what has already been achieved**.

Focus should be on **quality over quantity**, carefully selecting only the most relevant outputs and results to address specific challenges and needs.

Capitalisation can be implemented in two different ways. Both approaches are complementary and a combination of the two in one strategic project for capitalisation is possible.



Upstreaming: Existing outputs and results are **taken up and tailored** in a way that policy makers can address border issues through new or improved territorial or thematic policies and strategies. This should happen at the most appropriate level (i.e. European, national, regional or local).



Down streaming: Existing outputs and results are tailored in a way that they can be further rolled-out at the most appropriate level. Such roll-out could be “territorial” in case the adapted outputs and results are applied in other regions facing similar issues; or “sectoral” when the adapted outputs and results are applied to other sectors than the ones initially addressed.

Capitalisation and synergies

As a minimum requirement, projects must explicitly take up existing outputs and results from:

- o At least two [Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects](#) funded under the first and second calls of the 2021–2027 programme, and
- o At least two Interreg cross-border cooperation projects (funded in the 2021-2027 period or, if relevant, in the 2014-2020 period), addressing internal central European borders.

Additionally, and if relevant to the project's scope and the overall call objective, the projects may also take up:

- o outputs and results of relevant projects funded by other programmes, such as for example: Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2014–2020, other Interreg transnational programmes, Interreg cross-border programmes at external borders of central Europe, mainstreaming programmes;
- o knowledge and tools developed under the B-Solutions initiative of the European Commission, tackling obstacles caused by internal central European borders.

Features

Projects funded under this call will be recognised as “Operations of Strategic Importance”, i.e. flagship initiatives that make a strong contribution to programme objectives and demonstrate the tangible benefits of EU cooperation.

By building on existing results from Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE and relevant cross-border projects, these projects are expected to:

- o **Scale up** proven solutions to current and emerging challenges, maximising their impact across central Europe
- o **Create synergies** and strengthen networks
- o **Add clear value** beyond what has already been achieved

As strategic projects, they will benefit from enhanced visibility and they are also expected to take an active role in communicating results, helping to showcase the value of Cohesion Policy to citizens, decision-makers and other stakeholders.

12.8. Advantages

Enhanced Visibility and Strategic Recognition: selected projects will be designated as “Operations of Strategic Importance,” elevating their profile and demonstrating the tangible benefits of European cooperation

Substantial Funding Support: with an indicative European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) budget of €23 million, projects can receive up to €1 million in funding, facilitating significant transnational initiatives

Broad Thematic Scope: the call is open to all programme priorities and specific objectives, allowing for a wide range of project topics, including innovation, energy transition, climate resilience, culture and tourism and governance

Promotion of Synergies and Network Strengthening: by focusing on capitalising existing outputs, projects are encouraged to create synergies, strengthen networks and attract political attention, ensuring that successful ideas reach wider audiences

Support for Policy Integration: projects can implement “upstreaming” (influencing policy-making) and “down streaming” (applying results in new regions or sectors), facilitating the integration of successful solutions into broader policy frameworks.

12.9. Disadvantages

- **Complex Partnership Requirements:** projects must involve at least three partners from three countries, including two from central Europe. Additionally, they must build upon outputs from at least two Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects and two cross-border cooperation projects, which can complicate partnership formation.
- **High Expectations for Value Addition:** projects are expected to go beyond merely pooling existing results; they must further develop, improve, or adapt these outputs, demonstrating clear added value. This requirement may pose challenges in project design and justification.
- **Intensive Application Process:** the emphasis on quality over quantity necessitates a thorough selection of relevant outputs and results, potentially leading to a more demanding and time-consuming application process.
- **Fixed Project Duration:** projects are expected to have a duration between 18 and 24 months. This fixed timeframe may not align with all project scopes or objectives, requiring careful planning and time management.

12.10. Duration of the project

Between 18 and 24 months

13. Call: Digital Europe Programme

13.1. Brief description

The European Commission provided the digital development of the Tourism sector with the opportunity to benefit the call DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-DATA-AI-05-DATATOURISM under the Digital Europe Programme. It aims to establish a secure and trusted common European data space for Tourism. This initiative seeks to enhance data sharing among tourism stakeholders, improve service offerings, predict tourist influxes, and promote sustainable and innovative business models.

Each project funded by the call is expected to develop the necessary infrastructure, connect local and national data ecosystems, and establish links with other sectoral data spaces, such as cultural heritage. It will also provide guidance and training to encourage stakeholder participation in data sharing.

13.2. Call date

The call was open initially with a deadline 23 January 2024, 17:00 CET with a budget of 8 million euro. It is included in the Work Programme 2025-2027 of the Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL) and expected to be launched again in this time frame (2025-2027)¹.

13.3. Goals

The objective is to maintain, further develop and expand the functionalities, services and user community of the common European data space for tourism through a range of actions that guarantee tangible added value, building on the results of the deployment action selected under the DIGITAL work programme 2023-2024. The data space for tourism aims to provide the ecosystem with access to data and to boost productivity, greening and sustainability, innovative business models and upskilling. It will provide participants with the possibility to better align offers with tourists' expectations, adapt service proposals to new tourist groups, predicting influx of tourists and allow planning of resources more efficiently, as well as to create new business opportunities and innovative solutions and practices. The data space for tourism will play a key role both for innovation in tourism services and as a new data resource for decision making, by providing available information on tourism service implementation and impacts.

