

**EN**

**Horizon Europe**  
**Work Programme 2025**

*7. Digital, Industry and Space*

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## **Introduction**

Progress in digital and industrial technologies, including in space, shapes all sectors of the economy and society. These technologies transform the way industry develops, create new products and services, and are central to any sustainable future. Research and innovation to support the green and digital transition, and attain and maintain strategic capacities such as Access to Space or Act in Space, are a key to Europe's competitiveness and open strategic autonomy, to industrial sustainability and to setting human-centred standards.

Resilience and technological sovereignty have become renewed priorities for the EU due to the current geopolitical and economic context that exposed vulnerabilities in critical value chains. In this context it is imperative to contribute to the implementation of the **Net-Zero Industry Act** (NZIA) and the **Critical Raw Materials Act** (CRMA); and to reinforce Europe's position in digital technologies, high-performance computing, Artificial Intelligence, robotics, secure communication, virtual worlds, critical Space technologies, advanced and sustainable manufacturing technologies, net-zero industry, sustainable raw and innovative materials, and the circular economy.

Cluster 4, 'Digital, Industry and Space' aims to shape competitive and trusted technologies for EU leadership in these technologies; to enable production and consumption respecting the boundaries of our planet; and to maximise the benefits for all parts of society in the variety of social, economic and territorial contexts in Europe. It will for example boost Europe leadership and competitiveness on Artificial Intelligence innovation (AI), leading the way on making AI safer and more trustworthy, and on tackling the risks stemming from its misuse. Similarly, it will ease the exploitation of untapped data potential while promoting high standards of data protection.

This cluster will serve the goals of the **Competitiveness Compass** through substantial R&I investments, often complemented by private investments through partnerships, across different technology readiness levels; and by integrating technological, environmental and social objectives into innovation.

This cluster will also support the **Clean Industrial Deal**, by driving decarbonisation and circularity in the manufacturing, energy-intensive and construction industries; and by providing the advanced materials and advanced manufacturing technologies that are needed for a net-zero economy. It aims to position the European Union as a technology and industrial leader in clean technologies.

Actions under this cluster will support key enabling technologies that are strategically important for Europe's future, and deliver on the following six expected impacts in the Strategic Plan, through matching destinations in this Work Programme.

In addition, several actions are crucial to support our European Economic Security Strategy, notably its 'promote' pillar that focuses on enhancing the Union's competitiveness and

industrial base, as well as investing in research and innovation for strategic and dual-use technologies.

Destination ‘Achieving global leadership in climate-neutral, circular and digitised industrial and digital value chains’

Destination ‘Achieving technological leadership for Europe's open strategic autonomy in raw materials, chemicals and innovative materials’

Destination ‘Developing an agile and secure single market and infrastructure for data-services and trustworthy artificial intelligence services’

Destination ‘Achieving open strategic autonomy in digital and emerging enabling technologies’

Destination ‘Open Strategic Autonomy in Developing, Deploying and Using Global Space-Based Infrastructure, Services in Space and on Ground, Applications and Data’

Destination ‘Digital and industrial technologies driving human-centric innovation’

## Calls

### Call - INDUSTRY

***HORIZON-CL4-2025-01***

#### Overview of this call<sup>1</sup>

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)		Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) <sup>2</sup>	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2025	2027		
Opening: 22 May 2025 Deadline(s): 23 Sep 2025					
Destination 1: Achieving global leadership in climate-neutral, circular and digitised industrial and digital value chains					
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-01: Integrated approaches for remanufacturing (Made in Europe Partnership) (IA)	IA	35.00		5.00 to 7.00	6
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-02: Physical and cognitive augmentation in advanced manufacturing (Made in Europe Partnership) (RIA)	RIA	35.00		4.00 to 6.00	7
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-05: Advanced manufacturing technologies for leadership of EU manufacturers in products for the net-zero industry (Made in Europe Partnership) (IA)	IA	42.00		5.00 to 7.00	6

<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

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Partnership) (IA)					
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-31: From heat-driven processes to the use of mechanical and electric forces (Processes4Planet partnership) (IA)	IA	25.00		8.00 to 10.00	3
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-32: Green and resilient flexible production processes (Processes4Planet partnership) (IA)	IA	25.00		8.00 to 10.00	3
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-33: Integrated use of renewable energy carriers in industrial sites (Processes4Planet partnership) (RIA)	RIA	25.00		6.00 to 8.00	3
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-34: Smart integration of net zero technologies into Energy Intensive industries (Processes4Planet and Made in Europe partnerships) (IA)	IA	25.00		5.00 to 9.00	3
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-37: Solving issues in carbon-neutral iron and steel making processes with diverse input materials of varying quality (Clean Steel Partnership) (RIA)	RIA	28.00		Around 14.00	2
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-36: Safe and clean processing technologies and products (Processes4Planet partnership) (RIA)	RIA	24.00		6.00 to 8.00	4
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-38: Synergies and mutual learning with national and regional initiatives in Europe on Industrial decarbonisation	CSA	1.00		Around 1.00	1

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(CSA)					
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-39: Towards human-centric, sustainable and resilient energy-intensive industries (Processes4Planet and Clean Steel partnerships) (CSA)	CSA	2.00		Around 2.00	1
Destination 2: Achieving technological leadership for Europe's open strategic autonomy in raw materials, chemicals and innovative materials					
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-61: Technologies for critical raw materials and strategic raw materials from end-of-life products (IA)	IA	24.00		Around 8.00	3
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-62: Strategic Partnerships for Raw Materials: Innovative Approaches for sustainable production of Critical Raw Materials (IA)	IA	30.00		Around 7.50	4
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-63: Innovative solutions for the sustainable production for Semiconductor raw materials (IA)	IA	24.00		Around 8.00	3
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-64: EU Co-funded Partnership on raw materials for the green and digital transition (Co-funded partnership Raw Materials for the Green and Digital Transition)	COFUND	45.00	45.00	Around 90.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-44: Innovative Advanced Materials Innovation Procurement (CSA)	CSA	2.00		Around 2.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-45: Materials Commons for Europe (IA)	IA	28.00		Around 28.00	1

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HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-52: Accelerate the uptake of life-cycle assessment (LCA) for Safe and Sustainable by Design (SSbD) chemicals and materials and resulting products (RIA)	RIA	15.00		4.00 to 5.00	3
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-31: Digitally enabled local-for-local textile and apparel production (Textiles for the Future Partnership) (IA)	IA	10.00		Around 5.00	2
Destination 4: Achieving open strategic autonomy in digital and emerging enabling technologies					
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-DIGITAL-61: AI Foundation models in science (GenAI4EU) (RIA)	RIA	30.00 <sup>3</sup>		Around 6.00	5
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-DIGITAL-62: Facilitated cooperation for AI in Science (CSA)	CSA	3.00		Around 3.00	1
Destination 6: Digital and industrial technologies driving human-centric innovation					
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-60: Horizon Standardisation Booster (CSA)	CSA	1.50		Around 1.50	1
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-61: Standardisation landscape analyses tool (CSA)	CSA	1.00		Around 1.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-62: Artificial Intelligence for knowledge valorisation (CSA)	CSA	2.00		Around 2.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-63: Value creation pilots for scaling up innovative	CSA	2.00		Around 2.00	1

<sup>3</sup> Of which EUR 12.00 million from the 'Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment' budget and EUR 6.00 million from the 'Climate, Energy and Mobility' budget.

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solutions (CSA)					
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-64: Pilot initiatives on Technology Infrastructures (CSA)	CSA	5.00		0.50 to 1.00	5
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-65: System innovation experimentation for Industry 5.0 (IA)	IA	3.00		Around 3.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-66: Assessment of Technology Infrastructure needs in Ukraine (CSA)	CSA	1.50		1.00 to 1.50	1
Overall indicative budget		494.00	45.00		

**General conditions relating to this call**

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

**Call - SPACE-HADEA**

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-02**



## Overview of this call<sup>4</sup>

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) <sup>5</sup>	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2025		
Opening: 22 May 2025 Deadline(s): 25 Sep 2025				
Destination 5: Open Strategic Autonomy in Developing, Deploying and Using Global Space-Based Infrastructure, Services, Applications and Data				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-11: CSA on access to European spaceports	CSA	1.00	Around 1.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-12: Digital solutions for autonomy for space transportation systems, design and simulation tools - Digital enablers and building blocks	RIA	3.00	1.00 to 3.00	2
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-13: Digital solutions for autonomy for space transportation systems, design and simulation tools – targeting demonstration	IA	7.00	4.00 to 7.00	2
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-21: ISOS Pilot Mission Detailed Design – Servicing component	RIA	18.00	6.00 to 12.00	2
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-22: ISOS Pilot Mission Detailed Design – HOST component	RIA	17.50	12.00 to 17.50	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-23: ISOS	RIA	12.00	10.00 to	1

<sup>4</sup> The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening.  
The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.  
All deadlines are at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.  
The budget amounts are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for 2025.

<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

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Pilot Mission Detailed Design – Logistics component			12.00	
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-24: ISOS Pilot Mission Detailed Design – satAPPs component	RIA	5.00	2.00 to 3.00	2
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-31: Digital enablers and building blocks for Earth Observation and Satellite telecommunication for Space solutions	RIA	6.00	1.00 to 5.00	3
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-32: Preparing demonstration missions for collaborative Earth Observation and Satellite telecommunication for Space solutions	IA	11.00	2.00 to 6.00	3
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-41: Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) evolution: new and innovative processing and methods for future Sentinels and other satellites for reanalyses	RIA	10.00	Around 10.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-42: Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS) evolution: improved soil-vegetation-atmosphere modelling and data assimilation of atmospheric constituents	RIA	3.00	Around 3.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-43: Copernicus Anthropogenic CO <sub>2</sub> Emissions Monitoring & Verification Support (CO2MVS) capacity: new and innovative methods to estimate the impact of fires on vegetation and related carbon fluxes	RIA	3.00	Around 3.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-44: Copernicus Marine Environment Monitoring Service (CMEMS) evolution: new and innovative ocean data assimilation techniques	RIA	5.00	Around 5.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-45: Supporting the AI/ML digital transition of Copernicus Services	RIA	12.00	Around 12.00	1

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HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-46: Innovative Earth observation services in support of maritime litter detection and ship source pollution policies	IA	5.00 <sup>6</sup>	Around 5.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-71: Space Critical EEE Components for EU non-dependence – RISC-V Microprocessor on 7nm	RIA	5.00	4.50 to 5.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-72: Space Critical Equipment and Related Technologies for EU non-dependence – Chip Scale Atomic Clocks and Solar Cells	RIA	8.00	3.50 to 4.00	2
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-73: Space Critical EEE Components for EU non-dependence - Connectors	RIA	1.00	0.80 to 1.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-74: Space Critical EEE Components for EU non-dependence – Advanced Packages and Memories	RIA	6.00	2.50 to 3.00	2
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-81: EU-Japan cooperation on the exploitation of Quantum Space Gravimetry data	RIA	0.50	0.45 to 0.50	1
Overall indicative budget		139.00		

**General conditions relating to this call**

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

<sup>6</sup> Of which EUR 5.00 million from the 'Climate, Energy and Mobility' budget.

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

## Call - DIGITAL - CNECT

***HORIZON-CL4-2025-03***

### Overview of this call<sup>7</sup>

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) <sup>8</sup>	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2025		
Opening: 10 Jun 2025 Deadline(s): 02 Oct 2025				
Destination 2: Achieving technological leadership for Europe's open strategic autonomy in raw materials, chemicals and innovative materials				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-MATERIALS-46: Innovative Advanced Materials (IAMs) for photonics, enabling low-power and ultra-broadband performance for telecommunication (RIA) (Innovative Advanced Materials for Europe partnership)	RIA	10.00	Around 5.00	2
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-MATERIALS-47: Innovative Advanced Materials (IAMs) for conformable, flexible or stretchable electronics (RIA) (Innovative Advanced Materials for	RIA	15.00	Around 5.00	3

<sup>7</sup> The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening.  
The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.  
All deadlines are at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.  
The budget amounts are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for 2025.

<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

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Europe partnership)				
Destination 3: Developing an agile and secure single market and infrastructure for data-services and trustworthy artificial intelligence services				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-08: Large-scale pilots for supply end-to-end infrastructures integrating device, network computing and communication capabilities for Telco Edge Cloud deployments, as a basis for Connected Collaborative Computing Networks (3C networks) (RIA)	RIA	75.00	Around 75.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-09: Alignment of stakeholders towards the supply-side large-scale pilot of end-to-end infrastructures integrating device, network computing and communication capabilities (CSA)	CSA	2.50	1.80 to 2.50	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-10: Roadmap for next generation computing technologies from IoT device level to edge to cloud to HPC (CSA)	CSA	2.50	1.80 to 2.50	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-11: Open Internet Stack: development of technological commons/open-source 3C building blocks (RIA)	RIA	10.00	Around 10.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-12: Preparing the Advancement of the state of the art of submarine cable infrastructures (CSA)	CSA	2.10	1.90 to 2.10	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-13: Fostering Innovative and Compliant Data Ecosystems (IA) (AI, Data and Robotics Partnership)	IA	45.00	7.00 to 9.00	6
Destination 4: Achieving open strategic autonomy in digital and emerging enabling technologies				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-01: Continuation of the Quantum Technologies Flagship (CSA)	CSA	4.50	Around 4.50	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-02: Quantum Computing –	RIA	10.00	Around 5.00	2

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complementing the quantum computing FPAs with the development of a technology agnostic software stack (RIA)				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-03: Supporting Digital Partnerships in Quantum technologies (RIA)	RIA	8.00	2.50 to 2.70	3
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-04: Post-exascale HPC (CSA)	CSA	2.50	Around 2.50	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-08: Strengthening the fabless Start-up and SME ecosystem in Europe (CSA)	CSA	1.00	Around 1.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-07: Robust and trustworthy GenerativeAI for Robotics and industrial automation (RIA) (AI/Data/Robotics & Made in Europe Partnerships)	RIA	85.00	40.00 to 45.00	2
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-09: Challenge-Driven GenAI4EU Booster (RIA) (AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)	RIA	45.00	Around 15.00	3
Destination 6: Digital and industrial technologies driving human-centric innovation				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-14: Core technologies for virtual worlds (RIA) (Virtual Worlds and Photonics Partnerships)	RIA	43.00	5.00 to 6.00	7
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-15: GenAI4EU: Generative AI for Virtual Worlds: Advanced technologies for better performance and hyper personalised and immersive experience (IA) (AI/Data/Robotics & Virtual Worlds Partnerships)	IA	20.00	4.00 to 5.00	5
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-16: Drive the evolution of the internet towards open and interoperable Web 4.0 and Virtual Worlds: building blocks in priority areas (RIA) (Virtual Worlds Partnership)	RIA	14.50	1.00 to 3.00	9
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-17: Specific support for the Virtual Worlds	CSA	2.50	Around 2.50	1

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Partnership and the Web 4.0 initiative (CSA) (Virtual Worlds Partnership)				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-18: GenAI4EU central Hub (CSA) (AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)	CSA	3.00	Around 3.00	1
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-19: International cooperation in semiconductors (CSA)	CSA	3.00	Around 3.00	1
Overall indicative budget		404.10		

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

**Call - DIGITAL - HADEA**

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-04**

## Overview of this call<sup>9</sup>

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) <sup>10</sup>	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2025		
Opening: 10 Jun 2025 Deadline(s): 02 Oct 2025				
Destination 3: Developing an agile and secure single market and infrastructure for data-services and trustworthy artificial intelligence services				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-DATA-02: Empowering AI/generative AI along the Cognitive Computing continuum (RIA) (AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)	RIA	30.00	6.00 to 8.00	4
HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-DATA-03: Software Engineering for AI and generative AI (RIA) (AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)	RIA	15.00	4.00 to 6.00	3
Destination 4: Achieving open strategic autonomy in digital and emerging enabling technologies				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-01: Advanced sensor technologies and multimodal sensor integration for multiple application domains (IA) (Photonics Partnership)	IA	25.00	4.00 to 6.00	5
HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-04: Assessment methodologies for General Purpose AI capabilities and risks	RIA	7.00	3.00 to 4.00	2

<sup>9</sup> The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening.

The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.

All deadlines are at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.

The budget amounts are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.



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(RIA) (AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-05: Soft Robotics for Advanced physical capabilities (IA) (AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)	IA	20.00	Around 10.00	2
HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-07: Enhanced Learning Strategies for General Purpose AI: Advancing GenAI4EU (RIA) (AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)	RIA	30.00	Around 15.00	2
Destination 6: Digital and industrial technologies driving human-centric innovation				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-HUMAN-08: GenAI for Africa	RIA	5.00	1.00 to 2.00	2
Overall indicative budget		132.00		

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

**Call - INDUSTRY two-stage**

***HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-two-stage***

## Overview of this call<sup>11</sup>

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) <sup>12</sup>	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2025		
Opening: 22 May 2025				
Deadline(s): 23 Sep 2025 (First Stage), 14 Apr 2026 (Second Stage)				
Destination 1: Achieving global leadership in climate-neutral, circular and digitised industrial and digital value chains				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-TWIN-TRANSITION-11-two-stage: Enhanced logistics and operations of construction sites (IA)	IA	13.00	Around 6.50	2
HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-TWIN-TRANSITION-35-two-stage: Developing and embedding upcycling technologies into viable business (Processes4Planet partnership) (IA)	IA	48.00	8.00 to 12.00	5
HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-TWIN-TRANSITION-21-two-stage: Demonstrators for clusters of social circular enterprises (IA)	IA	10.00	Around 5.00	2
Destination 2: Achieving technological leadership for Europe's open strategic autonomy in raw materials, chemicals and innovative materials				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-MATERIALS-42-two-stage: Innovative Advanced Materials (IAMs) for product monitoring, smart maintenance and repair strategies in the construction sector (RIA) (Innovative	RIA	30.00	Around 6.00	5

<sup>11</sup> The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening.

The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.

All deadlines are at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.

The budget amounts are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for 2025.

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

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Advanced Materials for Europe partnership)				
HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-MATERIALS-43-two-stage: Innovative Advanced Materials (IAMs) for robust, fast curing sealants and coatings for manufacturing and final assembly (IA) (Innovative Advanced Materials for Europe partnership)	IA	30.00	Around 6.00	5
HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-MATERIALS-51-two-stage: Development of safe and sustainable by design alternatives to Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) (IA)	IA	30.00	Around 7.00	4
Overall indicative budget		161.00		

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

## **Destinations**

### **Destination 1: Achieving global leadership in climate-neutral, circular and digitised industrial and digital value chains**

The research and innovation under this Destination will continue to support a globally competitive European industry through the **twin green and digital transition**. The development of new and cross-cutting technologies will boost the transformation of existing value chains and the creation of new ones.

Supporting **net-zero manufacturing** is a key objective of the Net-Zero Industry Act and has a crucial role to play in the transition towards a green and sustainable society, going from ‘smart factory’ to a ‘smart sustainable value chain’. Smart manufacturing will help develop the materials and products needed to support net-zero and less polluting industries. There is much scope for improvement in circularity technologies applicable to different value chains, with special attention needed for product design, re-use, disassembly, remanufacturing/upgrading, recycling, and ‘Zero-X’ – zero defects, zero breakdowns and zero waste.

Digital technologies, like big data, advanced computing, and networking (including quantum), AI, robotics, photonics and the industrial virtual worlds will transform the practices of research, design and engineering, with better performing net-zero solutions and increased productivity in all sectors. Quick-response services can support hyperflexible production using, e.g. trustworthy AI and digital twins, with digitally enabled certification and qualification of processes and products.

In addition to decarbonisation, **energy-intensive industries** need to embrace the circular economy as a key pillar in the design of their value chains. This will be fundamental to their resource efficiency (in terms of materials, energy and water). Particularly important in this context is the innovative upcycling of secondary raw materials and waste and the development of sustainable and resource-efficient industrial processes.

The EU has set an ambitious goal for Europe to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. In some areas the key solutions for achieving significant reductions in emissions are already in the market. In crucial parts of the economy, as is the case for energy-intensive industries, many of the tools needed for such a significant reduction are still at an earlier stage of industrial or commercial development.

Further development and deployment of technologies identified in the ERA (European Research Area) industrial technology roadmaps for circular technologies and for low-carbon technologies will be essential to achieve this goal. Manufacturing processes, supply chains, cyber-physical systems or cities will become more climate neutral and less polluting, and circular solutions will include AI and digital twins, and the deployment of common European data spaces like those under the Digital Europe Programme.

Across industries, the human dimension (including gender differences) will be stressed via the **Industry 5.0 paradigm**.

To successfully move from **innovation to deployment**, a more effective transfer from small-scale industrial demonstrators to first-of-a-kind climate-neutral demonstrators is needed.

#### **Business cases and exploitation strategies for industrialisation:**

This section applies only to those topics in this Destination, for which proposals should demonstrate the expected outcomes by including a *business case and exploitation strategy for industrialisation*.

A business case and a credible initial exploitation strategy are essential components in the ultimate success of an industry-based project, as well as its prospects to attract further investments for deployment. They will both be decisive factors under the impact criterion, and proposers are encouraged to use the extended page limit to present a carefully considered business case and exploitation strategy, backed by the management of the companies involved.

The *business case* should demonstrate the expected impact of the proposal in terms of enhanced market opportunities for the participants and deployment in the EU, in the short to medium term. It should describe the targeted market(s); estimated market size in the EU and globally; user and customer needs; and demonstrate that the solutions will match the market and user needs in a cost-effective manner; and describe the expected market position and competitive advantage.

The *exploitation strategy* should identify obstacles, requirements and necessary actions involved in reaching higher TRLs (Technology Readiness Levels), for example: securing the required investments, including through possible synergies with other programmes; accessing the required skills; matching value chains; enhancing product robustness; securing industrial integrators; and user acceptance.

For TRLs 6 and 7, a credible strategy to achieve future full-scale deployment in the EU is expected, indicating the intentions of the industrial partners after the end of the project.

Where relevant, in the context of **skills**, it is recommended to develop training material to endow workers with the right skillset in order to support the uptake and deployment of new innovative products, services, and processes developed in the different projects. This material should be tested and be scalable, and can potentially be up-scaled through the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). This will help the European labour force to close the skill gaps in the relevant sectors and occupational groups and improve employment and social levels across the EU and associated countries.

For topics in this destination, consortia (if selected for funding) could consider **voluntary contributions in terms of data, indicators and knowledge to relevant Joint Research Centre (JRC) platforms** for capitalising the knowledge developed in their projects and become more policy relevant:

- INnovation Centre for Industrial Transformation and Emissions (INCITE) (<https://innovation-centre-for-industrial-transformation.ec.europa.eu/>).
- The Energy and Industry Geography Lab: EIGL (<https://energy-industry-geolab.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>).

**Innovation Actions** — Legal entities established in China are not eligible to participate in Innovation Actions in any capacity. Please refer to the Annex B of the General Annexes of this Work Programme for further details.

## **Manufacturing**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

### **HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-01: Integrated approaches for remanufacturing (Made in Europe Partnership) (IA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 5.00 and 7.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 35.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 5 and achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

**Expected Outcome:** The manufacturing industry should benefit from the following outcomes:

- Enable an industrial ecosystem<sup>13</sup> to double the volume of remanufactured components in the Union, compared to 2021, for the sectors and products considered;
- Stimulate new synergies for circularity in manufacturing industries;

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<sup>13</sup> notably ecosystems acknowledged under the European Industrial Strategies

- Increase significantly the capability in Europe to implement remanufacturing technologies for retaining, reusing, upgrading or adapting the function of products and components;
- Support skills and education capabilities for remanufacturing; and
- Support the development or revision of standards to better support remanufacturing.

These outcomes are also expected to benefit downstream applications in the net-zero industries.

Scope: Remanufacturing (including de-manufacturing) is the rebuilding of products using combinations of reused, repaired and new components. Remanufacturing aims to retain the usefulness of both products and components and is an essential step in achieving full industrial circularity. Ultimately, remanufacturing is expected to reduce the level of resource consumption, as well as the carbon footprint of products and logistic chains. Such approaches will strengthen industrial resilience by building up a remanufacturing capacity in Europe, including possible applications in net-zero technologies and components.

Proposals should demonstrate cutting-edge remanufacturing approaches, covering de-manufacturing and appropriate manufacturing technologies, model-based systems engineering, quality control and business models. Repurposing of products (at the level of systems or components) may also be considered. This approach calls for remanufacturing technologies at the factory level, as well as for their integration into circular value loops – within specific industrial sectors or across industrial sectors. In general, the approaches should integrate traditional manufacturing processes, such as additive manufacturing, machining and welding, with automation, robotics and digitalisation.

*Recycling technologies for the generation of secondary raw materials are not within the scope of this topic.*

Proposals should address all of the following:

- Remanufacturing technologies and processes and/or system engineering, building on advances in data sharing and AI;
- Mass de-manufacturing, such as disassembly, separation and sorting;
- Capability to produce high-quality products from a wide range of resources (new and remanufactured components and materials);
- Methodologies to facilitate decisions made at the end-of-use or end-of-life phase at the level of components or systems;
- Measurement, verification and inspection approaches assuring high quality, traceability and compliance with quality standards;

- Stringent data sourcing, interoperability and processing, coupled to robust AI technologies (leveraging on existing ontologies and through the implementation of the FAIR data principles<sup>14</sup>);
- International standards, building on existing standards or contributing to future standardisation, with a focus on remanufacturing standards; and
- New sets of skills required for remanufacturing implementation at the European level.

Proposals aiming to develop new products should additionally cover the design of these products for circularity. Points to consider in this case are prioritising the use of recyclable materials and recyclable or reusable components; and increased adaptability, exchangeability and lifetime of components.

Proposals should consider where relevant

- The EU regulatory framework, notably the Ecodesign for Sustainable Product Regulation<sup>15</sup> and the EU waste/sectoral legislation<sup>16</sup>;
- The Ecodesign approach, especially the circular-by-design approach including modularity, reparability, adaptability and exchangeability of components as well as refurbishment and repurposing of products or components; and
- The Digital Product Passport: information about products along their overall lifecycle needs to be collected along the remanufacturing operations.

Proposals should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination. It is essential that the business model address the entire lifecycle of remanufacturing, including logistics. They should assess the circularity and decarbonisation that can be achieved, as well as the economic case and competitiveness, and make a corresponding contribution to the standardisation of lifecycle performance metrics. Regarding decarbonisation, proposals should address the expected reductions in energy consumption and GHG emissions, and – where applicable – impact net-zero technologies and components.

Where relevant, proposals are encouraged to build on, or seek collaboration with, existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives and funding programmes. In particular, links are encouraged with

- the projects funded under earlier relevant topics, for example the topic on re-manufacturing, HORIZON-CL4-2023-TWIN-TRANSITION-01-04: Factory-level and value chain approaches for remanufacturing; or
- the Digital Europe programme, e.g. in the area of Manufacturing Data Spaces.

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<sup>14</sup> Turning FAIR into reality: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/turning\\_fair\\_into\\_reality\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/turning_fair_into_reality_1.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/publications/proposal-ecodesign-sustainable-products-regulation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/publications/proposal-ecodesign-sustainable-products-regulation_en)

<sup>16</sup> [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/waste-and-recycling/waste-law\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/waste-and-recycling/waste-law_en)



To address the requirements above related to business models and to relevant skills (and where applicable to design), appropriate contributions from Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) are indispensable. Where appropriate social partners or social innovation may be considered.

International cooperation is encouraged, especially with Japan or Taiwan.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership Made in Europe.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-02: Physical and cognitive augmentation in advanced manufacturing (Made in Europe Partnership) (RIA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 4.00 and 6.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 35.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 3 and achieve TRL 5-6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>17</sup>.</p>
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

<sup>17</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

Expected Outcome: Manufacturing industry should benefit from the following outcomes:

- Empower workers at all levels in factories, both individuals and teams, through breakthrough augmentation technologies embodying the next stage in human-machine interactions;
- Enhance, with the help of these technologies and related contributions from Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), the flexibility, inclusiveness, safety and well-being of workers in the industrial environment, leading to more attractive jobs in the EU, attracting and retaining talents from new generations (e.g. Generation Z);
- Foster the human-centric aspect of the Industry 5.0 model, through insights into how technology affects the working environment and the organisation, and into how technology can support the worker in their career (including the associated meaningful job profiles).

Scope: The rising complexity of discrete manufacturing operations requires workers to adapt to the introduction of new breakthrough technologies, machines, processes, and production environments (considering where appropriate legacy machinery). In addition, labour shortages are growing. The development of a human-centric culture that places the humans at the centre of the manufacturing operation is crucial. Augmentation technologies support and empower the workforce, leading to more high-quality jobs and prosperity beyond efficiency. They can relieve people of non-creative tasks or reduce human strain and stress and potential risks in the workplace. Augmentation technologies can therefore produce benefits for both workers and managers and can become the most effective ways of supporting, or amplifying, human abilities.

Proposals should develop breakthrough technologies to augment human capabilities and skills. Proposals should cover all of the following aspects:

- Develop breakthrough solutions (based on e.g. mechatronics, sensing and photonics) for human-centric approaches; these include innovative perception technologies to sense the shopfloor environment and to predict the intentions of humans, also leading to enhanced worker safety and reduction of discomfort, fatigue and physical and psychological stress;
- Develop innovative methodologies, potentially using AI, to provide reasoning capabilities and to control the behaviour of the manufacturing systems, to support humans and to interact and communicate with them; this will foster natural improvements in efficiency, sharing of knowledge, inclusiveness, accessibility and flexibility;
- Assess and take into account the needs of managers and workers, at the beginning of the design phase and throughout all stages up to the development of a prototype, ensuring that both workers and managers have the right skills to implement the innovative solutions and that the solutions take into account the variety of workforces;

- Develop new methodologies to perform an assessment of augmentation technologies and their suitability and value added (beyond economics) for workers in all their diversity.

Digital-twin models can be potentially used in the development of new assessment methodologies to perform validation in a virtual scenario.

The assessment methodologies may lead to new standards for the validation of the developed systems, or indicate how new or existing standards could benefit from a human-centric approach and how the developed systems could support this.

Proposals should take into account Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) contributions regarding human-related barriers for the uptake of augmentation technologies in industrial environments, such as ergonomics, user experience, comfort, trust, feeling of safety, knowledge sharing and liability in modern production facilities. Proposals should specifically address gender, age, disability and other anthropometric and ergonomic considerations, and impacts across diverse demographic groups. Social partners (e.g. trade unions) may also be considered. Optionally, proposals may include test and experimentation environments such as living labs for validation.

Proposals should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination (adapted to the expected TRL of this topic).

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership Made in Europe.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-05:** **Advanced manufacturing technologies for leadership of EU manufacturers in products for the net-zero industry (Made in Europe Partnership) (IA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 5.00 and 7.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 42.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by

	3 pages.
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Expected Outcome: The European Union's manufacturing industry should benefit from the following outcomes:

- Enhanced capabilities in the areas of strategic and high-value-added products for the net-zero industry; and
- Increased production capacity for clean technologies in the Member States and Associated Countries, diversifying supply sources, and ensuring high environmental standards.
- Contributions to reaching the targets set by the Net Zero Industry Act, in ensuring the reduction of strategic dependencies.

Scope: The net-zero industry relies on manufactured products, components and equipment.

The focus is on advanced discrete manufacturing processes for such products, components and equipment, which enable new product features (in terms of geometry, weight, robustness, functional integration, re-use-potential); advanced production processes including automation; or the use of innovative materials. The processes should improve productivity and upscaling, decrease waste, and shorten time-to-market and process integration times.

Proposals should address manufacturing technologies applicable to products for *at least one* of the strategic net-zero technologies listed in Annex I of the Net-Zero Industry Act:<sup>18</sup>

Proposals should address the key manufacturing technologies that generate cross-sectoral impact among the chosen net-zero technology sectors.

While operating in synergy with initiatives that focus on the design and engineering of strategic products and solutions, research and innovation should focus on the innovative development and application of one or more of the following manufacturing technologies and associated systems:

- Additive manufacturing or cladding for manufacturing and/or repair;
- Advanced joining technologies;
- Advanced forming and material shaping technologies;
- Surface processing technologies, functionalisation, nano- or micromanufacturing; and
- High-precision machining and assembly.

Proposals should consider integrating

- Innovative metrology and inspection methods, aiming at first-time right manufacturing;

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<sup>18</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_23\\_1666](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_23_1666)

- Advanced and flexible automation approaches, for instance for large components, complex assembling or handling of hazardous materials;
- Digital twins and data mining for fast ramp-up, scale-up and real-time optimisation of production;
- Circular manufacturing approaches and reduced reliance on Critical Raw Materials, in view of increasing the options for re-manufacturing, disassembly, recycling, etc.; and
- Relevant skills and standards.

In addition the overall environmental impact of the manufacturing processes should be minimal in terms of energy and resource consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Proposals should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination. The aspect of manufacturing in the Union is particularly important in this topic.

*The attention of proposers is also drawn to the complementary topic HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-34: Smart integration of net zero technologies into Energy Intensive industries. Technologies covered by that topic are not in the scope of this topic.*

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership Made in Europe.

## **Construction**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-TWIN-TRANSITION-11-two-stage: Enhanced logistics and operations of construction sites (IA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY two-stage</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 6.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 13.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:  Applicants submitting a proposal under the blind evaluation

	pilot (see General Annex F) must not disclose their organisation names, acronyms, logos nor names of personnel in the proposal abstract and Part B of their first-stage application (see General Annex E).
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 5 and achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:  This topic is part of the blind evaluation pilot under which first stage proposals will be evaluated blindly.
<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) <sup>19</sup> .
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

Expected Outcome:

- Reduce the time taken to carry out site operations of construction or demolition works;
- Increase the application of on-site circular approaches such as re-use, preparing for re-use and recycling, resulting in reduced waste generation and improved waste management;
- Improve health and safety of construction workers.

Scope: Construction works on the building site, whether for civil infrastructure or for buildings, often involve a variety of complex operations apart from the actual assembly of elements. These can include transport and movement of construction products to and around the site; storage of products, materials and other items on site, and their eventual removal;

<sup>19</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

dealing with packaging of products and other consumables related to the construction works; temporary accommodation for workers; temporary utility connections and associated works; planning of works; coordination of trades and operations, including machines as well as human workers. Mistakes and delays in construction works can lead to negative consequences such as risk of accidents, waste, pollution, inefficiency and financial consequences.

Construction works need to be carried out more quickly and efficiently, with less room for error and waste. This could be improved through technology-driven innovations linked to on-site operations and logistical aspects.

Proposals should:

- Develop technologies that improve the efficiency of operations on the construction site, leading to more productive, faster and more efficient working practices. The technologies should be interoperable with, or build upon existing industry-wide practices, such as Digital Twins and Building Information Modelling tools. Speed and efficiency improvements should not be at the expense of safety.
- Address the traceability of construction products and other items delivered to the site, installed on site, and removed. If relevant, this can also include coordination with other operations outside the construction site boundary.
- Integrate circular economy approaches, such as waste prevention and the management and recovery of construction and demolition waste;
- Address new ways for site operations to reduce the chances of errors and accidents/taking better account of unexpected disruptions;
- Address human-centric and Social Science and Humanities (SSH) aspects of technologies or tools that are developed. Take into consideration potential social innovation mechanisms that can facilitate the market uptake of the developed tools.

Proposals should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination.

Proposals may choose to contribute to relevant European standardisation efforts. Proposals should seek to build synergies with relevant other work, for example, EU-funded projects under the New European Bauhaus Facility, or Horizon Europe partnerships including Built4People.

### **Energy-Intensive Industries - Decarbonisation and Energy Efficiency**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-31: From heat-driven processes to the use of mechanical and electric forces (Processes4Planet partnership) (IA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 8.00 and 10.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 25.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

Expected Outcome: Energy Intensive industries will benefit from the following outcomes:

- Enable the integration of renewable electricity in the process industries by transitioning from heat driven to direct electricity driven process units in a plant;
- Contribute to achieving the EU climate neutrality objective as well as proposed 2040 90% GHG reduction target<sup>20</sup>;
- Achieve 25% energy savings compared to processes based on relevant Best Available Technologies;
- Improve the economic viability of the entire unit compared to the state-of-the-art heat-driven process and increase the competitiveness and resilience of the European process industry.

Scope: The generation of heat, which is often sourced from fossil fuel combustion, is the biggest consumer of energy in the process industries and responsible for 60% of process industries GHG emissions. Heat input is in particular commonly used in separation and drying processes. The topic focuses on the development of new electrically driven industrial processes where heat input in such processes is replaced by electro-mechanical power or other

<sup>20</sup>

[2040 climate target - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/e300042f-323d-4761-991d-3f345070040c/policy_document/EN/202006/COM(2020)372_en.pdf)



forms of direct electrical input. These electrified processes could represent a major reduction of GHG emissions as well as an important source of energy savings. The scope does not include conventional electric heating or the use of heat pumps.

Proposals under this topic should address all of the following:

- Demonstrate and/or integrate highly efficient electrically driven technologies e.g., membrane technology, power ultrasound, mechanical activation, mechanically or electricity induced forces, electrochemical processes, that can replace traditional heating processes;
- Demonstrate and evaluate energy efficiency gains;
- Prove the effectiveness of the technologies towards GHG emission avoidance;
- Take a holistic approach which may include aspects such as redesign of equipment, requirements for advanced materials and integrated electrified processes;
- Ensure process safety, sufficient flexibility and ease of process control;
- Showcase improved CO<sub>2</sub> reduction potential, performance, scalability and cost efficiency of the proposed solution through, at least, one realistic use case that can be replicable with demonstrable economic return.

The inclusion of a GHG avoidance methodology<sup>21</sup> is recommended and should provide detailed descriptions of baselines and projected emissions reduction.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, underlining how the proposal will serve the purpose to boost industrial decarbonisation technologies supply chain in Europe. As project output an elaborated exploitation plan should be developed, including preliminary plans for scalability, commercialisation and deployment (feasibility study, business plan and financial model) indicating possible private and public funding sources (e.g. Innovation Fund, InvestEU and cohesion policy funds). Societal- and environmental impact as well as implications for the workplace (including skills and organisational change) should be outlined.

This topic implements the co-programmed European partnership Processes4Planet.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-32: Green and resilient flexible production processes (Processes4Planet partnership) (IA)**

**Call: INDUSTRY**

<sup>21</sup> That could follow Innovation Fund methodology: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/innovfund/wp-call/2021/call-annex\\_c\\_innovfund-lsc-2021\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/innovfund/wp-call/2021/call-annex_c_innovfund-lsc-2021_en.pdf)

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 8.00 and 10.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 25.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

Expected Outcome: Energy Intensive industries will benefit from the following outcomes:

- Increase significantly the process flexibility offering a step change in the capacity of individual production plants to promptly and frequently adapt to energy input variations over a significant range and with increased speed;
- Enable new flexible and efficient production processes, leading to economic and sustainability gains despite of volatile energy supply variations;
- Increase significantly raw material and energy efficiency while facing variations of the renewable energy input when compared to state-of-the-art industrial processes;
- Contribute to achieving EU climate neutrality objective as well as Commission recommendation of reducing EU GHG emissions by 90% by 2040 <sup>22</sup>.

Scope: Flexibility of energy intensive production processes is a necessity for the use of alternative energy carriers as the supply of energy by renewable sources is subject to significant variations and the competitive potential of energy storage is limited. The optimal use of the renewable energy supply will require processes that can perform fast transitions to allow continuous and efficient operation when the renewable energy input varies. The limiting factor addressed by the topic is the ability of the production plants to promptly change loads and throughputs in large ranges without negative consequences for the equipment, while staying energy and resource efficient. Storage options and use of several sources of renewable energy can be included, the combination (hybridation) of various decarbonisation technologies can also be considered.

<sup>22</sup>

[2040 climate target - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/e300127f-3260-476a-995d-698c48f222e1/en/attachment_data/data/e300127f-3260-476a-995d-698c48f222e1.pdf)

Proposals under this topic should address all of the following:

- Address the redesign and modification of existing processes, including, as relevant, modifications of process steps or equipment and smart combinations of renewable energy sources, thereby improving the overall operation flexibility of the process and resulting in continuous efficient operation;
- Propose redesign and modification of plants and processes to increase their flexibility response rate (e.g., faster ramp up or ramp down) while maintaining a high energy- and resource efficiency;
- Demonstrate and evaluate material and energy efficiency gains from a holistic view of the processing plants and the energy systems as well as economic benefits by exploiting the price variations on the energy markets;
- Showcase improved performance, scalability and cost efficiency of the proposed solution through at least one realistic use case at pilot scale;
- Define necessary skills of the proposed solution, to enable their industrial implementation.

Digital tools and advanced control to support the operation and the flexibility of the processes can be elements of a solution.

The inclusion of a GHG avoidance methodology<sup>23</sup> is recommended and should provide detailed description of baselines and projected reductions.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, underlining how the proposal will serve the purpose to boost industrial decarbonisation technologies supply chain in Europe. As project output an elaborated exploitation plan should be developed, including preliminary plans for scalability, commercialisation and deployment (feasibility study, business plan and financial model) indicating possible private and public funding sources (e.g. Innovation Fund, InvestEU and cohesion policy funds). Societal- and environmental impact as well as implications for the workplace (including skills and organisational changes) should be outlined.

This topic implements the co-programmed European partnership Processes4Planet.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-33: Integrated use of renewable energy carriers in industrial sites (Processes4Planet partnership) (RIA)**

**Call: INDUSTRY**

<sup>23</sup> That could follow Innovation Fund methodology: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/innovfund/wp-call/2021/call-annex\\_c\\_innovfund-lsc-2021\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/innovfund/wp-call/2021/call-annex_c_innovfund-lsc-2021_en.pdf)

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 6.00 and 8.00 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 25.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 5-6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

Expected Outcome: Energy Intensive industries will benefit from the following outcomes:

- Enable the integrated use of different types of renewable energy carriers in industrial sites<sup>24</sup> with the aim to provide a constant robust low-carbon and economic energy input to process industries;
- Pave the way for strategic industrial cooperation to cope with fluctuations of the energy inputs and to achieve overall energy and cost efficiency;
- Support stability and operational flexibility of the power grid, including implementation of storage solutions to buffer energy demand peaks;
- Enable the use of renewable energy labelling and documentation, scheduling of energy use and price compensation models to achieve optimal grid load;
- Improve the technical and economic feasibility of the integrated use of renewable energy carriers in industrial sites compared to other solutions with a similar CO<sub>2</sub> reduction potential.

Scope: There is a broad range of renewable energy carriers (e.g., electricity, hydrogen, solar heat, ammonia, etc) which can be utilised in the process industries. Many of them are provided with significant temporal variations, e.g., renewable electricity and solar heat. Integrated design and operation of these highly complex systems within process industry sites are needed to cope with the fluctuations of the energy inputs and to achieve overall energy

<sup>24</sup> Industrial sites refers to industrial clusters, hubs, parks formed by several plants of the energy intensive industries. Large individual plants may be considered in those sectors where plants are not typically integrated in industrial sites.

and cost efficiency. Industrial symbiosis and integration of production systems with energy systems in industrial sites can ensure overall emission reduction. These approaches can increase the efficiency of generation and enable solutions that avoid losses, supporting stability and efficiency of power systems.

Proposals under this topic should:

- Develop highly efficient technologies for, and prototype designs of, integrated structures of industrial sites, including storage elements and solutions for their integrated operation under varying conditions;
- Take due account of logistic aspects, risk assessment and management at plant level;
- Develop systemic solutions embracing industrial symbiosis, and if relevant, contribute to further evolution of existing Hubs4Circularity<sup>25</sup>;
- Consider the interaction with the supply side, in particular electric power grids, hydrogen pipelines or district heating;
- Demonstrate full integration and use of advanced digital technologies from fields of distributed process control strategies, and data driven AI based optimisation and the application of model-based technologies for the improved, safe and efficient operation of industrial plants and sites, including the interaction with different grids;
- Demonstrate and evaluate energy efficiency and CO<sub>2</sub> footprint reduction by optimal integration of energy from renewable sources as well as providing demand side flexibility;
- Propose new ways to adapt the workplaces and organisation of site management to ensure that the solutions can be widely implemented.

Proposals should include energy efficiency, techno-economic and life-cycle assessment considerations of the overall process.

Proposals should consider representative real industrial sites demonstrating the solutions at least in open-loop computations. This should be done in parallel to the actual operation of the plants with validation of the benefits by simulations with accurate models. Experiments involving real industrial sites are encouraged.

Proposals should actively pursue involvement of all actors in the value chain, from industrial sites management to plant operators, and renewable energy providers. Interoperability as well as secure and trusted data sharing between stakeholders in the value chain should be considered, in accordance with the FAIR<sup>26</sup> data principles. Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy (as outlined in the introduction

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<sup>25</sup> [Hubs4Circularity \(h4c-community.eu\);Horizon Europe strategic plan 2025-2027-KI0223326ENN.pdf](https://hubs4circularity.eu/Horizon_Europe_strategic_plan_2025-2027-KI0223326ENN.pdf)  
(page 94)

<sup>26</sup> Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable data

to this Destination) underlining how the proposal will serve the purpose to boost industrial decarbonisation technologies supply chain in Europe.

A strategy for skills development to master the challenges of such integrated systems should be included associating social partners. Attention should be given to using results from existing initiatives that have developed education and skills development concepts in this area.

This topic implements the co-programmed European partnership Processes4Planet.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-34: Smart integration of net zero technologies into Energy Intensive industries (Processes4Planet and Made in Europe partnerships) (IA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 5.00 and 9.00 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 25.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

Expected Outcome: Manufactures of net zero technology solutions, as well as energy intensive industries will benefit from the following outcomes:

- Enable the sustainable and efficient use of energy in the energy intensive industries by bridging the gap between users and manufacturers of net-zero solutions for the energy-intensive industries.
- Foster win-win situations in which equipment manufactures co-create solutions with the energy-intensive industrial sectors opening new markets for the net-zero technologies;
- Develop new net-zero technologies industrially integrated processes that support the decarbonization of industry and offer new market opportunities;

- Enhance competitiveness of the European Energy Intensive and manufacturing industries;
- Accelerate the adoption of net-zero technologies in the energy intensive industries.

Scope: As the industry decarbonises net-zero technologies<sup>27</sup> can be applied to a wide range of energy intensive sectors and processes. Furthermore, the Net-Zero Industry Act which is part of the Green Deal Industrial Plan, is aiming at increasing the manufacturing capacity of strategic net-zero technologies to meet at least 40% of the EU's annual deployment needs. In this framework the aim of this topic is to accelerate the deployment of net-zero technologies in at least one industrial sectors through a closer collaboration between, net-zero technology manufacturers and energy intensive industries.

Proposals under this topic should address several of the following:

- Facilitate collaboration between at least one energy intensive industrial sector, with manufacturers of net-zero technology solutions, as well as where relevant engineering, and construction firms for the smart integration of one or several net-zero technologies in specific processes. Several energy intensive industrial sectors can be considered if they share similar processes and energy related needs;
- Assess the needs of the proposed industrial sector(s) to define 'standard' process(es) and assess operational energy needs through a closer exchange with net-zero technology manufacturers and suppliers in order to effectively design sustainable and cost-efficient energy solutions;
- Optimise and adapt technologies, products and solutions proposed by manufacturers of net zero technologies to meet the industrial sector needs;
- Propose and demonstrate the necessary modifications of processes for the efficient and flexible incorporation and the integration of net zero technologies in existing industrial plants;
- Demonstrate the effectiveness and replicability of the proposed approaches allowing to move from custom-built project by project approach for each specific industrial plant and process, to more streamlined, standardised yet flexible solution for industrial sector(s) and/or processes;
- Develop solutions offering an optimal balance between standardisation and flexibility as well as providing high-quality tailored solutions at competitive prices;
- Support the development of skills for the integration of net-zero technologies into energy intensive industries.

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<sup>27</sup> Net-zero technologies as defined in the Net Zero Industry Act, Annex I: Strategic Net-zero Technologies

Proposals should involve all actors in the value chain from the manufacturers of net zero technology solutions to energy intensive industries and engineering and construction firms. Interoperability and secure and trusted data sharing between the stakeholders of the value chain should be ensured.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination. As project output an elaborated exploitation plan should be developed, including preliminary plans for scalability, commercialisation and deployment (feasibility study, business plan and financial model) indicating possible private and public funding sources (e.g. Innovation Fund, InvestEU and cohesion policy funds). Societal- and environmental impact as well as implications for the workplace (including skills and organisational changes) should be outlined. Proposals should ensure dissemination and replication of the proposed approaches for wide deployment, including advising and building capacity among the relevant actors. Proposals should be based on a sound techno-economic analysis that confirms the economic viability in view of evolving regulatory frameworks.

The inclusion of a GHG avoidance methodology<sup>28</sup> is recommended and should provide detailed description of baselines and projected reductions.

*The attention of proposers is also drawn to the complementary topic HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-05: Advanced manufacturing technologies for leadership of EU manufacturers in products for the net-zero industry.*

This topic implements the co-programmed European partnerships Processes4Planet and Made in Europe.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-37: Solving issues in carbon-neutral iron and steel making processes with diverse input materials of varying quality (Clean Steel Partnership) (RIA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 14.00 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 28.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions

<sup>28</sup> That could follow Innovation Fund methodology: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/innovfund/wp-call/2021/call-annex\\_c\\_innovfund-lsc-2021\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/innovfund/wp-call/2021/call-annex_c_innovfund-lsc-2021_en.pdf)



<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

Expected Outcome: The topic enables a fast and reliable transition to innovative technology pathways for carbon-neutral iron and steel making by tackling fundamental problems and boundary conditions with a system-level approach. This approach will target input materials, processes, and iron /steel output quality, considering the needs to reduce production costs, find alternative materials and solutions, improve process/energy efficiency and achieve at least the traditional product quality.

Iron and steel making plants constitute complex systems where the product quality is bound to a large set of variables. Variations in feedstock composition, along with reductant choice and mix, introduce noticeable variations in process metallurgy, its kinetics and thermodynamics, with influence on the morphology of the intermediates and consequent impact on the next phases of production, and lifetime, quality, safety and reliability of the finished product.