13.4. European Commission Priorities

The call aligns with the European Commission's priorities for the period, but more specifically supports *the new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness*: https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029/competitiveness_en . It is also relevant to the *new era for European defence and security*: https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029/security-and-defence_en as far as it concerns data security of the Tourism sector.

More precisely, the programme is relevant to:

- Economy that works for the people
- Europe fit for the digital age.

¹ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/work-programme-2025-2027-digital-europe-programme-digital>

13.5. Eligible Organizations

To participate in this call, applicants—including both beneficiaries and affiliated entities—must meet specific eligibility criteria. They must be legal entities, **whether public or private**, and be established in one of the eligible countries. This includes all EU Member States (including their overseas countries and territories), as well as EEA countries and other nations associated with the Digital Europe Programme. Countries currently negotiating association agreements are also eligible, provided the agreement is in force before the grant is signed.

13.6. Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by: – minimum 3 independent applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from 3 different eligible countries.

13.7. Characteristics

Objective:

To develop a secure and trusted **common European data space for tourism**, enabling improved access to and reuse of data across the tourism ecosystem. The initiative aims to boost **sustainability, innovation, productivity, and skills development**, while supporting better planning and alignment of services with tourist demands.

Expected Outcomes:

- Deployment of **data space infrastructure** for tourism.
- **Interconnection of national, local, and EU-level data ecosystems.**
- Links to other **sectoral data spaces** (e.g., cultural heritage).
- **Guidance and training materials** to foster stakeholder engagement in data sharing.
- Better **interconnection, reuse, and exploitation of data.**
- Regular **monitoring and reporting** once operational.

Scope:

- Build on the blueprint from the previous preparatory action.
- Develop and deploy **pilot use cases** (e.g., accommodation data, public-private data integration).
- Engage **urban and rural stakeholders** and initiatives.
- Collaborate with the **Data Spaces Support Centre.**
- Utilize the **Simpl cloud-to-edge middleware platform** where possible.

Key Deliverables:

- Reference architecture, building blocks, and common toolboxes.
- Common **semantic standards** and **interoperability protocols.**
- **Data governance** and **business models** for sustainable operation.

13.8. Advantages

The DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-DATA-AI-05-DATATOURISM call aims to establish a secure European data space for tourism, enhancing data sharing across public and private stakeholders. It supports better service planning, resource optimisation, and innovation through the reuse of high-quality data. The initiative promotes interoperability with other sectoral data spaces, particularly cultural heritage, and encourages stakeholder engagement through training and guidance. It aligns with EU priorities on digitalisation, sustainability, and competitiveness, and builds on previous preparatory work with an expected project duration of 36 months.

13.9. Disadvantages

The DIGITAL-2023-CLOUD-DATA-AI-05-DATATOURISM call also presents several potential disadvantages and challenges that applicants should consider:

- Limited budget and high competition:

With a total budget of €8 million and an EU funding rate of only up to 50% of eligible costs, the call may not be financially accessible for smaller organizations or consortia with limited resources. Given the strategic importance of the topic, competition is likely to be high, favouring more experienced and better-resourced applicants.

- Prioritization of previous participants:

The expected call may build on preparatory actions funded in earlier work programmes. This creates a strong continuity element that may favor consortia or organizations already involved in previous related projects, putting newcomers at a disadvantage when it comes to evaluation and implementation readiness.

- Technical complexity and integration requirements:

Applicants are expected to align with complex technical frameworks, such as the Simple cloud-to-edge platform and the Data Spaces Support Centre. Meeting these integration and interoperability requirements may be a barrier for less technically advanced stakeholders.

- Co-financing requirement:

Since the EU only covers 50% of eligible costs, co-financing is mandatory, which might be a significant hurdle for public bodies, SMEs, or NGOs without strong financial backing or access to national support schemes.

13.10. Duration of the project

For the call that closed in December 2024, the expected project duration was 36 months. It can be assumed that future calls will continue to set a similar timeframe as a standard criterion.

14. Call: Erasmus+ Teacher Academies

14.1. Brief description

The Erasmus+ Teacher Academies aim to facilitate networking, knowledge sharing, mobility and provide teachers and trainers with learning opportunities at all phases of teachers' and trainers' careers by promoting close cooperation between organisations active in initial and continuing teacher education and training, complement other work done in achieving the Education Area, and help transfer the results to national and regional policy making and eventually to teacher education and support for schools.

They are to build on the innovations and effective practice that exists within national teacher education and European cooperation and develop them further. Specific attention is to be paid to dissemination and exploitation of effective practice across countries and teacher education providers, and to ensure feedback and impact also at policy level.

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/ERASMUS-EDU-2025-PEX-TEACH-ACA?order=ASC&pageNumber=3&pageSize=50&sortBy=deadlineDate&isExactMatch=true&status=31094501,31094502>

14.2. Call date

Opening date: 05 December 2024

Deadline date: 26 March 2025 at 17:00:00 (Brussels time)

14.3. Goals

The overall objective of this action is to create European partnerships of teacher education institutions and training providers to set up Teacher Academies that will develop European and international outlook in teacher education.