The strong dependence of the final steel quality on the variable quality of the raw materials and the balance of the production process, has to be taken into account under the consideration of costs, energy availability, sustainability, overall and specific energy efficiency, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and strategic resources (in particular strategic raw materials<sup>29</sup>).

Projects are expected to contribute to at least three of the following outcomes:

- Validate innovative carbon-neutral iron and steel making solutions within a system-level approach and in consideration of diverse materials with varying quality (raw input materials and reductants mix) and energy needs. Address high-risk factors at macroscopic and microscopic level through detailed characterisation of the physical and chemical interactions that could compromise the optimal functioning of the processes;
- Solve system-level issues within at least two low-CO<sub>2</sub> production routes;
- Define solutions and provide concepts to address possible modifications or material substitutions in innovative installations for low CO<sub>2</sub> iron and steel production;
- Improve low-CO<sub>2</sub> steel production reliability to target high-quality products: i) clarify the effect of material and process variables, and overall system aspects; ii) clarify the influence of changing crude steel quality on the properties of the produced steel, with the purpose to achieve quality and extended lifespan of products; iii) clarify the impact of diverse input materials with varying quality on the residue characteristics and on its potential valorisation and use;

<sup>29</sup>

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/critical-raw-materials/>

- Provide an impact analysis covering the materials and energy balance of identified solutions, viability and byproducts.

Scope: The topic calls for collaborative approach between academia, industry (including SMEs) and research organizations with the purpose to support: i) understanding, validating, and solving essential problems to allow maturity of innovative technologies in the industrial investment panorama for future carbon-neutral iron and steel making, ii) accelerating a reliable transition to climate neutrality in view of the end of the free ETS allowances by providing solutions optimized for different scenarios, and iii) fulfilling the Commission Recommendation 2024/774<sup>30</sup> on a Code of Practice on industry-academia co-creation for knowledge valorisation.

Proposals should address at least four of the following points:

- De-risk and extend operational windows of low CO<sub>2</sub> iron- and steel making technologies considering system-level scenarios;
- Target the heterogeneity of available reductants and feedstock materials, their different physical states and the mixed use of them. In this context, the sustainability of the process to produce them should be considered, along with the requirements for various grades of purity;
- Achieve high-quality steel products characterized by increased tolerances of contents of contaminants, originating from low quality raw materials. Adapt the micro-structure and control application-specific properties by acting on material preparation, processes and process technologies. Include the development of detection / measurement systems and multi-scale models as needed;
- Analyse, micro- and/or nano-characterise, and compare low-carbon production of liquid iron and/or crude steel combining the use of direct reduced iron (DRI) with varying qualities and raw materials from primary and secondary sources to push for closing material cycles;
- Couple the analysis with needs for plant design optimisation and measures to mitigate risks during operation;
- Define pre-processing needs of primary and secondary iron containing materials for iron and steelmaking targeting low environmental impact. Analyse the effects on the production process and product metallurgy;
- Consider analytical research infrastructures. Data should be supporting simulations- and modelling needs in line with FAIR (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability and Reusability) principles. Interoperability of data sharing should be addressed;

<sup>30</sup>

[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L\\_202400774](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202400774)

- Consider effects of solutions indicated in the outcomes of the proposed project on specific regional or country level conditions, including cross-sectorial scenarios, such as energy availability, water use and recovery of water and other resources from the steelmaking process to use in other industrial sectors and vice versa, where applicable;
- Use tools such as, but not limited to, life cycle assessment (LCA) or life cycle costing (LCC) to create benchmarks for progress measurement towards carbon neutrality;
- Aim at taking advantage of pilot plants in Europe to create correlations between real-world processes and laboratory-based research.

Multidisciplinary research activities should address at least one of the following:

- Introduce sensors or develop new ones, especially able to work in very high temperature environments. They may include a soft and integrated set of sensors. Use fast digital techniques for data collection, processing and analysis. Develop enhanced models with different levels of resolution and integrate Machine Learning (ML)/AI for comprehensive understanding of process mechanisms;
- Use input from finalised/ongoing research in heat recovery via heat exchange technologies that could contribute to reduction of external energy use;
- Develop concepts for on-site hydrogen production techniques at very low cost.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy, for at least one process route, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination. If more than one process route is part of the project, the selection of the preferred one should be duly justified.

Additionally, a strategy for skills development to target innovative solutions should be presented, associating social partners when relevant.

The actions should envisage clustering activities with other projects funded under this topic. Cross-projects co-operation should include consultations and joint activities on cross-cutting issues and share of results not bound to intellectual property, as well as participating in joint meetings and communication events. To this end proposals should foresee a dedicated work package.

Projects (if selected for funding and if relevant) could consider clustering activities with one project funded under topic HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-DIGITAL-61.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement.

This topic implements the European co-programmed Clean Steel Partnership.

## Energy-intensive Industries - Circularity and Zero Pollution

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-TWIN-TRANSITION-35-two-stage: Developing and embedding upcycling technologies into viable business (Processes4Planet partnership) (IA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY two-stage</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 8.00 and 12.00 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 48.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applicants submitting a proposal under the blind evaluation pilot (see General Annex F) must not disclose their organisation names, acronyms, logos nor names of personnel in the proposal abstract and Part B of their first-stage application (see General Annex E).</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>This topic is part of the blind evaluation pilot under which first stage proposals will be evaluated blindly.</p> <p>To ensure a portfolio including support leading to the recovery and upgrading of industrial infrastructure in Ukraine, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking, but also to at least one project involving at least one non-profit partner and at least one industrial partner established and located in Ukraine, provided that the application attains all thresholds.</p>
<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) <sup>31</sup> .
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

Expected Outcome: Energy Intensive industries will benefit from the following outcomes:

- Prove the technical, economic, and environmental feasibility of the upcycling of end-of-life waste materials by process industries in integrated circular schemes – including for supplying the value chains of net zero technologies and components;
- Enable doubling the ratio of secondary raw materials upcycled leading to a significant increase in resource, including energy efficiency and improved carbon lifecycle across the value chain compared to present levels;
- Increase the competitiveness of the European process industry, including by providing new business opportunities and revenue flows for recycling companies benefiting particularly SMEs – including for supplying the value chains of net zero technologies and components;
- Foster the use of digital tools as well as the data sharing, and FAIR (Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability and Reusability) digital assets principles.
- As appropriate in one or more projects, contribute to the reconstruction, recovery, circularity and upgrading of industries of Ukraine.

Scope: The recycling of end-of-life materials into valuable materials that can replace primary raw materials requires integrated systems from the collection to dismantling and separation to their final processing. The technologies and implementation (including logistics and economics) of such circular schemes should be addressed in an integrated way. The innovation needed will depend on the addressed waste category. However, even if the upcycling technologies and implementation may be sector/material specific, the cross-sectorial elements are important and should deserve due attention.

Proposals are expected to address all of the following:

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<sup>31</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

- Develop processes for the upcycling of end-of-life materials in an integrated way, including the development of better novel separation, sorting and processing technologies as well as digitalisation and automation of the processes as necessary;
- Integration of technologies and logistics systems into business models of circular schemes;
- Focus on processes and secondary raw materials which offer the highest additional upcycling potential and accordingly develop novel upcycling technologies and processes including purification technologies;
- Identify the likely impacts of the upcycling solutions with respect to economic and job creation potential, as well as environmental footprint referring to the full set of planetary boundaries including freshwater intake aspects;
- Where relevant, minimise the presence of substances of concern to mitigate the impacts of multiple recycling loops as well as the accumulation of additives and trace materials in secondary resource streams;
- Consider advanced monitoring and sensing along the value chains and improved data completeness, accuracy and interoperability between the process and recycling companies. In this context, digital tools, such as a Digital Product Passport for tracking and tracing of materials throughout the lifecycle of a product should be applied and data sharing should be addressed.

Proposals should include techno-economic and life-cycle assessment of the overall process (including of the carbon footprint) and demonstrate the economic viability of the approach. This can be combined with an analysis of the effect of regulatory changes and demand side stimulation measures.

Projects are encouraged to integrate existing Hubs4Circularity<sup>32</sup> as nodes in the value chains. Proposals should actively pursue the involvement of all actors in the value chain from the process industry to designers, operators, formulators, recyclers, public authorities, and standardisation actors.

Additionally, a strategy for skills development should be presented associating social partners where relevant. Particular attention should be given to the cooperation with existing initiatives having developed education- and skills activities and outcomes in this area.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, underlining how the proposal will serve the purpose to boost industrial decarbonisation technologies supply chain in Europe.

*Under this topic, it is envisaged to include support for the recovery and upgrading of industrial infrastructure in Ukraine, and for this reason at least one proposal meeting the*

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<sup>32</sup> [Hubs4Circularity \(h4c-community.eu\)](https://hubs4circularity.eu/), [Horizon Europe strategic plan 2025-2027-KI0223326ENN.pdf](#) (page 94)

*criteria set out in the specific conditions will be funded. However, it is not mandatory to include such support in a proposal.*

This topic implements the co-programmed European partnership Processes4Planet.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-36: Safe and clean processing technologies and products (Processes4Planet partnership) (RIA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 6.00 and 8.00 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 24.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 4-6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<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). <sup>33</sup> .
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

Expected Outcome: Energy Intensive industries will benefit from the following outcomes:

<sup>33</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

- Reduce the use of hazardous substances in production processes and materials that pose a risk for human- and environmental health and safety, and ensure the avoidance of their proliferation into products;
- Enable novel processing technologies and materials with reduced health, safety, and environmental impacts;
- Increased knowledge on the industrial emission releases when it comes to emerging and less known groups of hazardous pollutants not regulated at EU level;
- Reduce the occupational exposure risk and negative health impacts at work by empowering employees;
- Contribute to the clean air and potentially biodiversity objectives, through the outcomes above.

Scope: Whereas the release of pollutants by European industry has generally decreased during the last decade, and it is expected to continue to do so, industry still contributes significantly to the emission of many pollutants into the European environment. Pollution harms our health and our environment. In addition to affecting people's health, pollution is one of the main reasons for the loss of biodiversity. Moreover, only emissions of historically important pollutants are reported by industry. Information on emerging and less known pollutants, especially those not regulated by the Industrial Emissions Directive, and related methods of monitoring is lacking. GHG emissions from industry are not included in the scope of this topic. Pollutant emissions to air, water and soil are considered.

Proposals under this topic should address all of the following:

- Demonstrate the reduction of the use of hazardous substances that pose a risk for human- and environmental health and safety and thereby also their proliferation into the products;
- Develop novel processing technologies leading to reduced health, safety and environmental impacts beyond CO<sub>2</sub> emissions;
- Minimise adverse effects from the novel processes' technologies on the function and durability of the materials, recyclability, the production cost as well as the associated risk;
- Where relevant, develop sampling and monitoring methods for emerging pollutants and less known groups of pollutants in stack emissions before entering the environment.

Proposals should include techno-economic and life-cycle assessment considerations of the overall process. They should consider involving all the relevant actors in a participatory approach for the reduction of risk and health issues at work.



Research should build on existing standards, or if relevant, contribute to standardisation, especially when addressing pollutants that lack robust monitoring methods. Where relevant, interoperability for data sharing should be addressed.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy as outlined in the introduction to this Destination.

If selected for funding, projects are encouraged to build on, or seek collaboration, with existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant European, national, or regional initiatives and funding programmes. Where relevant, projects are encouraged to take advantage of European research infrastructures and services in the areas of analytical research infrastructures such as the ones in the ARIE network<sup>34</sup> or environment, health and food<sup>35</sup>. Projects are moreover encouraged to inform the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) of their work plan to foster coordination with on-going science-for-policy related activities in the European Commission.

International cooperation is encouraged.

This topic implements the co-programmed European partnership Processes4Planet.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-38: Synergies and mutual learning with national and regional initiatives in Europe on Industrial decarbonisation (CSA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 1.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 1.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<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

<sup>34</sup> <https://arie-eu.org/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://ri-portfolio.esfri.eu/>

	Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025). <sup>36</sup> .
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Expected Outcome:

- Increased cooperation across Member States and Associated Countries related to European, national and regional initiatives in the field of decarbonisation of energy - intensive industries in the context of a R&I deployment agenda.
- Support the implementation of the part on accelerating the decarbonisation of energy-intensive industries of the ERA Action on “*Accelerating R&I investments for Europe’s industrial Transformation and Competitive Sustainability*” featuring in the 2025-2027 ERA Policy Agenda.
- Exchange of best practices across Member States and Associated Countries on industrial decarbonisation projects and initiatives under the ERA Action and in the context of a R&I deployment agenda.
- Contribute to the Coordination of actions under the ERA Action and relevant work streams under the SET-Plan.
- Facilitate the development of new and update of existing national and regional industrial decarbonisation roadmaps, strategies, and action plans on energy intensive industries of countries participating in the ERA Action as well as under the SET Plan.
- Make available relevant national and regionally funded projects on the European Innovation Centre for Industrial Transformation and Emissions (INCITE)-Platform in line with a methodology developed by the Joint Research Centre in cooperation with other Commission services.

Scope: The governance of the action should be under the authority of national and regional governments and relevant public bodies who are responsible for national and regional policies, strategies and programmes addressing energy intensive industries.

Proposals should support the coordination of national and regional public authorities’ funding of research, innovation, acceleration of public/private R&I and deployment of technologies for the energy intensive industries’ decarbonisation. It should be aligned with the policies rolled out under the Clean Industrial Deal. The proposals should take into account and build on the Mutual Learning Exercise on Industrial Decarbonisation<sup>37</sup>.

Coordination and support activities should address all of the following:

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

<sup>37</sup> [Mutual Learning Exercise on Industrial decarbonisation | Research and Innovation \(europa.eu\)](#)

- Promote and organise active networking, exchanges of information and mutual learning and the application of a whole-of-government approach, involving national and regional authorities.
- Build an overview of national and regional technology roadmaps, strategies, and action plans on industrial decarbonisation.
- Compare this overview to relevant work at European level, including the ERA Industrial Technology Roadmap for low carbon technologies in energy-intensive industries, the updated SRIAs of the Processes4Planet and Clean Steel Partnerships, activities under the Innovation Funds, the SET-Plan, and the Net Zero Industry Act (and its and implementing acts), as well as the 2020 Taxonomy Regulation and its implementation as regards climate mitigation<sup>38</sup>.
- Build and exchange knowledge and expertise in national and regional industrial decarbonisation roadmapping for low-carbon technologies in energy-intensive industries; and develop monitoring tools and identify indicators to monitor progress.
- Promote the valorisation of knowledge and results of EU, national and regional projects, in line with the Council conclusions<sup>39</sup> on knowledge valorisation of 23 May 2024.
- Implement the action through analytical work, providing information and data, workshops to facilitate collaboration among countries participating under the energy intensive industry part of the ERA Action and relevant working parties under the SET Plan among others.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-TWIN-TRANSITION-39: Towards human-centric, sustainable and resilient energy-intensive industries (Processes4Planet and Clean Steel partnerships) (CSA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 2.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:

<sup>38</sup> Commission Delegated Act 2021/2139 as regards the relevant parts of section 3 on manufacturing  
<sup>39</sup> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10182-2024-INIT/en/pdf>

<i>Agreements</i>	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). <sup>40</sup> .
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Expected Outcome: Proposals should contribute to the following outcomes:

- Facilitate radical workplace innovation, optimising human-machine interactions and capitalising on the added value of human workers via digital technologies;
- Contribute to the development of innovative technologies in a human-centric way while reducing the risk and negative health impacts at work;
- Incorporate new breakthrough technologies and realise new production processes with respect to human-centric design, environmental- and societal impacts and resilience;
- Improve the capacities of actors to integrate Industry 5.0 (human-centricity, sustainability, and resilience) in the technological development processes by at the same time increasing the competitiveness of the industry.

Scope: Industry 5.0 recognises the power of industry to achieve societal goals beyond jobs and growth to become a resilient provider of prosperity. It focuses on making production respect the boundaries of our planet improving competitiveness of European process industries and placing the wellbeing of the industrial worker at the centre of the production process, while increasingly embracing digital and green technologies to remain the solution provider for all Europeans.

Coordination and support activities should address all of the following:

- Prepare an overview of the state of the preconditions for adding the Industry 5.0 perspective to energy intensive industries - this includes human-centric, gender-specific, resilience and sustainability aspects;
- Map technologies (e.g., industrial wearable, human digital twin, extended reality) integrating individual competences and increasing usability, specifically applicable to energy intensive industries sectors and processes. For example, technologies i) supporting the co-design of processes and workplaces, enhancing the remote monitoring experience and creating new capabilities for operating; ii) supporting new forms of human-machine interaction by providing real-time feedback on personal performance

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<sup>40</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

and holistic intuitive workplace interfaces; or iii) co-designed in accordance with user expectations and the integration of workplace experience;

- Explore through a practical assessment how the process automation technologies currently in use in Process Industries are making use of innovative the industry 5.0 technologies (the practical assessment is expected to cover several companies and at least five industry sectors);
- Develop an Industry 5.0 framework and engage with a wide range of stakeholders including labour authorities and ongoing relevant sectoral social dialogues at European level. This should include empower employees in a participatory approach for adding the industry 5.0 dimension to the industrial processes including the reduction of risk and health issues;
- Dissemination and communication of information and knowledge to stakeholders including industry, policy makers, research and education actors, civil society and general public;
- Proposals should specifically address gender, age, and disability considerations, recognising potential variations in technological adoption and impact across diverse demographic groups.

This topic implements the co-programmed European partnerships Processes4Planet and Clean Steel partnerships.

### **Social Circular Enterprises**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-TWIN-TRANSITION-21-two-stage: Demonstrators for clusters of social circular enterprises (IA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY two-stage</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 5.00 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 10.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:  Applicants submitting a proposal under the blind evaluation pilot (see

	General Annex F) must not disclose their organisation names, acronyms, logos nor names of personnel in the proposal abstract and Part B of their first-stage application (see General Annex E).
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:  This topic is part of the blind evaluation pilot under which first stage proposals will be evaluated blindly.
<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) <sup>41</sup> .

Expected Outcome: Social Circular Enterprises (SCEs)<sup>42</sup> need to adapt to new market realities in the circular economy, driven by the search for new market opportunities (e.g. secondary raw materials market, business models addressing change in consumption awareness, and technological developments improving productivity). To achieve this adaptation, investment in R&D capacity and technology for SCEs is essential. Besides further developing its offer towards consumers, SCEs are increasingly focussing their activities towards B2B markets, such as for secondary raw materials. In that regard, SCEs started to explore the growing and labour-intensive market of sorting, recycling and upcycling services for other businesses. Research and innovation can accelerate this potential and is most needed in the area to remain competitive. Moreover, research and innovation in this sector can lever potentials beyond productivity and competitiveness, as SCEs pursue a triple impact: economic, green (contribute to a circular and resource efficient economy) and social (employment of vulnerable groups).

The following outcomes are expected for SCEs and wider circular networks:

- Improve the uptake and scale of technology solutions in individual SCE and promote shared technology development and engineering through SCE clusters.
- Improve competitiveness through enhanced productivity, as well as new market opportunities, for SCEs related to specific waste streams with potential for competitive

<sup>41</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> [https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/sites/default/files/social\\_circular\\_economy\\_2017.pdf](https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/sites/default/files/social_circular_economy_2017.pdf)

advantages, such as, textiles, WEEE (waste electrical and electronic equipment) and construction materials;

- Prove technical, economic, and environmental excellence of SCE in (local) circular value chains (e.g. I-US) leading to increased collaboration with (mainstream / for profit) industrial partners;
- Contribute to the reduction of non-recyclable waste generated in the region/area of the cluster by contributing to the re-using and transforming waste, by-products, and side-streams into new/secondary resources of raw materials;
- Increase employment of persons with a distance to the labour market in SCE and improve their labour productivity, for example by using assistive technology in the work process and use of data (e.g. AI trained assessment and instructions).

Scope: Social Circular Enterprises (SCEs) have been pioneers in the circular economy since decades. They are active in all stages of the circular economy and deal with various waste stream. SCEs are also known to offer new and innovative circular business models and bringing new circular services and products to the market. In the last decade SCE also entered the market of secondary raw materials by collecting and disassembling various products and goods. The majority of SCEs are SMEs and offer local employment opportunities to vulnerable groups (99%)<sup>43</sup>. On average, a circular social enterprise creates 70 jobs per 1,000 tons collected with a view of being re-used.

Projects are expected to research and develop a replicable tech-oriented demonstrator(s) within social circular clusters. Within a demonstrator, partners are expected to jointly adapt, design, test and implement relevant technology solutions. The following specific activities are expected within demonstrators:

- The demonstrators are supposed to organise as a Social Circular Tech Cluster allowing to pool resources and adapt, develop and test technology solutions. This will facilitate more business opportunities (tech based spin-offs) and sharing of expertise with relevant industries.
- A demonstrator consortium should be active in at least two Member States or Associated Countries and can choose to focus on textile and construction waste or WEEE. Each demonstrator consortium exists out of two or more clusters, each grouping individual SCEs (ideally with different degrees of maturity<sup>44</sup>), for-profit circular companies (e.g. sectoral peers in secondary raw materials industries), research, and tech centres able to support SCE with relevant technology and research capacity. SCEs should form the core of the consortia, and should benefit directly from the interventions to improve their triple impact model. Public authorities and SCE federations could engage where appropriate. Demonstrator consortia should be transnational in order to compare pilots in different markets.

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<sup>43</sup> Proximity and social economy industrial ecosystem. Annual Single Market Report 2021.

<sup>44</sup> [https://social-economy-gateway.ec.europa.eu/about-social-economy\\_en](https://social-economy-gateway.ec.europa.eu/about-social-economy_en)



- Adapting, designing and developing technologies in SCEs needs should focus on optimising efficiency<sup>45</sup> in management and processing of waste streams and enlarge the potential market activity of SCEs in the circular economy (WEEE, textiles and construction focus). Relevant technologies should improve the productivity and innovation capacity within SCE and consequently the market position in the secondary raw materials markets. Technologies can include data driven technologies such as AI to improve sorting knowledge and decision making (screening based on automated recognition with cost-benefit analysis), software to standardise repair operations and instructions, improve stocks management and increase reuse sales by optimising the pricing system (e.g. automated value calculation of incoming materials and goods), digital modelling tools (including material passport), etc.
- Research could also include the potential of assistive technologies to support employees (mostly persons with disabilities, specific impairments, or social disadvantages) in SCE in order to improve their productivity and wellbeing.
- Market research focussing on improving the position of SCE as an attractive partner in management and processing of waste streams (in terms of textile, WEEE and construction materials) with most potential for growth in B2B markets. For example focussing on collection, disassembly, sorting, purification, concentration, recycling, exchanging or preparation, for the valorisation of waste to be used as feedstock for other plants and companies across sectors and/or across value chains. This market research can include specific sectoral assessment of economic potential for most labour-intensive circular activities.
- By organising through clusters, demonstrators are motivated to develop shared engineering activities (labs, strategies and shared technology) to make technology accessible for enterprises with less capacity and resources and to reduce overall costs for individual SCEs.
- Where relevant, proposals are encouraged to build on, or seek collaboration with, existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives and funding programmes. In particular, the project could build further on relevant knowledge, tools, methods and technology developed and applied within existing H4C (Clusters for Circularity) and its knowledge platform.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> <https://rreuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/d7--findings-and-evaluation-report-01.-digital-and-social-trends-in-re-use-operations-.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.h4c-community.eu/>



## **Destination 2: Achieving technological leadership for Europe's open strategic autonomy in raw materials, chemicals and innovative materials**

The research and innovation under this Destination will contribute to a paradigm shift, as regards the availability, development, use and disposal of chemicals and materials. This is necessary to guarantee Europe's technological sovereignty and capacity to deliver on the twin green and digital transitions (it is thus strongly linked to the objectives of the Destination 'Achieving global leadership in climate-neutral, circular and digitised industrial and digital value chains').

To enable such a shift, an innovative, strong European R&I ecosystem for circular chemicals and materials is needed, working across different technology readiness levels. Bringing knowledge and skills together across the materials' value chains is key to ensuring that this shift can materialise.

The requirements of the European Green Deal for safety, sustainability and circularity should be considered across the life cycle of a chemical or material. The 2022 Commission Recommendation on 'Safe and Sustainable by Design' (SSbD) sets out a new framework on how to achieve these objectives.

R&I activities should contribute to strengthen EU's critical raw materials capacities along all stages of the value chain, increasing our resilience by reducing dependencies, increasing preparedness and promoting supply chain sustainability and circularity, in line with the Critical Raw Materials Act. It is necessary to improve the energy and process efficiency of extractive and processing activities and minimise their environmental impact, including GHG emissions. Advancements need to be made on finding options for replacing critical raw materials with other (advanced) materials offering at least the same functionality and taking into account the existing environmental concerns.

Advanced materials (including amongst others nano- and 2D materials) and chemicals are designed with functionality in mind. Compared to conventional materials, they have novel properties that significantly step-up performance. New digital tools are needed such as common data spaces, digital twins, industrial virtual worlds, as well as novel (autonomous) design, synthesis, development, characterisation and fabrication tools as well as continuous training of scientists on these new tools.

To secure unimpeded market entry, appropriate test methods are needed. New chemicals and materials should be developed using the SSbD framework and with the efficiency and circularity of materials in mind, also for their inclusion in products. This calls for tools, models and data for robust SSbD, including animal-free new approach methodologies and systematic life-cycle assessments. Bio-based advanced materials/chemicals and the integration and interaction of biological and artificial materials and components offer new opportunities to reduce resource dependencies and maintain sustainability.

Achieving the circularity of both raw materials and advanced materials is a key future challenge. Establishing new material flows, recovery, recycling and upcycling of materials

from waste are challenges in themselves, but they also require information sharing along and across value chains and development of new business models allowing to foster innovative solutions related to technological progress, such as in materials design.

Uptake of advanced materials as well as a more efficient use of materials should be fostered in product and materials-based technology developments. This also requires new business models to be developed for the deployment of circular technologies and value chains as well as for providing product-as-a-service models, on-demand manufacturing, take-back-schemes and other service-based businesses. Strong support to SMEs is required so they can thrive in this materials ecosystem.

### **Business cases and exploitation strategies for industrialisation:**

This section applies only to those topics in this Destination, for which proposals should demonstrate the expected outcomes by including a *business case and exploitation strategy for industrialisation*.

A business case and a credible initial exploitation strategy are essential components in the ultimate success of an industry-based project, as well as its prospects to attract further investments for deployment. They will both be decisive factors under the impact criterion, and proposers are encouraged to use the extended page limit to present a carefully considered business case and exploitation strategy, backed by the management of the companies involved.

The *business case* should demonstrate the expected impact of the proposal in terms of enhanced market opportunities for the participants and deployment in the EU, in the short to medium term. It should describe the targeted market(s); estimated market size in the EU and globally; user and customer needs; and demonstrate that the solutions will match the market and user needs in a cost-effective manner; and describe the expected market position and competitive advantage.

The *exploitation strategy* should identify obstacles, requirements and necessary actions involved in reaching higher TRLs (Technology Readiness Levels), for example: securing the required investments, including through possible synergies with other programmes; accessing the required skills; matching value chains; enhancing product robustness; securing industrial integrators; and user acceptance.

For TRLs 6 and 7, a credible strategy to achieve future full-scale deployment in the EU is expected, indicating the intentions of the industrial partners after the end of the project.

Where relevant, in the context of **skills**, it is recommended to develop training material to endow workers with the right skillset in order to support the uptake and deployment of new innovative products, services, and processes developed in the different projects. This material should be tested and be scalable, and can potentially be up-scaled through the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). This will help the European labour force to close the skill gaps in the relevant sectors and occupational groups and improve employment and social levels across the EU and associated countries.

For topics in this destination, consortia (if selected for funding) could consider **voluntary contributions in terms of data, indicators and knowledge to relevant Joint Research Centre (JRC) platforms** for capitalising the knowledge developed in their projects and become more policy relevant:

- INnovation Centre for Industrial Transformation and Emissions (INCITE) (<https://innovation-centre-for-industrial-transformation.ec.europa.eu/>).
- The Energy and Industry Geography Lab: EIGL (<https://energy-industry-geolab.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>).

**Innovation Actions** — Legal entities established in China are not eligible to participate in Innovation Actions in any capacity. Please refer to the Annex B of the General Annexes of this Work Programme for further details.

### **Raw Materials**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-61: Technologies for critical raw materials and strategic raw materials from end-of-life products (IA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 8.00 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 24.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>To increase EU resilience in raw materials supply chains and thus reduce the serious risk to the Union's strategic assets, economic and societal interests, autonomy and security associated with the current EU reliance on a few third countries for critical raw materials, by increasing sustainable and responsible sourcing of primary and secondary raw materials necessary to enable the green and digital transition and in</p>

	<p>alignment with the objectives of the Critical Raw Materials Act<sup>47</sup>, participation in this topic is limited to legal entities established in Member States, associated countries, OECD countries, African Union Member States, MERCOSUR, CARIFORUM, Andean Community and countries with which the EU has concluded strategic partnerships on raw materials<sup>48</sup> as well as trade agreements (or association/economic partnership or equivalent agreements, including the new Clean Trade and Investment Partnerships) containing raw materials cooperation provisions (i.e. Energy and Raw materials chapters)<sup>49</sup>. The choice of these countries was made taking into consideration the development of strategic international partnerships on raw materials and avoidance of reinforcing existing over-dependencies, as well as the importance of involving partners committed to pursuing open trade in such materials.</p> <p>Proposals including legal entities which are not established in the countries that fall under the criteria above will be ineligible.</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

**Expected Outcome:** The projects' outcomes will enable the expected impacts of the destination by increasing supply security and access to secondary raw materials, in particular critical and strategic raw materials for EU<sup>50</sup> industrial value chains and strategic sectors which will alleviate critical raw materials dependency.

<sup>47</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 ([OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj)).

<sup>48</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy_en)

<sup>49</sup> [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/negotiations-and-agreements\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/negotiations-and-agreements_en)

<sup>50</sup> Annex I and II, Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and

Projects are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Increased recovery rate of critical and strategic raw materials as set out in the Critical Raw Materials Act<sup>51</sup> through developing raw materials recycling and re-use of components and/or products from end-of-life (EoL) products, including recovery of raw material by-products.
- Improved competitiveness of secondary raw materials production by enhancing cost effectiveness.
- Improved efficiency of technologies for separation and recycling and the sustainable embedment of the process in terms of energy, resource and water use, waste and emissions (including Green House Gases and air pollutants) footprint.
- Improved responsible supply of raw materials to Europe from EoL streams in line with the EU principles for sustainable raw materials,<sup>52</sup> which are a non-regulatory set of principles based on the EU acquis. They set out requirements for sustainable raw materials and extraction and processing in Europe in terms of social, environmental and economic performance.
- Actions are expected to contribute to the implementation of the EU Critical Raw Materials Act<sup>53</sup>.

Scope:

- Actions should develop material efficient high-quality re-use and recycling of one or more of the following end-of-life product categories/key waste streams: waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), waste batteries, end-of-life vehicles, waste wind turbines, waste solar photovoltaics, waste heat pumps, waste electrolyzers and machine tools made from high-performance alloys.
- Actions should focus on the whole chain of re-using and recycling processes and procedures – from collection, logistics, characterisation, sorting, cleaning, refining and purification of secondary raw materials and quality of produced outputs.
- Actions should focus on functional re-use and recycling. Recycling where the recycled material is of lower functionality than the original material (downcycling) is to be avoided.

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amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 ([OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj>](#)).

<sup>51</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 ([OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj>](#)).

<sup>52</sup> European Commission. Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. (2021). EU principles for sustainable raw materials. Publications Office. <https://doi.org/10.2873/12856>

<sup>53</sup> To be updated after publication in the Official Journal

- Actions should envisage clustering activities with other projects aiming at recycling, second life, re-use, repurposing, remanufacturing of products and/or components relevant selected projects for cross-projects co-operation, consultations and joint activities on cross-cutting issues and share of results as well as participating in joint meetings and communication events. To this end proposals should foresee a dedicated work package and/or task, and earmark the appropriate resources accordingly.
- Actions should facilitate the market uptake of solutions developed through industrially- and user-driven multidisciplinary consortia covering the relevant value chain and should consider standardisation aspects when relevant. The action should also include the analysis of financial opportunities ensuring the market exploitation and replication of the circular business model behind the developed solutions as new processes, products and/or services.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and/or gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement, however, should you consider it to be of relevance for your specific proposal, you are strongly encouraged to do it.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-62: Strategic Partnerships for Raw Materials: Innovative Approaches for sustainable production of Critical Raw Materials (IA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 7.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 30.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>To increase EU resilience in raw materials supply chains and thus reduce the serious risk to the Union's strategic assets, economic and societal interests, autonomy and security associated with the current EU reliance on a few third countries for critical raw materials, by increasing sustainable and responsible sourcing of primary and secondary raw materials</p>

	<p>necessary to enable the green and digital transition and in alignment with the objectives of the Critical Raw Materials Act<sup>54</sup>, participation in this topic is limited to legal entities established in Member States, associated countries, OECD countries, African Union Member States, MERCOSUR, CARIFORUM, Andean Community and countries with which the EU has concluded strategic partnerships on raw materials<sup>55</sup> as well as trade agreements (or association/economic partnership or equivalent agreements, including the new Clean Trade and Investment Partnerships) containing raw materials cooperation provisions (i.e. Energy and Raw materials chapters)<sup>56</sup>. The choice of these countries was made taking into consideration the development of strategic international partnerships on raw materials and avoidance of reinforcing existing over-dependencies, as well as the importance of involving partners committed to pursuing open trade in such materials.</p> <p>Proposals including legal entities which are not established in the countries that fall under the criteria above will be ineligible.</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p> <p>Due to the scope of this topic, legal entities established in countries with which the EU has established strategic partnerships for raw materials<sup>57</sup> are exceptionally eligible for Union funding.</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following

<sup>54</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy_en) Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 ([OJ L 2024/1252](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj), 3.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj>).

<sup>55</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy_en)

<sup>56</sup> [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/negotiations-and-agreements\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/negotiations-and-agreements_en)

<sup>57</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy_en) Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 ([OJ L 2024/1252](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj), 3.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj>).

	<p>exceptions apply:</p> <p>To ensure a balanced portfolio covering the four different groups mentioned in the scope below, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but also to at least the highest ranked proposal within each group, provided that the applications attain all thresholds.</p>
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	<p>In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.</p>

**Expected Outcome:** Projects outcomes will enable the expected impacts of the destination by increasing supply security and access to more sustainable produced primary raw materials and secondary raw materials, in particular critical and strategic raw materials for EU<sup>58</sup> industrial value chains and strategic sectors.

Projects are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Strengthen EU cooperation with countries the EU established strategic partnerships on Raw Materials<sup>59</sup>;
- Improved industrial viability, safety and environmental impacts of the operation in a way that leads to measurable improvements;
- Improved diversification of EU sourcing of critical raw materials from third countries;
- Improved responsible supply of raw materials to Europe in line with the EU principles for sustainable raw materials<sup>60</sup>, which are a non-regulatory set of principles based on the EU acquis. They set out requirements for sustainable raw materials and extraction and processing in Europe in terms of social, environmental and economic performance.
- Dissemination and exploitation of projects outputs is tailored for organisations and industry dealing with raw materials in the EU and project partner from Strategic partnership countries.
- Promote the utilisation of UNFC (United Nations Framework Classification for Resources) and UNRMS (United Nations Resource Management System) in the raw materials sector.

<sup>58</sup> Annex 1 and Annex 2, Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 (OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, [http](http://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy_en)).

<sup>59</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy_en)

<sup>60</sup> European Commission. Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. (2021). EU principles for sustainable raw materials. Publications Office. <https://doi.org/10.2873/12856>



- Actions are expected to contribute to the implementation of the EU Critical Raw Materials Act<sup>61</sup>.

Scope: Proposals should:

- Develop and demonstrate extraction, processing or refining technologies in order to facilitate and increase recovery in exploitation of primary critical raw materials (minerals and metals only). The proposals have to demonstrate (measure and assess) reduced environmental and social impact. Proposals can include additional exploration aspects if duly justified.
- Justify the relevance of all targeted minerals and metals. Priority are the EU critical raw materials. Sea mining is not within the scope of this topic.
- Collaborate with countries with which the EU has signed Strategic Partnerships on Raw Materials.<sup>62</sup>
- Collaborate with one selected Strategic Partnership country out of the four groups: Group 1 (Argentina, Chile), Group 2 (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia, Rwanda, Zambia), Group 3 (Kazakhstan, Serbia, Uzbekistan), Group 4 (Australia, Greenland). Group 4 can be extended to countries which will sign strategic partnerships for raw materials before the deadline for applications. The consortia should include raw materials industry from the targeted country in the focussed group, as well as downstream users from the EU. Proposals are expected to focus on one out of four groups.
- Demonstrate technology on mineral resources of the targeted partner country. The environmental (including GHG and other air pollutant emissions, water, soils, biodiversity) and social impacts of technology should be duly measured and assessed.
- Envisage clustering activities with other relevant selected projects for cross-projects co-operation, consultations and joint activities on cross-cutting issues and share of results as well as participating in joint meetings and communication events. To this end proposals should foresee a dedicated work package and/or task, and earmark the appropriate resources accordingly.
- Facilitate the market uptake of solutions developed through industry- and user-driven multidisciplinary consortia covering the relevant value chain and should consider standardisation aspects if relevant. The action should also include the analysis of financial opportunities ensuring the market exploitation and replication of the circular

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<sup>61</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 (OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj>).

<sup>62</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy_en)

business model behind the developed solutions as new processes, products and/or services.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and/or gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement, however, should you consider it to be of relevance for your specific proposal, you are strongly encouraged to do it.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-63: Innovative solutions for the sustainable production for Semiconductor raw materials (IA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 8.00 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 24.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>To increase EU resilience in raw materials supply chains and thus reduce the serious risk to the Union's strategic assets, economic and societal interests, autonomy and security associated with the current EU reliance on a few third countries for critical raw materials, by increasing sustainable and responsible sourcing of primary and secondary raw materials necessary to enable the green and digital transition and in alignment with the objectives of the Critical Raw Materials Act<sup>63</sup>, participation in this topic is limited to legal entities established in Member States, associated countries, OECD countries, African Union Member States, MERCOSUR, CARIFORUM, Andean Community and countries with which the EU has concluded strategic partnerships on raw materials<sup>64</sup></p>

<sup>63</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 ([OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj)).

<sup>64</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy_en)

	<p>as well as trade agreements (or association/economic partnership or equivalent agreements, including the new Clean Trade and Investment Partnerships) containing raw materials cooperation provisions (i.e. Energy and Raw materials chapters)<sup>65</sup>. The choice of these countries was made taking into consideration the development of strategic international partnerships on raw materials and avoidance of reinforcing existing over-dependencies, as well as the importance of involving partners committed to pursuing open trade in such materials.</p> <p>Proposals including legal entities which are not established in the countries that fall under the criteria above will be ineligible.</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

Expected Outcome: Projects outcomes will enable achieving the expected impacts of the destination by increasing access to primary raw materials and secondary raw materials, in particular critical raw materials for EU<sup>66</sup> industrial value chains and strategic sectors.

Projects are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Decreased dependency of the EU on imported raw materials for semiconductor production and decreased risk in European semiconductor supply chains. The actions targeting strategic raw materials<sup>67</sup> should contribute to the benchmarks as set out in the

<sup>65</sup> [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/negotiations-and-agreements\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/negotiations-and-agreements_en)

<sup>66</sup> Annex 2, Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 ([OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI:https://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj](#)).

<sup>67</sup> Annex 1, Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 ([OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI:https://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj](#)).

Critical Raw Materials Act<sup>68</sup>.

- Raw materials for semiconductors competitively produced and refined in the EU in a sustainable and socially acceptable way improving the competitiveness of European industry.
- Increase recovery rates of particularly raw materials from low grade or complex ores and/or from residues and/or by-products and/or extractive waste and/or manufacturing waste.
- Increase the competitiveness and sustainability of mineral processing and refining processes in terms of cost-effectiveness, higher material-, water-, energy-efficiency, emission reduction and flexibility. This may also include the development of more sustainable solvents, reagents, and low-carbon manufacturing processes.
- Foster collaboration among industry stakeholders along the value chain, research institutions, and technology providers to accelerate the development and adoption of sustainable production solutions.
- Improve responsible supply of raw materials to Europe in line with the EU principles for sustainable raw materials<sup>69</sup>, which are a non-regulatory set of principles based on the EU acquis. They set out requirements for sustainable raw materials and extraction and processing in Europe in terms of social, environmental, and economic performance.

Scope: Actions should focus on raw materials for semiconductors necessary for the green and digital transition and strategic sectors, such as for example aero-space; including one or more of the following raw materials: antimony, arsenic, bismuth, boron, gallium, germanium, indium, selenium, silicon, tellurium.

Actions should facilitate the market uptake of solutions developed through industrially- and user-driven multidisciplinary consortia covering the relevant value chain from extraction to the production of semiconductor grade raw materials and alloys, as well as relevant downstream industry. Standardisation aspects should be considered when relevant.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination. For TRLs 6-7, a credible strategy to achieve future full-scale deployment in the EU and encourage long-term industrial collaboration is expected, indicating the intentions of the industrial partners after the end of the project.

Actions should envisage clustering activities with other relevant selected projects for cross projects co-operation, consultations and joint activities on cross-cutting issues and share of

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<sup>68</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 ([OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI:https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj)).

<sup>69</sup> European Commission. Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. (2021). EU principles for sustainable raw materials. Publications Office. <https://doi.org/10.2873/12856>

results as well as participating in joint meetings and communication events. To this end proposals should foresee a dedicated work package and/or task, and earmark the appropriate resources accordingly.

Actions should also contribute to improving the awareness of relevant external stakeholders and the general public across the EU about the importance of raw materials for society, the challenges related to their supply within the EU and about proposed solutions which could help to improve society's acceptance of and trust in sustainable raw materials production in the EU.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and/or gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement, however, should you consider it to be of relevance for your specific proposal, you are strongly encouraged to do it.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-64: EU Co-funded Partnership on raw materials for the green and digital transition (Co-funded partnership Raw Materials for the Green and Digital Transition)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 90.00 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 90.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Programme Co-fund Action
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>To increase EU resilience in raw materials supply chains and thus reduce the serious risk to the Union's strategic assets, economic and societal interests, autonomy and security associated with the current EU reliance on a few third countries for critical raw materials, by increasing sustainable and responsible sourcing of primary and secondary raw materials necessary to enable the green and digital transition and in alignment with the objectives of the Critical Raw Materials Act<sup>70</sup>, participation in this topic is limited to legal entities established in Member States, associated countries, OECD countries, African Union</p>

<sup>70</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy_en) Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 ([OJ L 2024/1252](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj), 3.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj>).

	<p>Member States, MERCOSUR, CARIFORUM, Andean Community and countries with which the EU has concluded strategic partnerships on raw materials <sup>71</sup> as well as trade agreements (or association/economic partnership or equivalent agreements, including the new Clean Trade and Investment Partnerships) containing raw materials cooperation provisions (i.e. Energy and Raw materials chapters)<sup>72</sup>. The choice of these countries was made taking into consideration the development of strategic international partnerships on raw materials and avoidance of reinforcing existing over-dependencies, as well as the importance of involving partners committed to pursuing open trade in such materials.</p> <p>Proposals including legal entities which are not established in the countries that fall under the criteria above will be ineligible.</p> <p>The coordinator role of the action is limited to public institutions being R&amp;I programme owners or funders.</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p> <p>Due to the scope of this topic, legal entities established in countries with which the EU has established strategic partnerships for raw materials<sup>73</sup>, as well as in countries which were participating in ERAMIN 3<sup>74</sup>, are exceptionally eligible for Union funding.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties. The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. The EUR 60 000 threshold provided for in Article 208(a) of the Financial Regulation No 2024/2509 does not apply, as financial support provided by the participants to third parties is one of the primary activities of this action in order to be able to achieve its objectives. The maximum amount of FSTP to be granted to an individual third party is EUR 8 million.</p>

<sup>71</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy_en)

<sup>72</sup> [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/negotiations-and-agreements\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/negotiations-and-agreements_en)

<sup>73</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy_en) Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 ([OJ L 2024/1252](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj), 3.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj>).

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.era-min.eu/about-era-min-3>



	The funding rate is 30% of the eligible costs.
<i>Total indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 90 million committed in annual instalments in the years 2025 and 2027 (EUR 45 million from the 2025 budget and EUR 45 million from the 2027 budget).

Expected Outcome: Projects outcomes will enable achieving the expected impacts of the destination by increasing supply security and access to primary and secondary raw materials, in particular critical and strategic raw materials<sup>75</sup> for EU industrial value chains and strategic sectors.

Projects are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Align national R&I priorities in raw materials with EU policy on raw materials.
- Strengthen EU cooperation with countries the EU established strategic partnerships on Raw Materials<sup>76</sup>;
- Improve industrial viability, safety and environmental impacts of the operation in a way that leads to measurable improvements;
- Improve EU sourcing diversification of critical raw materials from third countries;
- Improve responsible supply of raw materials to Europe in line with the EU principles for sustainable raw materials<sup>77</sup>, which are a non-regulatory set of principles based on the EU acquis. They set out requirements for sustainable raw materials and extraction and processing in Europe in terms of social, environmental and economic performance.
- Dissemination and exploitation of projects outputs is tailored for organisations and industry dealing with raw materials in the EU and project partner from Strategic partnership countries.
- Promote the utilisation of UNFC (United Nations Framework Classification for Resources) and UNRMS (United Nations Resource Management System) in the raw materials sector.
- Actions are expected to contribute to the implementation of the EU Critical Raw Materials Act<sup>78</sup>, particularly to the 2030 benchmarks.

<sup>75</sup> Annex 1 and Annex 2, Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 ([OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI:https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj)).

<sup>76</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy_en)

<sup>77</sup> COM(2023) 165 - A secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials in support of the twin transition

<sup>78</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and

Scope:

- The objective of the European Partnership on Raw Materials is to strengthen the co-ordination of national and regional research programmes in the field of non-energy and non-agricultural raw materials, ensuring common understanding of R&I challenges to achieve the objectives of the Critical Raw Materials Act<sup>79</sup>.
- The Partnership will build on the experience of ERA-NETs: ERA-MIN, ERA-MIN 2 and ERA-MIN 3. The Partnership should cover the whole raw materials value chain including exploration, extraction, processing technologies, and recycling and improve circularity. Sea mining is excluded from this topic.
- Proposals should pool the necessary financial resources from the participating national (or regional) research programmes with a view to implementing joint annual calls for proposals resulting in grants to third parties with EU co-funding in this area. Financial support provided by the participants to third parties is one of the primary activities of this action in order to be able to achieve its objectives.
- As specified in the eligibility conditions, the Partnership is open to all EU Member States, associated countries to Horizon Europe, OECD countries, African Union Member States<sup>80</sup>, MERCOSUR, CARIFORUM, Andean Community and countries with which the EU has concluded strategic partnerships on raw materials<sup>81</sup> as well as trade (or association/economic partnership or equivalent) agreements containing raw materials cooperation provisions (i.e. Energy and Raw materials chapters)<sup>82</sup>. Participation remains open to those wanting to join during the Partnership's lifetime.
- Beneficiaries should preferably be national, regional or local institutions responsible for programming research and innovation activities in raw materials. To ensure alignment of R&I activities and raw materials policy participation is also additionally open to relevant Ministries and public institutions responsible for raw materials and R&I policy.
- This Partnership should be implemented through a joint programme of activities ranging from research to coordination and networking activities, including training, demonstration, piloting and dissemination activities, to be structured along the following main building blocks:
  - o Joint annual calls for R&I activities;

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amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 (OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj>).

<sup>79</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 (OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj>).

<sup>80</sup> *African Union member states* includes countries whose membership has been temporarily suspended  
<sup>81</sup> [https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy\\_en](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/raw-materials/areas-specific-interest/raw-materials-diplomacy_en)

<sup>82</sup> [https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/negotiations-and-agreements\\_en](https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/negotiations-and-agreements_en)



- o Facilitating further uptake and commercialisation of developed R&I results;
  - o Clustering of projects and synthesising of R&I results;
  - o Coordinating research programmes between EU and its Member States and participating third countries and trigger combined action;
  - o Serving as a centre for knowledge on partner countries' R&I programmes and activities in raw materials.
- Actions should also provide measures contributing to the objectives of the Critical Raw Materials Act<sup>83</sup> and of EU raw materials policy.
  - Partners are expected to provide financial and/or in-kind contribution, in line with the level of ambition of the proposed measures. The partnership should be open to including new partners over the lifetime of the partnership. Its governance should create a clear and transparent process for engaging with a broad range of stakeholders, together with the full members of the partnership, to ensure that the work strategically covers a wide range of views in the field of biodiversity, nature-based solutions and ecosystem services throughout the lifetime of the partnership. To ensure that all work streams are coherent and complementary, and to leverage knowledge investment potential, the partnership is expected to foster close cooperation and synergies with the projects funded under Cluster 4 Digital, Industry and Space. It should also develop synergies with other relevant European initiatives, funding programmes and platforms such as EIT Raw Materials.
  - Financial support provided by the participants to third parties is one of the primary channels under this action to enable the partnership to achieve its objectives. The maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 2 million. It is expected that the partnership organises joint calls on an annual base from 2026 to 2032 and therefore it should factor ample time to run the co-funded projects.
  - The total indicative budget for the partnership is EUR 300 million. The EU contribution will be limited to 30% of the total eligible costs of the action with a maximum of EUR 90 million.

The starting date of grants awarded under this topic may be as of the submission date of the application. Applicants should justify the need for a retroactive starting date in their application. Costs incurred from the starting date of the action may be considered eligible.

### **Innovative Advanced Materials**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

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<sup>83</sup> Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 (OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj>).

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-MATERIALS-42-two-stage: Innovative Advanced Materials (IAMs) for product monitoring, smart maintenance and repair strategies in the construction sector (RIA) (Innovative Advanced Materials for Europe partnership)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY two-stage</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 6.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 30.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applicants submitting a proposal under the blind evaluation pilot (see General Annex F) must not disclose their organisation names, acronyms, logos nor names of personnel in the proposal abstract and Part B of their first-stage application (see General Annex E).</p>
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding.</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 3 and achieve TRL 5-6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>This topic is part of the blind evaluation pilot under which first stage proposals will be evaluated blindly.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-</p>

	2025) <sup>84</sup> .
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

Expected Outcome: Projects are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Support the implementation of the Commission Communication on Advanced Materials for Industrial Leadership<sup>85</sup>.
- Break frontiers between functional and structural materials by applying monitoring applications enabling infrastructure management such as tracking, self-powering and self-sensing to reduce maintenance costs by at least 30% compared to the state-of-the-art.
- Reduce the resources (materials and energy) needed for constructions and lower environmental impacts by applying innovative advanced materials (IAMs) with improved performance of structural or functional components, combining longevity and efficiency, repairability and circularity (improving overall materials circularity by at least 30%);
- Proof of concept of the ‘safe and sustainable by design’ (SSbD) framework during the development phase of the new IAMs to avoid use of hazardous substances and lower environmental impact;
- Promote industrial uptake of IAMs by facilitating scalability and/or integration into leaner industrial production processes;
- Support acceptance of innovative construction materials for housing to achieve maximized user experience and comfort.

Scope: Extend the lifetime of materials used in the construction sector (e.g. cement, concrete, composites, technical textiles, plaster board, pipes) for which durability is often limited by poor stability and low flexibility and/or by increasingly aggressive and changing environments. Extending a products’ life (use phase) is an important pillar of a solid sustainable and circular strategy because it reduces materials demands. In addition, new materials fit for the circular economy should be easily dismantlable into reusable or recyclable components. The actual condition and functional performance of products, components and materials should be monitored and assessed and smart maintenance and repair functions implemented, ideally at the level of individual products or components. Autonomous repair

<sup>84</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

<sup>85</sup> COM(2024) 98 final

systems often use sensors to detect changes in the material's condition through physical principles or mechanical deformation. The smart (AI) exploitation of collected data enables real-time monitoring of the material's condition. The surfaces created in the building process are ideal for smart solutions incorporating ubiquitous electronic systems.

Proposals should develop new and/or improved IAMs that increase recyclability, circularity and safety of construction materials reducing (raw) materials consumption by:

- Increased durability and reliability and reduced maintenance requirements (e.g. self-cleaning and/or self-healing properties, self-protection, increased stress resistance and innovative protection treatments such as corrosion and/or erosion resistance, increased fatigue resistance);
- Support smart material functionalities for continuous monitoring and in-service inspections, e.g. through integrated sensors, with multifunctional features (such as asset management tracking, self-powering and/or self-sensing for several parameters).

Multidisciplinary research activities should address at least two of the following:

- Develop strategies to accelerate the time-consuming performance evaluation step to greatly reduce the times to prototyping and then to market.
- Enhance sensor capabilities for tailored solutions through IAMs with extended physical sensor functionalities for mechanical-technological traits;
- Develop self-repairing and -healing materials for complex and resource-intensive structures, receptive to digital stimuli to retroactively influence material properties and integrating autonomous repair mechanisms to enhance their reliability (such as in composites, ceramics, coatings, technical textiles etc), extend their lifespan and enabling easy recycling;
- Develop (AI based) models like digital twins to utilize high-dimensional new sensor data and generate multimodal stimuli and functionalities for customised maintenance and repair plans, extending product lifetime economically and environmentally;
- Produce and share new knowledge on underlying multi-scale and multi-physics phenomena to better understand materials behaviour during their lifetime, develop and validate methodologies and suitable models to predict materials degradation (mechanical and/or environmental) and to assess the longevity of materials, components and products through accelerated testing and functional performance verification;
- Develop IAMs fit for modular off-site processing or 3D printing onsite;

In addition, all proposals should

- Use new digital technologies including data driven approaches to push the frontiers of designing and producing IAMs with new functionalities/performance, improve materials

scalability and related processes and use analytical technologies and infrastructures to characterise the efficiency, quality and effectiveness of developed IAMs;

- Contribute to the availability of FAIR<sup>86</sup> data and methods for safety and sustainability assessment of IAMs and for decision-making processes (at the design, engineering and end-of-life stage of IAMs and products);
- Explore possibilities to transfer and use developed IAMs or technologies in other sectors;
- Assess safety, sustainability and circularity of all components during the entire innovation cycle as well as how to decompose and sort for enhanced recyclability of all components at the end of life, in line with the safe and sustainable by design (SSbD) framework.

Proposals need to address both the IAM development and all the supporting technologies (digital and physical) needed (not existing yet) to cover the entire value chain (material development, validation, production, processing, use and end of life). Any existing technologies that do not require development or adaptation should be mentioned in the proposal.

Proposals should involve appropriate expertise in Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), particularly regarding the acceptance of innovative construction materials for housing for maximized user experience and comfort. This may involve a perception analysis of these materials, resulting functionalities and the development of optimization strategies.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination.

Research should build on existing standards or contribute to standardisation of technologies encompassing sensing, self-repairing or self-healing materials. Interoperability for data sharing should be addressed, in accordance with the FAIR data principles. Projects should build on, or seek collaboration with, existing projects in EU Member States and Associated Countries and develop synergies with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives, funding programmes and platforms. Where relevant, projects are encouraged to take advantage of and connecting to European analytical research infrastructures and services.

Proposals could consider the involvement of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), whose contribution could consist of providing added value on new solutions for advanced materials in construction, including the ability to dismount and reuse, multifunctionality, smart maintenance and enhanced circularity and safety.

International cooperation is encouraged, especially with Japan.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement.

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<sup>86</sup> Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable data

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership Innovative Advanced Materials for the EU (IAM4EU). Proposals funded under this topic are part of the partnership portfolio and are expected to develop synergies with the related stakeholder community and contribute actively to the objectives of the partnership. The different stakeholder communities in IAM4EU are encouraged to coordinate amongst and across each other and foresee adequate resources for this as well as for the overall coordination with IAM4EU in the proposals.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-MATERIALS-43-two-stage: Innovative Advanced Materials (IAMs) for robust, fast curing sealants and coatings for manufacturing and final assembly (IA) (Innovative Advanced Materials for Europe partnership)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY two-stage</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 6.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 30.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applicants submitting a proposal under the blind evaluation pilot (see General Annex F) must not disclose their organisation names, acronyms, logos nor names of personnel in the proposal abstract and Part B of their first-stage application (see General Annex E).</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 3-4 and achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>This topic is part of the blind evaluation pilot under which first stage proposals will be evaluated blindly.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-</p>

	2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025) <sup>87</sup> .
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

Expected Outcome: Projects are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Support the implementation of the Commission Communication on Advanced Materials for Industrial Leadership<sup>88</sup>.
- Prolong lifespan and performance of components and products across sectors using IAMs-based coatings, functionalised surfaces and/or sealings to withstand specific or challenging requirements and/or harsh environments;
- Lower maintenance needs and overall reduced Cost of Ownership for essential, structural or functional components and products;
- Lower environmental impact through improved resource efficiency, reduced energy consumption, increased recyclability at end of life and/or substitution of hazardous substances.
- Proof of concept of the ‘safe and sustainable by design’ (SSbD) framework during the development phase of the new IAMs;
- Promote industrial uptake of IAMs by facilitating scalability and/or integration into leaner industrial production processes;

Scope: One of the main factors limiting the lifespan of products (and their components) is their prolonged exposure to environmental elements. The combination of different stressors and changing conditions (operational, daily, seasonal) results in accelerated aging and premature or unanticipated failures. To prevent the resulting adverse effects, protective coatings and sealings are key to provide additional protection without requiring the reassessment of the physical design of the product/component, nor the inherent properties of the parts to be coated/sealed.

Moreover, performance evaluation of coated samples to select coating solutions which meet the demands of industrial end users constitute another bottleneck in the fast development of IAM-based coatings. In addition, recyclability is often hampered by the sealants and coatings

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<sup>87</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

<sup>88</sup> COM(2024) 98 final

used. The new IAMs-based coatings, functionalised surfaces and sealings should allow to decompose products and structures into recyclable or reusable parts.

Proposals should develop new and/or improved IAMs-based coatings, functionalised surfaces and/or sealings that improve recyclability, circularity and safety of developed materials and products, reduce (raw) materials consumption, costs of production, manufacturing and disassembly by:

- Combining multiple functionalities, e.g. fast curing and drying, self-curing, mechanical and durable robustness, protection from environmental agents (sun, rain, snow, humidity, corrosion, erosion, temperature, ...), or a combination of beneficial thermal, acoustic, magnetic, electrical and tribological properties;
- Satisfy multiple requirements across different application areas such as electronics; (renewable) energy production and storage; automotive; maritime; aviation and rail infrastructures; construction, including HVAC<sup>89</sup> components;

Multidisciplinary research activities should address at least two of the following:

- Develop strategies to accelerate the time-consuming performance evaluation step to greatly reduce the times to prototyping and then to market.
- Develop functionalised surfaces (directly functionalised or via coatings), which can substantially improve the integrity, efficiency and overall performance of products and can cope with sometimes extreme surface areas (small/large) and complex and/or high aspect ratio geometries requiring advanced processing and tooling;
- Design and develop new sealants and coatings that can be applied by automated processes (higher speed and precision by digitalization), cured at room temperature (no extra heating or air conditioning of large paint shops or hangars required) and with curing times reduced by at least 90% compared to the state-of-the-art (in terms of increased productivity and/or decreased energy consumption);
- Master batch synthesis of IAMs with cutting-edge properties that allow production and processing of robust, fast and/or self-curing sealants and coatings to be applied in the manufacturing and final assembly lines in industries, and transferable between sectors;
- Produce and share new knowledge on underlying multi-scale and multi-physics phenomena to better understand materials behaviour during their lifetime, develop and validate methodologies and suitable models to predict material degradation and assess release rates from coatings and sealants used in harsh environments;

In addition, all proposals should

- Use new digital technologies including data driven approaches to push the frontiers of designing and producing IAMs with new functionalities/performance, improve materials

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<sup>89</sup> Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning



scalability and related processes and use analytical technologies and infrastructures to characterise the efficiency, quality and effectiveness of developed sealants, coatings or surfaces;

- Contribute to the availability of FAIR<sup>90</sup> data and methods for safety and sustainability assessment of IAMs and for decision-making processes (at the design, engineering and end-of-life stage of IAMs and products);
- Explore possibilities to transfer and use developed IAMs or technologies in other sectors;
- Assess safety, sustainability and circularity of all components during the entire innovation cycle as well as how to decompose and sort for enhanced recyclability of all components at the end of life, in line with the safe and sustainable by design (SSbD) framework.

Proposals need to address both the IAM development and all the supporting technologies (digital and physical) needed (not existing yet) to cover the entire value chain (material development, validation, production, processing, use and end of life). Any existing technologies that do not require development or adaptation should be mentioned in the proposal.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination.

Research should build on existing standards or contribute to standardisation of technologies for IAM-based sealings and coatings. Interoperability for data sharing should be addressed, in accordance with the FAIR<sup>91</sup> data principles. Projects should build on, or seek collaboration with, existing projects in EU Member States and Associated Countries and develop synergies with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives, funding programmes and platforms. Where relevant, projects are encouraged to take advantage of and connecting to European research infrastructures and services in the area of analytical research infrastructures.

International cooperation is encouraged, especially with Japan.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership Innovative Advanced Materials for EU (IAM4EU). Proposals funded under this topic are part of the partnership portfolio and are expected to develop synergies with the related stakeholder community and contribute actively to the objectives of the partnership. The different stakeholder communities in IAM4EU are encouraged to coordinate amongst and across each other and foresee adequate resources for this as well as for the overall coordination with IAM4EU in the proposals.

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<sup>90</sup> Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable data

<sup>91</sup> Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable data

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-44: Innovative Advanced  
Materials Innovation Procurement (CSA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 2.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>92</sup>.</p>

Expected Outcome:

- Leverage innovation procurement processes to stimulate innovation in advanced materials addressing specific needs or challenges faced by public procurers.
- Drive market transformation by aligning public procurement strategies with broader policy objectives, such as the twin transition.
- Establish market dialogue between the public demand side and the supply side, industry, and research organisations, reducing the gap between innovation procurement strategies and innovative solution development roadmaps on both sides.
- Develop proposals for amending Commission guidelines and sharing best practice on innovation procurement targeting resource and energy efficiency gains due to innovative technologies related to advanced materials.
- Identify standardisation needs for procurers in line with the Commission communication on Advanced Materials for Industry Leadership.

<sup>92</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

Scope: The use of advanced materials<sup>93</sup> has the potential to reinforce the Union's resilience and competitiveness as well as achieving circularity, materials efficiency and overall sustainability targets. Public procurers can play a leading role in driving innovation and fostering the uptake of advanced materials, thereby speeding up the market introduction of technologies that enable the twin transition and EU's resilience and economic security. Advanced materials drive innovations in new clean energy technologies provided for in the Net-Zero Industry Act and have the potential to substitute certain Critical Raw Materials (CRMs), thus contributing to the objectives of the CRM Act. Advanced materials can also replace hazardous substances, improve the environmental performance of products and processes, and facilitate circularity.

Public Procurements that make better use of advanced materials can potentially achieve a substantial impact towards these policy objectives in all areas where the public sector is an important customer such as construction, mobility, electronics and energy. Examples of functionalities that could potentially be realised through advanced materials include thermal isolation and protective coatings in construction, superior reliability and durability of energy and mobility infrastructures, improved performance of electronic devices, increased circularity and cost-efficient maintenance of products.

Mandatory requirements in public procurement procedures, relating to for example energy efficiency performance or environmental sustainability, are foreseen in the Energy Efficiency Directive<sup>94</sup>, the Net Zero Industry Act<sup>95</sup> and the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation<sup>96</sup>. More generally, the EU Public Procurement Directives allow contracts to be awarded not only based on lowest price, but also on other criteria linked to the subject matter of the contract, such as improved performance/functionalities provided by advanced materials. Furthermore, the Competitiveness Compass for the EU<sup>97</sup> foresees the introduction of a European preference in public procurement for strategic sectors and technologies, reinforcing technological security and domestic supply chains, as well as simplifying and modernising rules, in particular for start-ups and innovative companies.

The objective of this coordination and support action (CSA) is to create a Europe-wide consortium of public procurers that define together unmet procurement needs for innovative solutions based on advanced materials.

The consortium should prepare future procurement topics to conduct Pre-Commercial Procurements (PCP)/Public Procurements of Innovative Solutions (PPI) that make use of advanced materials with novel functionalities for sectors where public procurers and key customers, in particular aligned with objectives pertinent to advanced materials.

Proposal objectives should reflect making best use in public procurements of innovative material properties that contribute to superior product performance (including the impact on

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<sup>93</sup> [Advanced Materials for Industrial Leadership, COM\(2024\)98 final](#)

<sup>94</sup> [Energy Efficiency Directive](#)

<sup>95</sup> Regulation 2024/1735

<sup>96</sup> Regulation 2024/1781

<sup>97</sup> COM(2025)30 final

e.g. production, maintenance or recyclability) and/or contribute to policy objectives such as those formulated in the Green Deal, the Net-Zero Industry Act, the Critical Raw Materials Act and the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation while having the potential to be exploited as widely as possible.

Activities supported by this CSA should include the following aspects:

- open market consultation with the industry;
- market analysis and analysis of potential barriers (status of market developments regarding advanced materials versus the procurement needs, standardisation, certification, regulatory requirements, intellectual property rights, contracting models, payment schemes, etc.);
- consultations with other public buyers and relevant stakeholders such as end-users to prepare for a future market uptake of the solutions and effective use of innovation procurement (PCP/PPI).

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-45: Materials Commons for Europe (IA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 28.00 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 28.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 3-4 and achieve TRL 5-6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to accommodate the complexity of the activities required under this topic, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended to a total of 60 pages.

**Expected Outcome:** The project is expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

1. Create a pioneer federated digital infrastructure for advanced materials research and development, demonstrating use cases facilitating industrial uptake and offering a feedback loop to academic research;

2. Give researchers from industry and academia access to interoperable, heterogeneous and FAIR<sup>98</sup> data sources and computational tools that support the workflows for the design and development of advanced materials;
3. Address the requirements of experimental workflows for high-quality, well-structured and documented primary data by providing tailored solutions to experimentalists;
4. Provide a framework to support self-driving labs using the digital infrastructure, enabling to use of state-of-the-art AI technologies and predictive modelling techniques in industry and academia;
5. Devise mechanisms for long term sustainability and expansion to future use cases.

Scope: This action will accelerate R&I in the area of advanced materials by bringing together at EU level experience, knowledge and resources, from existing and new national digital infrastructures for advanced materials design and development.

It will set the ground for the implementation of a long term sustainable European digital infrastructure for advanced materials R&I as announced in the Communication on Advanced Materials for Industrial Leadership<sup>99</sup>, supporting academic and industrial collaborations.

Such a digital infrastructure should:

- Interconnect existing and new infrastructures devoted to advanced materials design and development across the EU supported by AI tool and facilitate access to High-Performance Computing facilities.
- Help researchers and innovators from across Europe to significantly accelerate the design, development, characterisation and testing of new or improved advanced materials in a controlled environment.
- Foster trust in data sharing among stakeholders (including researchers, research organisations, industry and SMEs) based on FAIR data principles, while also fostering common materials taxonomies, ontologies and data interoperability.
- Be based on an inclusive approach that fosters contributions from academia and industry, across different sectors, using a user-centric view that takes into account intellectual property rights and ownership.
- Support virtual design of advanced materials and related processing. Foster the progress towards self-driving labs which are widely accessible to European researchers.

To achieve these goals, beneficiaries are in principle expected to be publicly funded organisations with the necessary expertise, which are mandated by their competent ministry. They must be able to function as major (e.g., national or regional) hubs and contact points for stakeholders in national ecosystems, exploring models for participation and contribution,

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<sup>98</sup> Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable

<sup>99</sup> COM(2024) 98 final

while also working closely with pan-European organisations working on the digitalisation of R&I on advanced materials.

The inclusive nature of the Materials Commons for Europe shall be facilitated through the creation of an advisory board as part of the project composed of relevant ministries or national funding bodies supporting short- and long-term solutions. The applicants are encouraged to consider a project duration of around four years.

The envisioned project should follow the following phases:

1. Phase 1: Planning and Framework Establishment

- Developing functional and non-functional requirements and identifying existing solutions (e.g., cloud solutions, middleware, data spaces) that can be used to accelerate, or be integrated into, the infrastructure. Identification of possible use of existing infrastructures and resources, including support for and integration of self-driving labs.
- Planning a governance framework, able to implement the infrastructure meeting the functional and non-functional requirements, including a strategy for adhesion of new entities in the long term.
- Agreeing on long-term sustainability plan, taking into account academic, industry needs and aspects going beyond R&I.
- Determining compatibility issues and standardisation needs, also in relation to semantic interoperability.
- Setting out key stakeholders, including from academia and industry and related projects and initiatives which will be the users of the infrastructure.

1. Phase 2: Initial build-up

- Building up trust infrastructure and enabling remote access.
- Governance framework for data, computational tools and workflows at operational level.
- Standards and machine readable, domain-specific data schemas and Advanced Programming Interfaces, enabling semantic interoperability and interconnections between different datasets and tools.
- Support for European self-driving labs and their interconnection to the infrastructure, enabling them to reach higher levels of data-driven decision making and automated workflows.

1. Phase 3: Demonstration

- Integration of workflows and tools, including those aimed at creation of primary data.

- 5 use cases across different sectors and related demonstrators, facilitating industrial uptake and offering a feedback loop to academic research.
- concrete steps towards sustainability.

Complementarity and synergies should be sought with existing national initiatives such as Material Digital<sup>100</sup>, DIADEM<sup>101</sup> and CaPeX<sup>102</sup>, as well as with innovation-related strategies, policies, programmes and plans at national and/or regional level. This also extends to EU initiatives such as the proposed “Innovative Materials for EU” partnership, Data Spaces including in particular the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)<sup>103</sup>, EuroHPC<sup>104</sup> and Open Innovation Testbeds<sup>105</sup>.

The action should also envisage the coordination with a possible mutual learning exercise (MLE) on this topic, targeted to countries leading on this area and those who still need to improve national digital infrastructure, enabling an exchange of experience with digital infrastructures, and creating synergies with ongoing related initiatives.

Proposals should involve appropriate expertise in Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), in particular to achieve a user-centred design that facilitates access across different sectors, and by different communities with different characteristics.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-MATERIALS-46: Innovative Advanced Materials (IAMs) for photonics, enabling low-power and ultra-broadband performance for telecommunication (RIA) (Innovative Advanced Materials for Europe partnership)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 5.00 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 10.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.materialdigital.de/>

<sup>101</sup> <https://pepr-diadem.fr>

<sup>102</sup> <https://capex.dtu.dk/>

<sup>103</sup> <https://eosc.eu/>

<sup>104</sup> [https://eurohpc-ju.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://eurohpc-ju.europa.eu/index_en)

<sup>105</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0aaf1e05-2082-11ee-94cb-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

	networks.
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 3 and achieve TRL 6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B

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

- Demonstrated added value of Innovative Advanced materials (IAMs) such as Two-dimensional materials and EO polymers for integrated photonic devices and systems, with focus on low power consumption, enabling future telecommunication networks in which Europe can build competitive value chains.
- IAMs for miniaturized and outperforming photonic integrated technologies e.g. in terms of performance, power, cost, novel functionality enabling the development of future-proof, scalable, low-power and high-bandwidth devices.

Scope: IAMs can be the ideal candidate for several applications in photonics and optoelectronics. These include ultrafast integrated photonic circuits, with modulators, waveguides, detectors, emitters and switches, which play a crucial role in the ongoing quest to increase the speed of data transmission in telecommunications networks. In addition, they find utility in high-frequency transmitter modulators and receiver demodulators, which are essential for advancing wireless telecommunications technologies. They can also serve as integral components in optical interconnects for data centers, high-performance computing (HPCs), and artificial intelligence/machine learning (AI/ML) computing systems.

The main objective of this topic is to explore innovative solutions based on IAMs, including 2DMs, that offer state-of-the-art performance and low power consumption, while demonstrating scalability for volume production, thus exploiting the semiconductor manufacturing infrastructure. The envisioned compact devices are expected to be designed to be compatible with low-power driving electronics and thus reduce energy consumption. Solutions should be compatible with existing photonic integrated platforms and low-voltage electronics.

Proposals are expected to integrate the value chain and include relevant manufacturing technologies required to bring the developed devices to market. Prototypes are expected to be developed using packaged devices, including electronics, to enable testing in relevant environments.

Efforts should be focused on envisioning optimized routes for electronic and photonic design, fabricating photonic circuits, producing IAMs, conducting testing, executing wafer-scale fabrication, and performing co-integration and co-packaging, ultimately leading to demonstrations of the developed technologies and their added values.



Where relevant, proposers are encouraged to take advantage of and connecting to European analytical research infrastructures and services such as the ones in the ARIE network <sup>106</sup>.

Proposals should also consider building their innovations on top of relevant existing standards and consider standardisation as part of innovation and dissemination activities.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership Innovative Advanced Materials for Europe (IAM4EU). Proposals funded under this topic are part of the IAM4EU partnership portfolio and are expected to develop synergies with the related stakeholder community and contribute actively to the objectives of the partnership. Proposals should seek collaboration, with existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant European, national, or regional initiatives, funding programmes such as the Graphene Flagship <sup>107</sup> for proposals investigating 2D materials. In addition, outreach to relevant national projects in EU Member States and Associated Countries is encouraged. Adequate resources for all these synergies should be foreseen in the proposal.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-MATERIALS-47: Innovative Advanced Materials (IAMs) for conformable, flexible or stretchable electronics (RIA) (Innovative Advanced Materials for Europe partnership)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 5.00 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 15.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 3 and achieve TRL 6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B

<sup>106</sup> <https://arie-eu.org/>

<sup>107</sup> Graphene Flagship: <https://graphene-flagship.eu/>

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

- Conformable, flexible or stretchable electronic devices and circuits, enabling improved user experience and adoption;
- Sustainable electronics based on low environmental impact materials, promoting reparability and/or recyclability and compatible with energy and resource efficient manufacturing processes;
- Materials tailored for solution-processed electronics such as semiconductor, conductive, dielectric, electroactive polymers, low environmental impact and/or functional substrates, etc. enabling high performance and reliable flexible electronics devices.

Scope: The concept of "ubiquitous electronics" can be a unique opportunity for the EU, opening up new avenues for e.g., wearable electronics, e-textile, e-skin, wellbeing solutions and Internet of wearable things (IoWT), which represent strategic markets for the EU. Innovative and advanced materials (IAMs) can enable new technologies and the much-needed paradigm of an electronic device that can adapt to any substrate. Despite the progress made in this field, current devices are made up of a limited proportion of flexible, conformable, and stretchable components, mainly sensors, while the rest of the circuit remains rigid, limiting this technology shift.

The overall objective is to discover Innovative Advanced Materials (IAMs), including 2DMs, with improved properties in terms of flexibility, conformability and stretchability that can enable novel flexible electronic applications, with a focus on environmentally friendly technologies with reduced carbon footprint processing. Proposals should address most of the following challenges:

- Discomfort of existing wearables leading to non-adoption
- Environmental impact of current electronics due to the use of hazardous and/or critical raw materials, energy-hungry and resources intensive processes
- Low or limited performance and durability of existing materials for high performance and reliable flexible electronic devices and circuits
- Limited integrability of current electronics: size and/or weight, complex cabling, interface between flexible and rigid components, design limitations (i.e., pattern geometry, thickness, dimensions).

Proposals should address reparability and/or recyclability of devices and circuits e.g. reversible adhesives and interconnects, low temperature soldering, bio-based or recycled substrates such as low thermal budget paper and inks, bio-resorbable conductive materials for the next generation of transient implanted medical devices, etc., compatibility with energy and resource efficient manufacturing processes e.g., printing, thermoforming, high pressure forming, lamination, injection moulding, etc.

Where relevant, proposers are encouraged to take advantage of and connecting to European analytical research infrastructures and services such as the ones in the ARIE network <sup>108</sup>.

Proposals should also consider building their innovations on top of relevant existing standards and consider standardisation as part of innovation and dissemination activities.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership Innovative Advanced Materials for Europe (IAM4EU). Proposals funded under this topic are part of the IAM4EU partnership portfolio and are expected to develop synergies with the related stakeholder community and contribute actively to the objectives of the partnership. Proposals should seek collaboration, with existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant European, national, or regional initiatives, funding programmes such as the Graphene Flagship <sup>109</sup> for proposals investigating 2D materials. In addition, outreach to relevant national projects in EU Member States and Associated Countries is encouraged. Adequate resources for all these synergies should be foreseen in the proposal.

### **Safe and Sustainable by Design**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-MATERIALS-51-two-stage: Development of safe and sustainable by design alternatives to Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) (IA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY two-stage</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 7.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 30.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Applicants submitting a proposal under the blind evaluation pilot (see General Annex F) must not disclose their organisation names, acronyms, logos nor names of personnel in the proposal abstract and Part B of their first-stage application (see General Annex E).</p>

<sup>108</sup> <https://arie-eu.org/>

<sup>109</sup> Graphene Flagship: <https://graphene-flagship.eu/>

<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 3-4 and achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>This topic is part of the blind evaluation pilot under which first stage proposals will be evaluated blindly.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025) <sup>110</sup>.</p>
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

Expected Outcome: Projects are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Make safer and more sustainable alternatives to per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) available to industries offering products with targeted performances supporting their competitiveness;
- Give the Commission, regulatory agencies, Member States and associated countries access to new and publicly available knowledge about PFAS alternatives;
- Support EU strategies, policies and legislation, such as future PFAS restrictions under the REACH Regulation <sup>111</sup>, as well as requirements for the EU Ecolabel <sup>112</sup>, EU Taxonomy <sup>113</sup> and Eco-design for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR) <sup>114</sup>, by making safe and sustainable alternatives to PFAS available;

<sup>110</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

<sup>111</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:02006R1907-20231201>

<sup>112</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/the-ecolabel-scheme.html>

<sup>113</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/energy-climate-change-environment/standards-tools-and-labels/products-labelling-rules-and-requirements/sustainable-products/ecodesign-sustainable-products-regulation\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/energy-climate-change-environment/standards-tools-and-labels/products-labelling-rules-and-requirements/sustainable-products/ecodesign-sustainable-products-regulation_en)

- Demonstrate the applicability of the ‘Safe and Sustainable by Design’ (SSbD) framework<sup>115</sup> to avoid regrettable substitution when developing innovative safe alternatives to PFAS.

Scope: PFAS are a large class of substances used in a wide range of applications (for instance, as adhesives, coatings, lubricants, sealants, surfactants), for their technical and/or safety functions (e.g., water and oil repellence, antiadhesion, thermal & chemical stability)<sup>116</sup>. Nevertheless, PFAS have been detected in groundwater, surface water and soil, the remediation of which is extremely problematic<sup>117,118</sup>. Their accumulation in the environment has been linked to negative effects for the wildlife and the human health, including carcinogenic, mutagenic, reprotoxic and toxic effects for the endocrine system<sup>119</sup>. In January 2023, five national authorities submitted to the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) a PFAS restriction dossier to ban the manufacture, placing on the market and use of PFAS as a chemical class in all uses, with few exemptions<sup>120</sup>.

The Commission initiative for SSbD sets a framework which should be a reference in the proposal. The new alternatives to be developed should meet the technical functions required in the specific applications and align with such framework.

Proposals should address at least one industrial application and should develop one or more new chemical substances or technologies to replace existing PFAS used, according to abovementioned applications and functions, in one of the following areas:

- **Electronics, electrical appliances and grids** (e.g., wires, cables, heat transfer fluids, transformers, switchgears), where PFAS are currently used to provide a combination of technical and/or safety functions to withstand impact of high temperature, pressure and chemicals, ensure corrosion inhibition and non-flammability.
- **Construction technologies** (e.g., carpeting, drywall, paintings, foams) where PFAS are currently used to provide a combination of technical functions such as resistance in harsh environments and for wetting agents.
- **Technical textiles** (e.g., personal protective equipment, construction textiles, filtration and separation media, technical textiles for transport applications) where PFAS are currently used for their repellence but also heat stability and corrosion inhibition.

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<sup>115</sup> See documents defining the SSbD framework and criteria on: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/key-enabling-technologies/advanced-materials-and-chemicals\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/key-enabling-technologies/advanced-materials-and-chemicals_en)

<sup>116</sup> This list of applications and functions are not exhaustive, unless explicitly mentioned.

<sup>117</sup> <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/european-zero-pollution-dashboards/indicators/pfas-contamination-and-soil-remediation-signal>

<sup>118</sup> [PFAS in European seas \(Signal\) \(europa.eu\)](https://www.euractiv.com/en/pfas-in-european-seas-signal/europa.eu/)

<sup>119</sup> <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2022.e200418>

<sup>120</sup> [Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances \(PFAS\) - ECHA \(europa.eu\)](https://echa.europa.eu/pfas-restriction)

- **Automotive parts** (*e.g.* electrical parts including batteries, membranes, hoses and pipes, brakes, rubber processing) where PFAS are also currently used<sup>121</sup>.

All actors along the value chain should be involved to ensure the new substance has a clear use case, market and potential to grow.

Multidisciplinary research activities should address all of the following:

- The ‘Safe and Sustainable by Design’ framework should be applied when developing the alternative(s) and the assessment results be published and underlying methods and data made FAIR across the whole value chain;
- The selection of the PFAS alternatives to be developed should be justified with a technological and socio-economic analysis, also considering potential impacts on health and reproductive health;
- Novel PFAS-free materials or structures should undergo testing under relevant conditions to ensure their properties meet or exceed the properties of PFAS-based solutions across various applications;
- The substitution barriers for the selected applications should be identified and a driving mechanism for a maximal substitution in the targeted value chains proposed;
- Challenges for the adaption of existing production lines should be identified and solutions proposed;
- Communication and other outreach actions to all stakeholders and specifically citizens about the benefits of the developed ‘Safe and Sustainable by Design’ alternatives to PFAS substances.
- Proposals should involve appropriate expertise in Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), *e.g.* with communities of citizens to engage in product reliability and consumer rights. At least, an analysis of how the introduction of such alternatives is positively or negatively considered by users and the general population, disruptive (or not) for the established social norms or behavioural patterns, should be conducted;
- Policy briefs will be reported to the European Commission on a yearly basis to communicate on the key results and achievements.

Proposals should indicate to which chapters of the Strategic Research and Innovation Plan for chemicals and materials<sup>122</sup> they will contribute.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy.

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<sup>121</sup> The use of (gaseous) PFAS in air conditioning is outside the scope of this call.

<sup>122</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/key-enabling-technologies/advanced-materials-and-chemicals\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/key-enabling-technologies/advanced-materials-and-chemicals_en)

In accordance with the SSbD framework, this topic requires the effective demonstration of the added value of the outcomes to protect human health and the environment, *e.g.* in the fields of biodiversity protection, indoor and /or outdoor air quality.

Collaboration with existing Open Innovation Test Beds (OITBs)<sup>123</sup> should be explored - where relevant.

International collaboration is encouraged.

The challenge of developing PFAS alternatives should also cooperate with relevant topics under other clusters and calls of Horizon Europe (*e.g.* HORIZON-CL4-2021-RESILIENCE-01-08<sup>124</sup>, HORIZON-CL4-2022-RESILIENCE-01-23<sup>125</sup>, HORIZON-CL6-2023-ZEROPOLLUTION-02-2-two-stage<sup>126</sup>, Horizon 2020 LC-GD-8-1-2020<sup>127</sup>), including topics under the Chips Joint Undertaking and the Clean Hydrogen Joint Undertaking (*e.g.* HORIZON-JTI-CLEANH2-2024-05-02: Development of non-fluorinated components for fuel cells and electrolyzers). Proposals should specifically allocate the necessary resources for collaboration with the other relevant projects.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-52: Accelerate the uptake of life-cycle assessment (LCA) for Safe and Sustainable by Design (SSbD) chemicals and materials and resulting products (RIA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 4.00 and 5.00 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 15.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 3-4 and achieve TRL 5-6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Legal and financial</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions

<sup>123</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/sustainable-production-processes\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/sustainable-production-processes_en)

<sup>124</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-cl4-2021-resilience-01-08>

<sup>125</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-cl4-2022-resilience-01-23>

<sup>126</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-cl6-2023-zeropollution-02-2-two-stage>

<sup>127</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/lc-gd-8-1-2020>

<i>set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	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). <sup>128</sup> .
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Expected Outcome: Projects are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Support the implementation of EU strategies such as the proposed Eco-design for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR)<sup>129</sup>, the EU Ecolabel<sup>130</sup>, the Green Claims Directive proposal<sup>131</sup>, the One-Substance-One-Assessment package<sup>132</sup>, the Batteries Regulation<sup>133</sup>, the Critical Raw Materials Act<sup>134</sup> and the Net Zero Industry Act<sup>135</sup> with scientific evidence on sustainability throughout the entire life cycle of chemicals and materials,;
- Reduce significantly the cost to apply LCA at company level, including for SMEs, compared to current costs;
- Allow an efficient and simplified LCA application at early stage of design and facilitate decision making for companies and policy makers by providing user-friendly and cost-effective tools, methods and data;
- Provide advanced, reliable and predictive life cycle models and impact assessment methods, allowing for a satisfactory measurement of planetary boundaries;

Scope: Proposals should identify and fill the gaps in LCA tools, methods and data used for improving the environmental sustainability and efficiency of chemicals, materials and resulting products, taking also into account the criticality of raw materials. The Environmental Footprint (EF) methods should in particular be built on. All stages from raw material extraction to end-of-life disposal of products should be included. Data-driven decisions and actions for a greener and more sustainable future should be enabled, while respecting

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<sup>128</sup> 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/lc-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/lc-decision_he_en.pdf)

<sup>129</sup> [Proposal for Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation](#)

<sup>130</sup> [EU Ecolabel](#)

<sup>131</sup> [Green Claims Directive proposal](#)

<sup>132</sup> [‘One substance, one assessment’ chemicals assessment reform](#)

<sup>133</sup> [Batteries Regulation](#)

<sup>134</sup> [European Critical Raw Materials Act](#)

<sup>135</sup> [Net-Zero Industry Act](#)



planetary boundaries. The tools should be in compliance with the Safe and Sustainable by Design<sup>136</sup> framework, hence to be considered as a reference in the proposal.

Multidisciplinary research activities should address all the following:

- Develop advanced, user-friendly LCA tools and methodologies that allow for a comprehensive assessment of the environmental sustainability of the entire lifecycle of chemicals, materials and resulting products whilst considering planetary boundaries;
- Develop LCA datasets, in particular building on the EC PEF methods, from design to end-of-life of at least three relevant chemicals or materials and a selection of their resulting products. The selected substances should be emerging alternatives to substances of concern (as defined in the ESPR proposal) and should have a high socio-economic value;
- Develop solutions to fill in the identified data and assessment gaps and to estimate LCA uncertainty, using advanced digital technologies, modelling, machine learning and artificial intelligence;
- Feed relevant sustainability databases managed by the European Institutions and Agencies, such as the European Platform on LCA<sup>137</sup> (EPLCA), with FAIR<sup>138</sup> data and ensure new tools developed are findable by stakeholders.
- Provide guidance for LCA modelling of circularity scenarios for chemicals, materials and resulting products, in alignment with EC PEF methods and the SSbD framework;
- Ensure that the developed tools, methods and datasets are cost-effective and user-friendly in order to increase uptake and use in industry;
- Develop guidelines and user-friendly solutions to enable a seamless integration of the new LCA approaches with existing safety assessment tools and methods (notably the EC PEF method) to ensure a holistic SSbD assessment from the early innovation phases;
- Engage with the wider stakeholder community, especially with SMEs, to promote a harmonised use of the proposed tools and methodologies;
- Perform training and knowledge transfer activities to promote LCA and SSbD knowledge as well as life cycle thinking within the R&I ecosystem;
- Projects should contribute to yearly policy briefs and technical discussions, for example under the Eco-design for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR)<sup>139</sup> or with the EF Technical Advisory Board;

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<sup>136</sup> See documents defining the SSbD framework on: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/key-enabling-technologies/advanced-materials-and-chemicals\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/key-enabling-technologies/advanced-materials-and-chemicals_en)

<sup>137</sup> [European Platform on LCA | EPLCA](#)

<sup>138</sup> Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable

- Proposals should leverage the experience of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) researchers in refining models related to child labour, employment conditions, and other socio-economic factors within LCA;
- The improved/advanced tools and methods should consider evaluating the economic and social dimension of sustainability at product level based on a functional unit.

Proposals should indicate to which chapters of the Strategic Research and Innovation Plan for chemicals and materials<sup>140</sup> they will contribute.

International collaboration is encouraged.

Projects should build on, or seek collaboration with, existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives, funding programmes and platforms. Specifically, projects should collaborate with the Partnership on Assessment of Risks from Chemicals<sup>141</sup> (PARC) and ensure complementarity with the SSbD toolbox<sup>142</sup> and also engage with the IRISS project<sup>143</sup> on the different value chains. Additionally, projects are encouraged to build on the results obtained by the ORIENTING<sup>144</sup> project funded under the CE-NMBP-42-2020<sup>145</sup> topic which has aimed to operationalise methodologies for LCA and to propose options to further advance the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF). Proposals should allocate the necessary resources for the above activities. Where relevant, proposers are encouraged to take advantage of and connecting to European research infrastructures and services.

Synergies with Horizon Europe missions as relevant are encouraged.

## **Textiles**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-MATERIALS-31: Digitally enabled local-for-local textile and apparel production (Textiles for the Future Partnership) (IA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 5.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission

<sup>139</sup> [Proposal for Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation](#)

<sup>140</sup> [Strategic Research and Innovation Plan for safe and sustainable Chemicals and Materials | Research and Innovation](#)

<sup>141</sup> [Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals | Parc](#)

<sup>142</sup> [Safe and sustainable by design toolbox | Parc](#)

<sup>143</sup> [About IRISS](#)

<sup>144</sup> [Orienting EU Project](#)

<sup>145</sup> [Materials life cycle sustainability analysis](#)

	and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 10.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties. The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. The maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 60 000.</p> <p>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).<sup>146</sup></p>
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination, the page limit in part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.

Expected Outcome:

- Demonstrate economic viability of local on-demand production of fashion and other complex textile products, including for professional or public end markets, through integration of advanced digital technologies across the full product life cycle from creation, production, distribution, use and end-of-life;
- Accelerate adoption of advanced digital product creation and manufacturing technologies by European textile and fashion SMEs; and
- Increase share of re- or near-shored production of time-critical textile products, made in socially and environmentally responsible ways, including recycled materials; and in this way contribute to the mitigation of GHG emissions.

<sup>146</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

Scope: Up to 80% of textile and apparel products consumed in Europe are partially or fully made outside Europe, exploiting lower labour cost as well as laxer local standards and regulations with regards to environmental, human health and labour rights protection. This offshoring of production has slowed textile manufacturing technology innovation in Europe and led to a complex long-lead time supply chain, generating unnecessary production and pre-consumer waste from unused mass-produced materials and unsold products not meeting actual demand.

Digitalisation in product development, production and on-demand supply chains has the potential to significantly reduce such overproduction, and enable business models that can competitively offer rapid short run or single piece production as well as related repair or end-of-life dismantling services for effective local recycling.

These aspects are particularly important in view of the new requirements to be set under the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation under which textiles are flagged as one of the priority product groups for the elaboration of a sustainable policy framework that could consider durability, recyclability, repairability and recycled content the most important product aspects

Proposals should address at least one of the two following activities:

1. Small scale demonstration, experimentation or piloting of approaches, processes or technologies for:

- Complex manufacturing operations including yarn or fabric production and final product assembly that go beyond state-of-the-art processes such as digital garment printing;
- Seamless interoperable data flows and transparency towards the end user that pursue and harness waste minimisation, short time to market and trust-building between supply chain partners and end users;
- Valorisation of locally available renewable raw materials (biobased or recycled) and regional production capacities that allow for shortest time to market and lowest environmental footprint;
- Micro-factories that can flexibly combine small-scale local production, repair, and re-and de-manufacturing operations.

2. Uptake of innovative service-driven business models that maximise consumer value creation and lowers total cost of ownership from high-quality long-lasting products.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business case and exploitation strategy, as outlined in the introduction to this Destination.

Proposals should include financial support to third party (FSTP) to maximise the number of SMEs involved in small-scale innovation projects. All such innovation projects should include at least one advanced technology provider; one manufacturing SME; and one end-market facing company, such as a retailer or a professional or consumer service provider. The

partners should be from at least two different countries. FSTP funding can be provided only to SME participants, while the active participation of larger companies in such innovation projects is encouraged. The involvement of start-ups is also specifically encouraged. To ensure a focused effort, each third-party beneficiary should receive funding up to EUR 60 000, in projects with an indicative duration of 18 months.

International cooperation may be considered, in particular with countries that are advanced in the field.

Where relevant, projects should build on or seek collaboration with existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives and funding programmes.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership ‘Textiles for the Future’.

### **Destination 3: Developing an agile and secure single market and infrastructure for data-services and trustworthy artificial intelligence services**

The next stage of the data economy will shift data flows from the consumer-to-business model to business-to-business, business-to-consumer, consumer-to-consumer, business-to-government and government-to-business models.

Destination 3 will continue to support technologies that are crucial for the next stages of the data economy, such as privacy preserving technologies and compliance technologies, source and transaction integrity (such as blockchain), and technologies underpinning interoperable and compliant industrial, public and personal data spaces and secure data exchanges. Rebalancing the data, computing, and learning capacity across the cloud-to-edge/internet of things continuum will let businesses, public organisations and individuals exploit data for trustworthy and bias-free decision making.

Wide availability of reliable data, like from the European data spaces in the Digital Europe Programme, together with new interactive, immersive and context-aware technologies – digital twins, cyber-physical systems, internet of things and virtual worlds – will make this easier than ever before. This will help all people groups benefit from the power of data and AI in a fair, unbiased and compliant way.

Industrial virtual worlds that are open and interconnected bring alternative but realistic and coherent views on what are widely distributed, diverse and complex devices, processes and value chains. Beyond visualisation and simulation, and thanks to new types of interfaces (like XR/VR), secure data sharing and distributed computing technologies, they allow for safe and natural ways of interaction and control, high level of response to local events, real-time optimisation and dynamic re-configuration in key application areas like for: i) the integration of renewable energy sources, ii) smart farming, iii) agile supply chains and logistics, and iv) hyperflexible manufacturing and manufacturing-as-a-service. Similarly, data-driven tools, AI, language technology, adaptive and self-programmed robotics, and new energy-aware programming solutions will improve operational and energy efficiency in lead sectors like healthcare, manufacturing, mobility, and the energy sector itself.

Quantum technologies will further expand the data economy in high value-added areas where traditional approaches struggle to deliver, for instance, highly secure communication of critical data, or on exponentially complex simulations, machine learning and optimisation. Quantum networks will provide highly secure, tamper-free data storage and transmission, which can be critical in situations where the integrity and confidentiality of the data are paramount, like in the health sector, smart cities, energy systems or other critical infrastructure.

The strategic development of communication networks (5G, 6G) as well as the future structures of data intermediation and governance, high-capacity computing and artificial intelligence through the cloud and the edge are very important to the single market, Europe's economic security and sustainable competitiveness. They are also vital for trustworthy data- and AI-based services.

## **Connected Collaborative Computing Networks (3C networks)**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-08: Large-scale pilots for supply end-to-end infrastructures integrating device, network computing and communication capabilities for Telco Edge Cloud deployments, as a basis for Connected Collaborative Computing Networks (3C networks) (RIA)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 75.00 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 75.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway and the following additional associated countries: Canada, Israel, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the</p>

	meaning of ‘restrictions for the protection of European communication networks’ (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees. <sup>147</sup>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 3 and achieve TRL 7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.

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

- Strengthen European industrial ecosystems for the 3C Network, while enabling the path towards sustainability and competitiveness of key vertical sectors in the EU, to be supported in the work programme 2026-2027 of Horizon Europe by future large-scale pilot focusing on 3Cs demand in vertical industrial sectors such as “industrial virtual worlds” (automotive, aerospace, processing, manufacturing, agriculture, electronics), services (mobility, energy, smart communities, health) or others.
- Strategic industrial cooperation among network and data processing stakeholders which enable new revenue streams in support of viable communication infrastructures by building open platforms, underpinning an emerging industrial open telco edge cloud ecosystem to be established in Europe.
- The pilot should devise appropriate cooperation mechanisms with the Open Internet Stack actions, to help defining the requirements for the development of the building blocks and ensure their integration in the pilot, including envisaging mechanisms for testing and integration of the solutions developed by the Open Internet Stack.
- A European vision of advanced digital infrastructures through the convergence of connectivity with interoperable edge and cloud computing services. Moreover, the large-scale pilot should seek and include sufficient evidence of a clear commitment from the major European telecom, cloud and edge providers to industrialise further the results of the pilot among the major stakeholders, in particular by considering the necessary business adaptations and future perspectives, etc. In this context, an advisory group of end users should be set up to discuss and advise about user requirements to be considered in relation to the pilots. This group will collect requirements from a large range of users and test them through small demonstrations.

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The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.



Scope: The recent Commission White Paper “How to master Europe’s digital infrastructure needs?” highlights the convergence of electronic communications networks and cloud services, and call for the strengthening of the EU “Telco Edge Cloud” infrastructure, by creating the 3C Network (Connected Collaborative Computing).

The convergence of connectivity, including mobile networks (5G and 5G advanced), combined with computing environments at the edge and cloud is a unique opportunity for the European telecom industry to drive a European vision of next generation digital infrastructures and meet future processing demands of IoT and AI. Investing into future computing and connectivity paradigms will strengthen the industrial European supply side and deliver an enablement for the path towards sustainability of key sectors in the demand side.

Increased density of edge and cloud facilities is needed to sustain adoption of innovative and sovereign telco edge cloud technologies across Europe. Backed by ubiquitous connectivity to deliver the right performance in terms of bandwidth and latency, Europe’s infrastructure will require advanced network management and orchestration technology as well as neutral interconnection services to guarantee efficient infrastructure utilisation and enable innovative use cases at scale.

The 3C Network large-scale pilot (focusing on the supply side) aims at setting up end-to-end integrated infrastructures and platforms, bringing together players from different segments of the connectivity and compute value chain and beyond. The main target is to research and validate the integration of device, network, cloud and edge computing, and communication capabilities for telco edge cloud deployments to realize a ubiquitous mesh of computing and communication resources. This will complement the Telco Edge Cloud reference deployments of Digital Europe and IPCEI-CIS and will feed into future deployment initiatives.

Therefore, the scope for the action would be the following:

- Researching and prototyping at scale end-to-end telco edge cloud integrated infrastructures and platforms, bringing together players from different segments of the connectivity value chain and beyond, such as operators, system integrators, network/cloud/edge suppliers, experts on AI and (wireless) communication, experts on testing and validation of network technologies and services, IoT platform providers et al.
- Developing open orchestration platforms across the telco edge cloud continuum, to support unlocking the transformative value of AI for European businesses and driving business growth in multiple industries strategic for Europe and associated countries.
- Integrating AI solutions for optimising the orchestration of the different resources to be managed by the pilot actions, such as bandwidth, spectrum, computing, hardware, other user requirements.

- Investigation, testing, validation and demonstration of solutions and prototypes of the simultaneous use of integrated devices, edge and cloud computing and communication resources in operational environments (including both public networks and large private networks), ensuring high level of security and privacy, energy efficiency, transparency and control of the ecological footprint.
- Investigation, testing, validation and demonstration of integration of available infrastructures as cloud-edge continuum with distributed systems such as blockchain infrastructure and services, data spaces and seamless and comprehensive AI systems in the process of creation of decentralised digital infrastructure network, including the compliance with applicable EU regulations.
- Exploration of novel approaches for cybersecurity by design and sustainability in advanced communication infrastructure.