These Academies aim to develop teacher education in line with the EU's priorities in education policy and contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the European Education Area. The action focuses on networking, mobility and innovative methods, and will also embrace multilingualism, language awareness and cultural diversity topics

The Erasmus+ Teacher Academies have the following objectives:

First of all, to contribute to the improvement of teacher education policies and practices in Europe by creating networks and communities of practice on teacher education that bring together providers of initial teacher education (preservice education for future teachers) and providers of continuing professional development (in-service), other relevant actors such as teacher associations, ministries and stakeholders to develop and test strategies and programmes for professional learning that is effective, accessible and transferable to other contexts.

Furthermore, to develop and test jointly different models of mobility (virtual, physical and blended) in initial teacher education and as part of teachers' continuous professional development to enhance the quality and number of mobility, as well as to make mobility an integral part of teacher education provision in Europe.

Moreover, to develop sustainable collaboration between teacher education providers with an impact on the quality of teacher education in Europe and with a view to inform teacher education policies at European and national levels.

Lastly, to enhance the European dimension and internationalisation of teacher education through innovative and practical collaboration with teacher educators and teachers in other European countries and by sharing experiences for the further development of teacher education in Europe.

14.4. European Commission Priorities

The Erasmus+ Teacher Academies initiative supports teacher education (both initial and continuous professional development) and aims to create communities of practice and collaboration across Europe. When identifying the European Commission (EC) priorities that align with this initiative, we can refer to the EC's strategic priorities and how they relate to education and training.

Here are key European Commission priorities that can be directly applied to the Erasmus+ Teacher Academies project:

A) European Education Area

Relevance to Erasmus+ Teacher Academies:

The creation of the European Education Area by 2025 is a central EC priority. It envisions that learning, studying, and doing research should not be hindered by borders in Europe.

Erasmus+ Teacher Academies contribute to this by promoting cross-border cooperation, mobility, and recognition of qualifications in teacher education.

B) Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027)

Relevance to Erasmus+ Teacher Academies:

Supports digital transformation in education and training.

Erasmus+ Teacher Academies promote digital skills for teachers, including the use of digital tools for teaching and professional development.

C) European Green Deal

Relevance to Erasmus+ Teacher Academies:

Encourages sustainability education and environmental awareness.

The Academies can integrate education for sustainable development (ESD) in teacher training, preparing educators to teach environmental responsibility and climate change awareness.

D) Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture

Relevance to Erasmus+ Teacher Academies:

Promotes intercultural understanding and common European values.

Through international cooperation and mobility, the Teacher Academies support European identity, values, and cultural diversity in teacher training programs.

E) Social Inclusion and Equity in Education

Relevance to Erasmus+ Teacher Academies:

Encourages access to quality education for all, regardless of background.

The Academies can focus on inclusive education, addressing the needs of students from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds.

F) Improving Quality and Innovation in Teacher Education

Relevance to Erasmus+ Teacher Academies:

Supports the professional development of teachers and education staff.

The Academies foster innovation in pedagogy, peer learning, and research-based practices to improve teaching quality.

14.5. Eligible Organizations

Who can apply? Any participating organisation established in an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme can be the applicant/coordinator. This organisation applies on behalf of all participating organisations involved in the project. For Partnerships in the fields of education and training or youth submitted by European NGOs and managed by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), the applicant in order to be eligible, applicant organisations must have been legally established at least 2 years before the application deadline.

Which types of organisations are eligible to participate in the project? Any public or private organisation, established in an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme or in any third country not associated to the Programme in regions 1 to 3 can participate in a Cooperation Partnership. Exception: organisations from Belarus (Region 2) are not eligible to participate in this action. Organisations established in EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme can either participate as the coordinator of the project or as a partner organisation. Organisations in third countries not associated to the Programme cannot participate as project coordinators. Irrespective of the field impacted by the project, Cooperation Partnerships are open to any type of organisation active in any field of education, training, youth, sport or other socio-economic sectors as well as to organisations carrying out activities that are transversal to different fields (e.g., local, regional and national authorities, recognition and validation centres, chambers of commerce, trade organisations, guidance centres, cultural and sport organisations). Depending on the priority and the objectives addressed by the project, Cooperation Partnerships should involve the most appropriate and diverse range of partners in order to benefit from their different experiences, profiles and specific expertise and to produce relevant and high quality project results.

Participation of associated partner organisations: In addition to the organisations formally participating in the project (the coordinator and partner organisations), Cooperation Partnerships may also involve other partners from the public or private sector that contribute to the implementation of specific project tasks/activities or support the promotion and sustainability of the project. Within an Erasmus+ project, these partners will be called “associated partners”. For eligibility and contractual management aspects they are not considered to be project partners, and they do not receive any

funding from the Programme as part of the project. However, in order to understand their role within the partnership and have a global picture about the proposal, their involvement in the project and in different activities needs to be clearly described.