With radical changes triggered by GenAI, as well as AI applications penetrating more and more industrial domains, demands for low latency are looming. The pilot should have to tackle the network evolution complementing the cloud with progress towards the edge, as well as needing reliability from the mobile networks.

Key aspects to be researched, validated and demonstrated by the 3C Network end-to-end infrastructures include:

- AI-enabled orchestration and quality assurance tools, algorithms and techniques which cater for hybrid multi-cloud technologies.
- Enablers for multi-level (networks, edge, cloud, and services) federation management and interoperability.
- Tools and mechanisms that facilitate the standardised exposure of network functions.
- Enablement of Edge-as-a-Service approaches that effectively integrate cloud computing's multi-tenancy and resource sharing concepts into access networks.
- Security and Compliance mechanisms targeted for telco edge cloud.
- Tools for guaranteed end-to-end QoS and QoE across heterogeneous network, cloud and edge infrastructures.
- Mechanisms to exploit specialised hardware and accelerators to address the strict the requirements (e.g. latency, energy efficiency) of virtualised network functions.
- Investigation on the trade-offs associated to Edge nodes density and placement required in telco edge cloud deployments to achieve the target latency rates.
- Lightweight virtualisation and cloud-native approaches for virtualised network functions.

- Novel approaches to handle user mobility to ensure edge service continuity and quality of service.
- Privacy preserving record linkage on individual citizen level and device-related level to foster meaningful linkage of data for secondary usage.

Thanks to these, the pilot and its associated research should support the emergence of telco edge cloud as-a-service approaches that successfully implement multi-tenancy and resource sharing notions from cloud computing into network infrastructure and resources. In addition, the project infrastructures should cater for the pragmatic complexities associated with the physical placement of the various types of telco edge cloud platforms (near, far, regional,) across the territory considering the necessary trade-offs between performance, capacity, and costs.

Furthermore, the pilot should tackle the need for multi-cloud and edge service orchestration at scale, which enables workload portability across providers and technologies as well as effective service placement and lightweight and cloud-native forms for NFV and optimisation by means of acceleration, multi-cloud orchestration, multi-level federation and mobility management.

Moreover, the technical solutions in the pilot should investigate the use of AI to handle the optimal allocation and optimisation of the operation of the digital infrastructures resultant of the combination of distributed compute and network resources of the edge cloud compute continuum in a predictive and efficient manner and at scale. These should take into consideration the appropriate QoS trade-offs in relation to bandwidth, spectrum, computing, hardware and other functional and non-functional requirements, cater for the need for AI/ML to improve optimisation of assets and process and closed-loop automation, and target development and life-cycle management of AI models and resource management tools for the optimal management of combined and converged network, cloud and edge infrastructures. It will integrate security and privacy by design into account and seek to incorporate mechanisms such as edge discovery and deployment as-a-service delivery, end-to-end network and compute performance, energy efficiency and mobility management, including the Non-Terrestrial Network component for ubiquity.

The pilot should provide an *open, multi-supplier, multi-vendor, and interoperable Telco Edge Cloud reference architecture and ecosystem* that encourages cooperation and cooperative development among all key stakeholders, with broad representation of MS/AC, owing to the joint research to be implemented. Furthermore, the pilot should define open access policies and mechanisms that aim to maximise the impact of the provided infrastructure which take into consideration the long-term sustainability and addressing different uses by industrial and research communities. When necessary, these should explore collaboration with complementary actions addressing the demand side.

Project participants should analyse the existing standards landscape as a key state-of-the-art input when planning their project activities, and relevant open-source projects (e.g., Sylva, ANUJET, Nephio, CAMARA). The development paths of the critical technologies are

expected to be merged and aligned to support the standardisation and uptake of 6G and Web 4.0.

The pilot should help maturing the technologies resulting from medium TRLs projects, while performing its own research towards enabling and prototyping of converged telco cloud edge platforms in operational and multi-suppliers, multi-domain and multi-tenant environments.

The pilot should cover research on infrastructure and platforms mid-TRLs telco edge cloud technologies, including development of telco-cloud network resources orchestration, demos, proof of concepts and early deployment of technologies.

The main achievements of the pilot should be showcased by means of small-scale demonstrations, that could be scaled up in future work programmes, for instance demonstrators on virtual worlds for industrial settings.

The pilot should ensure a high degree of participation of stakeholders from the relevant technological sectors, including SMEs, scaleups and start-ups, as well as properly consider the demand side from vertical sectors and broad representation of MS/AC, also in view of the planned demand-side large-scale pilots. In this regard, proposals should clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the participating stakeholders in developing, testing, validating, updating, maintaining and/ or using the technologies and services of the 3Cs network. The pilot's Consortium should also define a policy on the ownership and access of 3Cs network resources and facilities, during the Horizon Europe project and beyond.

Proposals are expected to build synergies and ensure complementarities with relevant topics under SNS JU Work Programme 2022-2024, Digital Europe Programme WP2023-2024, IPCEI-CIS, Connecting Europe Facility.

The large-scale pilot would ideally reuse and extend relevant open-source frameworks and capitalise on existing testing and trial platforms from European or national initiatives<sup>148</sup> among which the IPCEI-CIS, SNS Stream C (dedicated to the development of EU-wide experimentation platforms incorporating promising 6G enablers), SNS Stream D projects (which focuses on implementing large-scale trials and targets specific verticals of high economic and societal importance), and other SNS projects, results from Open Internet Stack action, the Cloud-Edge-IoT HE projects, and the Digital Europe Programme's Reference edge-cloud deployments, the "Empowering AI across the continuum" and the "Software engineering for AI" R&I areas, as well as research results on infrastructure and platforms. It should also establish strong relationship and collaboration with complementary EU-funded research activities, and also ensure close interaction with the relevant constituencies driving that research, including the Open Internet Stack constituencies. Relevant research from both the supply and the demand side of 3C networks should be considered in this regard, thus ensuring participation of research organisations from all across the value chain.

Finally, digital autonomy in edge and cloud implies that computation infrastructure should be able to be sourced from European technology, including non-terrestrial network

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<sup>148</sup> Such as UNICO 6G in Spain, CAMPUS-OS in Germany, 6G Flagship in Finland, etc.

infrastructure. The subsequent step following the EU investments in processors for HPC (under the EuroHPC Joint Undertaking) is to extend its success to the rest of the computing continuum. Therefore, the project will also seek to coordinate with other EU (HE) research activities with a view to integrating new processor architectures into cloud edge infrastructures as they become available.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-09: Alignment of stakeholders towards the supply-side large-scale pilot of end-to-end infrastructures integrating device, network computing and communication capabilities (CSA)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.80 and 2.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2.50 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway and associated countries.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, shall not participate in the action.</p>

Expected Outcome: The supply-side large-scale pilot (LSP) of end-to-end infrastructures integrating device, network computing and communication capabilities will develop

horizontal facilities for the benefit of constituencies represented in the supply LSP and also beyond, including those focusing on the demand side of the referred infrastructures. This CSA is expected to bring together all those stakeholders. In any case, the CSA action should be prepared, managed and coordinated by key stakeholders in the field, while it would be important that the coordinator adopts a neutral position.

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

- Coordination of the different stakeholder communities in the scope of the supply LSP work (software, hardware, computing, telcos, AI, cloud...), bringing stakeholders together to work on a common plan and technology roadmap on supply and demand of end-to-end infrastructures integrating device, network computing and communication capabilities, monitoring implementation and identifying gaps.
- Enable the supply-side LSP to consider the demand-side perspective, including requirements from the different applications/user communities.
- Help stakeholders build small, and later larger-scale, demos based on the developments of the supply-side LSP, as well as developments from future Horizon research actions as possible and appropriate.
- Assist stakeholders from the different segments of the value chain (telecoms, software providers, middleware stack providers, etc.) to converge towards a shared approach, while modular and flexible, for telco-edge-cloud infrastructure and services
- Put in place mechanisms for exchange, collaboration and shared governance to facilitate smooth cooperation between supply and demand-side activities, including the Open Internet Stack, towards a common platform approach across industrial actors, including a repository with critical mass of largely open-source building blocks, as well as maintenance and support services.

Scope: The expected scope of the CSA for this governance mechanism to function would be the following:

- Consolidate priorities and maximise benefits across different demand perspectives and timelines for key infrastructure services to be implemented.
- Ensure alignment of demand and supply side strategies and roadmaps, in line with (and contributing to) the White Paper on communication infrastructures and other relevant EU policy.
- Ensure coordination and integration of the work of the actions on the supply side pilot and the Open Internet Stack.
- Open-source delivery of Telco Edge Cloud building blocks by the supply side pilot, which will be the foreseen backbone to articulate the cooperation among supply- and demand-side LSPs.

- These open-source modules should be aligned with industrial interests and where appropriate with common European building blocks including with the developments at IPCEI-CIS Telco Edge Cloud community initiatives (e.g. Sylva, Anuket, Nephio and CAMARA).<sup>149</sup>
- The demand-side developments in the relevant verticals will offer a continuous feedback loop to the supply side endeavours, while they will benefit from the progressive developments of the supply LSP.
- Provide a foundation for exploitation of European technology developed under the 3C initiative as an alternative to the platforms led by large multinationals. The project should provide a forum for consultation and input of the demand-side application sectors and verticals into the development of the supply-side architecture and building blocks.
- Identification of paradigms shifts evolving in relevant vertical domains like virtual worlds as a driver for emerging network virtualisation and performance as well as vertical services like mobility, communities or energy.
- Assessment of monetising edge computing, interoperability of middleware and SW framework through trend scouting on markets, value chains and ecosystems in the area of dynamic content delivery, AI adoption for telco operation and edge computing, convergence across the telco-cloud-edge- IoT continuum.

Proposals are expected to build synergies with relevant topics under Digital Europe Programme (DEP) and Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-10: Roadmap for next generation computing technologies from IoT device level to edge to cloud to HPC (CSA)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.80 and 2.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2.50 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following

<sup>149</sup> Sylva – Linux Foundation Projects Site ([sylvaproject.org](https://sylvaproject.org)); Camara Project – Linux Foundation Project.

<i>conditions</i>	exceptions apply:  Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.
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**Expected Outcome:** The CSA action should be prepared, managed and coordinated by key stakeholders in the field. Proposal results are expected to contribute to the following expected outcomes:

- Support structure for the European Computing ecosystem: networking events (including conferences, summer schools etc.) and vision workshops for the academic and industrial computing community;
- Yearly updated roadmaps on computing addressing the area from a broad perspective from edge-IoT device to edge cloud to cloud to HPC, from scientific to industrial to societal and research applications, and addressing all relevant aspects such as real-time, security, support to artificial intelligence, use of generative AI for computing system engineering, etc.

**Scope:** To support the European Commission and the European computing constituency by providing to them annually updated roadmaps for research and innovation related to computing. This topic is overarching and building the bridge between Destinations 3 (heading “From Cloud to Edge to IoT for European Data”), Destination 4 (“Ultra Low Power Processors”), as well as the Joint Undertakings (JU) on Chips, Smart Networks and Services, and high-performance computing (HPC). This effort builds on the achievements and structures established by the HIPEAC project and think tank of renowned European research centres on computing “at large” and their key experts. Both the academic visions as well as the industrial perspective complementing the Strategic Research and Innovation Agendas of the JUs as well as the roadmapping done by the European Alliance for Industrial Data, Edge & Cloud as well as the IPCEI exploitation office should be taken into consideration.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-11: Open Internet Stack: development of technological commons/open-source 3C building blocks (RIA)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 10.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 10.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions



<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties. The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. The maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 400 000 to allow 1/ cases where a given legal entity may receive several grants (e.g. from different calls) 2/ reaching the maturity level for third party's project to ensure sustainability with multiple awards.</p> <p>To support and mobilise internet innovators, a maximum of 70% of the total requested EU contribution could be allocated to financial support to third parties, selected through open calls.</p>

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

- A publicly available and operational stack of strategic commons focusing on internet technologies for trust, transactions, connectivity, and decentralisation implementing the European vision of next generation digital infrastructures, in particular the 3Cs networks (in close cooperation with the 3Cs large scale pilots), and the wider Web 4.0.
- A library of inclusive, trustworthy, interoperable, and human-centric applications and services leveraging Open-Source commons building blocks which will increase the value of the network in the respect of European values. These Open Source solutions will be integrated and tested / validated in the 3C large scale pilot.
- A flourishing European ecosystem of contributors to digital commons– e.g., individuals, SMEs, academics - stimulated by critical challenges around sovereignty, trust, and user empowerment.

Tools, services, and insights supporting compliance with and implementation of EU legal framework e.g., EUDI, CRA, DMA, DSA, GDPR, Data Act, DGA.

Scope: This action will foster an Open-Source framework, developed through commons, i.e. Open Source software governed by communities of contributors, that will provide key technology components for the operation of the 3C large scale pilot. They will be addressing relevant areas, structuring them in a stack and supporting the development of 3C building blocks making them available through a library of digital commons supporting applications on top of the European providers ecosystem.

It will mainly cover three technology areas:

- Trust technologies such as privacy enhancing technologies, AI-based agents and trusted technologies for identities allowing exchanges across multiple 3C networks, providing the users with transparent, auditable, secure, and resilient building blocks and tools across the internet stack.
- Network and connectivity technologies according to the identified needs of the 3C large scale pilot.
- Decentralised technologies for an immersive world notably based on open standards ensuring interoperable flow of data and events across the 3C pilot networks and operators.

In order to implement the European vision of next generation digital infrastructures (3Cs networks), applicants should devise appropriate mechanisms for cooperation with the 3C pilot:

- To ensure the integration of requirements and specifications stemming from the 3C large scale pilots.
- To ensure the 3C large scale pilot's swift integration of the building blocks developed by the Open Internet Stack, including envisaging mechanisms for testing and integration of the solutions.

Applicants should provide concrete plans on how such work should be organised in close cooperation with the 3C large scale pilot to decide the building blocks that will be prioritised, facilitate their integration in the 3C large scale pilot and avoid any duplication of the work. If applicants opt for financial support to third parties, the solutions selected under the Open Calls should form a coherent portfolio and duplications should be avoided. The 3C CSA will ensure co-ordination and monitoring for duplication risks across the 3C projects' activities.

Applicants could also decide to select and fund third party projects, wherever required, through up to 70% of their project's budget for financial support to third parties.

If applicants opt for financial support to third parties, they should target calls towards the Open-Source communities actively influencing the course of the Internet. This action is aimed in particular at leveraging the European Open Source community – SMEs, research institutes and individual researchers and developers – with solid experience with development of solutions in line with EU rules and values. The calls should aim at improving trust, transactions, decentralisation implementing optimal balance between distribution, security (including AI for security), AI usage and energy efficiency targeting climate neutrality objectives. Applicants should then also define the mechanisms for maturing third parties' projects e.g., security and accessibility audits, packaging of the stack for easy deployment, localisation of the software in EU languages, documentation best practices, performance optimisation and advising on licensing.

Applicants should detail the path to growth for third parties' projects e.g., by actively animating communities, creating momentum among like-minded efforts, defining how

projects will gain critical mass and what services will be provided for reaching such stage. Proposals should also detail the strategy for standardisation.

In addition to contributing to the 3C large scale pilot, applicants should demonstrate how the software produced will be operationalised as a stack of open libraries accessible through a common European repository and maximising re-use, reproducibility, and resilience for adopters.

Applicants should actively manage the portfolio of funded projects and provide a coherent overall picture in relation to the 3Cs objectives, describing how mature solutions are and ensuring trusted and easy deployment capabilities for each building block through packaged stack.

Applicants should strive for identification of common tools and stimulate maximum re-use of components coming from other funded projects e.g., interoperable identity and credential management tools, common packaging solutions, tools for decentralised social media.

Applicants should seek active collaboration with other initiatives addressing internet commons of relevance to 3Cs at national, European levels and beyond Europe including with European technology industries.

Applicants should demonstrate their experience and understanding of Open-Source communities and their expertise covering the full Open-Source life cycle through proven track record including years of experience and indication of volume of Open-Source projects supported.

The Commission considers that proposals in this topic with an overall duration of typically 36 months would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other durations.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement.

#### **Financial support to third parties**

Third parties will be funded through projects typically in the EUR 50 000 to 150 000 range per project, with indicative duration of 9 to 12 months. The consortium should provide the programme logic for the third-party projects, managing the projects lifecycle, and provide the necessary technical and non-technical support: these tasks cannot be implemented using the budget earmarked for the financial support to third parties.

#### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-12: Preparing the Advancement of the state of the art of submarine cable infrastructures (CSA)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>
<b>Specific conditions</b>

<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.90 and 2.10 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2.10 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway, associated countries, OECD countries and MERCOSUR countries.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, shall not participate in the action.</p>

**Expected Outcome:** Defining specific R&I roadmap at EU level to enhance the cooperation between the EU authorities and other stakeholders and establish leadership in all relevant submarine cable technology domains (EU research roadmap on submarine cables infrastructures, i.e. including any infrastructure related to its construction, operation, maintenance and repair). This CSA should be prepared, managed and coordinated by the key stakeholders in this field, including industry, research and academic stakeholders.

The project should take into consideration the overarching challenges of:

- Reinforcing European leadership and cooperation in submarine cable connectivity, with European capabilities and best practices shaping future connectivity standards, promoting their secondary use (e.g. for a pre-warning system of natural hazard) as well as synergies and collaboration with CEF-Digital backbone projects;
- A digital and green transition towards low carbon footprint of connectivity platforms through principles of the circular economy, including reduction of pollution,

regenerating natural systems etc. while targeting long-term sustainability, resilience and security of submarine cable networks;

- Ensuring resilience for the most demanding cases requiring a very high grade of quality of service (QoS) and performances, and
- Risk evaluation, preparedness and prevention against any future natural or man-made damage or deliberate sabotage.

Against this background, the objectives of the target support actions are outlined below:

- Analysis and definition of the expected critical hardware and software components of future submarine cable infrastructure systems, and indication on where Europe should seize opportunities and strengthen its capabilities, taking into account the characteristics and architectures, including components, security, and operations of future submarine connectivity infrastructures;
- Definition of the main required R&I work and assessment of associated research investment needs related to the identified domains;
- Definition of an appropriate industry roadmap (SRIA), in close partnership with relevant EU actors both from industry and academia, indicating research & innovation actions to be undertaken in priority, their scope, and a timetable showing the main milestones and targets. The project could envisage organising thematic workshops to consult all interested communities. The results of this action will feed into the work of relevant groups working on submarine cable infrastructures, such as the European Submarine Cable Expert Group, the NIS 2 Coordination Group or the CER Group.

Scope:

- Enabling technologies applicable to submarine connectivity infrastructures and systems, including its secondary use for pre-warning systems against natural hazards, are increasingly important to ensure Europe's strategic autonomy as well as economic security. Achieving such goals requires that Europe remains at the technological edge not only with regards to the cable technology itself but also all the other critical elements composing the submarine cable infrastructure such as repeaters, landings stations, operational control centres, underwater acoustic sensor networks (UASN) or cable communications cybersecurity.
- While some of the necessary research is indirectly conducted through mainstream research activities in generic technologies (e.g., optical communications or network management software), more specific research is needed to address the particular needs and advancement of submarine cable infrastructures and systems. However, the specific research needs still need to be identified, which supports the need to develop a specific roadmap and SRIA for research and innovation in submarine cable technologies. Such research efforts may address some of the following (non-exhaustive) domains: Multi-core fibre (MCF) technology, Digital Signal Processing, repeater systems, intelligent

sensing, advanced Digital Acoustic Sensing (DAS), strain and temperature sensing, oceanographic sensors for continuous, real-time trans-oceanic measurements (monitor water body), logical layer and cable network management systems, underwater robotics to improve the construction, maintenance and repair of submarine cable infrastructures, and other innovations, such as wireless sensor networks (WSN) to monitor permanently submarine cable infrastructure and to detect possible threats.

Projects are expected to develop synergies and ensure complementarities with projects under CEF Digital, the Digital Europe Programme (DEP) and the Smart Networks and Services (SNS) Joint Undertaking.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement.

### **AI-GenAI / Data / Robotics**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

#### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-13: Fostering Innovative and Compliant Data Ecosystems (IA) (AI, Data and Robotics Partnership)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 7.00 and 9.00 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 45.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway, associated countries and OECD countries.</p>

	For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, shall not participate in the action.
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 6-7 and achieve TRL 8 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.

Expected Outcome: The projects are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Easing the compliance process of businesses and professionals with the relevant EU legislation, in particular reporting obligations, and alleviating administrative burdens for businesses and professionals.
- Developing and integrating advanced technologies for data collection, data sharing and data analytics for simplifying and automating compliance.
- Generating, managing, and leveraging synthetic data to improve fitness for purpose; addressing limitations of real-world data, enhancing data quality, diversity, and representativeness, while mitigating bias and addressing other ethical issues.
- Ensuring broad user training and support for rolling out and scaling up “compliance and privacy by design” and the FAIR<sup>150</sup> principles in the constantly evolving regulatory landscape.

Scope: As the European Union (EU) legislation continues to expand, both in the digital (GDPR, Open Data Directive (ODD), Data Governance Act, AI Act, Data Act) and non-digital realm (e.g. green deal, due diligence, healthcare, transport), businesses and professionals face increasing challenges in maintaining compliance. Also, the complexity and volume of reporting obligations are growing, posing difficulties for both regulatory bodies to enforce laws and for entities trying to comply. These challenges underscore the need for innovative solutions to streamline compliance processes and enhance competitiveness within the EU.

Another current challenge are limitations of real-world data such as issues with availability, confidentiality, and bias. Synthetic data is becoming increasingly vital in addressing these problems. By generating and utilizing synthetic data, actions within this framework aim to enhance data quality, diversity, and representativeness, making it a crucial tool for AI-powered innovation and regulatory compliance.

Where relevant, the actions should address **cybersecurity, interoperability, reproducibility and standardization**, and/or liaise with other actions working on those aspects, in view of

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<sup>150</sup> FAIR: Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable data

facilitating effective data sharing across platforms and sectors, while ensuring an adequate level of security and protection.

Actions should provide necessary comprehensive **user training and support**, (also involving the users/stakeholders outside the project), ensuring adaptability and scalability to accommodate evolving regulations and diverse organizational needs and to raise awareness and improve understanding of relevant compliance issues. Proposals for all three areas should analyse and address the real needs of real users and stakeholders, and how these will be addressed in the proposed action. The training and user needs should be linked to tangible progress indicators in the proposal.

The proposal should clearly state (in the abstract and in the introduction) which of the following three areas it addresses. A proposal can address more than one area, but it should indicate one of them as the main focus of the proposal, and it will be evaluated accordingly under that area.

- Area 1: Actions to develop advanced compliance technology integrating AI, cybersecurity, language technologies, and privacy preservation. This framework could include the creation of NLP<sup>151</sup>-driven semantic analysis tools for deciphering complex legal texts and translating them into clear compliance tasks, energy-efficient neuromorphic approaches and mechanisms for optimising massive data operations, or machine learning algorithms trained on historical data to predict and mitigate potential compliance violations. With the capability to detect changes in EU legislation, these advanced AI systems and analytics tools will provide deep insights into compliance performance, risk management, and help forecast upcoming regulatory trends to strategically prepare for future requirements. For usability, it is also important that the tools can be integrated with the organisation's existing processes and systems.
- Area 2: Actions to ensure auto-compliance of data transactions and data spaces with applicable regulation (e.g. data and sectoral legislation). Actions in this area should anticipate compliance tasks within the context of Common European Data Spaces and coordinate with them as necessary. Actions in this area are expected to develop automatic or semi-automatic tools that analyse and take into account the specific architecture, governance model, exchange mechanisms, tools, data types, identity management, smart contracting, user policies and other user needs or operational features of the actual data spaces, liaising with and building on other actions working in this area, in particular the Data Spaces Support Centre.
- Area 3: Actions to generate, manage and leverage **synthetic data** in order to improve data quality, availability, representativity, fitness for purpose and compliance. The actions should in particular address the inherent shortcomings of real world data that would necessitate synthetic data (e.g. data availability, confidentiality, privacy protection, enhancing quality, diversity, representativeness, bias). Additionally, actions may target generating synthetic data for sparse or unusual domains, integrating synthetic and real

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<sup>151</sup> NLP: Natural Language Processing



data effectively, or advancing technological capabilities in generative models and simulation-based approaches to drive synthetic data generation forward and/or addressing or modelling rare events and complex dynamic systems. All actions under this Area are expected to address the evaluation, validation and benchmarking of synthetic data to ensure fitness for purpose and safe, ethical and compliant use of synthetic data, including the analysis and mitigation of biases inherited from the original data or introduced by the synthetic data generation process. For these purposes, collaboration with simulation/digital twins actions could be explored.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on AI, Data and Robotics.

Projects are expected to develop synergies with Digital Europe programme topics implementing Common European Data Spaces, especially the Data Spaces Support Centre (DSSC). Projects are expected to ensure complementarities with projects funded under the following topics:

- HORIZON-CL4-2024-DATA-01-01 AI-driven data operations and compliance technologies (IA).
- HORIZON-CL4-2021-DATA-01-01 Technologies and solutions for compliance, privacy preservation, green and responsible data operations (RIA).

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-DATA-02: Empowering AI/generative AI along the Cognitive Computing continuum (RIA) (AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 6.00 and 8.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 30.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global</p>

	<p>context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway and the following additional associated countries: Canada, Israel, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.<sup>152</sup></p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 3 and achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.

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

- **Novel AI-enabled Cloud and Edge management solutions** tailored for the processing needs of AI workloads across the cognitive cloud-edge-IoT continuum.
- Strategic industrial cooperation across the Cloud-Edge-IoT cognitive computing continuum to support future **hyper-distributed AI applications**.

<sup>152</sup>

The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

- Seamless and trustworthy integration and interoperability across diverse computing and data environments spanning from core cloud (including HPC) to edge to IoT and across different technology stacks.
- Enhanced openness and open strategic autonomy in the evolving data and AI-economies across the computing continuum **validated through key business/societal sectors**.
- Guaranteeing a minimum level of interoperability and portability thereby facilitating European access to foreign markets.

Scope: The Cloud to Edge Continuum needs to provide seamless and trustworthy integration of diverse computing and data environments spanning from core cloud to edge to IoT and support the enormous data, processing needs, and new resource types brought by next generation AI technologies.

Different types of AI processes pose different requirements that compute infrastructures need to meet to execute them. The state-of-the-art in generative AI and large language models is heavily reliant on high-performance processing and very large AI models. Cutting-edge hardware accelerators that power these processing systems are scarce on the market and only available in highly specialised, high-performance infrastructures in certain cloud and HPC environments at considerable costs. At the same time, the requirement to gather, process, and transmit massive amounts of data to the central data processing environment remains a barrier for many AI applications. All these factors urge the emergence of efficient tools and mechanisms **to empower the distribution of AI training and inference processes throughout the computing continuum**.

Empowering the next generation AI technologies with on-demand, agile and situation-aware infrastructure that brings data- and computing power to where and when it is needed will let end-users exploit Artificial Intelligence across the computing continuum without compromising on security and trust and optimising their energy use. These **challenges** span various aspects of the continuum, including **on-device data processing, data orchestration and sharing, AI integration, decentralised intelligent management, decentralized and global optimization, energy and resource heterogeneity support, data management, security/privacy, and synergies with 5G/6G**. Addressing these challenges is crucial for realizing the vision of a cognitive cloud-to-edge continuum as a key enabler for any emerging trends such as AI/generative AI.

The Cognitive Computing Continuum could eventually be extended to **include other computational resources**, such as **HPC**, and provide abstraction layers to maximize the benefits of available hardware.

Addressing all the above complexities calls for innovative research to overcome these challenges. **The aim is to develop generic and AI-enabled cloud-edge technologies encompassing the whole computing continuum to empower the development of AI/generative AI technologies and applications**. The proposals should demonstrate the generic applicability of the proposed technological solutions across various application

domains such as but not limited to, manufacturing, healthcare, robotics, transportation and smart cities.

The following (one or more) research areas should be addressed:

- **Development of novel mechanisms for the efficient development, deployment, and operation of AI workflows** across heterogeneous and distributed infrastructures along the Edge to Cloud to HPC continuum that optimise training times, model accuracy and data management while factoring in performance metrics such as memory usage, energy efficiency, application processing and data transfer latency, and network overheads. These should factor in virtualisation and orchestration techniques that seamlessly integrate heterogeneous processor architectures and cater for the explainability of the applied cognitive optimisations.
- **Decentralised and federated computing continuum tools and mechanisms to enable distributed AI architectures.** These include scheduling, orchestration, and placement mechanisms that leverage the wide range of Edge computing environments available in the compute continuum, including on-device edge. Tools and mechanisms should take into consideration - where appropriate - data security and privacy aspects. The focus is on enhancing AI process execution through techniques such as model, data, hybrid parallelism and data compression, gossip, swarm, and federated training, or conditional computing.
- **Cloud and edge processing tools and techniques to reduce AI processing power usage and emissions across the cognitive computing continuum,** relying on hardware efficiency (for example, thanks to special-purpose accelerators and heterogeneous hardware processor architectures) and energy optimisation techniques, such as hardware and software approximation.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on AI, Data, and Robotics.

Projects are expected to develop synergies and relate to activities and outcomes of the Digital Europe Programme (DEP) and any existing or emerging Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI) initiative, such as IPCEI-CIS.

All proposals are expected to share communicable results with the European R&D community, through the AI-on-demand platform, and if necessary other relevant digital resource platforms in order to enhance the European AI, Data and Robotics ecosystem through the sharing of results and best practice.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-DATA-03: Software Engineering for AI and generative AI (RIA) (AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - HADEA</b>
<b>Specific conditions</b>

<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 4.00 and 6.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 15.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway and the following additional associated countries: Canada, Israel, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.<sup>153</sup></p>

<sup>153</sup>

The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity,

<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 4 and achieve TRL 6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
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Expected Outcome:

- Improved methods and tools to optimally develop and deliver bias-free AI algorithms and generative AI.
- New concepts of the auto-evolution-enabled software elements that AI algorithms can autonomously select and integrate.

Scope: The latest developments in AI are demanding computation infrastructures designed to maximize the number of FLOPS. Europe has a window of opportunity to leverage open source and ensure that the European industry is at the cutting edge of these new processing infrastructures. The current methods and tools to develop and efficiently deliver AI pipelines and complex generative AI applications present several shortcomings.

Current identified challenges include the continuous management of data pipelines, novel testing methods (e.g. differential testing or improved performance testing), optimized deployment strategies (in terms of using energy efficient resources or the best performant), management of dependencies with a diverse set of types of hardware, algorithm bias and discrimination against certain groups, determined by characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, age or disability, as well as the maintenance of the effectiveness of AI applications, notably generative AI ones. The explainability of AI models is another crucial challenge that must be also tackled at the software engineering level, possibly in synergy with explainability methods at the machine learning stage. Also, large language models and foundational models require the development and operation of complex system architectures that need to handle data processing at large scale, continuous training of models and inference. Furthermore, AI pipelines and generative AI application also strongly suffer from poor protection against learning dataset poisoning, as well as prompt poisoning; software engineering methods and tools providing support to protect against those attacks are thus direly required. This presents novel challenges for developers that will need to be addressed with the development of new methods, mechanisms and tools covering the above, including neuromorphic computing, but not limited to.

The main objectives for the advancements of Software Engineering in this field are:

- Increasing the productivity of generative AI application developers, and operators, especially of foundational and language models.
- Define a reference architecture and framework for generative AI application developers to simplify integration and system modularity.
- Simplifying and automating the development and operation of such applications.

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and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

- Including novel techniques for the generation of labelled training sets for reinforcement learning (RL) from human feedback, to be evaluated with corresponding RL algorithms.
- Facilitating AI progress and advancement beyond the state-of-the-art in the EU at a faster rate vis-à-vis the rest of the world and contributing to the implementation of the AI Act.
- Establishing collaboration with EU-based chips designers to maximize how the hardware resources are fully optimized with the software to develop

The proposal should address at least one use case as an industry application (e.g., automotive, health, energy, food/agriculture, etc.).

Actions could build on, provide support or seek collaboration with existing projects, develop synergies and ensure complementarities with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives currently demanding this kind of optimisations possibly in different verticals: e.g. digital twins leveraging GenAI, data quality enhancement leveraging GenAI, development of energy-efficient AI algorithms.

Communicable results should be shared with the European R&D community through the AI-on-demand platform, and if necessary, other relevant digital resource platforms to bolster the European AI, Data, and Robotics ecosystem by disseminating results and best practices.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on AI, data and robotics (ADRA), and all proposals are expected to allocate tasks for cohesion activities with ADRA, and the CSA HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-18: GenAI4EU central Hub.

Actions are encouraged to build on, provide support or seek collaboration with existing projects, develop synergies and ensure complementarities with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives currently demanding this kind of optimisations possibly in different verticals: e.g. digital twins leveraging GenAI, data quality enhancement leveraging GenAI, development of energy-efficient AI algorithms. In particular, proposals are encouraged to ensure complementarities with projects funded under the following topics:

1. HORIZON-CL4-2024-HUMAN-03-01: Advancing Large AI Models: Integration of New Data Modalities and Expansion of Capabilities
2. HORIZON-CL4-2024-HUMAN-03-02: Explainable and Robust AI (AI Data and Robotics Partnership) (RIA)
3. HORIZON-CL4-2023-DATA-01-01 AI-driven data operations and compliance technologies (IA)
4. HORIZON-CL4-2021-DATA-01-01 Technologies and solutions for compliance, privacy preservation, green and responsible data operations (RIA)
5. HORIZON-CL4-2021-HUMAN-01-24 - tackling gender, race and other biases in AI.

Projects are encouraged to develop synergies and relate to activities and outcomes of the Digital Europe Programme (DEP) and any existing or emerging Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI) initiative.

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#### **Destination 4: Achieving open strategic autonomy in digital and emerging enabling technologies**

Destination 4 ensures Europe's strategic autonomy while preserving an open economy in those technologies that will be key for a deep digital transformation of industry, public services and society, while fully playing its enabling role in the twin transition. As set out in the European Chips Act, the top-priorities are to i) strengthen processes undertaken at critical stages in the semiconductor and quantum chips value chain, including chip design and manufacturing technologies, and ii) address the use of new materials and green technologies, energy efficiency and the integration of circularity and life-cycle assessment.

Destination 4 will address high value-added hardware needs for core, cloud and edge, fast-sensing, low-latency and high-bandwidth data transmission, and help secure the supply of critical components for key markets, such as automotive, health, automation and mobility systems. For this purpose, significant human capacity will be required in chip manufacturing to ensure: (i) the strengthening of processes undertaken at critical stages in the value chain; and (ii) that workers can take up quality jobs created as part of these priorities, including through the activities undertaken by the joint undertaking initiative.

In addition, future needs in microelectronics (such as performance, size, cost, energy efficiency, environmental impact, new materials, concepts, architectures, integration) may also be addressed to make sure Europe's microelectronics industry remains competitive. Opportunities may come from non-volatile memories, spintronics, in-memory computing, neuromorphic and other emerging technologies. Photonics research will lead to fast and versatile sensing and imaging, and energy-efficient building blocks for networks and data centres. The cluster will also push for chip-level integration of photonics and optoelectronics.

The cloud/edge/internet of things will be transformed into an agile and situation-aware infrastructure that brings data to where and when it is needed. Within these smart digital infrastructures, end-to-end artificial intelligence, from the core to the edge and across all technology layers, will be key for on-demand supply of optimal data-, communication-, and computing resource orchestration, with optimal use of energy while preserving privacy and ensuring resilience. European sovereignty in the cloud-edge server market will be strengthened through the power of open-source software, complementing the RISC-V based European Processor Initiative that aims to increase Europe's independence in high performance computing hardware.

Cluster 4 will transform the user experience. It will push the frontiers of virtual and extended realities (VR/XR) and of open, human-centric virtual worlds for industry, entertainment and arts, public services and people alike, e.g. by leveraging social innovation. It envisages a vibrant R&I ecosystem that strategically joins-up research and development on sophisticated VR/XR optics and displays, multimodal human-computer interaction, authoring tools, real-time spatial computing, rendering, integration and application research. Improved sensing, fast processing and low-latency will be challenging for the underlying cloud/edge/Internet of things. Along similar lines, the way in which the virtual world meets the physical world will continue to evolve, thanks to all kinds of robots and other smart devices that involve self- and

context awareness, spatial intelligence, exploiting the best in bias-free AI, engineering and design for game-changing physical characteristics, functional or cognitive capabilities, acute perception, autonomy and safe interaction.

Artificial intelligence underpins many of these changes and Cluster 4 will strengthen and consolidate R&I in this area. For example, today's generative models are a preview of how virtual worlds and multimodal user-experiences could be produced on-demand. Research on core learning and analysis techniques (incremental, frugal and collaborative), as well as next generation smart robotic systems, will keep Europe at the cutting edge of AI. Artificial Intelligence is also key to keep the competitiveness and strategic autonomy of the EU scientific sector. The EU's comprehensive approach to achieving leadership in AI is reflected in its Apply AI Strategy, which aims at establishing Europe as a global leader in the development and adoption of AI. By fostering a vibrant AI ecosystem, the EU seeks to make Europe a hub for AI innovation and growth, where world-class AI models are developed and integrated into strategic sectors. This initiative is designed to drive innovation, economic growth, and competitiveness, while ensuring that the benefits of AI are shared by all. The topics related to Generative AI included in this destination will support the implementation of the GenAI4EU initiative included in the AI Innovation Package of 24 January 2024. They constitute, moreover, an integral part of the broader Apply AI strategy. By aligning these efforts with the GenAI4EU initiative and the Apply AI strategy, the EU aims to create a cohesive and coordinated approach to AI development and adoption, one that promotes European excellence and leadership in this critical field.

Europe's long-term competitiveness in the digital area requires continuous scouting and early, low-TRL cross-disciplinary work on new and emerging technologies, dissociated from the main roadmaps. This would encourage collaboration in research and cross-fertilisation between disciplines and sectors on new approaches in: (i) microelectronics; (ii) power electronics; (iii) photonics and photon/phonon/spin/electron integration; (iv) unconventional, hybrid, neuromorphic, nature-inspired or bio-intelligent paradigms; and (v) novel systems and infrastructure architectures.

Europe's strength in quantum technologies (including in quantum communications and optical satellite communications, etc.) is a strategic asset for its future security and independence. Cluster 4 supports early and mature quantum technologies and stimulates their industrial uptake, e.g. through experimentation and testing environments for integrating them into standard industrial design and manufacturing. Equally transformative, two-dimensional materials (2DM) could positively affect many industries, including ICT. While further exploring the vast range of 2DMs, Cluster 4 will also work towards completing a fully European supply chain and scaling up the development and piloting of 2DM technologies and devices for more industrial fields.

### **Quantum and High Performance Computing**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-01: Continuation of the Quantum Technologies Flagship (CSA)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 4.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 4.50 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.</p>

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

1. Act as a global observatory of quantum technologies, systematically reporting on the latest advancements and breakthroughs occurring worldwide. Provide regular assessments to the European Commission and Member States, specifically to the Quantum Technologies Coordination Group established in line with the Quantum Declaration, offering a detailed analysis of Europe's standing relative to global competitors. This will ensure Europe can strategically respond to emerging trends and innovations.
2. Capitalize on the accomplishments and infrastructure (e.g. online presence) established by the current CSA to further elevate Europe's leadership in quantum technologies.
3. Provide comprehensive support to Flagship projects, researchers, and innovators, fostering synergies, knowledge sharing, and best practices.
4. Develop and implement targeted communication strategies to raise awareness and understanding of quantum technologies across varied audiences, including students, specialists, and the general public.
6. Promote the sustainable growth of quantum technologies in Europe by exploring new applications and markets, ensuring the field's dynamism and competitiveness.
7. Serve as a pivotal entity for coordinating efforts between the EU and Member States, especially in light of the new Quantum Declaration. This includes aligning national and European strategies and enhancing international relations to fortify Europe's stance in the global quantum landscape.

8. Assist the Flagship's governance bodies and facilitate the integration of new structures or initiatives, ensuring a cohesive and efficient approach to advancing quantum technologies in Europe.
9. Act as a globally-oriented data observatory for quantum technologies, systematically collecting data (e.g. on patents, scientific publications and the current and future evolution of markets for quantum technologies) related to the state of quantum technologies in Europe and worldwide. Once or twice a year, this data should be disseminated to stakeholders, including the Commission and Member States, as well as countries associated to Horizon Europe.
10. Propose a clear, service-oriented model detailing the CSA's offerings to various stakeholders, including research support, data business intelligence, strategic analysis, international collaboration facilitation, event organization, and communication activities.
11. Update the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda through a community-based process involving research and industry stakeholders.

Scope: The scope of the new Quantum Flagship CSA encompasses:

1. The global observatory role of quantum technologies, systematically reporting on the latest advancements and breakthroughs occurring worldwide.
2. Fulfil the dissemination requirement of five articles every two months highlighting EU success stories in quantum technologies. These articles should be widely promoted in Europe and beyond via social media, popular newspapers, and technical magazines to ensure maximum visibility and impact.
3. Building upon the established infrastructure by the previous CSA, support the European Commission and current and future projects within the Quantum Flagship, including organisation of events and ensuring they have access to the necessary resources and expertise.
4. Developing comprehensive communication plans tailored to different target audiences, enhancing the visibility and understanding of quantum technologies and their societal implications.
5. Acting as a central hub for coordinating actions between the EU, Member States, and international partners. This involves compiling and disseminating information critical for harmonizing strategies at different levels.
6. Providing support to the Flagship's governance structures, contributing to the smooth execution of its strategic vision and operational goals. This may include aiding the establishment and integration of new bodies or initiatives.
7. Contribute to the organisation of the European Quantum Technologies Conference (EQTC). The conference is due to be hosted by the country holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the third quarter of each year (2026-2029).

The Commission considers that proposals with an overall duration of typically 48 months would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other durations.

The project should aim to link to the activities of relevant standards development organisations with e.g. participation of project beneficiaries in the relevant standards technical committees. The Commission encourages the inclusion of partners with direct experience –of participation in relevant standards committees at national, European or international level(s) in project consortia.

Proposals are encouraged to build on, or seek collaboration with, existing projects and develop synergies and complementarities with other relevant European, national, or regional initiatives and funding programmes. In particular, links are encouraged with:

- the project funded under the topic HORIZON-CL4-2021-DIGITAL-EMERGING-01-32: Support and coordination of the Quantum Technologies Flagship Initiative (CSA) – QUCATS project;
- all relevant quantum technologies-related projects funded under Horizon Europe and Digital Europe, and as part of the EuroQCI initiative, EuroHPC Joint Undertaking and Chips Joint Undertaking.

Proposals should also cover synergies with other relevant European, national, or regional initiatives and funding programmes such as those mentioned above.

Proposals should also contribute to spreading excellence across Europe; for example, through the involvement of EU Widening Countries.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and/or gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement; however, should proposers consider it to be of relevance for their proposal, they are strongly encouraged to integrate it.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-02: Quantum Computing – complementing the quantum computing FPAs with the development of a technology agnostic software stack (RIA)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 5.00 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 10.00 million.

<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway and the following additional associated countries: Canada, Israel, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.<sup>154</sup></p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 3-4 and achieve TRL 5-6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.

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

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The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

1. Establishing a universal, interoperable quantum computing ecosystem that supports diverse hardware platforms through the creation of a technology-agnostic software stack.
2. Seamlessly integrating quantum computing with classical computing systems, including HPC and cloud services (including the EuroHPC Joint Undertaking's supercomputers, and the quantum computers and simulators already integrated into them), and demonstrating practical quantum computing applications by showcasing use cases that combine quantum and classical computing capabilities
3. Advancing the development of standardized software architectures, compilers, and simulators that ensure application portability and performance across different quantum computing platforms.
4. Demonstration of workflows that effectively combine quantum and classical computing to address complex computational challenges, providing clear examples of the added value of quantum acceleration or showing a quantum advantage.
5. Support for initiatives aimed at training software developers in quantum programming and developing libraries for basic quantum algorithms, including the integration of quantum error correction mechanisms.

This topic emphasizes the strategic importance of collaboration between Horizon Europe quantum computing software and hardware projects and the EuroHPC Joint Undertaking's quantum projects, including high-performance computing-quantum middleware, integration, and Quantum Excellence Centres. Successful applicants will be required to closely collaborate and agree on the interfaces for the main layers of the software stack at the beginning of their projects. It is crucial that the projects collaborate from the outset to define open interfaces for the main layers of the software stack. These interfaces should be open for consultation and incorporate input from existing initiatives to ensure they are well aligned with current developments in the field. All interface specifications should be properly documented as they will serve as the foundational basis for the development of different layers and facilitate seamless collaboration across projects.

In line with the European Commission's commitment to open access and reuse of software, when possible, all developments under this call should utilize open-source software platforms and be published in open repositories such as GitHub. Additionally, the use of appropriate software licenses, such as those listed as free by the Free Software Foundation and listed as open source by the Open Source Initiative, or under the European Union Public Licence (EUPL), is strongly recommended.

Moreover, the beneficiaries will have to ensure open access to other research outputs like data and workflows under the principle 'as open as possible and as closed as necessary' and in accordance with the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) data principles.

Scope: Quantum APIs and cloud access form the transition layer between users and quantum machines in the quantum computation stack. This layer includes general-purpose quantum software development kits that are used to implement quantum algorithms for both gate-based

systems, simulators and quantum annealers. This call seeks proposals that address the creation of a cohesive software stack that is agnostic to quantum hardware, facilitating the development, testing, and deployment of quantum applications across various platforms.

Proposals are encouraged to build on, or seek collaboration with, existing projects, and develop synergies and ensure complementarities with other relevant European, national, or regional initiatives and funding programmes. In particular, links are encouraged with the following, as well as with the EuroHPC Joint Undertaking:

- HORIZON-CL4-2021-DIGITAL-EMERGING-02-17: Framework Partnership Agreement for developing large-scale quantum simulation platform technologies (FPA)
- HORIZON-CL4-2021-DIGITAL-EMERGING-02-15: Framework Partnership Agreement for developing the first large-scale quantum computers (FPA)
- HORIZON-CL4-2023-DIGITAL-EMERGING-01-43: Framework Partnership Agreement for developing large-scale quantum Computing platform technologies (FPA)
- HORIZON-CL4-QUANTUM-02-SGA - Developing large-scale quantum simulation platform technologies (SGA)
- HORIZON-CL4-QUANTUM-01-SGA - Developing the first large-scale quantum computers (SGA)

In addition, proposals are expected to develop synergies with relevant projects funded under the Digital Europe Programme (DEP).

Proposals should also contribute to spreading excellence across Europe; for example, through the involvement of EU Widening Countries.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and/or gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement; however, should proposers consider it to be of relevance for their proposal, they are strongly encouraged to integrate it.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-03: Supporting Digital Partnerships in Quantum technologies (RIA)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 2.50 and 2.70 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 8.00 million.



<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 2-3 and achieve TRL 3-5 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.

Expected Outcome: The overall objective of this call is to support the implementation of the EU-Republic of Korea Digital Partnership by strengthening cooperation with the Republic of Korea (ROK) in quantum technologies, in the areas identified in the Partnership.

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

- Strengthening the European quantum ecosystem, enabling stakeholders to enhance quantum technologies' applications in academic, industrial, and relevant cases for the EU and ROK.
- Improving the exchange of information and expertise between EU and ROK to tackle societal challenges utilizing quantum technologies.
- Sharing best practices in deploying quantum technologies and integrating them with other technologies.
- Facilitating researcher and engineer exchanges between the EU and ROK for mutual access to quantum infrastructures.
- Enhancing international cooperation between the EU and ROK quantum communities, with a roadmap for future collaboration in targeted areas.

Scope: Proposals are expected to address quantum technology challenges in the fields of quantum communication, computing, simulation, and sensing, identifying the added value and mutual benefits for both EU and Korean partners. This includes integration across various disciplines such as physics, engineering, computer science, cybersecurity, theory, algorithms, software, manufacturing, control, and infrastructures.

Relevant technological and societal challenges to address include:

- Co-design of hardware and software to accelerate quantum computing and simulation applications, ensuring interoperability across platforms and foundational quantum algorithm and architecture theories.
- Development of secure quantum communication protocols, including quantum key distribution and beyond, with a focus on device-independent protocols, quantum network architecture, and certification of quantum states.

- Application-specific quantum sensor development, covering areas like device fabrication, characterization for purposes like navigation, imaging, and biomedical applications, and optimizing sensor control and advanced approaches.

Proposals are recommended to link to the activities of relevant standards development organisations, e.g. via participation of project beneficiaries in the relevant standards technical committees. The Commission encourages the inclusion of partners with direct experience of participation in relevant standards committees at national, European or international level(s) in project consortia.

Proposals should contribute to spreading excellence between the EU and ROK, through the balanced involvement of EU and ROK entities.

Proposals should clearly define the benefit of EU-ROK collaboration, aiming to enhance the technology readiness level (TRL) through comprehensive engineering approaches involving public and/or private partners.

Proposals should also contribute to spreading excellence across Europe; for example, through the involvement of EU Widening Countries.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and/or gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement; however, should proposers consider it to be of relevance for their proposal, they are strongly encouraged to integrate it.

#### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-04: Post-exascale HPC (CSA)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 2.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2.50 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.

**Expected Outcome:** The CSA action should be prepared, managed and coordinated by key stakeholders in the field. Project results are expected to contribute to the following expected outcomes:

- Delivery of a high-quality roadmap addressing the post-exascale HPC/AI research challenges for applications, algorithms, software, hardware and systems, including a strong emphasis on AI
- Contribution to the development of a competitive European converged HPC/Quantum/AI ecosystem, including AI Factories and future AI Gigafactories
- Interaction and collaboration with similar international efforts, ensuring alignment with AI-driven computing paradigms worldwide

**Scope:** Proposals are invited for a Coordination and Support Action that will guide and prepare European HPC for the post-exascale era of converging supercomputing, quantum computing and artificial intelligence worlds.

The action should bring together the key scientific and industrial players in Europe, ensuring strong AI engagement, and should liaise with the relevant international post-exascale efforts (e.g. the International Exascale Project (InPex)), the EuroHPC Joint Undertaking advisory bodies such as the Research and Innovation Advisory Group (RIAG) and the Infrastructure Advisory Group (INFRAG), the EuroHPC JU private partners (i.e. the European Technology Platform for High Performance Computing ETP4HPC, the Big Data Value Association (BDVA), and the European Quantum Industry Consortium (QuIC)), relevant EuroHPC main initiatives (e.g. the DARE Framework Programme Agreement on RISC-V processors, HPC Centres of Excellence, AI Factories, etc), the hosting entities of European AI Factories and future AI Gigafactories, and other relevant European projects and initiatives.

The action should analyse the research challenges of all relevant technologies in the post-exascale/AI era and produce and maintain a high-quality research roadmap with recommendations for research actions at the European level. Issues like hardware-supported mixed-precision, AI-driven HPC as a service, real-time HPC, next generation AI model training and inference, digital continuum, convergence of HPC/AI/Quantum/Cloud/Edge, should be part of the analysis.

The Commission considers that proposals with an overall duration of typically 24/36 months would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other durations. Only one proposal will be selected for funding.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and/or gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement; however, should proposers consider it to be of relevance for their proposal, they are strongly encouraged to integrate it.

Projects are expected to develop synergies with relevant projects funded under the Digital Europe Programme (DEP).

## **Photonics**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-01: Advanced sensor technologies and multimodal sensor integration for multiple application domains (IA) (Photonics Partnership)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 4.00 and 6.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 25.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 3 and achieve TRL 7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.

Expected Outcome: Photonic sensor technologies enable precision and versatility in sensing across multiple domains. The integration into multimodal systems enhances data accuracy, speed and reliability. Advancements in photonic sensors and their multimodal integration aim to elevate diagnostics, monitoring, and sensing by improving efficiency, performance, and reliability while reducing size and manufacturing costs and power consumption.

The development of sensor technologies and multimodal integration is closely aligned with several key EU policies. These include achieving open strategic autonomy in digital and emerging enabling technologies, enhancing Europe's technological sovereignty, and supporting the twin transition to a digital and green economy by promoting energy-efficient, competitive, and resilient digital infrastructures.

The initiative also aims to advance the digital transformation by providing access to high-quality environmental data, supporting the development of technologies for privacy, compliance, and data integrity to empower decision-making and foster a fair data economy.

Lastly, it contributes to the green transition by leveraging photonic sensor technologies for environmental monitoring and sustainable practices. It aligns with the EU's objectives for a green and digital economy, enhancing system operations and promoting innovation in eco-friendly practices, thus strengthening Europe's technological leadership for societal and economic progress.

Projects are expected to contribute to at least three of the following outcomes to fully exploit the potential of photonics for a digital, green and healthy future in Europe:

- Increase the efficiency of developed photonic sensors, surpassing existing technologies in aspects such as energy consumption, data acquisition and processing speed, as well as measurement accuracy.
- Significantly reduce the size, weight, or footprint of the sensors and quantify advancements over current technologies.
- Improve both intrinsic and extrinsic performance metrics to boost measurement accuracy for at least three use-case scenarios.
- Extend the sensing and testing capabilities of photonic sensors by linking optical with non-optical measurement parameters (e.g. for acoustic sensing or electromagnetic sensing).
- Contribute to reducing manufacturing costs and increasing resource-efficiency, while also enhancing reliability and durability of the targeted sensor systems.

They are additionally expected to:

- Help secure the open strategic autonomy for Europe by ensuring intellectual property and production means of key technologies are maintained within the EU, reducing dependencies and enhancing negotiation power in technological cooperation.
- Help maximise international competitiveness by increasing the uptake and translation of photonic technologies into new products and services, guided by key technology requirements.

Scope: The scope of this topic focuses on the advancement and application of photonic sensor technologies and their integration into multimodal systems. Proposals are expected to address the development of sensor technologies and their validation through trials in realistic use cases. This includes exploring multi-modal sensor capabilities, as well as employing sensor fusion and machine learning approaches for the analysis of sensor data. Techniques should address at least two different technology approaches, i.e. sensor modalities, of which at least one must be photonic from the following areas:

- 3D sensing and imaging such as LIDAR, optical coherence tomography (OCT), optical tomography, interferometry, photoacoustics, etc.
- Communication fiber sensing
- Chemical and gas sensing
- Bio- and medical sensing and/or imaging
- Particle sensing

- Integrated photonic solutions

In addition, the proposals could focus on developing and integrating algorithms designed to enhance the processing capabilities and decision-making accuracy of photonic sensors. These algorithms may help to optimize the interpretation of complex sensor data, enable real-time analytics, ambient intelligence and adaptive responses in dynamic environments.

Furthermore, projects should aim to provide significant improvements in one or more of the application domains listed below and to demonstrate these in at least three use case scenarios. Demonstrators would be expected to reach TRL 4-5 while the photonic techniques would be developed up to TRL 7.

This expectation underlines the call's objective to foster innovations that have a substantial and beneficial impact on society and various industry sectors:

- Healthcare (medical diagnostics, disinfection, treatment through improved imaging techniques and diagnostic accuracy).
- Transportation Safety (enhanced safety features in automotive and aerospace industries through better sensing capabilities).
- Industrial efficiency and sustainability (industrial processes such as manufacturing, quality control, increasing precision and automation through improved sensing technologies).
- Agricultural/Food Sector (precision agriculture, food safety, food waste reduction and supply chain management through improved sensing techniques for monitoring crop health, detecting contaminants, and optimizing production processes and raw material utilisation).
- Environmental Monitoring and sustainable energy (pollution monitoring, climate research, renewable energy infrastructure and natural disaster mitigation).
- Security, safety and resilience of people and critical infrastructure (face identification, long distance observation by day and night, (infra-)structural health monitoring, chemical and gas sensing, explosive detection)
- Protection and efficient operation of optical communications, risk management of data transport and processing including increased resilience to cyber security.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include a business scenario and exploitation strategy.

Research must build on existing standards or contribute to standardisation. Where relevant, interoperability for data sharing should be addressed.

All projects should build on or seek collaboration with existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives, funding programmes and platforms, in particular the Digital Europe Programme (DEP).

## **Semiconductors**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-08: Strengthening the fabless Start-up and SME ecosystem in Europe (CSA)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 1.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 1.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions

Expected Outcome: Proposals should result in an enhanced and integrated support instrument for fabless startups, SMEs and mid-caps that drives collective growth and innovation. The outcomes should include:

- A sustainable and active organization or network that represents the interests of European fabless SMEs (e.g. the consortium could form an open industry association).
- A comprehensive framework facilitating dialogue between fabless SMEs and European stakeholders, including public authorities and key industrial actors, to address sector-specific needs and challenges.
- A platform providing fabless SMEs with easy access to up-to-date information on relevant calls and funding opportunities, policy and regulatory developments, as well as key technological updates.
- Active representation of fabless SMEs in high-profile forums and events, to strengthen their role and influence within the European semiconductor ecosystem.
- Targeted services to support startup acceleration and scaling, with emphasis on advanced semiconductor technologies, such as chips for AI, low-power computing, autonomous driving, integrated photonics, etc.

This CSA invites proposals that can foster a collaborative and inclusive European fabless ecosystem, capable of thriving in a dynamic global market.

Scope: Fabless semiconductor start-ups and SMEs play a key role in driving innovation and economic growth within the global technology sector. These companies, which design chips and outsource their manufacturing, are at the forefront of technological advancements, fueling innovative developments in semiconductor technologies related to AI, data processing, communications, automotive, and more. Globally, fabless companies contribute to approximately 50% of chip revenues. However, Europe's share in this crucial market is less than 1%, highlighting a significant gap that needs to be addressed to strengthen Europe's strategic autonomy and economic security. European fabless startups and SMEs often face significant challenges in accessing cohesive and timely information, financial resources, and relevant infrastructures and services. Nurturing and supporting the growth of European fabless SMEs is essential for building a competitive ecosystem that fosters rapid innovation, job creation, and sustainable growth. This Coordination and Support Action (CSA) aims to bridge this gap by providing targeted support and advocacy for Europe's fabless semiconductor start-ups, SMEs and small mid-caps, ensuring their voice is heard and their potential is fully realized.

The CSA will support European fabless start-ups, SMEs and mid-caps by establishing a coordination and knowledge hub to foster collaboration, improve access to strategic resources, and bridge the gap between them and decision-making entities. The proposed actions will aim to:

- Establish a sustainable organization or network, potentially through the formation of an open industry association, to represent the interests of European fabless SMEs.
- Promote dialogue and advocacy between fabless SMEs and European stakeholders, including public authorities and policymakers, while representing their interests with key industrial actors (such as foundries, EDA vendors, and design houses) as well as relevant initiatives of the Chips for Europe Initiative, the Chips Joint Undertaking and the IPCEIs on Microelectronics.
- Enhance the visibility and engagement of fabless start-ups and SMEs in EU policy-making to leverage their innovation potential, strengthening Europe's leadership in critical industry domains and in advanced semiconductors such as for AI, HPC, quantum, communications, advanced sensing, power systems and autonomous driving technologies and applications.
- Align with relevant support actions in key EU programmes, including coordination with the network of the European Semiconductor Competence Centres and the Design Platform under the "Chips for Europe Initiative".
- Develop a central platform (a one stop-shop) for semiconductor start-ups and SMEs that aggregates and disseminates all essential information they need (e.g., policy updates, public and private funding opportunities, and technological advancements) and facilitates access to funding and investment opportunities.



- Organize and participate in events, including workshops and conferences, to enhance the profile of fabless startups and SMEs, and strengthen their role in the broader European semiconductor ecosystem.
- Foster partnerships and innovation through networks that connect start-ups and SMEs, promoting cross-sector knowledge-sharing and joint projects to advance technological solutions and business growth.

The action should be coordinated and driven by the relevant representative European start-up and SME stakeholders operating in the field.

*Links with topics in other WPs:* Chips JU WP 2024 and 2025

### **AI-GenAI / Data / Robotics**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-07: Robust and trustworthy GenerativeAI for Robotics and industrial automation (RIA) (AI/Data/Robotics & Made in Europe Partnerships)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 40.00 and 45.00 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 85.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway and the following additional associated countries: Canada, Israel, the</p>

	<p>Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.<sup>155</sup></p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply:</p> <p>A minimum of EUR 10 million of the EU funding requested by the proposal must be allocated to financial support to third parties.</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 2 and achieve TRL 6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>To ensure a balanced portfolio grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to one proposal that is the highest ranked within Type A and Type B, provided that the applications attain all thresholds.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following

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The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

<i>of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>exceptions apply:</p> <p>Beneficiaries must provide financial support to third parties (FSTP). The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. In derogation to article 208 EU Financial Regulation, the maximum amount to be granted to each third party can exceed EUR 60,000 and reach up to EUR 500 000. This derogation is justified by the high cost intensity of the substantial human resources, equipment or data acquisition required to successfully carry out the research and innovation activities planned in the FTSP actions.</p> <p>A given action supported by such FSTP scheme can be implemented by one third party or a by consortium of entities. The maximum amount to be granted to each action implemented by a third party or by a consortium is up to EUR 2 million.</p>
<i>Exceptional page limits to proposals/applications</i>	<p>In order to include a business case and exploitation strategy, the page limit in Part B of the General Annexes is exceptionally extended by 3 pages.</p>

**Expected Outcome:** Proposals are expected to address one area of the expected outcomes, either Type A or Type B. The type should be clearly identified within the proposal.

Type A GenAI4EU<sup>156</sup>: Generative AI for Robotics for industrial automation. Project results are expected to contribute to all the following expected outcomes:

- Development of advanced foundation models for robotics, fostering increased autonomy and generalization capabilities, thus enabling robots to dynamically learn and comprehend their physical surroundings in real-time, ensuring adaptability and reliability across diverse and complex scenarios.
- Validation of the model through fine-tuning and downstream application to address industrial automation use-cases

Type B Trustworthy and robust generative AI for improved manufacturing. Project results are expected to further advance foundation models and reliable industrial solutions and to contribute to some of the following expected outcomes, depending on the use-cases addressed in the proposals:

- Increased productivity by high quality, flexible and resource-efficient industrial automation, both on the shop floor and in engineering/business processes;

<sup>156</sup> GenAI4EU is an initiative launched in the context of the AI innovation package, fostering the development of innovative Generative AI solutions to support the competitiveness of Europe's strategic sectors and industries: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-launches-ai-innovation-package-support-artificial-intelligence-startups-and-smes>

- Significantly improved facilitation of product and process certification and compliance assessment, as well as reliability, efficiency and sustainability of manufacturing processes, supporting easier high-mix production and manufacturing of products based on sustainable and advanced technologies; and
- Significantly facilitated installation, commissioning and decommissioning of production facilities, through tools that enable faster industrialisation of factory automation well beyond the pilot phase, while reducing the need for manual on-site interventions.
- Applicants will justify their selection by the expected business dimension of their use cases, while ensuring a critical mass of resources in the project to ensure significant outcomes in these.

Scope: Proposals integrating Generative AI in robotics and industrial automation are expected to substantially contribute to productivity gains, including for instance in engineering industries, the automotive sector, food production or other sectors related to manufacturing industries. All proposals will have to demonstrate their expected impact on the competitiveness of the selected application sector.

The budget will be split in a balanced way between area Type A and Type B defined below. Proposals should clearly identify the area they are addressing.

Proposals aiming for Type A outcomes should adhere to the Type A scope, while proposals aiming for Type B outcomes should follow the Type B scope.

**Type A Scope:** While it is widely acknowledged that current use of generative AI has the potential to impact certain tasks in robotics such as improving user interaction or providing explanations about why a robot system made a particular decision, these are, in general, not within the critical operating flow of a robot. To reach next level of autonomy, generative AI must also enable robots to learn from their experiences, simulate realistic environments for training in challenging conditions, and enhance planning, decision making and control while considering the physical constraints imposed both by the environment and by the physical construction of the robot. This includes integrating 'Human-in-the-loop' mechanisms, where AI systems collaborate with human operators to enhance decision-making processes and adaptability, particularly in dynamic environments.

This represents a significant advancement in robotics, requiring the development of AI models that can effectively navigate the complexities of the physical world while ensuring safety. Generative AI is expecting to bring such a step-change in robots precision, adaptability, versatility and robustness, enabling them to efficiently achieve real world tasks such as complex moves (navigation, manipulations, etc.) with higher level of autonomy and precision.

In the context of advancing robotics capabilities, the use of generative AI stands as a transformative force, amplifying robots' learning, interaction, and operational abilities. By enabling robots to learn from experiences, simulate diverse environments for training, and enhance human-robot interaction, it drives adaptability and efficiency. Additionally,

generative AI facilitates the augmentation of robot situational awareness and planning capabilities, empowering them to predict outcomes of various actions, thereby elevating their autonomy and decision-making prowess.

Training current generative AI models, in particular Large AI models, requires high volumes of data to achieve effective levels of performance. The vast amount of data required present a significant challenge when it comes to robotics. Further research is necessary to find the appropriate balance between the quality, adequacy, and volume of data with regards to the performance of the AI model. Moreover, model distillation techniques may play a key role for the portability of the generative AI solution at the edge, in power-limited devices. The training data should come from the real world or from physical aware simulations of the real world. Where relevant, in particular in the context of human interaction, training data should encompass diverse individual characteristics, such as gender, age, racial and ethnical background, to mitigate potential bias and discriminations.

Proposals should detail strategies to leverage cutting-edge generative AI techniques to enhance the adaptability and reliability of these models across complex and dynamic scenarios, as well as how to ensure human-centricity and environmental considerations. The goal is to train and fine-tune generative AI models that meet the necessary standards for ensuring the safe operation of robotics hardware. These models should empower robots to autonomously plan and execute actions while maintaining high levels of performance and generalization capabilities.

Research activities should explore the training methodologies for these foundation models, emphasizing their ability to process multimodal data and derive actionable insights to inform robotic decision-making processes.

The proposals are also expected to include the validation of the trained models through applications. Proposals should detail methodologies for conducting rigorous testing procedures, incorporating both simulation-based evaluations and physical experiments. These tests aim to evaluate the performance and scalability of developed foundation models.

The research will be driven by impactful scenarios defined by major manufacturing industry players who should be well integrated in the consortium. They should be deeply involved in the proposed work in order to provide the use-case, the corresponding data and they will play an important role to accompany the validation process. They will define a number of representative real-world use-cases with gradually increased level of complexity to drive the technology development. They will provide existing relevant data and collect further data necessary to train and fine-tune the models, but also to validate the solutions. Given the sensitivity of sharing industrial data, manufacturers present in the consortium have to define upfront mechanisms to collectively provide and pool a sufficiently large dataset for training the models (this might involve a trusted third party as intermediary), ensuring sufficient quality and quantity of data needed to train the models. If necessary, they will have to put in place mechanisms to acquire data from sources outside the consortium.

Proposals are expected to enhance the accuracy and robustness of generative AI systems in robotics, ensuring that the solutions developed are trustworthy and reliable in their applications, hence in line with the AI Act requirements.

Proposals should address both the safety of robotic operations, ensuring protection against physical risks, and cybersecurity measures to safeguard against digital threats and ensure system integrity.

The emphasis lies in creating and disseminating general-purpose models and tools rather than being limited to narrowly focused solutions. Projects should also build on or seek collaboration with existing and upcoming projects and develop synergies and ensure complementarities with other relevant European (e.g. projects funded under HORIZON-CL4-2024-HUMAN-03-01: Advancing Large AI Models: Integration of New Data Modalities and Expansion of Capabilities), national or regional initiatives, funding programmes and platforms.

#### Type B Scope:

The objective is to enhance productivity and provide a competitive advantage to EU industry in the transition towards more sustainable, zero-carbon production, addressing the uncertainties and tensions on supply chains and the lack of highly-skilled workers. A new generation of digital technologies will integrate generative Artificial Intelligence, robotics, and advanced human interfaces in industry-grade applications with a high degree of autonomy. This will enable the development, production, and operation of complex and advanced high-tech products at lower cost while improving sustainability and flexibility, ultimately becoming a powerful tool for accelerating innovation in both processes and products.

The manufacturing sector should strongly benefit from increased levels of automation made possible by breakthroughs provided by AI, in particular by the family of technologies known as generative AI, including (e.g.) AI foundation models, large language models, transformers, multimodal generative AI. The main objective of this Type B is the development of Generative AI solutions dedicated to the manufacturing sector and making use of manufacturing data available in production lines.

Proposals should address at least one of the following use-cases:

- 1) Robustness and trustworthiness of digital technologies and data management at industry-grade quality, to raise the automation levels on production sites and across industry and supply chains;
- 2) Enhanced product and process qualification/certification and compliance assessment through higher levels of automation, digitalisation and data management, taking into account related requirements;
- 3) Automation of manufacturing processes to achieve higher reliability, efficiency and sustainability;

4) Automated tools for fast and large-scale deployment and reconfiguration of production assets and for rapid innovation cycles.

Proposals should accomplish these objectives exploiting the most suitable approach(es) among the ones described below:

- The integration of applications exhibiting advanced developments of generative AI model(s) specifically designed for manufacturing, providing measurable advantages in one of more of these key areas: manufacturing cost, increased productivity, quality, flexibility, resilience, sustainability, circularity, time to market and usability. Applications can target factory-floor operations and/or management of data, knowledge and documentation associated to products and production (for use-case 1 or 2);
- Development and integration of digital production systems capable of significantly increasing productivity and managing high-mix production with close to zero time needed for re-purposing and capability to manage different mixes of materials and components (for use-case 3);
- Development of deployment tools to automate the management of production lines, namely through automatic configuration, integration with legacy systems, placement of data translators and connectors, and deployment of machines and sensors on the shop floor (for use-case 4).

Proposals should indicate which approach they are targeting. Proposals may combine several approaches above, indicating which is the main approach, provided there is added value in such a combined approach; arbitrary combinations without integration are excluded.

The use of generative AI techniques is encouraged for all the approaches. The applicants will specifically describe how they will secure the acquisition of quality manufacturing data from real-world industrial use cases of industry partners or companies outside the consortium in the context of the data volume necessary to train and finetune the models used in the proposal.

#### Type A and Type B

For both Type A and Type B projects, proposal should allocate up to EUR 30 million towards the development of the foundation model. Each project is anticipated to focus on up to six use cases.

A minimum of EUR 10 million of the proposal budget must be allocated via FSTP for the fine-tuning phase. This phase aims to create Generative AI applications tailored to impactful industry-driven use cases.

- FSTP may be foreseen for up to EUR 2 million per use case, either for a single company (including SME/Start-up), user industry providing their data and use-case, or to a small consortium complementing such user industry company with one or two additional partners, such as AI developer/integrator. Such FSTP initiatives will develop mini-projects, working in close collaboration with the consortium partners, that will dedicate

sufficient resources to support such FSTP projects, in order to develop advanced applications and demonstrate with quantitative KPIs the power of Generative AI solutions. These mini-projects will include data preparation, fine-tuning, validation of the Generative AI solution in the selected impactful use-cases.

Proposed projects should aim to develop models that align with European values and principles and regulation, including the AI Act. Research should build on existing standards or contribute to standardisation, particularly addressing the needs and requirements of the industry.

Where relevant, interoperability for data sharing should be addressed, focusing on open specifications and standards, enabling effective cross-domain data communities, and new data-driven markets.

If high computing resources are necessary, for both Type A and Type B proposals the primary source of computing resources for pretraining should be sought from external high-performance computing facilities such as EuroHPC or National centres. The proposal should describe convincingly the strategy to access these computing resources.

When possible, proposals should build on and reuse public results from relevant previous funded actions. Additionally, proposals should leverage the tools available for the AI and robotics community on the AI on demand platform. Communicable results should be shared with the European R&D community through the AI-on-demand platform, and if necessary, other relevant digital resource platforms to bolster the European AI, Data, and Robotics ecosystem by disseminating results and best practices.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnerships on AI, Data, and Robotic (ADRA) and Made in Europe and all proposals are expected to allocate tasks for cohesion activities with ADRA and the CSA HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-18: GenAI4EU central Hub.

Proposals should also build on or seek collaboration with existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant International, European, national or regional initiatives.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DIGITAL-EMERGING-09: Challenge-Driven GenAI4EU Booster (RIA) (AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 15.00 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 45.00 million.



<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway and the following additional associated countries: Canada, Israel, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.<sup>157</sup></p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve at least at TRL 3 and achieve at least TRL6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>To ensure a balanced portfolio covering the different strategic sectors,</p>

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The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

	grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to one proposal that is the highest ranked within (i) the aerospace sector, (ii) the pharma/drug development sector, and (iii) the telecommunication sector, provided that the applications attain all thresholds.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Grants awarded under this topic will be linked to the other actions granted under this topic. A collaboration agreement will required.</p> <p>Beneficiaries must provide financial support to third parties. The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. In derogation to article 208 EU Financial Regulation, the maximum amount to be granted to each third party can exceed EUR 60,000 and reach up to EUR 250 000 per competing solution. This derogation is justified by the substantial resources required to successfully carry out the challenges planned in the project in the stage 2, that should be substantiated in the proposals. This amount is granted at the end of the first stage of the challenge to the 20 winning solutions, as a grant to prepare for the stage 2 of the challenge.</p> <p>Each competing solution to be developed in stage 2 is proposed either by a single start-up/SME or a small team of organisations built around such start-up/SME, therefore the EUR 250 000 is distributed accordingly.</p>

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

- Significant technology progress and innovation through challenge-driven approach in the fields of aerospace, pharma/drug development or telecommunication networks.
- Increased competitiveness and visibility of the Generative AI community in Europe, in demonstrating their capability to achieve challenging tasks within the aerospace, pharma/drug development or telecommunication sectors.
- Increased adoption of Generative AI in aerospace, pharma/drug development or telecommunication networks through tangible progress and achievement demonstrated via the challenge-driven process.

Scope: Generative AI (GenAI) promises to transform most industry sectors. This challenge-driven initiative aims to boost both Europe's developer community and the adoption of powerful trustworthy generative AI solutions in the strategic sectors of aerospace, pharma/drugs and telecommunication networks, key for their competitiveness. In pharmaceuticals, it can, for instance, accelerates drug design by rapidly creating target-

specific molecules, reducing development time from years to seconds, and potentially preventing prolonged health crises like COVID-19. In aerospace, generative AI can for instance optimize aircraft design, streamline manufacturing processes, predict maintenance needs through sensor data analysis, route optimisation, and enhance pilot training with diverse, realistic simulations. By embracing generative AI, telecom companies can position themselves at the forefront of a new era of intelligent and automated telecommunications. Specific use-cases include for instance network management, network optimization, network slicing, network healing, predictive maintenance, network mapping and optimization.

Each proposal should focus exclusively on one of the three key sectors mentioned above: aerospace, pharma/drug development, or telecommunications and clearly specify which sector it addresses. Each proposal is expected to focus primarily on the definition, the organization of a multi-stage competition in the chosen sector, as well as the accompanying support to the companies/teams taking part in the challenges, and related activities to maximise the impact of the action.

User industry companies from the strategic sector targeted by the proposal should be core partners in the consortium. They should demonstrate a genuine interest in the projects results and therefore support the challenge participants - in order to reach the most powerful and exploitable results benefitting their industry. The expected results are pre-competitive but the proposal must include a draft exploitation plan outlining commitments on future exploitation. The consortium is responsible for the various stages of the challenges and should provide the necessary support resources during each stage of the competition, including technical assistance and business support to develop an exploitation strategy, but most importantly, provide the data necessary to fine-tune models and build powerful solutions meeting industry needs.

Proposals should be driven by impactful use-cases where generative AI can make the difference: a number of industries from the targeted sector are expected to join forces to define challenging problems to solve with GenAI solutions, which then drive the rest of the project. Based on such challenges, the consortium organises a multi-staged competition with an increasing level of complexity. In the first two stages, third parties, either single companies (typically start-ups or SMEs) or small team of organisations built around such start-ups/SMEs, compete to address the challenges with GenAI solutions. After these stages, the solutions retained for the last stage will be invited to join the consortium, as full beneficiaries.

For each proposal:

- Stage 1: a challenge, open to all, will allow to select for stage 2 the 20 highest ranked solutions, according to a pre-defined selection process and criteria. Each solution competing for the challenge can be submitted either by a single start-up/SME, developer of GenAI solutions, or a small team of organisations built around such start-up/SME
- Stage 2: the 20 solutions selected from stage 1 receive EUR 250 000 FSTP funding, in form of a grant, in order to address the challenge set for this stage by the consortium. At

the end of stage 2, the 4 highest ranked competing solutions will be selected for the next stage according to a pre-defined selection process and criteria.

- Stage 3: after the end of stage 2 and the corresponding FSTP scheme, the 4 selected solutions will be invited to join the consortium and receive EUR 2 millions grants each (as part of the eligible costs of the grant agreement) to prepare for the grand finale. The consortium should define measures to maximise the impact for the team winning the grand finale at the end of the third stage, and maximise the uptake of their solutions (for instance, the best performing team could be offered the opportunity to conclude partnerships or contracts with the user industries leading the consortium. Measures to support the broad uptake of their solutions in the whole sector should also be considered).

Such multi-staged scheme is expected to be implemented in parallel by the successful proposals, each addressing a different sector.

Each proposal, involving several major industry players, should define a clear methodology to implement the various steps of the approach, define the specifications of the stages of the competitions, timelines, targets, KPIs, a solid evaluation methodology including evaluation criteria. The main information should be in the proposal, even if refinements could be further developed during the project. The proposers will also be in charge of implementing the evaluation methodology, and providing the necessary infrastructure/technical support for the participants to the challenges. The consortium members are also responsible for ensuring high visibility of the competitions, including possible sponsorships.

The actions selected from this call, each addressing one of the three targeted sectors, are expected to collaborate among themselves, in order to make economies of scale in sharing best practices, defining processes for organising the challenges, ensuring efficient monitoring, organising dissemination and communication activities, etc. Such collaboration among the linked actions is expected to be formalised by a collaboration agreement, after the Grant Agreement signature.

For each proposal, an amount of EUR 5 millions is foreseen to be distributed among the winners of stage 1, in form of FSTP grants, in order to prepare for stage 2. In addition, a budget of EUR 8 millions is reserved in the initial grant, to carry out the stage 3 of the challenge. The proposal is expected to make the case for such investment in defining the objectives with sufficient level of information, even if the details are to be further elaborated in the course of the project. Such amount will be distributed equally among the 4 winning teams of the stage 2, who will be invited to join the consortium as beneficiaries to develop further the solutions and compete for the stage 3 of the challenge.

Visibility would be important; therefore dissemination and communication campaigns are key. The proposers are also encouraged to seek sponsorship, which would be key for the visibility and prestige of their challenge, and to attract the best developers from the EU and associated countries to compete, particularly SMEs and startups, alone or within a team competing for the challenges.

All proposals are expected to incorporate mechanisms for assessing and demonstrating progress, including qualitative and quantitative KPIs, benchmarking, and progress monitoring. This should include the methodology to accompany the challenge participants to the various stages during the project, and the assessment methodology during the various selection stages. As part of the KPIs, efficiency gains from Generative AI should be considered, to maximize broader impact.

When possible, proposals should build on and reuse public results from relevant previous funded actions. Communicable results should be shared with the European R&D community through the AI-on-demand platform, and if necessary, other relevant digital resource platforms to bolster the European AI, Data, and Robotics ecosystem by disseminating results and best practices.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on AI, data and robotics (ADRA), and all proposals are expected to allocate tasks for cohesion activities with ADRA and the CSA HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-18: GenAI4EU central Hub.

Proposals should also build on or seek collaboration with relevant projects<sup>158</sup> and develop synergies with other relevant International, European, national or regional initiatives.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-04: Assessment methodologies for General Purpose AI capabilities and risks (RIA) (AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 3.00 and 4.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 7.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global</p>

<sup>158</sup> In particular, proposals in telecommunication should exploit potential synergies with projects funded under HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-08, HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-09 and HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-DATA-02; proposals in pharma/drug should exploit potential synergies with relevant projects from Cluster 1 and IHI Innovative Health Initiative; proposals in the aerospace should exploit potential synergies with relevant projects from the clean aviation JU and other similar projects/initiatives.

	<p>context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway and the following additional associated countries: Canada, Israel, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.<sup>159</sup></p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 2 and achieve TRL 5 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.

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

- New assessment and validations methodologies developed allowing to evaluate General Purpose AI (GPAI) models, including multimodal systems, and systems' capabilities and risks.
- Use of the research outcomes by GPAI providers, policymakers, public institutions, and other relevant stakeholders to evaluate GPAI models and systems' capabilities and risks.

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The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

- Support to the AI Office in its function to conduct evaluations of general purpose AI models with a view to enforce the AI Act' rules for general purpose AI models and facilitate self-evaluation for GPAI model developers to ensure compliance with AI Act requirements.

Scope: The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has led to the development of increasingly sophisticated general-purpose AI (GPAI) models and systems. These models, such as large language models and multimodal AI systems, demonstrate remarkable capabilities across a wide range of tasks. However, assessing the capabilities of these models remains a significant challenge. Traditional evaluation methods often fail to capture the full spectrum of abilities exhibited by GPAI models and systems. Therefore, there is a pressing need for the development of ***new assessment frameworks, methodologies and tools*** that can comprehensively evaluate these models in terms of their trustworthy and ethical behaviour and operation, ensuring their reliability, fairness, and alignment with human values.

This topic aims to develop robust assessment tools, techniques, and benchmarks specifically designed to rigorously evaluate GPAI models and systems, including multimodal systems. Proposals should cover one or more of the following research areas:

- Innovative methods for proactively identifying and forecasting emergent capabilities in GPAI models and systems. This encompasses the identification of capabilities with both beneficial and potentially detrimental uses.
- Assessment of GPAI capabilities with a significant economic impact or potential for misuse. This includes assessing capabilities that drive beneficial innovation and societal good, as well as evaluating potential risks in areas such as chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) hazards or cybersecurity threats.
- Developing assessment techniques that illuminate the underlying mechanisms of emergent capabilities in AI systems, emphasising interpretability and explainability.

Projects should generate example benchmark tests to examine trained AI models, systematically uncovering latent capabilities. These benchmarks will be made available to GPAI providers, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders to implement robust evaluation tools.

This topic strongly encourages the formation of interdisciplinary teams combining the necessary technical expertise. Such a collaborative approach will ensure that assessments accurately capture real-world use cases, including capabilities elicitation techniques, and that the developed frameworks, methodologies and tools are responsive to the concerns of all relevant stakeholders.

This topic requires the effective contribution of SSH disciplines and the involvement of SSH experts, institutions as well as the inclusion of relevant SSH expertise, in order to produce meaningful and significant effects enhancing the societal impact of the related research activities.

Proposals must adhere to Horizon Europe's requirements regarding Open Science. Open access to research outputs should be provided unless there is a legitimate reason or constraint; in such cases, the proposal should detail how GPAI providers, policymakers, and other stakeholders will access the research outcomes.

All proposals are expected to incorporate mechanisms for assessing and demonstrating progress, including qualitative and quantitative KPIs, benchmarking, and progress monitoring. This should include participation in international evaluation contests and the presentation of illustrative application use-cases that demonstrate concrete potential added value. Communicable results should be shared with the European R&D community through the AI-on-demand platform, and if necessary, other relevant digital resource platforms to bolster the European AI, Data, and Robotics ecosystem by disseminating results and best practices.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on AI, data and robotics (ADRA), and all proposals are expected to allocate tasks for cohesion activities with ADRA and the CSA HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-18: GenAI4EU central Hub.

Proposals should also build on or seek collaboration with existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant International, European, national or regional initiatives. Regarding European programmes, projects are expected to develop synergies and complementarities with relevant projects funded under Horizon Europe but also under the Digital Europe Programme (DEP).

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-05: Soft Robotics for Advanced physical capabilities (IA) (AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 10.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 20.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 4 and achieve TRL 7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.



Expected Outcome: Increased exploitation of novel materials, design methods, and control techniques for soft robotics, enabling the creation of inherently safe and versatile robotic systems with applications in various industries, including healthcare, maintenance, manufacturing, and transportation.

Scope: Soft robotics<sup>160</sup> represents an important avenue to advance robotics, particularly for enhancing safety and physical interaction. Its potential lies in creating systems with intrinsic and functional safety, capable of securely interacting with humans across various scenarios. By using compliant designs, these systems overcome the limitations of rigid robotic systems, such as limited adaptability and reduced safety around humans. Novel design methods, the use of smart materials, deformable physical architectures, and bioinspired approaches are key to improving robotic performance. However, significant challenges remain in learning, modelling, simulation, control, actuation, sensing, and the integration of soft electronics.

To address this, proposals should focus on exploiting novel materials and design methods for non-rigid structures, along with advanced control techniques for soft robotic systems.

Proposals should cover one or more of the following areas:

- Exploitation of novel materials suited to developing robotic systems, both as the main structure and of manipulators and end effectors. These may encompass passive and active materials, and combination materials with specific properties.
- Design methods for non-rigid structures and the means to accurately and sense position where this may no longer involve fixed rotational or linear links
- Control methods for structures built from novel and soft materials or for structures that emulate rigid structures using soft materials.

The proposals should include at least three different demonstrators from different sectors that clearly show the advantage of soft robotics in the context of some chosen application scenarios. The objective is to develop and disseminate general purpose tools and systems, therefore the results should not be limited to the demonstration scenarios selected in the proposals to demonstrate the technological progress.

All proposals are expected to incorporate mechanisms for assessing and demonstrating progress, including qualitative and quantitative KPIs, benchmarking, and progress monitoring. When possible, proposals should build on and reuse public results from relevant previous funded actions. Communicable results should be shared with the European R&D community through the AI-on-demand platform, and if necessary, other relevant digital resource platforms to bolster the European AI, Data, and Robotics ecosystem by disseminating results and best practices.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on AI, data and robotics (ADRA), and all proposals are expected to allocate tasks for cohesion activities with ADRA.

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<sup>160</sup> soft robotics concerns the design, control, and fabrication of robots composed of compliant materials, instead of rigid links. Hence such robots can be composed of rigid parts linked by compliant links

Proposals should also build on or seek collaboration with existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant International, European, national or regional initiatives.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-07: Enhanced Learning Strategies for General Purpose AI: Advancing GenAI4EU (RIA) (AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 15.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 30.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway and the following additional associated countries: Canada, Israel, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication</p>

	networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees. <sup>161</sup>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 2 and achieve TRL 5 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.

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

- Development of General Purpose AI (GPAI) models and architectures demonstrating enhanced capabilities, such as formal reasoning, mathematical problem-solving, confidence level estimation, long-term planning, and seamless adaptation to dynamic and non-stationary environments.
- Innovative learning approaches combining self-supervised learning with hybrid learning, active learning, reinforcement learning, transfer learning, relational learning or continual learning and evolutionary learning.
- Theoretical insights to advance the understanding of synergies between self-supervised and complementary learning paradigms in GPAI model development.

Scope: Current large-scale AI models have demonstrated remarkable capabilities that have transformed numerous fields. They excel at tasks like natural language processing, image generation, and playing complex games. However, despite these successes, current models often struggle in several key areas. They lack the adaptability to seamlessly adjust to changing conditions in real-world environments. Additionally, their reasoning abilities remain limited, when facing complex tasks that require logical deduction, mathematical problem-solving, or multi-step planning. Moreover, current GPAI models frequently fail to recognise their own limitations, leading them to generate erroneous outputs when presented with queries outside their domains of knowledge. These limitations underscore the need for advancements in General Purpose AI (GPAI) that go beyond pattern recognition and towards robust, adaptive systems capable of a wider range of intelligent behaviours, for example, taking inspirations from biological and collective systems.

To push the boundaries of current AI technology, this topic seeks the development of groundbreaking GPAI models that combine self-supervised learning with complementary

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<sup>161</sup> The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

learning strategies. These strategies include hybrid learning, which integrates symbolic reasoning and knowledge representation; active learning, which allows models to actively seek information to improve their performance; reinforcement learning, which enables models to learn through interaction with their environment; relational learning, which focuses on learning from relational data structures; continual learning, which allows models to continuously adapt and acquire new knowledge without forgetting previous tasks; and evolutionary learning, which draws inspiration from biological evolution to optimize model architectures and parameters; and physics-based learning, which considers physical properties in the models' architectures. By leveraging these complementary approaches, the aim is to create GPAI models that exhibit enhanced capabilities, overcome existing limitations, and pave the way for a new generation of intelligent systems capable of tackling complex, real-world challenges.

This topic prioritizes proposals that explore innovative approaches to developing GPAI models, focusing on at least one of the following key research areas:

- **Hybrid Learning Architectures for Advanced Reasoning:** Development of architectures integrating self-supervised learning with symbolic reasoning, knowledge representation, and neuro-symbolic methods to foster robust reasoning, complex planning, and problem-solving abilities within GPAI.
- **Continual and Evolutionary Learning for Dynamic Environments:** Research on paradigms enabling GPAI models to seamlessly adapt, learn from changing conditions, and retain knowledge essential for operation in dynamic, real-world environments.
- **Reinforcement Learning Integration:** Research on the fusion of self-supervised learning and reinforcement learning to overcome challenges like non-stationary data, algorithm sensitivity, and computational cost.
- **Explainable AI and Trustworthy Decision-Making:** Integration of robust XAI methodologies, exploring causal inference and counterfactual reasoning techniques to enhance transparency, accountability, and responsible use of GPAI models in alignment with European values and principles.
- **Other Novel Paradigms:** Research on the combination of self-supervised learning with other learning paradigms, such as active learning, relational learning, and embodied learning, to equip GPAI models with new advanced capabilities.

Proposed projects should aim for a balanced approach between theoretical advancements and practical applications, with a strong emphasis on the development of GPAI models that align with European values and principles, including the AI Act.

The potential impact of this research extends beyond scientific advancements, as it has the potential to transform key European industries and sectors, including advanced robotics, personalized healthcare, mobility, manufacturing, sustainable energy solutions, and the scientific sector, and to contribute to the EU climate neutrality objective through energy

efficiency. Successful projects will contribute to the development of GPAI models that enhance productivity, improve decision-making, and foster innovation across a wide range of domains.

This topic strongly encourages the formation of interdisciplinary teams combining the necessary technical expertise. Such a collaborative approach will ensure that assessments accurately capture real-world capabilities and risks, and that the developed tools are responsive to the concerns of all relevant stakeholders.

Proposals must adhere to Horizon Europe's requirements regarding Open Science. Open access to research outputs should be provided unless there is a legitimate reason or constraint.

All proposals are expected to incorporate mechanisms for assessing and demonstrating progress, including qualitative and quantitative KPIs, benchmarking, and progress monitoring. This should include participation in international evaluation contests and the presentation of illustrative application use-cases that demonstrate concrete potential added value. Communicable results should be shared with the European R&D community through the AI-on-demand platform, and if necessary, other relevant digital resource platforms to bolster the European AI, Data, and Robotics ecosystem by disseminating results and best practices.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on AI, data and robotics (ADRA), and all proposals are expected to allocate tasks for cohesion activities with ADRA and the CSA HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-18: GenAI4EU central Hub.

Proposals should also build on or seek collaboration with existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives, funding programmes and platforms. Regarding European programmes, proposals are expected to develop synergies and complementarities with relevant projects funded under Horizon Europe but also under the Digital Europe Programme (DEP).

### **Artificial Intelligence in Science**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-DIGITAL-61: AI Foundation models in science (GenAI4EU) (RIA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 6.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 30.00 million.

<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 1 and achieve TRL 4 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>To ensure a balanced portfolio of foundation models from a variety of disciplines, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking, but also to at least two projects in domain A, and at least one project in each one of domains B, C and D in the scope of this topic, provided that the application attains all thresholds.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>162</sup>.</p>

Expected Outcome:

- Accelerate research and development in science, with focus on the domains of a) materials science, b) climate change science, c) environmental pollution science (including PFAS) and d) agricultural science ;
- Advance AI technology (not limited to Generative AI) tailored for scientific needs and potentially adaptable to other tasks in the area of application;
- Contribute to the development of foundation models in the areas of application, and pave the way for future funding of foundation models in a broader range of scientific disciplines;
- Advance solutions to societal or scientific challenges;
- Bridge existing knowledge gaps and induce interdisciplinarity by design across different fields necessary to advance the area of application; and
- Support open-source and open science, especially for research communities with limited access to modern AI tools.

<sup>162</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

Scope: Foundation models in science are an evolving idea in the scientific community and go beyond the Generative AI trend<sup>163</sup>. The purpose of this topic is to tap into their potential, and to advance the development of AI technology specifically tailored for the needs of science.

A foundation model<sup>164</sup> can integrate information from various modalities of data. This model can then be adapted to a wide range of downstream, more specialized tasks. To build downstream applications, the foundation model is fine-tuned with additional training and task-specific examples. Therefore, a foundation model is itself incomplete but serves as the common basis from which many task-specific models can be built via adaptation.

In science, such foundation models could be trained on data from a specific scientific field and then be fine-tuned for a variety of tasks and used by a wider community in the field.

Proposals should address **one of the following scientific domains**:

- (A) Materials science: the development of new, innovative and advanced materials is essential for EU's economic security and for achieving a competitive and sustainable industry (especially sectors such as energy, mobility, construction, health and electronics). Employing AI in the process of materials design, characteristics and discovery could significantly accelerate and scale potential innovative solutions.
- (B) Climate change science: advancing climate research is critical for achieving the EU's climate neutrality and resilience goals. AI foundation models can contribute to more accurate insights into climate dynamics, enhanced predictions of extreme weather events, regional impacts and the evolution of climate tipping points.
- (C) Environmental pollution sciences: advancing environmental sciences can support the detection and characterisation of pollution sources, as well as their pathways, distribution and impacts to the environment and human health. This is particularly relevant in the case of pollutants of concern, emerging and/or less known pollutants.
- (D) Agricultural sciences: advancing agricultural sciences research is critical to achieve a competitive, resilient and sustainable agricultural system. AI foundation models can contribute to enhance crop, livestock, soil and water management.

Proposals should focus on 1) developing foundation models (not limited to Generative AI) for science in the chosen domain; 2) showing a foundation model's usefulness by adapting it to

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<sup>163</sup> Some examples in science include: Foundation model in materials science ([\[2401.00096\] A foundation model for atomistic materials chemistry \(arxiv.org\)](#)), Helmholtz Foundation Models Initiative ([Helmholtz Foundation Model Initiative - Helmholtz Home](#)), The Trillion Parameter Consortium (<https://www.anl.gov/article/new-international-consortium-formed-to-create-trustworthy-and-reliable-generative-ai-models-for>), NASA ([NASA and IBM Openly Release Geospatial AI Foundation Model for NASA Earth Observation Data | Earthdata](#)), the University of Michigan ([Scientific Foundation Models \(scifm.ai\)](#))

<sup>164</sup> Foundation models is a term defined by the Center of Research on Foundation Models of Stanford University in: "On the Opportunities and Risks of Foundation Models", <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2108.07258.pdf>

subtasks/scientific problems in the chosen domain; and 3) illustrating other possible areas of application.

The foundation models should provide researchers with access to essential AI-enabled capabilities for scientific discovery; employ the machine learning algorithms, models and architectures best suited for the chosen domain; be adaptable to different problems in the domain<sup>165</sup>; and be based on a robust and reliable architecture, as any potential errors and problems would be propagated to the downstream applications.

The foundation models should be placed at the disposal of the scientific community as open models, including the source code and, where possible, training datasets and other associated assets needed for full reusability of the foundation models (unless justified otherwise). This will serve a wider scientific community, thus broadening access to such scientific infrastructure and facilitating the use and adaptation of the model to different problems. Proposers should provide a clear documentation on the use and limitations of the model, alongside case studies demonstrating the model's application to a variety of tasks/problems in the chosen domain.

Multidisciplinary research activities should involve both AI and domain scientists, and address some of the following:

- Conceptualisation and planning: the scope, objectives and expected outcomes of the foundation model;
- Suitable interfaces for domain experts without computer science background to contribute to and utilise the outcomes;
- Data identification, collection and management of (preferably diverse, multimodal) datasets through semantically annotation data schemas;
- Model development, validation, testing under relevant operational and environmental conditions (such as thermal gradients, fatigue, corrosion, etc.) and, as appropriate, model evaluation and benchmarking, for example DOME<sup>166</sup>;
- Integration of domain knowledge into the model (for example through machine readable representations like RDF (Resource Description Framework)).

Proposals should:

- Prove access to high quality (multimodal) data needed for the development of the model. If in the process of developing the model, there is a need to create new data sets or adapt existing ones, they should follow the FAIR<sup>167</sup> principles. Describe the data curation and quality control procedures that will be used to ensure the accuracy, completeness, and consistency of the training data.

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<sup>165</sup> An example in materials science, for inspiration only: [\\*2401.00096.pdf \(arxiv.org\)](https://arxiv.org/abs/2401.00096)

<sup>166</sup> <https://dome-ml.org/>

<sup>167</sup> Findable Accessible Interoperable Reusable data.



- Contribute to efforts to reach common standards for data formats, metadata, taxonomies and ontologies.
- Demonstrate a strategy<sup>168</sup> to access the computational resources needed for model training, evaluation/testing and inference.
- Propose a model architecture that is designed with transparency in mind
- Ideally, employ methodologies for integrating domain/interdisciplinary knowledge into the model and seek synergies with solutions that facilitate the managing and making sense of vast amounts of data (for example knowledge graphs).
- Identify at least four possible use cases and scientific challenges that can be addressed with the model and its adaptations.<sup>169</sup>
- Identify and assess the potential risks of misuse of the foundation model.
- Propose a plan to make the model public, maintain and evolve it and promote it to the scientific community on a regular basis, in order to give visibility to the concept, discuss key findings and anticipate the technology evolution – possibly in synergy with other relevant projects.

Proposals should involve expertise in Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), in the cases where legal and ethical experts should be involved to address data privacy, sharing agreements, and compliance with regulations.

Synergies with the selected projects from HORIZON-INFRA-2025-01-EOSC-06: Using Generative AI (GenAI4EU) for Scientific Research via EOSC are encouraged, where relevant. Proposals are encouraged to collaborate with established infrastructures such as the WeatherGenerator<sup>170</sup> project.

International cooperation is encouraged, where the EU has reciprocal benefit, like the Trillion Parameter Consortium.<sup>171</sup>

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement.

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<sup>168</sup> In case the project plans to use the EuroHPC network, the EU-funded project EPICURE offers an application support service for EuroHPC: [Epicure - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://epicure.eu)

<sup>169</sup> For materials science, examples include, but are not limited to: **(for materials science)** alternatives to hazardous materials like PFAS, materials that lower environmental footprint, materials for quantum technology, for higher capacity batteries, for more efficient photovoltaic devices, etc.; **(for climate science)** enhanced prediction of climate and weather extremes, early warning systems, forecasting of climate-driven migration, and monitoring of the global carbon budget, monitoring and measuring adaptation effectiveness; **(for environmental pollution sciences)** solutions for the detection and assessment of pollution, including pollutants of emerging concern; **(for agricultural sciences)** enhanced prediction of impact of plant pests, monitoring of animal health and welfare, monitoring of soil health or of water management in agriculture.

<sup>170</sup> <https://weathergenerator.eu/>

<sup>171</sup> Ref. [Trillion Parameter Consortium \(TPC\) - Generative AI for Science and Engineering](#)

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-DIGITAL-62: Facilitated cooperation for AI in Science (CSA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 3.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>172</sup>.</p>

Expected Outcome: Projects are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Identify the long-term research challenges where AI can make a meaningful breakthrough contributing to EU's competitive edge in selected scientific disciplines/areas, through a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda.
- Provide evidence to structure the resources for AI in Science at European level, as a feasibility test towards potential R&I initiatives beyond the CSA that could optimise access to relevant data, infrastructure and talent across different scientific domains for more and better AI-enabled research.
- Coordinate, strengthen the network and raise awareness and a community of scientists, including citizen scientists, research organisations and stakeholders towards new paradigms of research with AI.