14.6. Consortium composition

A Cooperation Partnership is a transnational project and must involve at least three organisations from three different EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme. There is no maximum number of participating organisations in one partnership. All participating organisations must be identified at the time of applying for a grant. For applications submitted to National Agencies in the fields of school education, vocational education and training, adult education and youth, the same organisation (one OID) cannot be involved in more than 10 applications overall per deadline, either as applicant or partner. As a general rule, Cooperation Partnerships target the cooperation between organisations established in EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme. However, organisations from third countries not associated to the Programme can be involved as partners (not as applicants), if their participation brings an essential added value to the project and as long as the minimum participation from three organisations from three different EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme is fulfilled.

14.7. Characteristics

Cooperation Partnerships aim to enhance the quality of work, activities, and practices within involved organisations and institutions by encouraging openness to new actors, including those not traditionally part of a specific sector. These partnerships also seek to build the capacity of organisations to operate transnationally and collaborate across different sectors. They address shared needs and priorities in the fields of education, training, youth, and sport, while fostering transformation and change at individual, organisational, or sectoral levels. The goal is to drive improvements and introduce new approaches, tailored to the specific context of each participating organisation.

14.8. Advantages

A) Increased Participation and Accessibility

Empowers adults, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to engage in learning. Helps close skills gaps and address labour market shortages. Builds on frameworks like individual learning accounts, validation, and guidance.

B) Flexible and High-Quality Learning Opportunities

Supports development of blended and digital learning, making education more adaptable. Encourages validation of informal/non-formal learning, including micro-credentials. Promotes lifelong learning in formats suited to adult lifestyles.

C) Community and Social Impact

Strengthens local learning centres and community-based spaces (libraries, museums, NGOs). Promotes social inclusion, civic engagement, and community resilience. Encourages cross-sector collaboration for broader community development.

D) Upskilling and Reskilling

Focuses on low-skilled adults, providing clear pathways for competence and career growth. Supports guidance and motivation strategies tailored to individual learner needs.

E) Improved Educator Competences

Enhances the digital and green skills of adult educators. Promotes innovation in teaching methods, including tailored and inclusive approaches. Empowers educators to address diverse learner backgrounds effectively.

F) Intergenerational and European Learning

Promotes intergenerational learning to foster understanding across age groups. Strengthens European identity and understanding of EU values.

G) Quality Assurance

Develops mechanisms to track learning progress and the effectiveness of adult education. Encourages evidence-based improvements in adult learning provision.

14.9. Disadvantages

A) Digital Divide

Digital and blended learning solutions may **exclude digitally illiterate** adults or those without access to technology. Risk of increased inequality if digital infrastructure is lacking in certain regions.

B) Complex Implementation

Creating **tailored learning paths**, validation mechanisms, and outreach strategies requires **significant resources and coordination**. Smaller organisations or underfunded learning centres may struggle with implementation.

C) Recognition Issues

Informal and non-formal learning and **micro-credentials may lack universal recognition**, limiting their impact in employment or formal education.

D) Educator Workload and Training

Transitioning to **innovative and personalised methods** increases the pressure on educators. Not all adult educators may be ready or equipped to teach for sustainability or using advanced digital tools.

E) Sustainability of Community Learning Spaces

Funding and long-term sustainability of local learning centres and community partnerships can be a challenge. Dependence on temporary project funding can limit long-term impact.

F) Motivation and Outreach

Even with flexible offerings, **motivating adult learners**—especially those with negative past learning experiences—remains a key barrier. Outreach strategies may fail to reach the most marginalized groups without targeted support.

G) Monitoring and Evaluation Complexity

Developing and applying **quality assurance frameworks** requires technical expertise and consistent data collection. Tracking long-term impact on learners may be difficult.

14.10. Duration of the project

Duration of project: The duration has to be chosen at application stage, based on the objectives of the project and on the type of activities planned over time. The duration of a Cooperation Partnership may be extended, upon justified request by the beneficiary and with the agreement of the National or Executive Agency, (provided that the total duration does not exceed 36 months). In such a case, the total grant will not change.

15. Call: Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills (implementing the 'Blueprint')

15.1. Brief description

The Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills aim to create new strategic approaches and cooperation for concrete skills development solutions and tackle skills gaps in the labour market that hamper growth. These calls are integrated on Alliances for Innovation.

The **Alliances for Innovation** aim to strengthen Europe's innovation capacity by boosting innovation through **cooperation and flow of knowledge** among **higher education, vocational education and training** (both initial and continuous), and the **broader socio-economic environment**, including research.

They also aim to boost the provision of new skills and address skills mismatches by designing and creating new curricula for **higher education (HE) and vocational education and training (VET)**, supporting the development of a sense of initiative and entrepreneurial mind-sets in the EU.

These partnerships shall implement a coherent and comprehensive set of **sectoral or cross-sectoral** activities, which should be adaptable to future knowledge developments across the EU.

To boost innovation, the focus will be on **talent and skills development**. Firstly, digital competence has become increasingly important in all job profiles across the entire labor market. Secondly, the transition to a circular and greener economy needs to be underpinned by changes to qualifications and national education and training curricula to meet emerging professional needs for **green skills** and **sustainable development**. Thirdly, the **twin digital and green transition** requires an accelerated adoption of new technologies, in the highly innovative deep tech domains, across all sectors of our economy and society.

The industrial ecosystem the call is addressed to is: Agrifood; Aerospace & Defense; Automotive; Construction; Cultural & creative; Digital; Energy intensive industries; Health; Microelectronics; Proximity and social economy; Renewable energy; Retail; Textile; Tourism; Other.

By the characteristics of this working group, we could be acting in the ecosystems: Agrifood; Cultural & creative; Digital; Proximity and social economy; and Tourism.

Links to the call:

https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/stakeholders-and-business/funding-opportunities/alliances-sectoral-cooperation-skills-implementing-blueprint_en

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/ERASMUS-EDU-2023-PI-ALL-INNO-BLUEPRINT?isExactMatch=true&status=31094501,31094502,31094503&frameworkProgramme=43353764&callIdentifier=ERASMUS-EDU-2023-PI-ALL-INNO&order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=startDate>

15.2. Call date

The call is closed. The last call happened between 05 December 2024 and 06 March 2025.

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/ERASMUS-EDU-2025-PI-ALL-INNO-BLUEPRINT>

Calls for Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills (implementing the 'Blueprint') are being opened every year.

15.3. Goals

Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills aim to create new strategic approaches and cooperation for concrete skills development solutions – both in the short and the medium term – in areas implementing a major action of the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, the Pact for Skills.

The main objective of the Pact is to mobilise and incentivize all relevant stakeholders to take concrete actions for the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce, by pooling efforts and setting up partnerships, also at EU level addressing the needs of the labour market, supporting green and digital transitions as well as national, regional and local skills and growth strategies.

Therefore, in Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills the deliverables will be an important contribution to the work of the ecosystem-based large-scale partnerships that have joined the Pact for Skills, developing:

- sectoral skills intelligence,
- skills strategies,
- occupational profiles,
- training programs, and
- long-term planning.

15.4. European Commission Priorities

Considering the ecosystems where we could be acting in (Agrifood; Cultural & creative; Digital; Proximity and Social Economy; and Tourism), the European Commission priorities that can be applied to the call are:

Enhance businesses competitiveness, making them easier and faster: reducing innovation gaps by helping companies to implement the digital transformation on their processes.

Working on the goals set out in the European Green Deal: defining strategies for companies to reduce their carbon emission, seeking the target of European Climate Law for 2040 of reducing 90% of carbon-emission.

Work towards a more circular and resilient economy: promoting approaches to shift to a more sustainable pattern of production and consumption, retaining the value of resources in our economy for longer.

Boost productivity with digital tech diffusion: increasing productivity through diffusion of digital technologies, including IA, namely in the businesses of catering and hospitality.

Tackle the skills and labour gaps: improve people's careers and businesses competitiveness, along with union skills initiative (https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/union-skills_en), building skills for quality lives and jobs.

Facts about union skills initiative:

<https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/attachment/880647/Factsheet%20Union%20of%20Skills.pdf>

Therefore, this call can be aligned with European Green Deal, Economy that works for people and Europe fit for the digital age goals, since the it can cover issues of business competitiveness, digital transformation, climate change, skills, careers and quality of lives and jobs.

15.5. Eligible Organizations

The following organizations may participate as applicants (coordinator and full partners) or affiliated partners under Lot 2-Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills (Blueprint), provided that they are participants in extensive skills partnerships under the Pact for Skills. They may be legally recognized governmental or private entities based in an EU member state or third country connected to the program:

- Higher education institutions
- VET providers
- Networks of VET providers
- Small and medium-sized or large enterprises (including social enterprises)
- Research institutes
- Non-governmental organisations
- Public bodies at local, regional or national level
- Organisations active in education, training and youth
- Intermediaries that represent education, training or youth organisations or enterprises
- Accreditation, certification, recognition or qualification bodies
- Chambers of commerce, industry or labour, chambers of skilled crafts
- European or national social partners
- Hospitals or other care institutions, including long-term care
- Authorities responsible for education, training or employment at regional or national level
- Employment services
- National statistics offices
- Economic development agencies
- Sectoral or professional associations
- Sector skills councils
- Bodies providing career guidance, professional counselling, information services and employment services

In addition, the coordinator must be coordinating an ecosystem-based large-scale skills partnership under the Pact for Skills.

Higher education institutions established in an EU Member State or a third country associated to the Programme must hold a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE).

15.6. Consortium composition

Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills (Blueprint) must have at least 12 applicants (coordinator and full partners) and span at least 8 EU Member States or third countries connected to the program. The consortium must have at least five education and training providers (VET and HEIs) as applicants (coordinator and full partners) and at least five labour market actors (businesses or companies, or

representative intermediary organizations like chambers, trade unions, or trade associations). Each proposal should include a minimum of one HE institution and one VET provider as applicants (coordinator and full partners). The minimum qualifying requirements for the consortium composition do not apply to affiliated firms.

15.7. Characteristics

This initiative is crucial for upskilling Europe's workforce and ensuring long-term competitiveness. The main goal of this call is to strengthen Europe's innovation capacity by fostering cooperation between higher education (HE), vocational education and training (VET), and industry to address skills gaps and mismatches in key industrial sectors. The key goals are:

1. Boost innovation through knowledge flow between education, training, and industry;
2. Develop new curricula for HE and VET to meet emerging skills needs (digital, green, deep tech);
3. Support the Pact for Skills under the European Skills Agenda, promoting large-scale sectoral partnerships;
4. Reduce skills shortages by aligning education with labor market demands.