Scope: Artificial intelligence is a game-changer for science and innovation, and promises significant opportunities to boost the European competitive edge in R&I that need to be capitalised on. The aim of the CSA is to structure AI-enabled research in Europe and assess

<sup>172</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

options towards optimising the ecosystem for AI in Science in Europe, through a Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda and assessing the potential for possible future R&I initiative(s), in line with the recommendations of the Scientific Advice Mechanism<sup>173</sup>, and the European Commission President's political guidelines, for the setting up of an AI Research Council<sup>174</sup>..

**The project should develop a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for AI in Science** by mobilising large groups of domain and AI researchers in different fields **to identify key long-term research challenges in a diverse range of scientific areas where AI can make a meaningful difference for scientific breakthroughs**, which are compelling to the EU competitive, environmental and social policy agenda. The project should come up with pilot areas from across Horizon Europe Pillar II Clusters, building on Europe's competitive advantages in science and AI technologies. The research challenges should be related to prediction and design problems in the different scientific fields identified that could be solved with AI.

The SRIA should also include areas where AI can improve generic scientific tasks e.g virtual research assistant / tools for literature-based discovery, for improving / enabling research workflows, lab automation and collaborative human-AI work in science. Research priority areas involving the use of models based on frugal AI, which are more compact, more efficient and less energy intensive, as well as human-centric and trustworthy AI for scientific work should also be explored.

**The project should build evidence and assess the needs and potential for R&I initiatives for AI in Science beyond the CSA**, in an effort to identify ways to improve the EU landscape for support for AI in Science, to be discussed and **agreed upon with the Commission and the Member States**. The assessment should identify the ways for improving data access, infrastructure and support services, as well as skills and talent-related needs to boost the integration of AI in different fields of science at larger scale in Europe in research processes and lab automation, while promoting reproducibility, transparency and open science. It should also identify options for EU to better enable cooperative development and sharing of AI models for scientific discovery across different scientific fields. It should also take into account existing EU efforts to support access to data, research infrastructures, networks, HPC.

Different scenarios of R&I initiatives and infrastructure improvements should be prototyped together with a diverse range of users and stakeholders from the research community, industry, start-ups, civil society and policy-maker communities. Based on the feasibility test results, the project should **develop a roadmap** on the needed steps for a more effective coordination between the domain and AI scientific communities in Europe and the needed upgrades in service and infrastructure provision at EU level for the integration of AI in

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<sup>173</sup> See European Commission's Group of Chief Scientific Advisors (2024). [Successful and timely uptake of artificial intelligence in science in the EU: scientific opinion](#). Brussels: European Commission.

<sup>174</sup> See [Ursula von der Leyen, Political Guidelines For The Next European Commission 2024–2029](#)

different scientific fields, including research processes engaging citizens and civil society, e.g. Citizen Science.

**The proposals should also provide coordination and dissemination for interdisciplinary AI-enabled science** to facilitate stakeholder engagement, coordination and promotion of AI in Science initiatives across Europe. The CSA should develop a website, organise awareness raising events for the benefits of AI in Science and create opportunities for exchanging on good practices.

Projects should build on or seek collaboration with existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives, funding programmes and platforms, in particular with EU-level initiatives such as EOSC<sup>175</sup>, EuroHPC Joint Undertaking<sup>176</sup>, ESFRI,<sup>177</sup> AI Factories,<sup>178</sup> the EU AI, Data and Robotics Partnership,<sup>179</sup> AI4EOSC<sup>180</sup> the AI on Demand Platform<sup>181</sup> and the GenAI4EU Central Hub.

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<sup>175</sup> [Home | European Open Science Cloud - EU Node](#) and the selected projects from the HORIZON-INFRA-2025-01-EOSC-04: Advancing AI-readiness and Machine-Actionability in the EOSC Ecosystem.

<sup>176</sup> [Homepage - EuroHPC JU](#)

<sup>177</sup> [www.esfri.eu](http://www.esfri.eu)

<sup>178</sup> [AI Factories | Shaping Europe's digital future](#)

<sup>179</sup> [Adra Association](#)

<sup>180</sup> [AI4EOSC - AI4EOSC](#)

<sup>181</sup> [AI-On-Demand Portal - AIoD - AI on Demand](#)

## **Destination 5: Open Strategic Autonomy in Developing, Deploying and Using Global Space-Based Infrastructure, Services, Applications and Data**

Today, EU citizens enjoy watching satellite TV, increasingly accurate global navigation services for all transport modes and users, extended Earth monitoring for land, marine, atmosphere and climate change, global meteorological observation and accurate cartographies of a wide number of variables. Space also makes important contributions to security crisis management and emergency services. EU Space Programme components (such as EGNSS and Copernicus) are key assets for the EU policies on climate, environment, transport, agriculture and secure society. Finally, the Space sector is a source of economic growth and jobs.

This Destination is structured along the following building blocks:

- Accessing Space, i.e. the ability to transport satellites, cargo, and humans into space; build and launch the required vehicles, including re-usable systems; and operate the related facilities and services;
- Using Space on Earth, i.e. the ability to provide space-based secure communication, navigation and Earth observation services and applications, including through the EU Space flagships Galileo, Copernicus and IRIS<sup>2</sup>;
- Monitoring Space, i.e. the ability to detect, track and anticipate the trajectory of spacecraft, Near-Earth objects, and space debris during their full lifetime; to share data with relevant stakeholders; and to provide solutions for safe international space traffic management. It also includes the tracking and anticipation of other impacts on the space environment, such as Space weather events;
- Acting in Space, i.e. the ability to inspect, rendezvous and dock, grasp, repair, reconfigure, build, assemble and disassemble, reuse/recycle, relocate, remove and transport operational, non-operational, and other objects in space, including platforms or larger structures;
- Exploring Space, i.e. the ability to conduct high profile space exploration activities, perform excellent science and exploit space data to increase our knowledge about the Universe and celestial bodies, with a view to their exploration for scientific and socio-economic benefits;
- Boosting Space, i.e. the ability to sustain the above strategic capabilities through fostering the competitiveness of the EU space sector; improving education and developing the required skills; accelerating the pace of innovation; supporting EU non-dependency on critical technologies; and strengthening international cooperation.

Those building blocks are implemented through the following headings:

- **Heading 1: Accessing Space**

Autonomous access to space is a prerequisite for the strategic autonomy of the EU. It is a key enabler and indispensable element in the space ecosystem and value chain. European launch systems allow the autonomous deployment of satellites for the Union's flagships Copernicus, Galileo/EGNOS and IRIS<sup>2</sup> and contribute to the security and resilience of Europe's sovereign space infrastructure.

In a context of fierce competition and launch services paradigm changes, ensuring that Europe improves the resilience and the cost-effectiveness of its autonomous access to space is crucial. This requires urgent activities to enable and further consolidate operational capacities before 2030.

This challenge will be tackled by fostering space transportation solutions through the support to building blocks for smart technologies and digital solutions and contributing to facilitate access to European spaceports.

In a forward-looking approach and thanks to the implementation of a European Parliament Preparatory Action (outside the scope of Horizon Europe), a new R&I approach will be applied toward a more service-oriented and less prescriptive support of the full development cycle of access to space innovations. At the same time, a reflection will be carried out to envisage follow-up actions through the 26-27 WP and future programmes.

- **Heading 2: Acting in Space**

Act in space is a key enabler of the future freedom of action of the EU. In-Space Operations and Services (ISOS) will ensure EU's freedom of action in space and increase the resilience, sustainability, safety and protection of its space infrastructure, and contribute to the strengthening of the competitiveness of the EU space sector. R&I activities should bring the Europe to the forefront of emerging service applications, including inspection, rendezvous and docking, grasping, repair, reconfiguration, assembly and disassembly, manufacturing, resource extraction, reuse/recycling, removal and transport of objects in space, for satellites, platforms and larger structures. Key space R&I activities will be driven by a pilot mission that will contribute to establish and foster a new in-space economy.

Game-changing innovations and enabling technologies are at the heart of ISOS and an important focus of future actions. The paradigm shift towards adaptive space systems builds on automation and robotics, artificial intelligence, modular and reconfigurable spacecraft concepts. Together with other enabling technologies such as electric propulsion, they will provide new ways on how space assets are designed, produced, tested, transported, and operated. Different means realised with AppStore-like approaches will benefit the future space ecosystem and foster a circular economy.

- **Heading 3: Using Space on Earth related to telecommunications**

The Union Secure Connectivity programme aims to develop a secure and autonomous space-based connectivity system for the provision of guaranteed and resilient satellite communications on Earth. Among the objectives are to develop, build and operate a multiorbital space-based state-of-the-art connectivity system, continuously adapted to

governmental satellite communications demand evolution; to complement the Union pool of satellite communication capacities and services; and to integrate the GOVSATCOM ground segment infrastructure, as well as the European quantum communication infrastructure (EuroQCI).

- **Heading 4: Using Space on Earth related to Earth Observation**

Copernicus core services (Climate Change, Marine Environment Monitoring, Land Monitoring, Atmosphere Monitoring, Emergency Management and Security) should evolve and improve to better respond to new and emerging policy needs, and to leverage the latest science and technology developments. The Copernicus service evolution research topics will focus on further enhancing the services in the areas of coupled Earth system reanalysis and exploitation of past and emerging satellite and other data streams, soil-vegetation-atmosphere modelling for volatile organic compounds and pollen, wildfire risk forecasting and related carbon emissions, and ocean data assimilation and ensemble prediction. The digital transformation across services and value chains will be promoted via a dedicated broad topic on AI to stimulate innovation and know-how exchange. In connection with the Space Data Economy, downstream market uptake research activities will focus on energy, climate adaptation and environmental footprint reduction, green financing and insurance, and liveable cities of the future. Innovation in Earth observation services will also be supported in the field of ship source pollution detection in the context of evolving maritime policies.

- **Heading 5: Using Space on Earth related to satellite navigation**

For Galileo/EGNOS, the international context, the competitive environment with emerging actors and novel techniques in the value chain, the increasing threats, and the evolution of the technologies, components and systems, including dual-use technology, call for a constant adaptation of the EU space infrastructure to these changing realities.

To meet these challenges, EU needs sustained investments in R&D for innovative mission concepts, technology and systems. These will ensure the continuity of the EGNSS service, minimise the risks for technology inclusion in the infrastructure, thanks to anticipated development and testing including in-orbit, protect better this infrastructure against modern threats (notably cyber, jamming/spoofing, natural hazards), and increase the strategic autonomy in key technologies. Overall, they will maintain the EU's leadership position in the Global Navigation Satellite Systems.

- **Heading 6: Using Space on Earth related to services and data coming from satellites**

Over 10% of the European GDP is enabled by economical activities linked to the need of location through satellite navigation systems. Whilst the market uptake of EGNSS is already good in many areas, important priorities still remain, in particular 1) support the development of solutions that underpin EU priorities and policies, including the Green Deal, 2) support the public sector as a customer of Galileo, 3) foster the competitiveness of EU downstream

industry and SMEs/start-ups and 4) leverage synergies with other space programmes and non-space technologies.

Downstream R&I activities for EGNSS applications are needed to support the uptake of the new services/differentiators (i.e. Galileo High Accuracy Service and Open Service Navigation Message Authentication, made available in 2022 for testing and initial services, Galileo Emergency Warning Service to be made available in 2025 and Galileo Public Regulated Services to be made available soon). Opportunities to be market leader lie a.o. in autonomous driving, unmanned vehicles (aerial, terrestrial and maritime), location-based services, critical infrastructures, emergency management and humanitarian aid, insurance and finance, urban development and cultural heritage.

Regarding Copernicus applications, the digital dimension must be reinforced, encouraging the collaboration of ICT players with Earth observation and space stakeholders. The uptake of applications using Copernicus data could be improved, including by public authorities, who are important potential customers. Also, while many applications are developed for the land sector, other areas are less active. Solutions for a more sustainable use of resources and preserving biodiversity should be reinforced, as well as for countering natural hazards and climate extreme events as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation.

- **Heading 7: Monitoring Space**

Orbital space infrastructure, the data, and the services they deliver have become indispensable for European societies and economies and in the daily lives of Europeans. However, due to an increasingly congested orbital space, the likelihood of a satellite being severely damaged or destroyed in a collision has raised dramatically. Such risk calls for action to preserve European interests by protecting its private and public investments in space in a sustainable manner.

Based on the EU Space Programme, capabilities of the Space Situational Awareness (SSA) component and Space Surveillance and Tracking (SST) services are being developed and consolidated through a Partnership of 15 Member States. The EU SST Partnership Agreement has officially entered into force on 11 November 2022. With this Partnership, EU SST builds on the good results achieved by the initial consortium of 5 Member States (Decision 541/2014) and targets continuity of activities and service provision, improvement of specialisation on expertise, and consideration of the duality and security dimension of SST.

Partnership's Member States have joined forces and networked their national assets and competences with the objective to establish and improve the Union's SST capacities to ensure the delivery of SST services to European institutions, public authorities, and public and private spacecraft operators and owners. Services are structured around three axes: Collision Avoidance, Fragmentation Analysis and Re-entry Analysis. EU SST service provision is the key operational capability for the EU's future approach to Space Traffic Management (STM) which encompasses the means and the rules to access, conduct activities in, and return from outer space safely, sustainably, and securely.



EU SST relies on the European industry, including start-ups, to develop and improve national, public-owned capacities based on Partnership's requirements. As a result, more than 80% of the funds delegated by the EU to the EU SST Partnership are sub-contracted to EU industry through call for tenders. This has triggered the spawning of a European industrial sector on SST activities that should contribute to the EU STM approach. On 15 February 2022, a Joint Communication on STM (JOIN/2022/4 final) has been adopted, calling for the enhancement of EU operational capabilities to support SST and STM activities (action 2). Within the framework of this STM Joint Communication, a European Industry Start-ups Forum on Space Traffic Management (EISF) has been created. The Forum aims at directly involving EU companies and other relevant stakeholders in the conception of future research and innovation activities in the SST/STM domain.

Further resilience and autonomy of the Union's SST capabilities will come by leveraging complementary contributions from European private capabilities and commercial initiatives. At the same time, EU industry is expected to adapt and benefit from new SST market opportunities appearing in a rapidly changing environment in and beyond Europe. To that end, research and development activities are oriented towards the strengthening of the competitiveness of the Union space industry, including start-ups, by increasing its capacity in designing, building, and operating its own SST systems.

Importantly, SSA also covers the domains of Space Weather (SW) and Near-Earth Objects (NEO). For those domains, activities are ongoing and no additional ones are needed under the 2025 WP.

- **Heading 8: Boosting space through non-dependence of the EU for key critical space technologies**

Ensuring non-dependence for critical space technologies is key, especially in the current geo-political context. The European Commission has undertaken several activities and deployed new tools (e.g. the EU Observatory of Critical Technologies) for assessing space technologies and identify those that are critical from a dependency point of view. Within this domain, a number of technological developments will be initiated with focus on priorities stemming from on-going and planned EU Space missions, including IRIS<sup>2</sup>. Emphasis will be on reducing non-EU dependencies on critical space technologies across their whole supply chain from advanced materials to components, equipment, and sub-systems; providing unrestricted access to advanced space technologies relevant for EU space missions and programme components; developing or regaining capacity to operate independently in space by developing resilient space technologies supply chains, relying on EU supply chains and/or trustable and reliable supply chains not affected by non-EU export restrictions; enhancing competitiveness by developing products and capabilities reaching equivalent or superior performance level than those from outside the EU and compete at worldwide level; and opening new opportunities for manufacturers by reducing dependency on export restricted technologies.

- **Heading 9: Boosting Space through international cooperation**

International cooperation remains an important enabler as global challenges can best be addressed by global solutions. Opportunities lie especially in innovative technologies, in the exploitation of space-based data and in downstream applications.

- **Heading 10: Boosting Space through training and education activities**

Preparing the skilled workforce of tomorrow is essential to bridge the gap between supply and demand for talents in the European Space sector and inspire the next generation of space professionals.

- **Heading 11: Boosting Space through IOD/IOV opportunities**

IOD/IOV opportunities continue to be needed for experiments needing aggregation as well as for read-to-fly satellites. This includes the Flight Ticket Initiative to support competitiveness and innovation of the European Space sector.

- **Heading 12: Boosting Space through support to entrepreneurship**

Business development, acceleration and upscaling of start-ups is also much needed, which has given rise to the set-up of the CASSINI Space Entrepreneurship Initiative. CASSINI provides support to business and innovation-friendly ecosystems, including the strengthening business skills in the space market segments and digital services based on space data. CASSINI also aims at making start-ups and scale-ups investment-ready and able to secure venture capital funding and at leveraging synergies with the InvestEU programme and the EU Space Programme.

**Limiting participation in certain actions to Member States (and certain associated countries to Horizon Europe)**

The Space research part of the Horizon Europe Programme is by default open to the world, promoting international cooperation to drive scientific excellence.

However, an important aspect of this Destination consists in ensuring security and strengthening strategic autonomy across key technologies and value chains, taking advantage of the possibilities that space offers for the security of the Union and its Member States. This objective requires special rules in specific cases to set the requisite eligibility and participation conditions to ensure the protection of the integrity, security and resilience of the Union and its Member States. Hence, on an exceptional basis and duly justified, this work programme may foresee a limited participation to entities from selected countries. Such exceptional circumstances would relate to prevalent considerations to safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy or security. Possibilities for such limitations are framed by Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

The following call(s) in this work programme contribute to this destination:

***HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-HADEA***

***HORIZON-EUSPA-2026-SPACE-03***

## Heading 1 - Accessing Space

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-11: CSA on access to European spaceports**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 1.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 1.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security, namely it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Norway, Iceland and the other Associated Countries. Proposals including entities established in countries outside the scope specified in the call/topic/action will be ineligible.</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the</p>

	Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025). <sup>182</sup> .
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Expected Outcome: Common regulatory practices and guidelines will facilitate access to European spaceports and increase their attractiveness for European launch systems. The action is expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Awareness of stakeholders on practices and regulations;
- A comprehensive overview of technical challenges to be addressed in terms of guidelines and best practices;
- An assessment of the paths for the European spaceports regulations, guidelines and best practices to support safe and sustainable launch operations;
- An identification of the benefits for the European space market development, for European sovereignty as well as for international cooperation.
- Standards and guidelines should contribute to ease to launching from various spaceports.

Scope: This coordination and support action will contribute to the expected outcomes by:

- Assessing best practices, standards and guidelines for launch operations from European spaceports, taking into account experiences from worldwide existing spaceports.
- Proposing a set of common regulatory practices and guidelines for European Spaceports and evaluating their impact on the launch operations.
- Involving European stakeholders participating in the development of safety equipment with the aim to strengthen the spaceports interoperability with their technological solutions.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-12: Digital solutions for autonomy for space transportation systems, design and simulation tools - Digital enablers and building blocks**

**Call: SPACE-HADEA**

**Specific conditions**

<sup>182</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.00 and 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 3.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security, namely it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Norway, Iceland, Canada, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Proposals including entities established in countries outside the scope specified in the call/topic/action will be ineligible.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security.<sup>183</sup></p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may</p>

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The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

	additionally be used).
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 4-5 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector. 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). <sup>184</sup> .

**Expected Outcome:** The topic encompasses actions within the scope of the co-programmed European Partnership on Globally Competitive Space Systems ('Space Partnership') in the areas of satellite communication (SatCom), Earth Observation (EO) and New Commercial Space Transportation Solutions and is part of cohesive activities in the domain of digital developments under the grand heading of "digitalisation for commercial space solutions".

Under the area of *Access to Space* related to New Space Transportation Solutions, this topic focusses on the Low to Mid TRL level building blocks for key technologies required to strengthen competitiveness in this domain. Areas for launch service improvement are e.g., health monitoring systems, enabling real time subsystem monitoring through all mission phases, high speed sensor networks for on board real-time data feeds, smart avionics, functional building blocks for autonomy, enhanced ground-board high-data rate communication and high-speed on-board computer, as well as Artificial Intelligence algorithms to process high volumes of data.

Project results are expected to contribute to one or several of the following expected outcomes:

- Improved space transportation systems and launcher sustainability, reduced costs and operational constraints as well as enhanced system monitoring and autonomy;
- Technology developments for New Space Transportation Solutions, including addressing software and digital tools;
- Models for mission, system design and optimisation, able to integrate life cycle analysis, engineering and environmental models for optimisation of development through manufacturing and mission implementation.

<sup>184</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

This will contribute to developing, deploying global space-based services applications and data and contribute to fostering the EU's space sector competitiveness, as stated in the expected impact of this destination.

Scope: To tackle the above-mentioned expected outcomes, the following R&I is expected to be addressed:

- the maturation of eco-design software tools enhancing reconfigurability in orbit
- the maturation of disruptive/game changing technologies related to digitalisation

Proposals are expected to promote cooperation between different actors (industry, SMEs and research institutions) and consider opportunities to quickly turn technological innovation into commercial use in space.

Proposals under this topic should explore synergies and be complementary to already funded actions in the context of technology development at component level. In particular, it is expected that projects make use of existing European technologies and/or building blocks at component level contributing to European non-dependence and strengthen competitiveness, and this should be clearly presented in the proposal. Furthermore, proposed activities should be complementary to H2020 and Horizon Europe funded projects, national activities and activities funded by the European Space Agency (ESA).

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on ‘Globally Competitive Space Systems’ (GCSS). As such, projects resulting from this topic will be expected to report on results to the European Partnership ‘Globally Competitive Space Systems’ (GCSS) in support of the monitoring of its KPIs.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-13: Digital solutions for autonomy for space transportation systems, design and simulation tools – targeting demonstration**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 4.00 and 7.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 7.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions

<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security, namely it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Norway, Iceland, Canada, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Proposals including entities established in countries outside the scope specified in the call/topic/action will be ineligible.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security.<sup>185</sup></p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	<p>Activities are expected to achieve TRL 7-8 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector.</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p>

<sup>185</sup>

The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.



	Eligible proposals submitted under this topic and exceeding all the evaluation thresholds will be awarded a STEP Seal [ <a href="https://strategic-technologies.europa.eu/about/step-seal_en">https://strategic-technologies.europa.eu/about/step-seal_en</a> ].
<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). <sup>186</sup> .

Expected Outcome: The topic encompasses actions within the scope of the co-programmed European Partnership on Globally Competitive Space Systems ('Space Partnership') in the areas of satellite communication (SatCom), Earth Observation (EO) and New Commercial Space Transportation Solutions and is part of cohesive activities in the domain of digital developments under the grand heading of "digitalisation for commercial space solutions".

Under the area of *Access to Space* related to New Space Transportation Solutions, this topic focusses on the Mid to High TRL level developments of key technologies required to strengthen competitiveness in this domain.

Cost reduction, enhanced availability, and improved reliability must be reached by harnessing the advantages of reusability and modularity. Areas for launch service improvement are e.g., health monitoring systems, enabling real time subsystem monitoring through all mission phases, development of technologies and functional building blocks with a focus on digital solutions for autonomy, development of low cost/low mass sensors and efficient avionics. The demand for readily accessible off-the-shelf modular solutions and products, caters to the needs of all launcher manufacturers.

Project results are expected to contribute to one or several of the following expected outcomes:

- The ability to identify and locate structural damage remotely (like cracks, corrosion, delamination or structural weakening) within the transportation systems before it leads to significant failure.
- The ability to provide autonomous thermo-mechanical monitoring enabling tracking changes in temperature, mechanical behaviour and loads experienced by the transportation systems, to predict and autonomously prevent failures.

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<sup>186</sup> 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](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

This will contribute to developing, deploying global space-based services applications and data and contribute to fostering the EU's space sector competitiveness, as stated in the expected impact of this destination.

Scope: To tackle the above-mentioned expected outcomes, the following R&I should be addressed: R&I on advanced technologies and digital sensors for new space transportation, such as smart avionics with modularity and reusability drivers, health monitoring system and smart sensors, and structural health monitoring addressing thermo-mechanical monitoring and damage detection, ground and flight software for data management even by use of AI-algorithms.

The developments should aim at on-ground or in-orbit demonstration focusing on software and digital tools.

Proposals are expected to promote cooperation between different actors (industry, SMEs and research institutions) and consider opportunities to quickly turn technological innovation into commercial use in space via e.g., on-ground or in orbit demonstration.

Proposals under this topic should explore synergies and be complementary to already funded actions in the context of technology development at component level. In particular, it is expected that projects make use of existing European technologies and/or building blocks at component level contributing to European non-dependence and strengthen competitiveness, and this should be clearly presented in the proposal. Furthermore, proposed activities should be complementary to H2020 and Horizon Europe funded projects, national activities and activities funded by the European Space Agency (ESA).

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on ‘Globally Competitive Space Systems’ (GCSS). As such, projects resulting from this topic will be expected to report on results to the European Partnership ‘Globally Competitive Space Systems’ (GCSS) in support of the monitoring of its KPIs.

This topic contributes to the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) and addresses Space technologies falling under the sectors of “digital technologies” and “deep tech innovation”. This topic addresses objectives stated in the STEP Regulation, e.g., the development of critical technologies and safeguarding and strengthening their EU value chain. This topic will help reduce strategic dependencies from outside of the EU for components and equipment for the EU Space Programme, as well as for other European space applications.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

## **Heading 2 - Acting in Space**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

## **HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-21: ISOS Pilot Mission Detailed Design – Servicing component**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 6.00 and 12.00 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 18.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The page limit of the application is 60 pages.</p>
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security, namely avoiding a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to build on its strengths and to carefully assess and address strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States and the following associated countries: Norway and Iceland. Proposals including entities established in countries outside the scope specified in the call/topic/action will be ineligible.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security.<sup>187</sup></p>

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The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retracts or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of

	If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:  Eligible proposals submitted under this topic and exceeding all the evaluation thresholds will be awarded a STEP Seal [ <a href="https://strategic-technologies.europa.eu/about/step-seal_en">https://strategic-technologies.europa.eu/about/step-seal_en</a> ].
<i>Security Sensitive Topics</i>	Some activities resulting from this topic may involve using classified background and/or producing of security sensitive results (EUCI and SEN). Please refer to the related provisions in section B Security — EU classified and sensitive information of the General Annexes.

**Expected Outcome:** The strategic objective of this topic is to develop capabilities to ‘Act in Space’ through demonstrating in space a pilot mission by 2030 related to ISOS. The envisaged ISOS pilot mission shall provide the necessary seed components for a future service infrastructure, available to the European in-space ecosystem (including the EU assets), driving the generation of a new in-space economy, providing enhanced in-orbit technology demonstration and maximising EU technology non-dependence.

This pilot mission will largely contribute to ensure EU’s freedom of action in space, increase the resilience and protection of EU assets in space and foster the development of the new in-space economy. A pioneering and a novel mission concept which is unique compared to other initiatives among all space-faring nations is envisaged. The mission will build on previous R&I with an operational mission concept, focusing on application and service demonstration, with a concrete view to commercial and governmental usage. The detailed mission concept will be derived in close coordination with EU Member States and EEA countries through a dedicated ISOS Pilot Mission Advisory Group (PMAG)<sup>188</sup>.

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the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

<sup>188</sup> The ISOS Pilot Mission Advisory Group (PMAG) is composed of representatives of the Commission and the public authorities of interested Member States and EEA countries, under the chair of the Commission, with the objective to frame the ISOS Pilot Mission. It is expected that the PMAG will be

This topic addresses the finalisation of the detailed design of the **servicing component of the ISOS pilot mission**, that should feature robotic capabilities. The servicing component will be based on previous and ongoing R&I developments and could provide services such as inspection, upgrade, repair, life extension including refuelling, delivery and exchange of payload, reconfiguration, relocation, capture and removal of assets in space.

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

- A sustainable, highly automated and digitalised, flexible and economically viable space infrastructure, building on technologies and concepts for a circular economy in space, e.g. plug-and-play spacecraft functionality introducing recycling/re-use of spacecraft modules/functionalities;
- ISOS Pilot mission preparation up to detailed mission and system design for the servicing component and maturation of enabling technologies and innovative system and operational concepts;
- Elaboration of interfaces between the different components of the mission, together with the other mission components (i.e. HOST, logistics and satAPPs) and the ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination and Support Action (CSA)<sup>189</sup>;
- Contribution to the ISOS Pilot Mission Objectives provided in the technical annex<sup>163</sup>;
- Elaboration of clear use cases and relevant business models focussing on governmental and/or commercial needs;
- Ensuring the availability of results to the next mission phases.

This topic will contribute to, in the medium to long term, developing, deploying global space-based services and contribute to fostering the European space sector competitiveness, as stated in the expected impact of this destination.

Scope: To tackle the above expected outcomes, the following R&I actions should be addressed, taking into account the provided technical annex<sup>190</sup>:

- R&I to complete detailed mission and system design<sup>191</sup> (including relevant key technology maturation) for the servicing component as part of the ISOS pilot mission. More specifically, projects should finalise the detailed design for this component building on current or previous developments, demonstrating the achievement of the required TRL for all relevant technologies;

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replaced by a dedicated expert group that will take over all functions of the PMAG; in this event all references to the PMAG will refer to that expert group.

<sup>189</sup> ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination and Support Action

<sup>190</sup> Guidance document for the ISOS Pilot Mission, derived in close collaboration with the ISOS Pilot Mission Advisory Group, and published on the EU funding and tenders portal

<sup>191</sup> Comparable with a mission design phase C according to ECSS-M-ST-10C

- Contribution to the overall ISOS pilot mission detail design in close cooperation with the other mission components (including other servicing components), the ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination and Support Action and the ISOS Pilot Mission Advisory Group;
- R&I on related service capabilities and applications including operational concepts for servicing individual or fleets of satellites based on the functionality of the pilot mission system design. More specifically, possible use case for servicing a real EU asset is expected to be developed up to delivery of a concept of operations (CONOPS).

Projects are expected to ensure full compliance to the ISOS detailed pilot mission concept including interoperability with the other mission components, in case a possibility for a standalone IOD for the proposed servicing component materialises earlier than the ISOS pilot mission.

Proposals are expected to promote cooperation between different actors (industry, SMEs and research institutions) and consider opportunities to quickly turn technological innovation into commercial use in space via e.g., on-ground or in-orbit demonstration.

Proposals should clearly present a concrete plan to ensure that required technologies reach the necessary TRL at the end of the project. Moreover, complementarities with previous and/or ongoing R&I for the proposed servicing component should be clearly described. More specifically, proposals should explore relevant and promising solutions developed in Horizon Europe, Horizon 2020, or other EU-funded relevant activities, in particular, the topics: Future Space Ecosystem (HORIZON-CL4-2021-SPACE-01-12/ 2022-SPACE-01-11/ 2023-SPACE-01-12) and in relevant projects funded by the European Space Agency (ESA) and/or national programmes. Finally, proposals are also expected to consider the use of existing European technologies and/or building blocks, including at component level, contributing to European non-dependence and strengthen competitiveness.

Proposals are expected to consider and contribute to a balanced provision of Member States' and eligible Associated Countries' expertise and capabilities to the overall ISOS pilot mission, to support a successful introduction of the strategic capacity 'Act in Space' for the EU, its Member States and other partners.

This topic contributes to the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP<sup>192</sup>) and addresses Space technologies falling under the sectors of "digital technologies" and "deep tech innovation"<sup>193</sup>. This topic addresses objectives stated in the STEP Regulation, e.g., the development of critical technologies and safeguarding and strengthening their EU value chain. This topic will contribute to advancing digital capabilities in space and enhance the sustainability and agility of the EU's space assets.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

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<sup>192</sup> OJ L, 2024/795, 29.2.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/795/oj>  
<sup>193</sup> C(2024) 3148 final

The project(s) selected from this topic are expected to collaborate among themselves and with those selected under topics HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-22, 23, 24 and ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination and Support Action, in order to ensure interoperability and the necessary and sufficient documentation and information sharing for the implementation of the Pilot Mission, to make economies of scale in sharing best practices, defining common processes for addressing the different challenges, ensuring efficient monitoring and review, organising dissemination and communication activities, etc. Such collaboration among all those projects will be formalised by a collaboration agreement.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-22: ISOS Pilot Mission Detailed Design – HOST component**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 12.00 and 17.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 17.50 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply: The page limit of the application is 60 pages.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security, namely avoiding a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to build on its strengths and to carefully assess and address strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States and the following associated countries: Norway and Iceland. Proposals including entities established in countries outside the scope specified in the call/topic/action will be ineligible.  For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in

	<p>the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security.<sup>194</sup></p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.</p>
<i>Security Sensitive Topics</i>	Some activities resulting from this topic may involve using classified background and/or producing of security sensitive results (EUCI and SEN). Please refer to the related provisions in section B Security — EU classified and sensitive information of the General Annexes.

**Expected Outcome:** The strategic objective of this topic is to develop capabilities to 'Act in Space' through demonstrating in space a pilot mission by 2030 related to ISOS. The envisaged ISOS pilot mission shall provide the necessary seed components for a future service infrastructure, available to the European in-space ecosystem (including the EU assets), driving the generation of a new in-space economy, providing enhanced in-orbit technology demonstration and maximising EU technology non-dependence.

This pilot mission will largely contribute to ensure EU's freedom of action in space, increase the resilience and protection of EU assets in space and foster the development of the new in-space economy. A pioneering and a novel mission concept, which is unique compared to other initiatives among all space-faring nations is envisaged. The mission will build on previous R&I with an operational mission concept, focusing on application and service demonstration, with a concrete view to commercial and governmental usage. The detailed

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The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.



mission concept will be derived in close coordination with EU Member States and EEA countries through a dedicated ISOS Pilot Mission Advisory Group (PMAG)<sup>161</sup>.

This topic addresses the detailed design of the **platform component of the ISOS pilot mission**, which will be named **Hub for Operational Services and on-orbit Testing (HOST)**. The HOST shall be able to host multiple servicer spacecraft, IOD/V experiments and composable, and exchangeable functional satellite modules (satAPPs) for delivery, and shall be equipped with robotic manipulation and refuelling capabilities.

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

- A sustainable, highly automated, flexible and economically viable space infrastructure, building on technologies and concepts for a circular economy in space, e.g. plug-and-play spacecraft functionality introducing recycling/re-use of spacecraft modules/functionalities;
- ISOS Pilot mission preparation up to detailed mission and system detail design for the HOST component, and maturation of enabling technologies and innovative system and operational concepts;
- Elaboration of interfaces between the different components of the mission, together with the other mission components (i.e. servicing, logistics and satAPPs) and the ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination and Support Action (CSA)<sup>162</sup>;
- Contribution to the ISOS Pilot Mission Objectives provided in the technical annex<sup>163</sup>;
- Elaboration of clear use cases and relevant business models focussing on governmental and/or commercial needs;
- Provision of enhanced opportunities for IOD/V by actively promoting experiment plug and play on the HOST;
- Ensuring the availability of results to the next mission phases.

This topic will contribute to, in the medium to long term, developing, deploying global space-based services and contribute to fostering the European space sector competitiveness, as stated in the expected impact of this destination.

Scope: To tackle the above expected outcomes, the following R&I actions should be addressed taking into account the provided technical annex<sup>163</sup>:

- R&I to complete ISOS Pilot mission detailed mission and system design<sup>164</sup> (including relevant key technology maturation) for the platform component (HOST), demonstrating the achievement of the required TRL for all relevant technologies;

- R&I on key enabling technologies relevant for design of a scalable, modular, flexible platform component, equipped with robotic manipulation, satAPPs compatibility<sup>195</sup> and refuelling capability (for the HOST and the hosted servicer and logistic spacecraft), that can be extended and reconfigured to meet different demands (e.g., governmental and commercial, IOD/V and additional servicer hosting slots, robotic/manufacturing testbeds, warehouse and logistic node, etc.);
- Contribution to the overall ISOS pilot mission detail design in close cooperation with other mission components, the ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination and Support Action and the ISOS Pilot Mission Advisory Group;
- R&I on related HOST functions and applications including related operational concepts considering the use of distributed computing, multi-agent and network architectures and supported by simulations, enhancing the overall pilot mission system functionality.

Proposals are expected to promote cooperation between different actors (industry, SMEs and research institutions) and consider opportunities to quickly turn technological innovation into commercial use in space via e.g., on-ground or in-orbit demonstration.

Proposals should clearly present a concrete plan to ensure that required technologies reach the necessary TRL at the end of the project. Moreover, complementarities with previous and/or ongoing R&I for the proposed servicing component must be clearly described. More specifically, proposals should explore relevant and promising solutions developed in Horizon Europe, Horizon 2020, or other EU-funded relevant activities, in particular, the topics: Future Space Ecosystem (HORIZON-CL4-2021-SPACE-01-12/ 2022-SPACE-01-11/ 2023-SPACE-01-12) and in relevant projects funded by the European Space Agency (ESA) and/or national programmes. Finally, proposals are also expected to consider the use of existing European technologies and/or building blocks, including at component level, contributing to European non-dependence and strengthen competitiveness.

Proposals are expected to consider and contribute to a balanced provision of Member States' and eligible Associated Countries' expertise and capabilities to the overall ISOS pilot mission, to support a successful introduction of the strategic capacity 'Act in Space' for the EU and its Member States.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

The project selected from this topic is expected to collaborate with those selected under topics HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-21, 23, 24 and ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination and Support Action, in order to ensure interoperability and the necessary and sufficient documentation and information sharing for the implementation of the Pilot Mission, to make economies of scale in sharing best practices, defining common processes for addressing the

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<sup>195</sup> Ability to receive functional upgrades through composable and exchangeable functional satellite modules (satAPPs) that will be connected via dedicated Universal Service Interfaces (USI)

different challenges, ensuring efficient monitoring and review, organising dissemination and communication activities, etc. Such collaboration among all those projects will be formalised by a collaboration agreement.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-23: ISOS Pilot Mission Detailed Design – Logistics component**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 10.00 and 12.00 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>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The page limit of the application is 60 pages.</p>
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security, namely it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Norway, Iceland, Canada, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Proposals including entities established in countries outside the scope specified in the call/topic/action will be ineligible.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets,</p>

	<p>interests, autonomy, or security.<sup>196</sup></p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible proposals submitted under this topic and exceeding all the evaluation thresholds will be awarded a STEP Seal [<a href="https://strategic-technologies.europa.eu/about/step-seal_en">https://strategic-technologies.europa.eu/about/step-seal_en</a>].</p> <p>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.</p>
<i>Security Sensitive Topics</i>	Some activities resulting from this topic may involve using classified background and/or producing of security sensitive results (EUCI and SEN). Please refer to the related provisions in section B Security — EU classified and sensitive information of the General Annexes.

**Expected Outcome:** The strategic objective of this topic is to develop capabilities to ‘Act in Space’ through demonstrating in space a pilot mission by 2030 related to ISOS. The envisaged ISOS pilot mission shall provide the necessary seed components for a future service infrastructure, available to the European in-space ecosystem (including the EU assets), driving the generation of a new in-space economy, providing enhanced in-orbit technology demonstration and maximising EU technology non-dependence.

This pilot mission will largely contribute to ensure EU’s freedom of action in space, increase the resilience and protection of EU assets in space and foster the development of the new in-space economy. A pioneering and a novel mission concept, which is unique compared to other initiatives among all space-faring nations is envisaged. The mission will build on previous R&I with an operational mission concept, focusing on application and service demonstration, with a concrete view to commercial and governmental usage. The detailed

<sup>196</sup> The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

mission concept will be derived in close coordination with EU Member States and EEA countries through a dedicated ISOS Pilot Mission Advisory Group (PMAG)<sup>161</sup>.

This topic addresses the detailed design of the **logistics component of the ISOS pilot mission**. This component shall be able to transport cargo (i.e., satAPPs and propellant) taken from an upper stage to the HOST component.

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

- A sustainable, highly automated, flexible and economically viable space infrastructure, building on technologies and concepts for a circular economy in space, e.g. plug-and-play spacecraft functionality introducing recycling/re-use of spacecraft modules/functionalities;
- ISOS Pilot mission preparation up to detailed mission and system design for the logistics component and maturation of enabling technologies and innovative system and operational concepts;
- Elaboration of interfaces between the different components of the mission, together with the other mission components (i.e. servicing, HOST and satAPPs) and the ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination and Support Action (CSA)<sup>162</sup>;
- Contribution to the ISOS Pilot Mission Objectives provided in the technical annex<sup>163</sup>;
- Elaboration of clear use cases and relevant business models focussing on governmental and/or commercial needs;
- Ensuring the availability of results to the next mission phases.

This topic will contribute to, in the medium to long term, developing, deploying global space-based services and contribute to fostering the European space sector competitiveness, as stated in the expected impact of this destination.

Scope: To tackle the above expected outcomes, the following R&I actions should be addressed, taking into account the provided technical annex<sup>163</sup>:

- R&I to complete ISOS Pilot mission detailed mission and system design<sup>164</sup> (including relevant key technology maturation) for the logistics component, demonstrating the achievement of the required TRL for all relevant technologies;
- R&I on key enabling technologies relevant for design of a logistics component that can transport cargo (i.e., satAPPs and propellant) taken from an upper stage to the HOST component;
- R&I on solutions for docking and propellant management and transfer with the HOST. Building on existing European designs is encouraged;

- Contribution to the overall ISOS pilot mission detail design in close cooperation with other mission components, the ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination and Support Action and the ISOS Pilot Mission Advisory Group.

Proposals are expected to promote cooperation between different actors (industry, SMEs and research institutions) and consider opportunities to quickly turn technological innovation into commercial use in space.

Proposals should clearly present a concrete plan to ensure that required technologies reach the necessary TRL at the end of the project. Moreover, complementarities with previous and/or ongoing R&I for the proposed servicing component must be clearly described. More specifically, proposals should explore relevant and promising solutions developed in Horizon Europe, Horizon 2020, or other EU-funded relevant activities, in particular, the topics: Future Space Ecosystem (HORIZON-CL4-2021-SPACE-01-12/ 2022-SPACE-01-11/ 2023-SPACE-01-12) and in relevant projects funded by the European Space Agency (ESA) and/or national programmes. Finally, proposals are also expected to consider the use of existing European technologies and/or building blocks, including at component level, contributing to European non-dependence and strengthen competitiveness.

Proposals are expected to consider and contribute to a balanced provision of Member States' and eligible Associated Countries' expertise and capabilities to the overall ISOS pilot mission, to support a successful introduction of the strategic capacity 'Act in Space' for the EU and its Member States.

This topic contributes to the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP<sup>197</sup>) and addresses Space technologies falling under the sectors of "digital technologies" and "deep tech innovation"<sup>198</sup>. This topic addresses objectives stated in the STEP Regulation, e.g., the development of critical technologies and safeguarding and strengthening their EU value chain. This topic will contribute to advancing digital capabilities in space and enhance the sustainability and agility of the EU's space assets.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

The project selected from this topic is expected to collaborate with those selected under topics HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-21, 22, 24 and ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination and Support Action, in order to ensure interoperability and the necessary and sufficient documentation and information sharing for the implementation of the Pilot Mission, to make economies of scale in sharing best practices, defining common processes for addressing the different challenges, ensuring efficient monitoring and review, organising dissemination and communication activities, etc. Such collaboration among all those projects will be formalised by a collaboration agreement.

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<sup>197</sup> OJ L, 2024/795, 29.2.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/795/oj>

<sup>198</sup> C(2024) 3148 final

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-24: ISOS Pilot Mission Detailed Design – satAPPs component**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 2.00 and 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 5.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:  The page limit of the application is 60 pages.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:  Eligible proposals submitted under this topic and exceeding all the evaluation thresholds will be awarded a STEP Seal [ <a href="https://strategic-technologies.europa.eu/about/step-seal_en">https://strategic-technologies.europa.eu/about/step-seal_en</a> ].
<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). <sup>199</sup> .
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**Expected Outcome:** The strategic objective of this topic is to develop capabilities to ‘Act in Space’ through demonstrating in space a pilot mission by 2030 related to ISOS. The envisaged ISOS pilot mission shall provide the necessary seed components for a future service infrastructure, available to the European in-space ecosystem (including the EU assets), driving the generation of a new in-space economy, providing enhanced in-orbit technology demonstration and maximising EU technology non-dependence.

This pilot mission will largely contribute to ensure EU’s freedom of action in space, increase the resilience and protection of EU assets in space and foster the development of the new in-space economy. A pioneering and a novel mission concept, which is unique compared to other initiatives among all space-faring nations is envisaged. The mission will build on previous R&I with an operational mission concept, focusing on application and service demonstration, with a concrete view to commercial and governmental usage. The detailed mission concept will be derived in close coordination with EU Member States and EEA countries through a dedicated ISOS Pilot Mission Advisory Group (PMAG)<sup>161</sup>.

This topic addresses the detailed design of the **satAPPs component of the ISOS pilot mission**, that allows the creation of composable and exchangeable functional modules for satellite upgrade and the development of a European catalogue of satAPPs, following the AppStore approach and fostering system modularisation and flexibility.

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

- A sustainable, highly automated, flexible and economically viable space infrastructure, building on technologies and concepts for a circular economy in space, e.g. plug-and-play spacecraft functionality introducing recycling/re-use of spacecraft modules/functionalities;
- ISOS Pilot mission preparation up to detailed mission and system design for the satAPPs component, and maturation of enabling technologies and innovative system and operational concepts;
- Elaboration of interfaces between the different components of the mission, together with the other mission components (i.e. servicing, HOST and logistics) and the ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination and Support Action (CSA)<sup>162</sup>;
- Enhancing opportunities for IOD/V through satAPPs by actively promoting experiment plug and play on the HOST and prepared assets;
- Contribution to the ISOS Pilot Mission Objectives provided in the technical annex<sup>163</sup>;

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<sup>199</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)



- Elaboration of clear use cases and relevant business models focussing on governmental and/or commercial needs;
- Contributing to a European catalogue of satAPPs, following the AppStore approach and fostering system modularisation and flexibility;
- Ensuring the availability of results to the next mission phases.

This topic will contribute to, in the medium to long term, developing, deploying global space-based services and contribute to fostering the European space sector competitiveness, as stated in the expected impact of this destination.

Scope: To tackle the above expected outcomes, the following R&I actions should be addressed, taking into account the provided technical annex<sup>163</sup>:

- R&I to complete ISOS Pilot mission detailed mission and system design<sup>164</sup> (including relevant key technology maturation) for the satAPPs component. All relevant technologies shall reach the necessary TRL.
- R&I on technologies relevant for innovative satAPPs at TRL 6 that will be used in the context of the ISOS pilot mission to demonstrate upgrade of components' functionalities and/or payload exchange and IOD/V experiments.
- R&I on satAPP modules specifically for hosting IOD/V experiments.
- Contribution to the overall ISOS pilot mission detail design in close cooperation with other mission components, the ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination and Support Action and the ISOS Pilot Mission Advisory Group.

Proposals are expected to promote cooperation between different actors (industry, SMEs and research institutions) and consider opportunities to quickly turn technological innovation into commercial use in space via e.g., on-ground or in-orbit demonstration.

Proposals should clearly present a concrete plan to ensure that required technologies reach the necessary TRL at the end of the project. Moreover, complementarities with previous and/or ongoing R&I for the proposed servicing component must be clearly described. More specifically, proposals should explore relevant and promising solutions developed in Horizon Europe, Horizon 2020, or other EU-funded relevant activities, in particular, the topics: Future Space Ecosystem (HORIZON-CL4-2021-SPACE-01-12/ 2022-SPACE-01-11/ 2023-SPACE-01-12), EIC Accelerator WP2025 “Innovative in-space servicing, operations, robotics and technologies for resilient EU space infrastructure” and in relevant projects funded by the European Space Agency (ESA) and/or national programmes. Finally, proposals are also expected to consider the use of existing European technologies and/or building blocks, including at component level, contributing to European non-dependence and strengthen competitiveness.

International cooperation is encouraged in this topic.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

This topic contributes to the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) and addresses Space technologies falling under the sectors of “digital technologies” and “deep tech innovation”. This topic addresses objectives stated in the STEP Regulation, e.g., the development of critical technologies and safeguarding and strengthening their EU value chain. This topic will help reduce strategic dependencies from outside of the EU for components and equipment for the EU Space Programme, as well as for other European space applications.

The project(s) selected from this topic are expected to collaborate among themselves and with those selected under topics HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-21, 22, 23 and ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination and Support Action, in order to ensure interoperability and the necessary and sufficient documentation and information sharing for the implementation of the Pilot Mission, to make economies of scale in sharing best practices, defining common processes for addressing the different challenges, ensuring efficient monitoring and review, organising dissemination and communication activities, etc. Such collaboration among all those projects will be formalised by a collaboration agreement.

### **Heading 3 - Using Space on Earth - Telecommunications**

For a description of topics/actions related to the development of IRIS<sup>2</sup>, please refer to "Indirectly managed actions by ESA" in the section "Other Actions" of this work programme.

### **Heading 3bis - Using Space on Earth – Telecommunications and Earth Observation**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

#### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-31: Digital enablers and building blocks for Earth Observation and Satellite telecommunication for Space solutions**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.00 and 5.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 6.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following

<i>conditions</i>	<p>exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply: Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	<p>Activities are expected to achieve TRL 4-5 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector. Activities may start at any TRL.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>200</sup>.</p>

**Expected Outcome:** The topic encompasses actions within the scope of the co-programmed European Partnership on Globally Competitive Space Systems ('Space Partnership') in the areas of satellite communication (SatCom), Earth Observation (EO) and New Commercial Space Transportation Solutions and is part of cohesive activities in the domain of digital developments under the grand heading of "digitalisation for commercial space solutions".

Under the area of *Using Space on Earth* related to SatCom and EO, below this topic focus on the fast increment of the Low to Mid TRL level building blocks for key technologies required to strengthen competitiveness in these domains. Digitalisation is a major enabler for enhancing the value of an End-to-End EO and SatCom system. For example, processing applied to multi-sensor data can significantly enhance the resolution of the final data set, and digital optimisation of the data flow directly improves the End-to-End timeliness of an EO system (from request to delivery). Lastly, the enhancement of End-to-End data resilience and integrity calls for digital technologies on-board and, on the ground.