The priority sectors are Mobility-Transport-Automotive, Textile, Renewable Energy, Electronics, Retail, Construction, Aerospace and Defence and Low-carbon Energy Intensive Industries. The project activities involve strategies such as analyze labor market needs, develop a sectoral skills strategy for the ecosystem, design new VET & HE qualifications, create modular, flexible training programs (including work-based learning), pilot new training programs, ensure quality assurance and develop a long-term action plan for sustainability.

The expected Impacts are to strengthen industry-education collaboration, to reduce skills mismatches in key sectors and contribute to the European Green Deal, Digital Transition, and Industrial Strategy.

15.8. Advantages

The advantages of this call are:

- Promotes the implementation of a coherent and comprehensive set of sectoral or cross-sectoral activities, which should be adaptable to future knowledge developments across the EU;
- The consortium includes at least five labour market actors (enterprises or companies, or representative intermediary organisations, such as chambers, trade unions or trade associations) and at least five education and training providers giving (VET and HEI), encouraging a link between education and labour market;
- Promotes European values such as inclusion, equity, diversity and sustainable development;
- Identifies tourism as a high priorities intervention sector.
- Boost innovation;
- Stimulates knowledge exchange between HE, VET, enterprises, and research;
- Promotes sustainable large partnerships across Europe, fostering institutional innovation.

15.9. Disadvantages

Main disadvantages refer to:

- The consortium should have at least 12 partners, which can bring some challenges to teamwork and to communication between partners during the project;
- Since the application processes can be complex and strict evaluation criteria it may be difficult for smaller institutions;
- The requirements of the project are demanding. Despite all EU requirements, the project must have quality assurance standards to guarantee credibility and consistency of the outcomes. The planning and development of the project has to be very strict;
- Long term sustainability and viability after the project funding.

15.10. Duration of the project

Projects should last 48 months, although extensions are possible.

16. Call: Horizon Europe – Cluster 5: Climate, Energy and Mobility

16.1. Brief description

HORIZON-CL5-2026-02-D4-02: Smarter buildings as part of the energy system for increased efficiency and flexibility – Societal Readiness Pilot

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-1-general-introduction_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf

https://sciencebusiness.net/sites/default/files/inline-files/HORIZON-CL5_WP%202025_PC%20version_2024-04-29.pdf

The overarching driver for this cluster is to accelerate the twin green and digital transitions and associated transformation of our economy, industry and society with a view to achieving climate neutrality in Europe by 2050. This encompasses the transition to greenhouse gas neutrality of the energy and mobility sectors by 2050 at the latest (as well as that of other sectors not covered by this cluster), while boosting their competitiveness, resilience, and utility for citizens and society. Europe has been at the forefront of climate science and is committed to keep delivering the knowledge for enabling efficient pathways and just transitions to climate neutrality.

Activities of this work programme support the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [1]. By putting research and innovation at the heart of our economy, the EU aims to create more jobs and improve the competitiveness of its industry. On this basis, activities of this work programme will support the European Commission's Clean Industrial Deal, a more circular and resilient economy, as well as enhanced climate adaptation, preparedness and solidarity. This will finally contribute to sustaining our quality of life and a strengthening of European societies and their social models.

Cluster 5 supports the EU's strategic objectives through activities included in this work programme and through the support of Institutional European Partnerships [2] which are implemented through dedicated structures. Although the latter activities are not included in this work programme, it is of great importance to maximise synergy and coherence between activities regardless of their implementation mode [3]. Cluster 5 contributes also to the Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET Plan) objectives and its implementation working groups.

Activities in this work programme will contribute to all Key Strategic Orientations (KSOs) of the Strategic Plan:

The green transition: Horizon Europe R&I activities must support Europe to become the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and to tackle biodiversity loss and pollution. At least 35% of Horizon Europe's resources are committed to be spent on climate action and 10% for 2025-2027 on biodiversity action.

The digital transition: Research to support the digital transition is key to Europe's competitiveness and open strategic autonomy, and to setting human-centred standards. It is also key to achieving the green transition. In 2021-2027, it is agreed to invest at least EUR 13 billion from Horizon Europe in core digital technologies.

A more resilient, competitive, inclusive and democratic Europe: Europe's democratic values and principles need a strong foundation so they can be promoted globally. Horizon Europe research

activities will help provide this foundation. This includes research on civil security, on a fair and environmentally friendly economic model, on health and wellbeing and on democratic participation.

[1] Activities in this cluster will contribute to multiple SDGs, with the most direct impact on SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). In addition, SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), and SDG 12 (Responsible production and consumption) will be positively impacted.

[2] Clean Hydrogen, Transforming Europe's rail system, Integrated Air Traffic Management, Clean Aviation

[3] Activities specifically targeting fuel cells and hydrogen are primarily supported through calls for proposals of the European Partnership on Clean Hydrogen. However, in justified cases and in line with topic descriptions, specific aspects of hydrogen and fuel cells can be supported outside of the Clean Hydrogen Partnership

16.2. Call date

If the call is not open yet, please indicate what was the concrete call used to fill the report. And if you have that information, indicate the expected date that the call will open.

The announcement of opening of the Calls will be in 2026

HORIZON-CL5-2026-02-D3-20: Innovative tools and services to manage and empower energy communities

HORIZON-CL5-2026-02-D4-02: Smarter buildings as part of the energy system for increased efficiency and flexibility – Societal Readiness Pilot

16.3. Goals

HORIZON-CL5-2026-02-D4-02: Smarter buildings as part of the energy system for increased efficiency and flexibility – Societal Readiness Pilot

Call: Cluster 5 Call 02-2026 (WP 2025)	
Specific conditions	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 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 12.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions

<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply: The page limit is extended by two pages to 47.
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6-8 by the end of the project – see General Annex B. Activities may start at any TRL.
<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). 11 .

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

- Measurable reduction in buildings' energy demand together with a reduced gap between their as-designed and as-built energy performance;
- Measurable increase in the number of building typologies with smart grid connected renewable energy sources (RES) and energy storage together with increased flexibility in grid/network management and operations;
- Measurable enhancement of the smart readiness of buildings as rated by the Smart Readiness Indicator and/or other relevant building rating systems;
- Improved responsiveness by the relevant stakeholders to the needs and concerns of users from a diversity of social groups, including vulnerable and disadvantaged ones, involved in or potentially affected by the smart buildings, thereby increasing the potential for beneficial societal uptake and building trust in outcomes.

Scope: The construction sector and the building subsector remain among the least digitised. Smart buildings can contribute to reducing energy demand, curbing operational CO2 emissions, integrating RES and enhancing grid flexibility through optimised energy usage. At the same time, it is essential that smart buildings are flexible and adaptive to changing needs and usage patterns and are user-friendly to encourage widespread adoption of these technologies by grid operators, construction professionals, building facility managers and users. Furthermore, to ensure the societal benefits of the smart building technologies there is a need for increased user knowledge, acceptance and satisfaction.

Proposals are expected to address all of the following:

- Develop solutions that enhance the smartness of buildings by using and facilitate upgrading existing Building Management Systems (BMS) and/or other technical equipment;
- Ensure that the proposed solutions are user-friendly and provide the expected indoor environment quality, as well as user satisfaction and occupant comfort;

- Demonstrate the proposed solutions in at least three pilots. These pilots should collectively cover at least three different climatic zones, three different building types (residential, tertiary etc.), and three different technical building systems;
- Develop a methodology to measure the achieved energy demand reduction, increased flexibility in the grid, and enhanced interoperability, compared to current best practices;
- Investigate the cost-effectiveness and replicability of the proposed solutions.

This topic is a Societal-Readiness pilot:

- Proposals must follow the specific requirements applying to the Societal readiness pilot, as described in the introduction of the Horizon Europe Main Work Programme 2025 for Climate, Energy and Mobility. They entail the use of an interdisciplinary approach to deepening consideration and responsiveness of research and innovation activities to societal needs and concerns.
- This topic requires effective contribution of the relevant SSH expertise, including the involvement of SSH experts in the consortium, to meaningfully support Societal Readiness. Specifically, SSH expertise is expected to facilitate the socio-technological interface and enable the design of project objectives with Societal Readiness related activities.

^[1] This [decision](#) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf

16.4. European Commission Priorities

The keys activities on this cluster are related with green and digital transition. Therefore, considering the green transition goal of Europe to become the world’s first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and to tackle biodiversity loss and pollution, it is aligned with the following EC priorities: (1) Build a new Clean Industrial Deal; and (2) Boost climate adaptation, preparedness and solidarity.

For the goal of digital transition to Europe to increase competitiveness and open strategic autonomy, it is aligned with the EC priorities: (1) Boost productivity with digital tech diffusion; (2) Make business easier and faster; and (3) Tackle the skills and labour gaps.

16.5. Eligible Organizations

All established entities in EU.

16.6. Consortium composition

Not exactly stated. 2026 for info.

16.7. Characteristics

This is a Horizon Innovation Action aiming to pilot smart, energy-efficient, and flexible building systems that are technologically advanced; demonstrably effective in real-world diverse conditions; cost-effective and scalable; and, critically, aligned with societal needs and trust, leveraging SSH insights. The proposals should ensure pilots across climates, robust measurement frameworks, user-centered design, cost-benefit analyses, and strong SSH integration.

16.8. Advantages

This program offers significant opportunities for advancing smart, energy-efficient buildings while ensuring societal acceptance.

This call presents numerous advantages:

- Strong Alignment with EU Green & Digital Transition Goals, as it supports Europe's 2050 climate neutrality target and the Paris Agreement and contributes to multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including clean energy (SDG 7), sustainable cities (SDG 11), and climate action (SDG 13);
- High societal impact and inclusivity, as it focuses on societal readiness, ensuring solutions are user-friendly and accessible to diverse groups, including vulnerable populations and requires Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) integration, improving public acceptance and trust in smart building technologies;
- Financial Assistance and funding, with up to €4 million in EU funding per project (€12 million total budget) and a payment mechanism that makes it easier for participants to manage their budgets;
- Promotes digitalization as it addresses the low digitization of the construction sector by integrating smart grids, renewable energy sources and energy storage;
- Encourages cost-effective, scalable solutions that can be replicated across Europe and supports job creation and competitiveness in the green and digital economy.