Project results are expected to contribute to one or several of the following expected outcomes:

- Enable the European Space Industry to maintain a significant share of the global connectivity market by increasing the performance of space satellite networks, new type

<sup>200</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

of control, space and ground segments being fully integrated into the terrestrial networks;

- New commercial services and applications enabled by increased digitalisation of space solutions;
- Advanced Earth observation payloads, technologies and processing means (on ground and/or in space), for all types of observation missions.

This will contribute to developing, deploying global, more flexible and reactive space-based services applications, to contribute to fostering the EU's space sector competitiveness, as stated in the expected impact of this destination.

Scope: The areas of R&I, which needs to be addressed to tackle the above-mentioned expected outcomes are:

- R&I on End-to-End SatCom Mission capabilities (e.g., satellite network interconnectivity, seamless integration into the terrestrial networks, taking into account and contributing to ongoing standardisation efforts, increased reactivity), strengthening efficient connectivity using various technologies (e.g. optical communication, Inter Satellite Links, reconfigurable payloads) and ensure compatibility and interoperability with 5G & 6G, and satellites as network nodes in a distributed system (e.g., ubiquitous use of orbital resources, distributed computing, embracing both ground and space), flexible and modular testbed prototype with representative building blocks for complex SatCom typologies, improve SatCom performances using innovative technologies (data fusion, user terminal development, new generation antennas, SDR payloads, exploitation of higher bands, etc).
- R&I on breakthrough harmonization enabling interoperability among multiple EO missions, breakthrough digitalized technology steps, such as AI algorithms, high performance cloud-based architectures, active and adaptive optics and/or higher power electronics (focal plane and RF back-ends and front-ends), mature (on-board and/or ground) digital techniques and technologies to support novel operational approaches, mature miniaturised instruments design - including their digitalized on-board processing electronics- fit for affordable EO constellations to address emerging markets;
- R&I on lower maturity building blocks and processes common to EO and SatCom systems, such as technologies and products improving system security and threats identification, resources usage optimization, tools to support the measure of key environmentally driven criteria through increased resource sharing, and maturation of high-performance processing payload H/W to support space network capabilities together with software functions to support reconfigurability, inter alia.

Proposals should address at least one of the areas outlined above.

Proposals are expected to promote cooperation between different actors (industry, SMEs and research institutions) and consider opportunities to quickly turn technological innovation into commercial use in space.

Proposals under this topic should explore synergies and be complementary to already funded actions in the context of technology development at component level, while still enabling new entrants and new approaches. In particular the topics: Critical Space Technologies for European non-dependence (HE H2020 SPACE-10-TEC-2018-2020, COMPET-1-2014-2015-2016-2017, HORIZON-CL4-2021-SPACE-01-81/ 2023-SPACE-01-72/ 2024-SPACE-01-73), satellite communication technologies (H2020 COMPET-2-2016, COMPET-3-2017, SPACE-15-TEC-2018, SPACE-29-TEC-2020, HORIZON-CL4-2021-SPACE-01-11), Earth Observation end-to-end technologies (HORIZON-CL4-2022-SPACE-01-13, HORIZON-CL4-2023-SPACE-01-11). It is expected that projects make use of existing European technologies and/or building blocks, including at component level, contributing to European non-dependence and strengthen competitiveness, and this should be clearly presented in the proposal. Furthermore, proposed activities should be complementary to H2020 and Horizon Europe funded projects, national activities and activities funded by the European Space Agency (ESA).

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on ‘Globally Competitive Space Systems’ (GCSS). As such, projects resulting from this topic will be expected to report on results to the European Partnership ‘Globally Competitive Space Systems’ (GCSS) in support of the monitoring of its KPIs.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-32: Preparing demonstration missions for collaborative Earth Observation and Satellite telecommunication for Space solutions**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 2.00 and 6.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 11.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  The following additional eligibility criteria apply: Subject to restrictions

	<p>for the protection of European communication networks.</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 7-8 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible proposals submitted under this topic and exceeding all the evaluation thresholds will be awarded a STEP Seal [<a href="https://strategic-technologies.europa.eu/about/step-seal_en">https://strategic-technologies.europa.eu/about/step-seal_en</a>].</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>201</sup>.</p>

**Expected Outcome:** The topic encompasses actions within the scope of the co-programmed European Partnership on Globally Competitive Space Systems ('Space Partnership') in the areas of satellite communication (SatCom), Earth Observation (EO) and New Commercial Space Transportation Solutions and is part of cohesive activities in the domain of digital developments under the grand heading of "digitalisation for commercial space solutions".

Under the area of *Using Space on Earth* related to SatCom and EO, below this topic focusses on the Mid to High TRL level developments of key technologies required to strengthen competitiveness in these domains. Digitalisation is a major enabler for enhancing the value of an End-to-End EO and SatCom system. For example, processing applied to multi-sensor data can significantly enhance the resolution of the final data set, and digital optimisation of the data flow directly improves the End-to-End timeliness of an EO system (from request to delivery). Lastly, the enhancement of End-to-End data resilience and integrity calls for digital technologies on-board and, on the ground.

<sup>201</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

Project results are expected to contribute to one or several of the following expected outcomes:

- Enable the European Space Industry to maintain a significant share of the global connectivity market by increasing the performance of space satellite networks, new type of control, space and ground segments being fully integrated into the terrestrial networks;
- New commercial services and applications enabled by an increased digitalisation of space solutions;

Advanced Earth observation payloads, technologies and processing means, for multiple spectrum and frequency bands capabilities (on ground and in space), as well as optimisation of data downlink for all types of observation missions. This will contribute to developing, deploying global, more flexible and reactive space-based services applications, to contribute to fostering the EU's space sector competitiveness, as stated in the expected impact of this destination.

Scope: The areas of R&I, which needs to be addressed to tackle the above-mentioned expected outcomes are:

- R&I on End-to-End SatCom Mission capabilities (e.g., satellite network interconnectivity, seamless integration into the terrestrial networks, taking into account and contributing to ongoing standardisation efforts, increased reactivity), strengthening efficient connectivity using various technologies (e.g. optical communication, Inter Satellite Links, reconfigurable payloads) and ensure compatibility and interoperability with 5G & 6G networks, and satellites as network nodes in a distributed system (e.g., ubiquitous use of orbital resources, distributed computing, embracing both ground and space), flexible and modular testbed for complex satcom typologies to assess performances, compatibility of the different elements and operations concepts, data fusion;
- R&I on on-board processing to optimize EO missions' performance or timeliness (e.g., standardized software framework to host embedded edge-computing applications -AI, Machine Learning, in combination with onboard image processing for multiple spectrum and frequency bands capabilities-, data/signal image processing, enhanced downlink and uplink capabilities), EO ground segment interfaces and data flow standardisation and adoption (e.g., development of use cases demonstrating the associated digital building-blocks, at least in ground relevant environment), smart multi-source EO intelligence information fusion (e.g., innovative intelligence information extraction and fusion), EO-related equipment and instruments digitalisation (e.g., miniaturization of equipment, enhancement of the European optical digital detectors supply);
- R&I on synergetic technologies, building blocks and processes with applicability across both EO and SatCom systems and missions, such as maturation of technologies and products improving system security and threats identification, resources usage

optimization, tools to support the measure of key environmentally driven criteria through increased resource sharing, and maturation of high-performance processing payload H/W and payload data flexible downlink to support space network capabilities together with software functions to demonstrate mission flexibility.

Developments should aim at on-ground relevant environment or in-orbit demonstration focusing on software and digital tools (e.g. algorithms, functions), supporting open-HW alternatives (e.g. processors, electronics) such as RISC-V or similar from design to pre-operation phases.

Proposals may contribute to one or more of the above R&I areas, however the main area addressed should be clearly and unambiguously identified. To ensure a balanced portfolio covering the three areas described above, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to one proposal that is the highest ranked within each area, provided that the applications attain all thresholds. For the purposes of the ranking the main area declared by the proposal will be considered.

Proposals are expected to promote cooperation between different actors (industry, SMEs and research institutions) and consider opportunities to quickly turn technological innovation into commercial use in space via e.g., on-ground relevant environment or in orbit demonstration.

Proposals under this topic should explore synergies and be complementary to already funded actions in the context of technology development at component level, while still enabling new entrants and new approaches. In particular the topics: Critical Space Technologies for European non-dependence (HE H2020 SPACE-10-TEC-2018-2020, COMPET-1-2014-2015-2016-2017, HORIZON-CL4-2021-SPACE-01-81/ 2023-SPACE-01-72/ 2024-SPACE-01-73), satellite communication technologies and high speed data chain (H2020 COMPET-2-2016, COMPET-3-2017, SPACE-15-TEC-2018, SPACE-29-TEC-2020, HORIZON-CL4-2021-SPACE-01-11), Earth Observation end-to-end technologies (HORIZON-CL4-2022-SPACE-01-13, HORIZON-CL4-2023-SPACE-01-11). It is expected that projects make use of existing European technologies and/or building blocks, including at component level, contributing to European non-dependence and strengthen competitiveness, and this should be clearly presented in the proposal. Furthermore, proposed activities should be complementary to H2020 and Horizon Europe funded projects, national activities and activities funded by the European Space Agency (ESA).

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on ‘Globally Competitive Space Systems’ (GCSS). As such, projects resulting from this topic will be expected to report on results to the European Partnership ‘Globally Competitive Space Systems’ (GCSS) in support of the monitoring of its KPIs.

This topic contributes to the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) and addresses Space technologies falling under the sectors of “digital technologies” and “deep tech innovation”. This topic addresses objectives stated in the STEP Regulation, e.g., the development of critical technologies and safeguarding and strengthening their EU value chain. This topic will help reduce strategic dependencies from outside of the EU for



components and equipment for the EU Space Programme, as well as for other European space applications.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

#### **Heading 4 - Using Space on Earth – Earth Observation**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-41: Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) evolution: new and innovative processing and methods for future Sentinels and other satellites for reanalyses**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 10.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 10.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p> <p>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding.</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 5-6 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector. Activities may start at any TRL.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:

<i>the Grant Agreements</i>	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). <sup>202</sup> .
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Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Innovative methods to prepare and pre-process observational input for Earth-system reanalysis datasets, including the Copernicus Sentinel missions, which will lead to an increase in the use of observations for Earth-system reanalysis;
- Enhanced sparse data assimilation and initialisation methods of climate sub-component (e.g., atmosphere, ocean, land, hydrology) in Copernicus products;
- Comprehensive and better information about the climate records to be extracted from the available observations improving our overall monitoring of the climate and climate change;
- Expanded range of reanalyses products towards centennial reanalyses, and enhanced climate counterfactuals data sets to support data-driven predictions and the ongoing operationalisation of extreme event attribution.

Scope: The areas of R&I to address the above expected outcomes include:

- Improve the ability of Copernicus' and other models to assimilate new and other satellite observations (e.g. the Copernicus Sentinel Expansion and Next Generation missions, contributing missions, meteorological satellites, research satellites) that are sensitive to surface parameters and fluxes. It is also necessary to undertake research on information content of early satellite data and unlock their exploitation in reanalyses at global and regional scales;
- Exploit innovative methods (including AI/ML) for data rescue for in situ and remote sensing observations, in particular regarding past and changing observing methods and environmental factors, and on error analysis, quality control and bias adjustment of the historical observation record. The aim is to make best possible use of early observations from various records of in situ and remote sensing observations to improve physically consistent analyses of the atmosphere, the ocean, the land and the cryosphere towards centennial timescales;

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<sup>202</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

- Improve the use of Sentinel and other data in all Copernicus reanalyses and their use across different services. Beyond processing and reprocessing activities, specific coordinated developments in terms of observation operators and observational error characterization will be required;
- Explore innovative methods (e.g. AI/ML) to accelerate the production and updates of reanalyses, to capture reanalyses uncertainties efficiently, and to reduce overall computing energy/carbon footprint.

The C3S reanalyses represent a significant portion of the service data requests and are at the heart of the service product line and further exploitation (e.g. initialising climate predictions, evaluation of climate historical projections, climate intelligence, development of climate applications, AI/ML weather forecasts). The preparation of the future C3S coupled Earth system reanalyses is underway to significantly improve the consistency across earth system components and lengthen the timespan. An extension of the reanalyses back to the early 1900' would meet many requirements of users but such a task would be impossible without an adequate investment in data rescue and in the reprocessing of EO data. Reanalyses play a key and vital role in climate monitoring and in the attribution of extreme events, but the development of the required counterfactual dataset is often ad-hoc and lacks operational implementation.

Bringing together European expertise on a wide variety of observations, climate data records and global and regional reanalyses will be paramount, and this will require a very tight collaboration with space agencies, the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). International cooperation is hence strongly encouraged in this topic. This will fully realise the progressive exploitation of Copernicus Sentinel and other data for the monitoring of a changing climate over Europe and worldwide. In addition, the proposal should include some demonstrations of downstream applications that would benefit from these improvements. Synergies with Destination Earth are also encouraged.

Additionally, the transfer of research results to operations should receive active attention during the project to strengthen the readiness for an operational deployment in the future. Appropriate involvement and/or interaction with the relevant Entrusted Entities of the Copernicus services, the conditions for making available, for re-using and exploiting the results (including IPR) by the said entities should be addressed during the project implementation. Software should be open licensed.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-42: Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS) evolution: improved soil-vegetation-atmosphere modelling and data assimilation of atmospheric constituents**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 3.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p> <p>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding.</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 5-6 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector. Activities may start at any TRL.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>203</sup>.</p>

<sup>203</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

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

- Accurate simulation of the biogenic fluxes of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and other atmospheric constituents to represent the corresponding processes in numerical models;
- Enhanced monitoring of environmental policies regarding eutrophication and acidification of soils and ecosystems as well as for regulatory reporting commitments;
- Improved management of soils and vegetation with view to reduce health impacts from pollen and VOCs.

Scope: The areas of R&I to address the above expected outcomes include:

- Advancing soil-vegetation-atmosphere surface/interface and evapo-transpiration parameterizations, numerical models and data assimilation techniques;
- Further development of surface (sub-)models that can account accurately and dynamically for the sources and sinks of key trace gases and aerosols and are compatible with operational implementation in CAMS global and regional systems;
- Improvement of methodologies to estimate deposition fluxes and associated uncertainties;
- Develop data assimilation approaches to deliver highly resolved deposition products, based on in-situ deposition networks and Earth Observation;
- Development of accurate pollen source models for additional species among the most allergenic ones in Europe (the current pollens in the CAMS portfolio are alder, birch, olive, grass, mugwort, and ragweed);
- Investigation of modelling of pollen at the global scale;
- Development of further use of satellite observations for improving calculation of dry deposition fluxes and emissions.

Eutrophication and acidifications of ecosystems remain among the most sensitive environmental issues which drive the revision of emission reduction strategies (UNECE Gothenburg Protocol, NEC Directive). Pollen and many atmospheric trace components such as VOCs represent major public health issues, affecting hundreds of millions of people globally and in Europe. Elaborated soil-vegetation-atmosphere surface/interface models and associated parameterization are needed to represent emissions, concentrations and deposition of such constituents. Enhanced numerical models, data assimilation and parameterization techniques are needed to characterize the fate of such constituents.

The proposal is expected to develop activities that will improve and expand the operational global and regional atmospheric composition analyses, forecasts, and reanalyses. In addition, the proposal should include some demonstrations of downstream applications that would benefit from these improvements. Synergies with Destination Earth are encouraged.

The main output of the project should be tools and methodologies that can be readily transferred to the CAMS operational global and regional systems. Coordination with CLMS is also encouraged.

The transfer of research results to operations should receive active attention during the project to strengthen the readiness for an operational deployment in the future. Appropriate involvement and/or interaction with the relevant Entrusted Entities of the Copernicus services, the conditions for making available, for re-using and exploiting the results (including IPR) by the said entities must be addressed during the project implementation. Particular attention should be paid to the potential use and complementarities with the products already developed in the other Copernicus services. Strengthening Copernicus services collaboration could be foreseen. Software should be open licensed.

Proposals are encouraged to build on or collaborate with related EU funded projects like SYLVA (biogenic aerosol) or CERTAINTY and CleanCloud on modelling.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-43: Copernicus Anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions Monitoring & Verification Support (CO2MVS) capacity: new and innovative methods to estimate the impact of fires on vegetation and related carbon fluxes**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 3.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may</p>

	<p>additionally be used).</p> <p>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding.</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	<p>Activities are expected to achieve TRL 5-6 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector. Activities may start at any TRL.</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>204</sup>.</p>

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

- Enable accounting for the interaction between droughts, fires and vegetation in the CO2MVS capacity;
- Improve the estimation of fire emissions in the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS);
- Improve the fire risk forecasting in the Copernicus Emergency Management Service (CEMS);
- Improve the assimilation of Copernicus Land Monitoring Service (CLMS) products in vegetation fire impact and carbon fluxes assessments.

Scope: The areas of R&I to address the above expected outcomes include:

- Better understand and characterise the impact of wildfires on the carbon cycle and on anthropogenic emissions through land use change. This has been recognized especially in the climate community when developing process-based vegetation models for use in climate models. While a large variety of empirical or process-based vegetation models

<sup>204</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

exist today, it is still unclear which type of model or degree of complexity is required to model fire adequately at regional to global scales. International collaborations, such as the Fire Model Intercomparison Project (FireMIP), have evaluated existing global fire models against benchmark data sets for present-day and historical conditions;

- Investigate the current state of fire modelling and specifically how the interaction between droughts, fires and vegetation can be accounted for in a global monitoring system, such as the CO2MVS. Because of the monitoring aspects of the CO2MVS, use should be made, where possible, of including observation-based data sets representing certain aspects of the fire-vegetation interaction;
- Investigate how a better understanding of the impact of fires on vegetation can improve the estimates of fire emissions of chemical species and aerosols, and subsequently air quality products in CAMS and the fire risk forecasting in CEMS.

Wildfires have become widespread during summer over many regions of the world, including Europe, and have major safety and larger societal impacts (air quality and health, aviation, weather, agriculture, etc). Wildfires and biomass burning are significant sources of CO<sub>2</sub> and air pollutants in the atmosphere. Fires also change the vegetation and therefore affect the exchange of CO<sub>2</sub> between the biosphere and the atmosphere. Current vegetation and fire models need to be improved to refine the quality of CAMS products (air quality, emissions), the Global Fire Assimilation System (GFAS) supporting CEMS and forcing data sets for climate projections supporting the IPCC. Innovative methodologies should be investigated to include fire-vegetation interactions, also taking into account the impact of drought conditions in global monitoring systems such as the CO2MVS capacity, via the improvement of currently used process-based vegetation models or through empirical models. The use of relevant observation-based data sets (e.g. vegetation states, drought conditions, burnt areas) should be a key element of these methodologies. Current CLMS products should be considered, including options for potential improved specifications. The proposal should include some demonstrations of downstream applications that would benefit from these improvements.

The transfer of research results to operations should receive active attention during the project to strengthen the readiness for an operational deployment in the future. Appropriate involvement and/or interaction with, and/or coordination across the relevant Entrusted Entities of the Copernicus services, the conditions for making available, for re-using and exploiting the results (including IPR) by the said entities must be addressed during the project implementation. Software should be open licensed.

The possible participation of the JRC may consist in (1) ensuring access to relevant models, tools and datasets of the operational CEMS, (2) providing a good understanding of existing operational workflows for CEMS and advice regarding the operational feasibility of new developments and (3) testing of new developments/prototypes for CEMS in a pre-operational setting.



In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-44: Copernicus Marine Environment Monitoring Service (CMEMS) evolution: new and innovative ocean data assimilation techniques**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 5.00 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 5.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p> <p>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding.</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 5-6 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector. Activities may start at any TRL.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the</p>

	Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025). <sup>205</sup> .
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Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- To improve ocean monitoring and predictions, and to remain at the forefront at the international level;
- To ensure CMEMS users take full advantage from advances in observations, reanalysis, analysis and forecasting systems;
- To strengthen data assimilation development exchanges between operational centres and to facilitate scientific community contributions.

Scope: The areas of R&I to address the above expected outcomes include:

- Coupled data assimilation (e.g. between ocean and biogeochemistry, ocean and sea-ice, ocean and waves and atmosphere) to control in a more consistent way the ocean state variables across ocean components or forcings and to get more benefits from observations;
- Development of multi-scale methods capable of assimilating high-resolution and high-frequency observations as well as of constraining larger scales;
- Development of methods to produce reliable estimation of analysis and forecast uncertainties;
- Use of Artificial Intelligence techniques in data assimilation schemes (e.g. use of emulators for ensemble generation, model error estimation, bias correction, separation of scale and model parameter estimation);
- Use of new types of observations (e.g. new Sentinel Expansion and Next Generation missions, new in-situ observations) or higher-resolution of existing data streams;
- Development of methods and tools to systematically assess the observing system impact in data assimilation systems (e.g. analysis and forecast sensitivity to observation);
- The development of software infrastructure that can accommodate different assimilation methods (including artificial intelligence techniques), and facilitate the sharing of algorithms and optimization of computer codes (assimilation schemes) on high-performance computers;

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<sup>205</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

- The development of validation and intercomparison protocols to estimate and quantify the benefits of improved assimilation methods and integration of new observations (e.g. data challenges, use of OSSEs).

The development of new types of observations from satellites and in-situ and the improvement of space/time sampling of existing observations require a step change in data assimilation techniques to fully benefit from these new sources of data. Current techniques are facing hard limits to progress and need new approaches to make the best use of observation and advances in modelling (e.g. resolution). Emerging coupling, multi-scale, ensemble and artificial intelligence techniques represent new opportunities for significant improvements in ocean data assimilation. The proposal should include some demonstrations of downstream applications that would benefit from these improvements.

The transfer of research results to operations should receive active attention during the project to strengthen the readiness for an operational deployment in the future. Appropriate involvement and/or interaction with the relevant Entrusted Entities of the Copernicus services, the conditions for making available, for re-using and exploiting the results (including IPR) by the said entities must be addressed during the project implementation. Software should be open licensed.

Potential contributions to the European Digital Twin Ocean and the GEO Blue Planet initiative should also receive attention during the project, given that the CMEMS is and should remain an important player in these initiatives. International cooperation is hence encouraged in this topic.

Actions are encouraged to build on or cooperate with previous or ongoing Horizon funded projects contributing to different components of the global ocean observing value chain, for example - but not limited to - LandSeaLot, EPOC, EERIE, ObsSea4Clim, etc.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

#### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-45: Supporting the AI/ML digital transition of Copernicus Services**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 12.00 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>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply: Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p> <p>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding.</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 5-6 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector. Activities may start at any TRL.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>206</sup>.</p>

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

- Integrated AI/ML strategy across Copernicus Services, value chains and workflows;
- Improved quality, timeliness, reliability and resilience of Copernicus data, products and applications;
- Improved time-to-solution and energy-to-solution of Copernicus operational workflows;

<sup>206</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

- Transformed user experience through enhanced interactivity and on-demand capabilities for Copernicus services;
- Exchange of knowledge, benchmarking and best practices on using AI/ML in the context of Copernicus;
- Enhanced AI-readiness of Copernicus data, in particular open and free high-value labelled Copernicus data sets.

Scope: The areas of R&I to address the above expected outcomes include:

- AI-supported retrieval algorithms on both passive and active sensing for existing and upcoming Copernicus missions;
- Fast, reliable, consistent, and as much as possible sensor agnostic identification of clouds and shadows in optical sensing;
- Multi-source multi-target AI models for automatic segmentation;
- Physics parameterization and parameter optimization to emulate poorly understood processes and increase the fidelity of numerical models;
- Fault and outlier detection in production and delivery workflows to ensure more robust services;
- Support to automated pre-processing and QA/QC of observations and data to reduce the risk of man-made errors and product deficiencies;
- Data fusion techniques towards added-value products;
- Data compression and mining methods to navigate big data efficiently, as the amount of data is becoming a limiting factor;
- Hybrid observation operator, ensemble data assimilation techniques, error calibration and uncertainty quantification towards improved (re-)analysis and forecast skill;
- Analysis-driven Earth system deep learning models to boost prediction skill and timeliness, including with Digital Twin Earth models. These methods have shown great promises when applied to reanalyses for example;
- Experimenting observation(-only)-driven forecasting to support time-critical service elements, circumventing analysis steps. These approaches could be particularly suited for observation-dense areas from which processes can be inferred from observations alone;
- Exploring the potential of large pre-trained foundation models and transfer learning at scale for Earth system modelling, including with publicly available training datasets from Copernicus;

- Downscaling and super resolution applications building on Copernicus data to refine products in space and time;
- Adaptive workflow optimizations;
- Enhanced interactive interfaces enabling on-demand product and service generation;
- Chatbots that can guide the user across a wide range of information sources within and across Copernicus services for enhanced user support and experience.

Proposals are expected to address as many of the above areas as possible.

During the last decade, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, big data volumes and computing capacities have developed at an unprecedented pace, and it is now evident that Copernicus needs to become even more proactive on the digital transition. AI and machine learning offer great opportunities across the Copernicus value chain and workflows to deeply transform its data, products, applications, services and user experience.

However, the scope and speed of developments also generate challenges, in particular regarding the necessary know-how that needs to be established, the software and hardware infrastructure that need to be developed, and the integration of machine learning and conventional tools within production workflows. These challenges need to be addressed within a comparably short period of time to keep up with evolving user requirements and to leverage emerging AI/ML developments. The project is expected to foster game changer and disruptive approaches in particular towards next generation Earth system (re-)analysis and prediction systems as well as foundation models, to promote integrated AI/ML strategies and intensive cooperation and knowledge transfer with and across Entrusted Entities to pave the way into the future of Copernicus. Given the QA/QC requirements on Copernicus products, explainable, trustworthy, open-source and responsible use of AI approaches are of particular interest, as AI mainly operates as a black box. In the context of recent EU policies, a robust framework is required to ensure the same stringent quality, reliability, and verifiability requirements of AI-generated products, as well as transparency and clearly labelled information to users. Benchmarking approaches to quantify the positive impact and improvements of AI/ML methods over time are particularly encouraged.

Collaboration with the EuroGEO initiative and the project(s) funded from the topic HORIZON-CL6-2025-03-GOVERNANCE-09: Delivering Earth Intelligence to accelerate the green and digital transition is encouraged.

The transfer of research results to operations should receive active attention during the project to strengthen the readiness for an operational deployment in the future. Appropriate involvement and/or interaction with the relevant Entrusted Entities of the Copernicus services and Destination Earth, the conditions for making available, for re-using and exploiting the results (including IPR) by the said entities must be addressed during the project implementation.

The possible participation of the JRC may consist in (1) ensuring access to relevant models, tools and datasets of the operational CEMS and CLMS, (2) providing a good understanding of existing operational workflows for CEMS/CLMS and advice regarding the operational feasibility of new developments and (3) testing of new developments/prototypes for CEMS/CLMS in a pre-operational setting.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-46: Innovative Earth observation services in support of maritime litter detection and ship source pollution policies**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 5.00 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 5.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply: Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p> <p>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding.</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 7-8 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.</p>
<i>Legal and</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions

<i>financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	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). <sup>207</sup> .
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Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- National maritime authorities and enforcement bodies will benefit from improved detection services to fulfil the requirements of the Ship Sourced Pollution Directive (SSPD), ultimately resulting in a higher environmental protection of sea waters and preservation of marine ecosystems;
- Increased accuracy from the developed solutions will allow more efficient and quick responses to potential spill incidents.

Scope: The project should address the following points:

- Development and demonstration of space sensors, including the assessment of their operational boundaries and associated technical confidence levels, for the following use cases:
  - o Estimation of oil spill volume and thickness, in conjunction with the identification of oil types using for instance oil spectral signatures;
  - o Detection of oil spills in sea ice conditions;
  - o Detection and identification of chemical products on the sea surface (MARPOL Annex II);
  - o Detection and identification of sewage on the sea surface (MARPOL Annex IV);
  - o Detection and identification of garbage on the sea surface (MARPOL Annex V);
  - o Detection and identification of exhaust gas cleaning system residue, and monitoring of single-vessel methane emissions (MARPOL Annex VI);
  - o Detection and identification of the possible polluter using vessel unique spectral signature;

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<sup>207</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)



- o Elements of detection of other pollution emissions (MARPOL Annex VI) might prove useful and would be considered a plus;
- Design and improvement of use artificial intelligence methods for the identification of spills, sewage and garbage on the sea surface and their characteristics to achieve a higher level of timeliness, automation and confidence (e.g. avoid false alerts).

Context:

The MARPOL convention adopted at the IMO level regulates the release at sea of substances originating from ships, be it from the ship's operation or cargo operations. The Ship Source Pollution Directive adopted in 2005 seeks to strengthen the enforcement in the EU of the prohibition of release at sea of substances under Annex I and II of the MARPOL convention. Currently, high-resolution satellite imagery of the ocean surface is used to monitor and detect potential spill, notably through the CleanSeaNet service, offered by the European Maritime Safety Agency.

The revision of the Directive will expand its scope to discharges in the water under all MARPOL annexes. Further research is needed to adapt the current monitoring systems to the accurate detection of the substances included under the revised scope of the SSPD as the technologies may not be available or accurate enough.

The objective of this topic is to support R&I activities developing advanced technological solutions, that will allow to enhance the service provided to Member States for the detection of potential spills and identification of potential polluters.

R&I activities should complement what is currently being done by EMSA, along CleanSeaNet and the Copernicus maritime surveillance service. Moreover, the Copernicus Security Services Strategic Research Agenda (CSS-SRA) provides, on a yearly basis, an overview of R&D activities, as well as proposed actions based on latest developments. Applicants are invited to consult the corresponding additional requirements and information based on the CSS-SRA<sup>208</sup> and subsequent updates when they become available to develop their proposal.

The transfer of research results to operations should receive active attention during the project to strengthen the readiness for an operational deployment in the future. Appropriate involvement and/or interaction with EMSA, the conditions for making available, for re-using and exploiting the results (including IPR) by the said entities must be addressed during the project implementation. Proposals are encouraged to connect with and contribute to both the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030.

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<sup>208</sup> [JRC Publications Repository - The Strategic Research Agenda for Copernicus Security Service 2023 \(europa.eu\)](https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/publication/?id=JRC125432)

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

### **Heading 5 - Using Space on Earth – Satellite navigation**

For a description of topics related to the development of Galileo and EGNOS, please refer to “Public Procurement” and to “Indirectly managed actions by ESA” in the section “Other Actions” of this work programme.

### **Heading 6 - Using Space on Earth – Services & Data coming from satellites, both Earth Observation and navigation**

For a description of topics related to the development of applications for Galileo, EGNOS and Copernicus, please refer to “Indirectly managed actions by EUSPA” in the section “Other Actions” of this work programme.

### **Heading 7 - Monitoring Space**

For a description of topics related to SSA-SST, please refer to “Identified beneficiaries” in the section “Other Actions” of this work programme.

### **Heading 8 – Boosting Space through non-dependence of the EU for key critical space technologies**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

#### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-71: Space Critical EEE Components for EU non-dependence – RISC-V Microprocessor on 7nm**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 4.50 and 5.00 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 5.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:  The page limit of the application is 80 pages.
<i>Eligibility</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following

<i>conditions</i>	<p>exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security, namely avoiding a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to build on its strengths and to carefully assess and address strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States and the following associated countries: Norway and Iceland. Proposals including entities established in countries outside the scope specified in the call/topic/action will be ineligible.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.<sup>209</sup></p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	<p>Activities are expected to achieve TRL 5 by the end of the project. Activities may start at TRL 3. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector.</p>
<i>Evaluation and</i>	<p>The evaluation committee will be composed partially by representatives</p>

<sup>209</sup>

The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

<i>award procedure</i>	of EU institutions.
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Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Reinforcing EU strategic autonomy by reducing non-EU dependencies on critical space EEE components and related technologies across their entire supply chain;
- Providing unrestricted access to critical space EEE components and related technologies relevant for EU space missions;
- Developing or regaining capacity to operate independently in space by developing resilient space EEE components and related technologies supply chains, relying on EU supply chains and/or trustable and reliable supply chains not affected by non-EU export restrictions;
- Enhancing competitiveness by developing products and capabilities reaching equivalent or superior performance level than those from outside the EU and compete at worldwide level;
- Opening new opportunities for manufacturers by reducing dependency on non-EU export restricted technologies.

Scope: Unrestricted access to state-of-art space EEE components and related technologies is a pre-requisite for the EU space industry responding to EU space missions. However, especially for some families of components, the available solutions in EU do not meet the current high-performance space requirements. Currently, alternative products sourced from outside EU, are either affected by non-EU export control, that limits its use, or present challenges in terms of trustable supply chains for the implementation of EU space missions with a security dimension.

Within the frame of this topic, it is expected to finance and implement development projects aiming at maturing critical space EEE components with the final goal of lowering the dependency from outside EU. This will be done by establishing a long-term sustainable supply chain for supporting EU strategic autonomy in the space sector. The selection of the supply chains shall reflect this objective. Therefore, the supply chain shall preferably be built fully based in EU and when this can only be achieved partially (i.e. because of lack of current EU capabilities for unrestricted advanced semiconductor processes or advanced materials that cannot be developed within the project), services procured from outside EU shall nevertheless ensure that the overall supply chain will remain trustable and not affected by non-EU export control. The latest scenario is subject to the approval of the granting authority.

Below, the space EEE component and related technologies relevant for this Call. It has been identified based on needs related to strategic institutional space programs, inputs from European stakeholders and the EU Observatory of Critical Technologies.

- RISC-V microprocessors on 7nm technology node [Target final TRL 5]

Additional, context information and technical requirements are provided in the Technical Requirements Guidance document published on the Funding & Tenders Portal. Space is a low volume market affected by a dynamic industrial landscape compared to the terrestrial market therefore, technological spin in and/or bilateral collaborations should be enhanced between European non-space and space industries. Furthermore, proposed activities should be complementary to relevant national or other activities at European level. Complementary activities should be clearly identified, described and the proposal should report how the complementarity is ensured.

To achieve the non-dependence objective, applicants are expected to include a dedicated proposal's paragraph covering:

- The description of the technology and/or technology processes and high-level breakdown of the space EEE component supply chain to be used. Applicants should demonstrate that the supply chain and final product are free of any legal export restrictions or limitations, such as those established in the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) or equivalent instruments applicable in other non-EU jurisdictions. Applicants shall also report, in a dedicated subsection, if and which part of the supply chain is affected by non-EU export controls such as the Export Administration regulation (EAR) i.e. EAR99.
- The description of the suitable technology development process that has been identified and set up within the consortium for avoiding export restrictions of non-EU states and assess vulnerabilities of the supply chain.

Proposal covering space EEE components and related technology developments that are targeting a final TRL equal or higher than 5, shall include a list of proposed applicable standards (e.g. EN, ECSS, ESCC, MIL, JEDEC,...) that are considered relevant for implementing a formal space evaluation and/or qualification. Additionally, projects that aim at a formal space qualification shall deliver the full data pack planned to be submitted to the qualification authority. This deliverable shall be marked sensitive and it shall be shared with the granting authority (i.e. DG-DEFIS and HaDEA). Products that will successfully complete the space evaluation/qualification, either within the EU-COM activity or as a consecutive follow up, shall inform DG-DEFIS and engrave on the package the EU flag.

The proposal must include specific tasks as part of the work plan and related dedicated confidential deliverables to be provided within 6 months from the start of the project to the relevant Commission DG and Executive Agency (i.e. DG-DEFIS and HaDEA), with the objective of:

1. Analysing and describing, **in detail**, the full supply chain, each entity and its role in the supply chain, level of criticality and, if relevant, identify dependencies from outside EU;
2. Describing the industrial technical roadmap and a business plan for commercialization with accurate understanding of applications needs, space mission insertion, including time to market indication, of the developed product.

3. Reporting the list of relevant non-EU export control with extra territorial applicability for the specific technology/product under development, independently from the supply chain established for the EU-COM project.
4. Undertaking a comprehensive literature review of the relevant technology/product reporting the state-of-the-art and highlighting potential gaps between current EU solutions and competition from outside EU.

Unless otherwise agreed with the granting authority before the grant agreement, beneficiaries must ensure that none of the entities that participate as affiliated entities, associated partners or subcontractors are established in countries which are not eligible countries or target countries set out in the call conditions.

It is recalled to the applicants that all provisions reported by the Model Grant Agreements, related to topics with restricted eligibility conditions, are applied. For example, under this light, the consortiums shall ensure that for a period up to 4 years after the end of the action, supply and availability of the products and/or processes developed and/or qualified within the project (consortium as whole or individual beneficiaries) shall be given to any entity in EU, at fair and reasonable market prices, conditions and with no legal restrictions and limitations stemming for example from International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), or equivalent instruments applicable in non-EU jurisdictions. Additionally, beneficiaries that intend to transfer ownership or grant an exclusive licence must formally notify the granting authority (i.e. DG-DEFIS and HaDEA) before the intended transfer or licensing takes place and the granting authority may up to four years after the end of the action object to a transfer of ownership or the exclusive licensing of results.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not relevant.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-72: Space Critical Equipment and Related Technologies for EU non-dependence – Chip Scale Atomic Clocks and Solar Cells**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 3.50 and 4.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 8.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:

	The page limit of the application is 80 pages.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security, namely avoiding a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to build on its strengths and to carefully assess and address strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States and the following associated countries: Norway and Iceland. Proposals including entities established in countries outside the scope specified in the call/topic/action will be ineligible.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.<sup>210</sup></p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	<p>Activities are expected to achieve TRL 5-6 by the end of the project.</p> <p>Activities may start at TRL 3. The reference TRL definition is the ISO</p>

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The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

	16290:2013 applicable to the space sector.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>To ensure a balanced portfolio covering all the development areas described in the scope section, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to one proposal that is the highest ranked within each development area, provided that the applications attain all thresholds</p>

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

- Reinforcing EU strategic autonomy by reducing non-EU dependencies on critical space equipment and related technologies across their entire supply chain;
- Providing unrestricted access to critical space equipment and related technologies relevant for EU space missions;
- Developing or regaining capacity to operate independently in space by developing resilient critical space equipment and related technologies supply chains, relying on EU supply chains and/or trustable and reliable supply chains not affected by non-EU export restrictions;
- Enhancing competitiveness by developing products and capabilities reaching equivalent or superior performance level than those from outside the EU and compete at worldwide level;
- Opening new opportunities for manufacturers by reducing dependency on non-EU export restricted technologies.

Scope: Unrestricted access to state-of-art space equipment and related technologies is a pre-requisite for the EU space industry responding to EU space missions. However, especially for some families of equipment, the available solutions in EU do not meet the current high-performance space requirements and alternative products, sourced from outside EU, are either affected by non-EU export control with extra territorial applicability, that limit the access, re-export or raise challenges in terms of trustable supply chains for the implementation of EU space missions with a security dimension.

Within the frame of this topic it is expected to finance and implement development projects aiming at maturing critical space equipment with the final goal of lowering the dependency from outside EU, establish a long-term sustainable supply chain and support EU strategic autonomy in the space sector. The selection of the supply chains shall reflect this objective. Therefore, the supply chain shall preferably be built fully based in EU and when this can only be achieved partially (i.e. because of lack of current EU capabilities that cannot be developed within the project), services procured from outside EU shall nevertheless ensure that the



overall supply chain will remain trustable and not affected by non-EU export control. The latest scenario is subject to the approval of the granting authority.

Below, the list of space equipment and related technologies relevant for this Call. It has been identified based on needs related to strategic institutional programs, inputs from relevant European stakeholders and the EU Observatory of Critical Technologies.

- Chip Scale Atomic Clocks [Target final TRL 6]
- Solar Cells [Target final TRL 5-6]

Additional, context information and technical requirements are provided in the Technical Requirements Guidance document published on the Funding & Tenders Portal outlining all relevant information for each of the above-mentioned development lines.

A proposal should address only one technology area and clearly identify the area being addressed.

Space is a low volume market affected by a dynamic industrial landscape compared to the terrestrial market therefore, technological spin in and/or bilateral collaborations should be enhanced between European non-space and space industries. Furthermore, proposed activities should be complementary to relevant national and/or other activities at European level. Complementary activities should be clearly identified, described and the proposal should report how the complementarity is ensured.

To achieve the non-dependence objective, applicants must include a dedicated proposal's paragraph covering:

- The description of the technology and high-level breakdown of the space equipment supply chain to be used. Applicants should demonstrate that the supply chain and final product are free of any legal export restrictions or limitations, such as those established in the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) or equivalent instruments applicable in other non-EU jurisdictions. Applicants shall also report, in a dedicated subsection, if and which part of the supply chain is affected by non-EU export controls such as the Export Administration regulation (EAR).
- The description of the suitable technology development process that has been identified and set up within the consortium for avoiding export restrictions of non-EU states and assess vulnerabilities of the supply chain.

Proposal covering space equipment and related technology developments that are targeting a final TRL equal or higher than 5, shall include a list of proposed applicable standards (e.g. ECSS, ESCC, MIL, JEDEC, ...) that are considered relevant for implementing a formal space evaluation and/or qualification.

The proposal must include specific tasks as part of the work plan and related dedicated confidential deliverables to be provided within 6 months from the start of the project to the

relevant Commission DG and Executive Agency (i.e. DG-DEFIS and HaDEA), with the objective of:

1. Analysing and describing, **in detail**, the full supply chain, each entity and its role in the supply chain, level of criticality and, if relevant, identify dependencies from outside EU;
2. Describe the industrial technical roadmap and a business plan for commercialization with accurate understanding of applications needs, space mission insertion, including time to market indication, of the developed product.
3. Reporting the list of relevant non-EU export control with extra territorial applicability for the specific technology/product under development, independently from the supply chain established for the EU-COM project.
4. Undertaking a comprehensive literature review of the relevant technology/product reporting the state-of-the-art and highlighting potential gaps between current EU solutions and competition from outside EU.

Unless otherwise agreed with the granting authority before the grant agreement is signed, beneficiaries must ensure that none of the entities that participate as affiliated entities, associated partners or subcontractors are established in countries which are not eligible countries or target countries set out in the call conditions.

It is recalled to the applicants that all provisions reported by the Model Grant Agreements, related to topics with restricted eligibility conditions, are applied. Under this light, for example the consortiums shall ensure that for a period up to 4 years after the end of the action, supply and availability of the products and/or processes developed and/or qualified within the project (consortium as whole or individual beneficiaries) shall be given to any entity in EU, at fair and reasonable market prices, conditions and with no legal restrictions and limitations stemming for example from International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), or equivalent instruments applicable in non-EU jurisdictions. Additionally, beneficiaries that intend to transfer ownership or grant an exclusive licence must formally notify the granting authority before the intended transfer or licensing takes place and the granting authority may up to four years after the end of the action object to a transfer of ownership or the exclusive licensing of results.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not relevant.

#### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-73: Space Critical EEE Components for EU non-dependence - Connectors**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 0.80

<i>contribution per project</i>	and 1.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 1.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The page limit of the application is 80 pages.</p>
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security, namely avoiding a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to build on its strengths and to carefully assess and address strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States and the following associated countries: Norway and Iceland. Proposals including entities established in countries outside the scope specified in the call/topic/action will be ineligible.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.<sup>211</sup></p>

<sup>211</sup> The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity,

	If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 5-6 by the end of the project. Activities may start at TRL 3. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:  The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.

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

- Reinforcing EU strategic autonomy by reducing non-EU dependencies on critical space EEE components and related technologies across their entire supply chain;
- Providing unrestricted access to critical space EEE components and related technologies relevant for EU space missions;
- Developing or regaining capacity to operate independently in space by developing resilient space EEE components and related technologies supply chains, relying on EU supply chains and/or trustable and reliable supply chains not affected by non-EU export restrictions;
- Enhancing competitiveness by developing products and capabilities reaching equivalent or superior performance level than those from outside the EU and compete at worldwide level;
- Opening new opportunities for manufacturers by reducing dependency on non-EU export restricted technologies.

Scope: Unrestricted access to state-of-art space EEE components and related technologies is a pre-requisite for the EU space industry responding to EU space missions. However, especially for some families of components, the available solutions in EU do not meet the current high-performance space requirements. Currently, alternative products sourced from outside EU, are either affected by non-EU export control, that limits its use, or present challenges in terms of trustable supply chains for the implementation of EU space missions with a security dimension.

Within the frame of this topic, it is expected to finance and implement development projects aiming at maturing critical space EEE components with the final goal of lowering the

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and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

dependency from outside EU. This will be done by establishing a long-term sustainable supply chain for supporting EU strategic autonomy in the space sector. The selection of the supply chains shall reflect this objective. Therefore, the supply chain shall preferably be built fully based in EU and when this can only be achieved partially (i.e. because of lack of current EU capabilities for unrestricted advanced semiconductor processes or advanced materials that cannot be developed within the project), services procured from outside EU shall nevertheless ensure that the overall supply chain will remain trustable and not affected by non-EU export control. The latest scenario is subject to the approval of the granting authority.

Below, the space EEE component and related technologies relevant for this Call. It has been identified based on needs related to strategic institutional space programs, inputs from European stakeholders and the EU Observatory of Critical Technologies:

- Connectors [Target final TRL 5-6]

Additional context information and technical requirements are provided in the Technical Requirements Guidance document published on the Funding & Tenders Portal.

Space is a low volume market affected by a dynamic industrial landscape compared to the terrestrial market therefore, technological spin in and/or bilateral collaborations should be enhanced between European non-space and space industries. Furthermore, proposed activities should be complementary to relevant national and/or other activities at European level. Complementary activities should be clearly identified, described and the proposal should report how the complementarity is ensured.

To achieve the non-dependence objective, applicants are expected to include a dedicated proposal's paragraph covering:

- The description of the technology and/or technology processes and high-level breakdown of the space EEE component supply chain to be used. Applicants should demonstrate that the supply chain and final product are free of any legal export restrictions or limitations, such as those established in the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) or equivalent instruments applicable in other non-EU jurisdictions. Applicants shall also report, in a dedicated subsection, if and which part of the supply chain is affected by non-EU export controls such as the Export Administration regulation (EAR) i.e. EAR99.
- The description of the suitable technology development process that has been identified and set up within the consortium for avoiding export restrictions of non-EU states and assess vulnerabilities of the supply chain.

Proposal covering space EEE components and related technology developments that are targeting a final TRL equal or higher than 5, shall include a list of proposed applicable standards (e.g. EN, ECSS, ESCC, MIL, JEDEC,...) that are considered relevant for implementing a formal space evaluation and/or qualification. Additionally, projects that aim at a formal space qualification shall deliver the full data pack planned to be submitted to the qualification authority. This deliverable shall be marked sensitive and it shall be shared with

the granting authority (i.e. DG-DEFIS and HaDEA). Products that will successfully complete the space evaluation/qualification either within the EU-COM activity or as a consecutive follow up shall inform DG-DEFIS and engrave on the package, or if relevant, die the EU flag.

The proposal must include specific tasks as part of the work plan and related dedicated confidential deliverables to be provided within 6 months from the start of the project to the relevant Commission DG and Executive Agency (i.e. DG-DEFIS and HaDEA), with the objective of:

- Analysing and describing, **in detail**, the full supply chain, each entity and its role in the supply chain, level of criticality and, if relevant, identify dependencies from outside EU;
- Describing the industrial technical roadmap and a business plan for commercialization with accurate understanding of applications needs, space mission insertion, including time to market indication, of the developed product.
- Reporting the list of relevant non-EU export control with extra territorial applicability for the specific technology/product under development, independently from the supply chain established for the EU-COM project.
- Undertaking a comprehensive literature review of the relevant technology/product reporting the state-of-the-art and highlighting potential gaps between current EU solutions and competition from outside EU.

Unless otherwise agreed with the granting authority before the grant agreement, beneficiaries must ensure that none of the entities that participate as affiliated entities, associated partners or subcontractors are established in countries which are not eligible countries or target countries set out in the call conditions.

It is recalled to the applicants that all provisions reported by the Model Grant Agreements, related to topics with restricted eligibility conditions, are applied. For example, under this light, the consortiums shall ensure that for a period up to 4 years after the end of the action, supply and availability of the products and/or processes developed and/or qualified within the project (consortium as whole or individual beneficiaries) shall be given to any entity in EU, at fair and reasonable market prices, conditions and with no legal restrictions and limitations stemming for example from International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), or equivalent instruments applicable in non-EU jurisdictions. Additionally, beneficiaries that intend to transfer ownership or grant an exclusive licence must formally notify the granting authority (i.e. DG-DEFIS and HaDEA) before the intended transfer or licensing takes place and the granting authority may up to four years after the end of the action object to a transfer of ownership or the exclusive licensing of results.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not relevant.

## **HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-74: Space Critical EEE Components for EU non-dependence – Advanced Packages and Memories**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 2.50 and 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 6.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The page limit of the application is 80 pages.</p>
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security, namely avoiding a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to build on its strengths and to carefully assess and address strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States and the following associated countries: Norway and Iceland. Proposals including entities established in countries outside the scope specified in the call/topic/action will be ineligible.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication</p>

	<p>networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.<sup>212</sup></p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	<p>Activities are expected to achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project. Activities may start at TRL 3 for what concerns advanced packages while TRL 5 for what concerns memories. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector.</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>To ensure a balanced portfolio covering all the development areas described in the scope section, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to one proposal that is the highest ranked within each development area, provided that the applications attain all thresholds</p>

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

- Reinforcing EU strategic autonomy by reducing non-EU dependencies on critical space EEE components and related technologies across their entire supply chain;
- Providing unrestricted access to critical space EEE components and related technologies relevant for EU space missions;
- Developing or regaining capacity to operate independently in space by developing resilient space EEE components and related technologies supply chains, relying on EU supply chains and/or trustable and reliable supply chains not affected by non-EU export restrictions;

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The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.



- Enhancing competitiveness by developing products and capabilities reaching equivalent or superior performance level than those from outside the EU and compete at worldwide level;
- Opening new opportunities for manufacturers by reducing dependency on non-EU export restricted technologies.