16.9. Disadvantages

Although it offers numerous advantages, the complexity of consortium requirements, competitive funding, and real-world implementation challenges could pose some barriers.

In this call we can also find some disadvantages:

- It requires high complexity and interdisciplinary, as it is needed strong collaboration between all the partners and researchers, which may complicate consortium formation;
- Robust measurement techniques are needed for grid flexibility and energy savings, which calls for more experience;
- It will be more difficult for smaller players to compete with high-quality offers from big consortia because with a €12 million budget and about €4 million per project, only three to four projects are anticipated to receive funding;
- Real-world impact may be limited by market and regulatory obstacles (such as antiquated building rules and slower industry acceptance);
- Success relies on post-project commercialization and policy support, which are not guaranteed.

16.10. Duration of the project

Usually, from 36 to 48 months.

17. Conclusions

All the EU funding programs represent a transformative approach to addressing Europe's most pressing challenges—from digital and green transitions to labour market evolution and social inclusion. By fostering cross-sector collaboration between education, industry, and research, these initiatives create a dynamic ecosystem where knowledge, skills, and innovation thrive.

The programs serve as a cornerstone, uniting higher education, vocational and educational training, and businesses to develop future-proof curricula, joint qualifications, and work-based learning models. These efforts not only enhance workforce mobility and recognition of skills across borders but also empower learners and professionals to navigate the twin digital and green transitions with confidence.

Some calls amplify the impact by investing in sustainability, digital transformation, and inclusive growth. Together, they form a cohesive strategy to bridge skills gaps in key sectors (e.g., agrifood, digital, tourism) through targeted alliances, to accelerate deep tech adoption (AI, renewable energy, circular economy) to boost competitiveness and to strengthen transnational cooperation, reducing barriers to mobility and fostering regional resilience.

As Europe moves toward climate neutrality by 2050 and a digitally empowered society, these programs provide the tools and partnerships needed to build a skilled, innovative, and sustainable future. By aligning education with labour market demands and prioritizing social equity and environmental resilience, the EU solidifies its position as a global leader in inclusive and forward-thinking development.

The path forward is clear: continued investment in collaborative innovation, lifelong learning, and cross-border networks will ensure that Europe remains at the forefront of economic and societal progress. Stakeholders across sectors are encouraged to engage with these opportunities, leveraging EU funding to drive meaningful change and long-term prosperity.

Considering this agenda, the EU calls presented, and the consortium characteristics it seems more indicated for the proposal of the innovation project the calls related to the Alliances for Innovation because they aim to strengthen Europe's innovation capacity by boosting innovation through cooperation and flow of knowledge among higher education, vocational education and training (both initial and continuous), and the broader socio-economic environment, including research. Moreover, Horizon Europe Cluster 2 was also selected since this call aims to mobilize multidisciplinary expertise on social sciences and Humanities. Specifically, the calls considered more suitable were:

- **Lot 1: Alliances for Education and Enterprises** aim to foster innovation in higher education, vocational education and training, enterprises and the broader socioeconomic environment. This includes confronting societal and economic challenges such as climate change, changing demographics, digitalization, the emergence of new, disruptive (deep tech) technologies such as artificial intelligence and rapid employment changes through social innovation and community resilience as well as labour market innovation.
- **Lot 2: Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills** aim to create new strategic approaches and cooperation for concrete skills development solutions in areas implementing a major action of the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. This call seeks to tackle skills gaps in the labour market that hamper growth, innovation and competitiveness in specific sectors or areas, aiming for both short-term interventions and long-term strategies.

- **Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills (implementing the 'Blueprint')** aim to create new strategic approaches and cooperation for concrete skills development solutions – both in the short and the medium term – in areas implementing a major action of the European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, the Pact for Skills. Therefore, Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills deliverables will be an important contribution to the work of the ecosystem-based large-scale partnerships that have joined the Pact for Skills, developing sectoral skills intelligence; skills strategies; occupational profiles; training programs, and long-term planning.

- **Horizon Europe - Cluster 2 - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society** aims to meet EU goals and priorities on enhancing democratic governance and citizens participation, on the safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage, and to respond to and shape multifaceted social, economic, technological and cultural transformations. It mobilises multidisciplinary expertise of European social sciences and humanities (SSH) for understanding fundamental contemporary transformations of society, economy, politics and culture. It aims to provide evidence-based policy options for a socially just and inclusive European green and digital transition and recovery.

Considering the above calls, it is planned the following steps in order to develop the final project proposal:

1. Handling the workshop “Electing the suitable call”: to develop a workshop during the presential meeting TPM 3 to brainstorming about the most suitable call to maximize the sustainability of the project and the continuous collaboration between partners (**November 2025**).
2. Updating the need analysis per country, extending the work already made in task 1 (**December 2025**).
3. Structuring main goals and activities of the project (**January 2026**).
4. Defining main work package and assigning them to the partners (**January 2026**).
5. Writing the project proposal (**January/February 2026**).
6. Submitting the project proposal (**March 2026**).

18. References

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