Scope: Unrestricted access to state-of-art space EEE components and related technologies is a pre-requisite for the EU space industry responding to EU space missions. However, especially for some families of components, the available solutions in EU do not meet the current high-performance space requirements. Currently, alternative products sourced from outside EU, are either affected by non-EU export control, that limits its use, or present challenges in terms of trustable supply chains for the implementation of EU space missions with a security dimension.

Within the frame of this topic, it is expected to finance and implement development projects aiming at maturing critical space EEE components with the final goal of lowering the dependency from outside EU. This will be done by establishing a long-term sustainable supply chain for supporting EU strategic autonomy in the space sector. The selection of the supply chains shall reflect this objective. Therefore, the supply chain shall preferably be built fully based in EU and when this can only be achieved partially (i.e. because of lack of current EU capabilities for unrestricted advanced semiconductor processes or advanced materials that cannot be developed within the project), services procured from outside EU shall nevertheless ensure that the overall supply chain will remain trustable and not affected by non-EU export control. The latest scenario is subject to the approval of the granting authority.

Below, the list of space EEE components and related technologies relevant for this Call. It has been identified based on needs related to strategic institutional space programs, inputs from European stakeholders and the EU Observatory of Critical Technologies:

- Advanced packages – Organic substrate for very high, fine pitch [Target final TRL 6-7]
- MRAM Memories [Target final TRL 7]

Additional context information and technical requirements are provided in the Technical Requirements Guidance document published on the Funding & Tenders Portal outlining all relevant information for each of the above-mentioned development lines.

A proposal should address only one technology area and clearly identify the area being addressed.

Space is a low volume market affected by a dynamic industrial landscape compared to the terrestrial market therefore, technological spin in and/or bilateral collaborations should be enhanced between European non-space and space industries. Furthermore, proposed activities should be complementary to relevant national and/or other activities at European level. Complementary activities should be clearly identified, described and the proposal should report how the complementarity is ensured.

To achieve the non-dependence objective, applicants are expected to include a dedicated proposal's paragraph covering:

- The description of the technology and/or technology processes and high-level breakdown of the space EEE component supply chain to be used. Applicants should demonstrate that the supply chain and final product are free of any legal export restrictions or limitations, such as those established in the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) or equivalent instruments applicable in other non-EU jurisdictions. Applicants shall also report, in a dedicated subsection, if and which part of the supply chain is affected by non-EU export controls such as the Export Administration regulation (EAR) i.e. EAR99.
- The description of the suitable technology development process that has been identified and set up within the consortium for avoiding export restrictions of non-EU states and assess vulnerabilities of the supply chain.

Proposal covering space EEE components and related technology developments that are targeting a final TRL equal or higher than 5, shall include a list of proposed applicable standards (e.g. EN, ECSS, ESCC, MIL, JEDEC,...) that are considered relevant for implementing a formal space evaluation and/or qualification. Additionally, projects that aim at a formal space qualification shall deliver the full data pack planned to be submitted to the qualification authority. This deliverable shall be marked sensitive and it shall be shared with the granting authority (i.e. DG-DEFIS and HaDEA). Products that will successfully complete the space evaluation/qualification either within the EU-COM activity or, as a consecutive follow up, shall inform DG-DEFIS and engrave on the package (if present) the EU flag.

The proposal must include specific tasks as part of the work plan and related dedicated confidential deliverables to be provided within 6 months from the start of the project to the relevant Commission DG and Executive Agency (i.e. DG-DEFIS and HaDEA), with the objective of:

- Analysing and describing, **in detail**, the full supply chain, each entity and its role in the supply chain, level of criticality and, if relevant, identify dependencies from outside EU;
- Describing the industrial technical roadmap and a business plan for commercialization with accurate understanding of applications needs, space mission insertion, including time to market indication, of the developed product.
- Reporting the list of relevant non-EU export control with extra territorial applicability for the specific technology/product under development, independently from the supply chain established for the EU-COM project.
- Undertaking a comprehensive literature review of the relevant technology/product reporting the state-of-the-art and highlighting potential gaps between current EU solutions and competition from outside EU.

Unless otherwise agreed with the granting authority before the grant agreement, beneficiaries must ensure that none of the entities that participate as affiliated entities, associated partners or subcontractors are established in countries which are not eligible countries or target countries set out in the call conditions.

It is recalled to the applicants that all provisions reported by the Model Grant Agreements, related to topics with restricted eligibility conditions, are applied. For example, under this light, the consortiums shall ensure that for a period up to 4 years after the end of the action, supply and availability of the products and/or processes developed and/or qualified within the project (consortium as whole or individual beneficiaries) shall be given to any entity in EU, at fair and reasonable market prices, conditions and with no legal restrictions and limitations stemming for example from International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), or equivalent instruments applicable in non-EU jurisdictions. Additionally, beneficiaries that intend to transfer ownership or grant an exclusive licence must formally notify the granting authority (i.e. DG-DEFIS and HaDEA) before the intended transfer or licensing takes place and the granting authority may up to four years after the end of the action object to a transfer of ownership or the exclusive licensing of results.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not relevant.

## **Heading 9 – Boosting Space through international cooperation**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-81: EU-Japan cooperation on the exploitation of Quantum Space Gravimetry data**

<b>Call: SPACE-HADEA</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 0.45 and 0.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 0.50 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply: Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply: In order to achieve</p>

	<p>the expected outcome of the action, the consortium must include at least one legal entity established in Japan.</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 3 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector. Activities may start at any TRL.
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>213</sup>.</p>

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

- Support the EU space policy and the EU green deal by preparing the grounds for an innovative Quantum Space Gravimetry (QSG) mission.
- Foster EU-Japan cooperation in the field of quantum sensing from space.
- Allow scientists from EU and Japan to prepare for the exploitation of QSG mission data.

Scope: The development of quantum sensing technology brings several promises and expectations, in terms of sensor performances and stability. However, in order to best exploit quantum sensors, it is critical to prepare the scientific community to use the data generated by such sensors, develop new or tailor existing processing algorithms, and initiate and develop new applications based on this enhanced data.

The objective of this call is to prepare the grounds for the exploitation of Quantum Space Gravimetry mission data and foster the cooperation between the EU and Japan scientific

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<sup>213</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

communities on the topic. Effective QSG data exploitation requires research and dissemination activities to demonstrate the benefits of space-borne gravity field data and involve the relevant user institutions at early stage. To achieve this objective, one proposal will be selected. The proposal will identify Earth science fields relying on space gravity data exploitation and of mutual EU-Japan interest and will propose innovative algorithmic solutions highlighting the benefits of quantum space gravimetry. The proposal will discuss the expected QSG mission performance.

Horizon Europe will fund EU scientists only. Japan scientists will fund their own activities, expected to be at the same level as the EU contribution.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

### **Heading 10 – Boosting Space through training and education activities**

For a description of topics related to training and education activities please refer to “Public Procurement” in the section “Other Actions” of this work programme.

### **Heading 11 – Boosting Space through IOD/IOV opportunities**

For a description of topics related to the IOD & IOV opportunities, please refer to please refer to "Indirectly managed actions by ESA" in the section "Other Actions" of this work programme.

### **Heading 12 – Boosting Space through support to entrepreneurship**

For a description of topics related to Cassini Entrepreneurship, please refer to “Public Procurement” in the section “Other Actions” of this work programme

## **Destination 6: Digital and industrial technologies driving human-centric innovation**

New ways of working, assisted by technologies for physical or cognitive augmentation (exoskeletons, digital twins, collaborative AI, virtual and extended reality) will increase efficiency, safety and quality of work, provided they are trustworthy, safe and reliable, as well as human-centric and free from gender, racial and other social biases by design. Within the dynamic context of flexible organisation and process flows, workers will have to be empowered to co-create their new forms of working and collaboration within and across organisations, through participation, social innovation or living labs, where social economy actors and local grassroots initiatives are of particular importance. New job profiles and skills will emerge, often requiring digital competence, in addition to social and green skills (e.g. awareness of impact, circularity options). Continuous learning, through formal training, on-the-job learning or being immersed in virtual worlds, combined with appropriate certification and reward mechanisms can boost the attractiveness of careers in many sectors, including manufacturing. A new dynamic, in the spirit of Industry 5.0, will be brought to the workplace through better human interaction with production technologies, open innovation, supporting young professionals' innovations in e.g. manufacturing, as well as participation of new actors, such as fablabs. Digital environments and virtual worlds will enable new forms of collaboration in generating new product and process ideas, assisted by digital twins and AI, in an inclusive, trustworthy and ethical fashion.

Just like today's internet, the future internet will drive industrial, social and cultural innovation. Destination 6 will develop technologies for an inclusive, gender-equal, trustworthy and humancentric internet. This will build on a more resilient, sustainable, and decentralised architecture, empower end-users with more control over their data and their digital identity, and enable new social and business models that respect European values. The destination will also spearhead the use of virtual worlds and digital twins where they can make a real difference. Industrial virtual worlds could increase productivity, improve working conditions and access to work, and address and anticipate skills gaps for highly complex products/services or for safety-critical operations. Smart communities and 'citiverses' can empower public authorities and people to fulfil their aspirations. To reach the ambitious goal of achieving trustworthy AI, 'compliant by design' with the AI Act – challenges such as accuracy, robustness, transparency and efficiency have to be addressed, along eliminating biases in data entry to assure fairness in light of individual differences, e.g. in gender or age, and intersectional diversity. Increasing the cognitive level of AI systems (like from combining data-driven and symbolic learning) is crucial for their wider uptake and acceptance. Smart 'technology-for-trust' (e.g. blockchain for identity and transaction tracking, AI to counter biases, deep-fake recognition, fact checking) will also have a role. The Cluster will focus particularly on generative AI (addressing algorithms, data and computational resources), foundational models and language technologies to gain strategic autonomy in this area. This is expected to trigger a whole range of new applications in entertainment, education and commerce, starting with assisted and virtual content production, and on demand synthetic media. Beyond these, the possibilities in industrial settings (e.g. robotics, training, process planning, quality assurance), in public services and public administrations are largely

untapped. Involvement of social sciences and humanities will help bring benefits and respect for European values. Specific measures are needed to allow start-ups and smaller companies to use and benefit from AI, data (including by enabling access to the high-performance computing power needed), photonics and robotics, and to play an active part in developing the next generation of smart technologies within a diverse and open European innovation ecosystem. Similarly, the responsible use of AI in science, research and engineering is going to be key for keeping up the scientific and technological global competitiveness of the EU. These elements will also contribute to the EU's Apply AI Strategy, a comprehensive approach aimed at establishing Europe as a global leader in the development and adoption of AI, by fostering a vibrant AI ecosystem and making Europe a hub for AI innovation and growth, where world-class AI models are developed and integrated into strategic sectors. This initiative is designed to drive innovation, economic growth, and competitiveness, while ensuring that the benefits of AI are shared by all. The topics related to Generative AI included in this destination will support the implementation of the GenAI4EU initiative included in the AI Innovation Package of 24 January 2024, and constitute an integral part of the broader Apply AI strategy, aiming to create a cohesive and coordinated approach to AI development and adoption, one that promotes European excellence and leadership in this critical field. A well-functioning European ecosystem of digital commons, based on open technologies and driven by European values, and a thriving culture of collaboration and social innovation are essential for ensuring sovereignty, trust and user empowerment. New software engineering techniques are needed that are applicable from core to edge and across the entire software stack to build the open distributed systems that the cluster envisages. AI-driven as well as low-code methodologies will help address shortages of digital skills, increase productivity and allow for point-of-use configuration and personalisation.

This destination is structured around the following headings:

### **Virtual Worlds**

The objective of this heading is to gain industrial leadership in Virtual Worlds technology at large (eg. eXtended Reality technologies and immersive environments), while ensuring the European values of privacy, ethics and inclusiveness. It also aims at advancing immersive virtual experiences, supporting a user-centered Web 4.0, and building a sustainable digital ecosystem within Europe. The efforts will notably focus on advancing immersive experiences, enhancing virtual world technologies, and support the launch of the new European Partnership on Virtual Worlds that will drive innovation, access resources, and foster industry collaboration across the virtual worlds' value chain.

### **AI-GenAI / Data / Robotics**

The GenAI4EU HUB aims to build a vibrant European GenAI ecosystem by fostering collaboration, visibility, and innovation across strategic sectors. This initiative supports the European Commission's AI Office in creating a trustworthy AI ecosystem that maximizes societal and economic benefits. It will coordinate efforts among stakeholders—ranging from local GenAI communities and startups to large industries—enhancing the EU's GenAI impact and visibility. Additionally, it will monitor the EU GenAI landscape, assess market needs, and

disseminate findings to foster a cohesive and innovative GenAI environment. The HUB also aligns with European partnerships like ADRA, ensuring integration with existing initiatives and contributing to the EU's leadership in AI and GenAI advancements.

### **Standardisation and Knowledge Valorisation**

Linked to the importance of deploying the results of research and innovation in the Union, in order to achieve economic, environmental and social outcomes, a number of topics in this Work Programme will support essential efforts in knowledge valorisation and standardisation; and in improving access to technology infrastructures.

### **International Cooperation**

The proposed international coordination and support actions are aligned with the Commission's international priorities. They will help build strong international digital partnerships and promote a human-centred digital agenda. International cooperation will further a level playing field and reciprocity while delivering new solutions to digital challenges. Through evidence-based advice and joint actions with leading semiconductor nations like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, the USA, Canada, and India, the aim is to bolster Europe's role in the global semiconductor value chain. This includes guiding the European Commission on research collaborations and policy measures while providing factual insights into emerging technologies and global supply chains. In parallel, proposed actions will focus on strengthening international cooperation in the semiconductor sector and advancing Generative AI (GenAI) initiatives in Africa. The aim would be to empower African societies, particularly rural communities and women, by equipping local technology companies with the tools to leverage GenAI for innovative solutions in key areas, thereby unlocking its potential for social and economic development in Africa.

### **Virtual Worlds**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-14: Core technologies for virtual worlds (RIA) (Virtual Worlds and Photonics Partnerships)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 5.00 and 6.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 43.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions



<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 3 and achieve TRL 5 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:  To ensure a balanced portfolio covering the two areas described, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to two proposals that are the highest ranked within each of the two areas described, provided that the applications attain all thresholds.

Expected Outcome: Proposals are expected to contribute to developing core technologies for Virtual Worlds, with a focus on better, more realistic and more performant interaction and immersion, at application and components levels. The following outcomes are expected:

- Area A: Better and more realistic immersion through multimodal interaction. Project results are expected to contribute to the following expected outcome:
  - Improvement of the multimodal immersion experience combining eXtended Reality with advanced and innovative technologies.
- Area B: Innovative photonics technologies for projection, sensing and perception in virtual worlds. Project results are expected to contribute to the following expected outcome:
  - Improved performance of microdisplays or sensing devices serving Virtual Worlds by using innovative Optics and Photonics technologies.

Proposals are expected to focus on either Area A or Area B. The area should be clearly identified within the proposal. Special attention will be given to proposals (whether Area A or Area B) including transdisciplinary research in order to deliver and enhance uptake of suitable, accurate, ethical and safe solutions.

Proposed applications should aim at increasing awareness, acceptance and adoption of virtual worlds applications across sectors.

Scope: Virtual worlds will impact the way people live, work, create and share content, the way public administrations interact with citizens as well as the way businesses operate, innovate, produce and interact with customers.

Multimodal interaction and immersion are key dimensions of Virtual Worlds and will be supported by innovative optics and photonics technologies to achieve the full potential of Virtual Worlds core technologies.

A broader adoption of Virtual Worlds will need better and more realistic immersion and interaction, mixing modalities, sensors and actuators for an ever-improved user experience: touch, smell, haptics, etc will be better stimulated, bringing users closer to real-world sensations, serving Virtual Worlds.

Many challenges remain to be addressed to realize optics and photonics technical solutions that offer high-performance, excellent visual quality, high-quality user experience, and sustainable services and devices, for head-mounted displays (HMD), autostereoscopic displays or sensing devices.

Coupled with display and sensing technologies, algorithms and metrics should be considered to exploit the underlying light (transportation) models given the utilized modality and address e.g. scene representation, content generation, compression, transmission, content reconstruction, content-to-display adaptation, or rendering. Moreover, the quality of integration, both from a user and technological perspective, will be essential for a broad adoption of Virtual Worlds.

The Area A proposals under this topic should develop and demonstrate novel applications for Virtual Worlds that combine several modalities and aim to provide seamless and more realistic immersive interactions. Proposals should investigate novel scientific approaches or push the limit of existing ones to improve the synchronization and integration of the different modalities.

Proposals should focus on an enhanced use of multimodal technologies, integrating at least two modalities within an extended reality application. Modalities include haptics and force-feedback, vision, touch, smell, speech, etc.

The Area B proposals should address the development and integration of advanced innovative and high-performance Optics and Photonics technologies for display and sensing devices serving Virtual Worlds.

- For displays further improve current high-end microdisplays regarding power consumption (<1 mW), device efficiency, resolution (8K and beyond, pixel densities > 10kppi), high dynamic range (HDR), colour gamut, contrast and refresh rate holding the promise for truly immersive experiences;
- For sensing devices improve accuracy in diverse lighting conditions and with different eye physiologies.

Special attention should be given to the design and fabrication of suited waveguide optics, holographic elements, diffractive optics, reflective light guides, freeform optics (including micro-optics), or meta-surfaces with optimal optical properties and behaviour; to support the required field of view (FoV), to be lightweight and safe for the user, and provide excellent colour uniformity and high brightness efficiency; to satisfy the use case requirements for both professional use and mass adoption, i.e., be scalable to large volumes and cost-effective; to integrate targeted systems seamlessly into mixed-reality devices without increasing bulk or reducing comfort.

For both Area A and Area B proposals, the quality of integration, both from a user and technological perspective, will be essential for a broad adoption of Virtual Worlds. The proposals should include a focus on human perception and experience, from subjective, objective, and functional perspectives, and take into account EU values such as inclusivity, privacy, security and safety of users and the protection of their personal data, as well as diversity. Solutions should guarantee the privacy and rights of individuals and companies and ensure secure and trustworthy interactions to deliver and enhance uptake of suitable, accurate, ethical and safe solutions.

The Consortium should pay attention to developing solutions that are reliable, robust and interoperable. Proposals should leverage existing open standards and technologies in the domain of eXtended Reality, while contributing to ongoing standardisation work. Applications should be tested and anchored in real world environments and aimed at least one application domain.

We consider that proposals with an overall duration of typically 36 months would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other durations.

Proposals should involve the effective contribution of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) disciplines and SSH experts, in order to produce meaningful and significant effects enhancing the societal impact of the related research activities.

This topic is implemented through a joint effort from the co-programmed European Partnership for Virtual Worlds and the Photonics Partnership and all proposals are expected to allocate tasks for cohesion activities with both partnerships, including the CSA HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-17: Specific support for the Virtual Worlds Partnership and the Web 4.0 initiative.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-15: GenAI4EU: Generative AI for Virtual Worlds: Advanced technologies for better performance and hyper personalised and immersive experience (IA) (AI/Data/Robotics & Virtual Worlds Partnerships)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 4.00 and 5.00 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 20.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions

<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway and the following additional associated countries: Canada, Israel, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.<sup>214</sup></p>
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 4 and achieve TRL 6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.

Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to at least one of the following expected outcomes:

- Realistic, creative and innovative characters, user-tailored artefacts, and Virtual Worlds for a better immersion and significantly improved user experience.

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The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

- Smart digital assistants and 3D chatbots for a safe and inclusive navigation.

Scope: Generative AI, at the edge and integrated in devices, will bring better performance, a more personalised and a more immersive experience for an inclusive and wider adoption of Virtual Worlds. Small and frugal AI models would enable faster inference contributing to lower latency while improving security and privacy by processing data closer to the user, preserving EU Values. Smart digital assistants will accompany users throughout their journey within Virtual Worlds, bringing new innovative communication modalities, advancing collaborative intelligence and decision-making AI capabilities.

Innovation actions proposals are expected to address:

**Generative AI – Realistic and innovative Virtual Worlds for a better immersion:**

Proposals should use Generative AI to build on the users' expectations to create either safe and inclusive virtual spaces, realistic environments, or creative and beyond reality ones. They should develop dynamic Storytelling and scenarios to enable creative content that is personalised leading to unique experiences for the users or shared with other users. They should also use AI to enable generation of personalised avatars aiming to provide seamless and more realistic immersive interaction.

**Generative AI – Smart digital assistance for a safe and inclusive navigation in Virtual Worlds:**

Proposals should develop smart people-centered and accessible digital assistants and 3D chatbots (AI-enhanced communicating 3D avatars), to for example, enhance training and education, remove language barriers or language disorders through instant translation, including sign languages, remove barriers to persons with disabilities, offer sentiment analysis and behavioural decision support systems, enable users to adapt to various interlocutors from various cultures, languages and backgrounds, contributing to navigate in inclusive and safe Virtual Worlds, while offering users new adapted learning modalities. When relevant, proposals can capitalise on latest developments in generative AI, to bring step change in explainable collaborative intelligence and decision-making capabilities by dedicated specific research.

We consider that proposals with an overall duration of typically 36 months would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other durations.

Proposals should involve the effective contribution of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) disciplines and SSH experts, in order to produce meaningful and significant effects enhancing the societal impact of the related research activities.

This topic is implemented as a joint effort between the co-programmed European Partnership for Virtual Worlds and the co-programmed European Partnership on AI, data and robotics (ADRA), and all proposals are expected to allocate tasks for cohesion activities with both partnerships, including the CSA HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-17: Specific support for

the Virtual Worlds Partnership and the Web 4.0 initiative and the CSA HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-18: GenAI4EU central Hub.

When possible, proposals should build on and reuse public results from relevant previous funded actions. Communicable results should be shared with the European R&D community through the AI-on-demand platform, and if necessary, other relevant digital resource platforms to bolster the European AI, Data, and Robotics ecosystem by disseminating results and best practices.

Proposals should also build on or seek collaboration with existing projects and develop synergies and complementarities with other relevant International, European, national or regional initiatives.

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-16: Drive the evolution of the internet towards open and interoperable Web 4.0 and Virtual Worlds: building blocks in priority areas (RIA) (Virtual Worlds Partnership)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.00 and 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 14.50 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.
<i>Procedure</i>	The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:  To ensure a balanced portfolio covering all the areas described in the scope, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to one application that is the highest ranked within each area, provided that the applications attain all thresholds.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:  Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties. The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. The

	<p>maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 150 000. This is justified by the possibility for a third party to participate in several calls during the full duration of the pilot.</p> <p>A maximum of 15% of the total requested EU contribution may be allocated to financial support to third parties, selected through open calls.</p>
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Expected Outcome: Project results are expected to contribute to the following expected outcomes:

- An early demonstration of the future Web 4.0 architectural framework (including protocols and standards) made up of key Open Source internet building blocks in priority areas: identity, software supply chain, open hardware, decentralised solutions & virtual worlds.
- The emergence of open and interoperable Web 4.0 and Virtual Worlds supported by EU based internet ecosystems centred on EU values and regulatory framework with high socio-economic impact, through the application of digital commons technologies and other Open Source solutions and open standards in several use cases.
- Supporting the transition from today's internet towards Web 4.0 where end-users have access to a more personalised and interactive experience through more collaborative, decentralised and user-centred approaches. Special attention will have to be given to security, scalability, and accessibility issues.
- New business opportunities and the emergence of new business and sustainability models based on Open Source.

Scope: The aim of this topic is to advance the evolution of the internet towards open and interoperable Web 4.0 enabling Virtual Worlds, ensuring seamless user experience navigating across platforms by increasing the take up of digital commons technologies and other Open Source solutions in Europe. The action will thus leverage the strong and active community of European Open Source innovators that can contribute to relevant digital commons to deliver on key features of virtual worlds.

This topic will support early demonstrations for Web 4.0 and its architectural framework, through the use of key building blocks where there is sufficient level of maturity and critical mass of commons contributors (such as in the context of the Next Generation Internet initiative).

The envisaged Web 4.0 shall be powered by open and decentralised technologies enabling interoperability between platforms and networks and freedom of choice for the users. It should be developed through Open Source / digital commons and tackle security, scalability and sustainability at the core of the technological developments.

Applicants should define the mechanisms for contributing to and aligning with the strategic roadmap for research and innovation and the architectural Framework as it becomes available from the specific separate support action HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-17: Specific support for the Virtual Worlds Partnership and the Web 4.0 initiative (CSA).

Applicants should devise appropriate mechanisms for cooperating with the other projects under this action to ensure that they work in a coherent way towards the vision of an open, interoperable Web 4.0

At least one proposal in each of the area defined below will be selected. Proposals should clearly identify the area they are addressing.

### **Area 1: Identity management**

Proposals will support and facilitate the deployment and adoption of the EU Digital Identity Wallet with the testing, community development and packaging of Open Source solutions for the issuance and verification of electronic attestations and the provision of eIDAS trust services. The aim is to deliver a diversity of Open Source digital solutions and services in accordance with the European digital rights and principles, empowering citizens with the freedom of choice from many secure digital identity solutions that are aligned with the EU regulations. Additionally, to foster and support enterprises to harness the benefits of the EUDI wallet and the eIDAS trust services. Examples may include the implementation of EUDI wallets for Open Source operating systems, like Linux (for enterprise servers), cloud-based wallets, laptop-based wallets, Open Source Operating System for mobile devices. Furthermore, technical solutions and services for secure and anonymous digital payments and money transfers between people, solutions for the implementation for attestation issuers and verifiers and the eIDAS trust services with a focus on the development of Open Source stacks for issuers and relying parties (for issuing and verifying electronic attestations), especially as/for cloud services. When relevant, proposals may address the validation of physical documents, either IDs or other types of identity-related documents, such as breeder documents.

### **Area 2: Software Supply Chain security**

Trusted frameworks are essential to keep the software supply chain secure, as demonstrated by the recent attack on XZ Utils. The aim is to strengthen the security of the software supply chain by leveraging related NGI building blocks and package solutions for example for traceability of code, collaborative trust models among contributors and users, detection of anomalous behaviour, construction of software bill of material. Use cases include developers and users of codes, DevSecOps team, corporate IT, Open Source projects, industry and/or parties that need to be compliant with the Cyber Resilience Act.

### **Area 3: Open Hardware**

Open Hardware is key for supporting trust and sovereignty as it allows users to inspect, modify, and implement freely the designs. The aim is to support the uptake of Open Hardware chips and tools through prototyping, productization and integration in real life cases.



Proposals can address several re-usable tools and components such as controllers, processors, or network chips. Use cases include consumer devices for immersive virtual worlds, industry applications, consumer devices, smart cities.

#### **Area 4: Alternative solutions to centralised platforms**

As EU legislation places obligations on platforms, particularly focusing on gatekeepers, it is important to prioritize nurturing and enriching credible alternatives. Proposals in this area could cover integrating, testing and operation of Open Source decentralised solutions offering credible alternatives to users supporting the emergence of Web 4.0 and Virtual Worlds experience. Examples include instant messaging, application stores, or productivity groupware that should showcase virtual worlds interoperability, trust, resilience, and scalability. The focus should be made on decentralised and federated solutions based on interoperability requirements and on open standards to ensure to not only meet regulatory demands but also foster a more open, diverse, resilient, and competitive digital ecosystem.

#### **Area 5: Web 4.0 demonstration for Virtual Worlds**

Web 4.0 technologies enabling interoperability and transferability across platforms are crucial to ensure various players to contribute to virtual worlds as opposed to a mono-provider environment. This area will make use of existing Open Source building blocks for ensuring trust, interoperation, interconnection, transaction (including tokens), and resource access in Virtual Worlds applications and services. Proposals will aim at integrating the various building blocks, with a special focus on interoperability and will demonstrate seamless interactions (for example when browsing and searching across multiple providers) in one or two selected scenarios.

For all areas, proposals should innovate beyond the state-of-the-art and could include development, integration, testing, deployment, uptake, and operations activities.

Proposals should encourage, when relevant, open access to data, standardisation activities, as well as an IPR regime and sustainability model ensuring lasting impact and reusability of results.

The Commission considers that proposals with an overall duration of typically 24 to 36 months would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other durations.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on Virtual Worlds.

#### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-17: Specific support for the Virtual Worlds Partnership and the Web 4.0 initiative (CSA) (Virtual Worlds Partnership)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>
<b>Specific conditions</b>

<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 2.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2.50 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.</p>

Expected Outcome: The launch of the co-programmed new European Partnership for Virtual Worlds will help develop and promote a thriving industrial and end-user ecosystem in the EU, covering all the aspects of the virtual worlds value chain. It will also actively engage with people and society at large and provide access to a broader range of resources, including funding, expertise and technology.

This CSA should be prepared, managed and coordinated by the key stakeholders in this field. Project results are expected to contribute to the following expected outcomes:

1. The delivery of a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) for Virtual Worlds in Europe, for useful, open, interoperable, inclusive, sustainable and trustworthy virtual worlds systems and applications, ensuring Virtual worlds reflect EU values and principles.
2. The delivery of a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) for Web 4.0 in Europe leading to an inclusive, trustworthy, interoperable, and human-centric Web 4.0 leveraging open-source commons building blocks enabling new social and sustainability models that respect European values.
3. Established and running European Virtual Worlds Partnership supporting the European Virtual Worlds and Web 4.0 community.
4. A strong and competitive ecosystem, with European companies playing a leading role in the adoption and acceptance, and in the development and deployment of Virtual Worlds technologies.
5. Reinforced links among initiatives in virtual worlds in Horizon Europe, Digital Europe Programme, and other programmes at EU, national and regional levels.
6. Widespread awareness and outreach programmes

7. Increased adoption of virtual worlds that are open, accessible and inclusive, interdisciplinary, safe and respect ethical values and European legal framework, including regarding privacy, security in all Member States and Associated Countries
8. Standardisation methods for virtual worlds technologies and in support of the EU regulatory framework.

Scope: The selected proposal should provide specific support for the coming European Virtual Worlds Partnership.

The selected proposal should:

- Support to the Virtual Worlds Partnership to develop a strong and inclusive network by strengthening the links and promoting collaboration among academia, industry, public actors and end-users, including the major industrial European sectors and all relevant stakeholders, to guarantee strong coordinated efforts toward trustworthy and human-centric virtual worlds for the economy and society. The network will also include national representatives, to link to national programmes and to foster synergies and coordination between the various European, national, public and private initiatives. Such coordination of efforts in research, innovation and expertise will be important for Europe's leadership in virtual worlds. The objective is to support the community in defining and implementing the Virtual Worlds strategy for research, innovation, and deployment, and support the Partnership in its coordination and support of the community in non-R&D tasks as well.
- Support the development and implementation of a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for Virtual Worlds (SRIA).
- Support the development of a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) for Web 4.0 in Europe and propose an implementation agenda of a European Web 4.0 strategy for research and innovation by defining the trajectories to drive the evolution of the internet towards Web 4.0. This should include the architectural framework (including standards and protocols) and principles, identifying its main building blocks. The implementation strategy should also identify the technology areas where Web 4.0 and Virtual Worlds can benefit from joint developments, reuse of technologies or exchanges.
- Support the emergence of a thriving European ecosystem for Web 4.0 where developers, research teams, industry and startups can boost technological capabilities, accelerate uptake of innovative solutions, and foster a supportive business environment. This community is expected to be involved in the definition of the architectural framework, its main building blocks and the implementation roadmap.
- Support and encourage the adoption of Virtual Worlds in all Member States and Associated Countries, with particular emphasis on geographical aspect and across the value chain.

- Develop and implement outreach programmes aiming at better understanding and awareness of Virtual Worlds including acceptability and trustworthiness, informing about potentialities of Virtual Worlds but also ensuring that public expectations are realistic to avoid backlash in the adoption. Such activities should target in particular the business community, with a particular focus on SMEs, as well as public administrators, citizens and civil society at large.
- Identify ethical, legal, societal and economic aspects of virtual worlds and actions on how to tackle possible issues. Particular attention should be paid to gender, racial, and other biases as well as mitigation measures.
- Support to standardisation in view of boosting virtual worlds industry, creating, and guaranteeing trustworthy and ethical Virtual Worlds, by bringing stakeholders together and, when needed, organise European representation in existing or new standardisation working groups in support of the Commission regulatory framework.

This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on Virtual Worlds and the initiative on Web 4.0.

Proposals are encouraged to build on, or seek collaboration with, existing projects and develop synergies and ensure complementarities with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives and funding programmes relevant for Web 4.0 and Virtual Worlds in Horizon Europe, Digital Europe Programme (such as the Common European Data spaces or the Digital Twins) and other programmes (European Innovation Council, Digital Innovation Hubs, European Digital Innovation Hubs, European Digital Infrastructure Consortia, the VR/AR Industrial Coalition, etc). Such synergies and complementarities should be developed through efficient mechanisms (e.g. joint task forces), organisation of joint events gathering projects, etc.

In particular links are encouraged with:

- HORIZON-CL4-2023-HUMAN-01-21: Next Generation eXtended Reality (RIA)
- HORIZON-CL4-2023-HUMAN-01-22: eXtended Reality for Industry 5.0 (IA)
- HORIZON-CL4-2023-HUMAN-01-23: Supporting the emergence of an open human-centric Metaverse (CSA)” In view of sharing knowledge and developing synergies, proposals are also encouraged to coordinate, establish links and ensure complementarities with relevant initiatives in this Work Programme, especially:
- HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-11: Open Internet Stack: development of technological commons/open-source 3C building blocks (RIA)
- HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-DATA-08: Large-scale pilots for supply end-to-end infrastructures integrating device, network computing and communication capabilities for Telco Edge Cloud deployments, as a basis for Connected Collaborative Computing Networks (3C networks) (RIA)

- HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-14: Core technologies for virtual worlds (RIA) (Virtual Worlds and Photonics Partnerships)
- HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-15: GenAI4EU: Generative AI for Virtual Worlds: Advanced technologies for better performance and hyper personalised and immersive experience (IA) (AI/Data/Robotics & Virtual Worlds Partnerships)
- HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-16: Drive the evolution of the internet towards open and interoperable Web 4.0 and Virtual Worlds: building blocks in priority areas (RIA) (Virtual Worlds Partnership)

Proposals are encouraged also to closely collaborate and build synergies and complementarities with other relevant European Partnerships (such as Data, AI and Robotics; Photonics, the European Blockchain Partnerships); Next Generation Internet (NGI) initiative, the European Flagships (such as Graphene), the EU supported digital twins initiatives (such as Destination Earth).

The Commission considers that proposals with an overall duration of typically 36 months would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other durations.

Proposals should involve the effective contribution of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) disciplines and SSH experts, in order to produce meaningful and significant effects enhancing the societal impact of the related research activities.

All proposals are expected to allocate tasks to cohesion activities with the Partnership on Virtual Worlds and funded actions related to this partnership.

#### **AI-GenAI / Data / Robotics**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-18:      GenAI4EU      central      Hub      (CSA)**  
**(AI/Data/Robotics Partnership)**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - CNECT</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 3.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions

<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway, associated countries and OECD countries.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, shall not participate in the action.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025) <sup>215</sup>.</p>

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

- Creation of the GenAI4EU HUB: developing a strong and visible GenAI4EU community, supporting the uptake of European GenAI solutions across strategic application sectors and the HE Clusters, through collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- This CSA will also support and collaborate with the European Commission's AI Office in its function to promote an innovative ecosystem of trustworthy AI, to reap the societal and economic benefits.

Scope: This horizontal Coordination and Support Action for GenAI4EU will develop a strong and visible European GenAI ecosystem of developers and users, aiming to strengthen the

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<sup>215</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

coordination, impact and visibility of the GenAI4EU initiative<sup>216</sup> across diverse sectors. This CSA should be prepared, managed and coordinated by the key stakeholders in this field, in particular those active in developing local GenAI communities, tech transfer, attracting investment, and making the European GenAI stakeholders visible.

Serving as a hub for collaboration, this project seeks to streamline efforts in developing high-impact GenAI-based applications while fostering cooperation among various GenAI stakeholders, from startups, academia and large user industries, including large IT suppliers and integrators.

It will support all the Horizon Europe Pillar 2 clusters, in addressing their policy needs through the implementation of the GenAI4EU initiative, in particular in supporting mechanisms to pool efficiently and make sufficient data of high quality available (in particular from the European Data Spaces, but exploiting other sources of data as appropriate), and facilitate collaboration with the AI Factories.

The proposed project is expected to involve close collaboration and coordination among the projects implementing GenAI4EU, developing a strong community. It should also help them to maximise their impact and increase their visibility.

It should also foster the uptake in all strategic application sectors, namely the ones addressed in the GenAI4EU initiative, including the 14 industrial ecosystems<sup>217</sup>, in stimulating collaborations between the European developers and users.

The selected proposal will foster collaboration between the AI Factories, the Data Spaces (as well as other data providers) and the SIMPL infrastructure, in establishing mechanisms to make data available in the AI factories, in particular for the training, and possibly fine-tuning of large GenAI models, while respecting IP or privacy/GDPR of the entities/industries providing their data. This should build on relevant initiatives, such as data intermediation services, with a view of using a trusted third party to ensure no exchanges between industry competitors for instance, while defining mechanisms to access (and if needed pooling of) critical amount of data, required for the training of very large models. This will require mobilisation of industries owning large sets of data, defining with them such mechanisms acceptable to all, and implementing them through secure infrastructures, protocols, interoperability mechanisms, within the various projects implementing GenAI4EU in the various clusters.

The proposal will also support Common European Data Spaces to coordinate standard setting approaches for further data sharing and data interoperability among them or with the AI Factories.

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<sup>216</sup> <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/communication-boosting-startups-and-innovation-trustworthy-artificial-intelligence>

<sup>217</sup> The 14 strategic industrial ecosystems identified in the European Industrial strategy (Strategy - European Commission (europa.eu)) are: construction, digital industries, health, agri-food, renewables, energy intensive industries, transport and automotive, electronics, textile, aerospace and defence, cultural and creative culture industries, tourism, proximity and social economy, and retail

The selected proposal will also ensure collaboration between the GenAI4EU projects, and the relevant the AI Factories, for the computing resources, and the data spaces. Moreover, a few specific working groups among stakeholders should be established in key European industrial / application sectors (such as in Robotics / Manufacturing, Automotive, energy, pharmaceuticals, etc.). Their aim will be to bring together key stakeholders of the sector (incl. startups / SMEs and large companies) and foster discussions among them for stimulating their cooperation in developing GenAI models relevant for their sector, but also on how to address access to existing large data sets, incl. their interoperability and use for GenAI models and/or any other elements necessary for enabling an effective development and further grow of the sector's GenAI ecosystem.

The proposal will also ensure connection with the AI on Demand platform providing support for fine-tuning pre-trained models and developing innovative downstream applications, the GenAI4EU Skills, and relevant activities implemented under the EU's Digital Europe Programme, Horizon Europe Programme as well as national activities. The selected proposal is also expected to build on or seek collaboration with existing and upcoming projects and develop synergies and ensure complementarities with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives, funding programmes and platforms.

The CSA is expected to constantly monitor the way the EU GenAI ecosystem, including the AI factories, is developing. More broadly, the selected proposal will act as a global observatory for GenAI conducting a comprehensive landscape analysis of GenAI, including data on market, research, funding, patent and more broadly the state of the advancement of GenAI in the EU and worldwide. This includes an inventory of use cases, capabilities, evaluation tools and methods to assess generative AI models. The selected proposal is expected to widely disseminate this analysis at least twice a year to the stakeholders, including the EU, the Member States and Associated Countries.

It will also assess the uptake of GenAI by large European industry (including technology suppliers and user industry), and mobilise them to engage in GenAI4EU initiatives and drive the future strategy for the development and uptake of GenAI solution “made in Europe” in all strategic industries.

By identifying prioritized sectors and sharing best practices, the project aims to bridge existing gaps, connect stakeholders and foster innovation uptake.

Furthermore, the selected proposal will assess potential areas that require further R&D, including coordination with national initiatives, to ensure comprehensive coverage and collaboration. It will actively engage in networking and community animation to foster knowledge exchange and collaboration among stakeholders.

When possible, proposals should build on and reuse public results from relevant previous funded actions. Communicable results should be shared with the European R&D community through the AI-on-demand platform, and if necessary, other relevant digital resource platforms to bolster the European AI, Data, and Robotics ecosystem by disseminating results and best practices.



This topic implements the co-programmed European Partnership on AI, data and robotics (ADRA) and all proposals are expected to allocate tasks to cohesion activities with ADRA and the funded actions related to this partnership under the call CSA HORIZON-CL4-2021-HUMAN-01-02. This initiative will capitalise on these existing initiatives, complement them and ensure integration within the existing ecosystem developed by ADRA.

### **Standardisation and Knowledge Valorisation**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

#### **HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-60: Horizon Standardisation Booster (CSA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 1.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 1.50 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties. The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. The maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 60 000.</p> <p>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).<sup>218</sup>.</p>

Expected Outcome: Proposals are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Increased participation of research performers in standardisation activities by establishing a long-term, sustainable link between R&I and standardisation.

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<sup>218</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

- Increased development and adaptation of standards to meet new industrial needs, particularly in critical technology areas, driven by EU and national research.
- Increased uptake of new technologies through enhanced standardisation activities.

Scope: Standards are crucial in ensuring the safety, functionality, and interoperability of EU products. They help maintain compliance with policy and legal requirements while also enabling access to global markets when they are cutting-edge and established through international organisations. This highlights the important role that standards play in the EU's policy agenda, particularly in initiatives like the Digital Decade, the New Industrial Strategy for Europe, the Commission's EU standardisation strategy<sup>219</sup>, the Communication on Advanced Materials for Industrial Leadership<sup>220</sup> and the Communication on European Economic Security Strategy<sup>221</sup>. Future Commission actions – whether it is the implementation of legal frameworks like the AI and Data Act or the roll-out of the Commission Recommendation on critical technology areas<sup>222</sup> for the EU's economic security – will depend on standards.

To maximize the impact of R&I, early integration of standardisation, as recommended in the Code of Practice on standardisation<sup>223</sup>, is crucial for aligning innovations with policy goals and enhancing market competitiveness.

This action aims to create a full-fledged standardisation mentoring scheme, by providing expert services to European projects to valorise project results by contributing to the creation or revision of standards. The action should take into account the achievements and lessons learnt of the Horizon Standardisation Booster (HS Booster) pilot, which is running from April 2022 to March 2025. In line with the EU Standardisation Strategy, the HS Booster aims to increase the impact of European standardisation resulting from Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe projects by designing, launching, and managing a dedicated service for beneficiaries.

To further support the valorisation of project results, the full-fledged Standardisation Booster will assist beneficiaries, primarily, but not exclusively, in the technology domains identified by the Commission Recommendation on critical technology areas<sup>224</sup>, whose research results appear to lead to the revision or creation of a standard. This service will involve testing the relevance of their results for standardisation activities.

The premium service concept of the currently running Horizon Booster pilot has a proven track record of providing pertinent support. A similar, high-quality concept is fundamental for a booster successor. It is crucial that such a service increases the number of European standards, compared with the ongoing service scheme. Therefore, the HSbooster.eu platform and tools should be further developed, promoted, and utilised to reach their full potential.

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<sup>219</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0031>

<sup>220</sup> [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/0fcf06ea-c242-44a6-b2cb-daed39584996\\_en?filename=com\\_2024\\_98\\_1\\_en\\_act\\_part1.pdf](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/0fcf06ea-c242-44a6-b2cb-daed39584996_en?filename=com_2024_98_1_en_act_part1.pdf)

<sup>221</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023JC0020&qid=1687525961309>

<sup>222</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L\\_202302113](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202302113)

<sup>223</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023H0498&qid=1678171117168>

<sup>224</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L\\_202302113](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202302113)

Education and training are prerequisites for a successful and mutually beneficial relationship between R&I and standardisation. A future booster should increase the use of the existing Training Academy, continuously add new elements based on user feedback and data tracking, and be further developed and advertised to enhance usage.

Scaling and full implementation at the member state level are paramount for a booster to create significant and long-term impact. Therefore, besides ongoing and closed Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe projects, and other EU-funded projects, the Booster will be open to national publicly funded R&I projects. The service will help these beneficiaries engage with standardisation bodies and contribute primarily to the creation of standards through preparation and elaboration of standardisation activities, such as participating in focus groups, setting up new technical committees, drafting technical specifications or technical reports.

Applicants can vary widely, including standard development organisations, research and technology organisations (RTOs), universities, private companies, SMEs, industrial partners, innovation agencies and national metrology institutes. The project may benefit from being addressed by a consortium that is formed by experts in standardisation, able to support Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, and other publicly funded project beneficiaries.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-61: Standardisation landscape analyses tool (CSA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 1.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 1.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>225</sup>.</p>

<sup>225</sup> 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:

Expected Outcome:

- Provide an information tool on the standardisation landscape accessible for all actors of the R&I ecosystem which includes a search instrument for standardisation deliverables at national, European and international level;
- Improve valorisation mechanisms for ensuring the market relevance and scalability of R&I results.

Scope: Standards play a pivotal strategic role, serving as the silent foundation of our Single Market, ensuring a high-level of safety, functionality and inter-operability for EU products. They guarantee adherence to policy and legal objectives. At the same time, standards can facilitate access to global markets when they are state-of-the-art and developed within international organisations. This underscores the significant role of standards on the EU policy agenda, including initiatives such as the European Green Deal, Digital Decade, New Industrial Strategy for Europe, the Commission's EU standardisation strategy<sup>226</sup>, and the Communication European Economic Security Strategy<sup>227</sup>. Future Commission actions – whether it is the implementation of legal frameworks, like the AI and Data Act or the roll-out of the Commission Recommendation on critical technology areas for the EU's economic security – will depend on standards.

To support the valorisation of research and innovation results, it is essential to ensure that investments in R&I fully leverage the substantial benefits of standardisation for policy and legal objectives. In line with the Commission Recommendation on a Code of Practice on standardisation<sup>228</sup>, structured information on the existing standardisation landscape should be accessible for R&I actors. This is crucial as available information is fragmented, standardisation processes are often uncoordinated, and financial impacts are insufficiently understood.

Furthermore, the diverse array of standard development organisations contributes to a varied landscape, each with distinct procedures, priorities, and stakeholders. This decentralised approach often results in duplicated efforts, and difficulties in navigating the plethora of available standards. Moreover, the absence of a centralised database or repository makes it challenging for researchers to access relevant standards efficiently, hindering their ability to incorporate standardisation into their research and innovation endeavours effectively.

The overarching objective of the action is to develop a landscape analyses tool supporting all actors in the R&I ecosystem in identifying relevant existing standards. This will enable R&I actors to consider the existing standards landscape as a key state-of-the-art input when planning their R&I project activities, thereby avoiding reinventing the wheel. The tool to be developed shall include mechanisms to keep the standards up-to-date automatically as far as

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

<sup>226</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0031>

<sup>227</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023JC0020&qid=1687525961309>

<sup>228</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32023H0498&qid=1678171117168>

possible. In addition, state of the art standards give new impetus for technological developments and help R&I actors comply with existing regulatory frameworks. Efforts should be made to develop standards that align with international and European standards, as well as with industrial and commerce consortia, to reduce the number of standards and have a broader acceptance.

In order to develop such a comprehensive open-access information tool effectively benefitting a variety of R&I actors, the project should be carried out by experts representing different stakeholders covering industry, academia and standard development organisations.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-62: Artificial Intelligence for knowledge valorisation (CSA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 2.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>229</sup>.</p>

Expected Outcome: Proposals are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Swiftly valorise research results by market, society or policy making, powered by AI;
- Tackle the innovation paradox in Europe, by supporting R&I actors to valorise their research through relevant AI tools;

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<sup>229</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

- Use AI to deliver valorisation roadmaps, business plans, partnerships and guide market uptake strategies in at least 100 use cases of research-based innovative solutions addressing societal challenges.

Scope: Artificial intelligence and machine learning present enormous opportunities to use scientific knowledge and research results faster and more effectively to create value, develop new products and services and address the needs of our societies. Despite leading in many fields of scientific research, Europe falls short in innovation and valorisation performance (what is known as “the innovation paradox”). Harnessing the power of AI to guide the efforts of researchers and innovators to bring results to the market, make their research more responsive to the needs of society and provide knowledge to inform public policies, can significantly contribute to addressing the innovation paradox. From results scouting to patent drafting, the role of AI to support knowledge valorisation presents ever-growing possibilities.

One of the main reasons hampering valorisation of the knowledge generated by R&I actors in Europe is that researchers and innovators are not always aware of the valorisation opportunities of their research results and may struggle to adopt a concrete plan on how to generate value from their research.

This topic aims to support R&I actors to use AI to support the uptake of research results by market and society. This entails the identification of appropriate existing tools and instruments and the testing of AI -powered valorisation plans in at least 100 cases.

The action will provide an AI -powered valorisation toolbox, which will take into account EU policy and regulations on AI-ethics, as well as social sciences and humanities aspects, and can be used by researchers and innovators to identify the opportunities for valorisation as well as for guiding them towards market and societal uptake. This may include using AI for assessing feasibility under conditions, investigating legal frameworks that may be relevant to the uptake of the solutions, providing guidance on supporting instruments and funding mechanisms, supporting matching with investors, providing knowledge on the sector, investigating institutional and cultural aspects, citizens and consumer preferences. The use of AI may also focus on the efficient use of intellectual assets to raise awareness and guide R&I actors for the smart management of intellectual assets.

The action will also support multistakeholder collaboration for valorisation, by identifying and promoting dynamic stakeholder interaction opportunities to optimise outreach and engagement, e.g. by engaging SMEs, social enterprises, NGOs and local communities. Drawing of the testing of at least 100 cases of AI- powered valorisation from research results to the market, the action will also develop a knowledge base for insights and best practices, principles and guidance to ensure a responsible use of AI for knowledge valorisation benefiting society.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-63: Value creation pilots for scaling up innovative solutions (CSA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 2.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>230</sup>.</p>

Expected Outcome: Proposals are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Increase innovation capacity by drawing on transdisciplinary research and cross-sectoral collaboration to generate economic and societal value;
- Promote the twin transitions, by testing and preparing for scale up at least 10 valorisation pilots, combining research results in a transdisciplinary mode, building multistakeholder collaborations, promoting industry- academia co-creation and engaging with citizens for swifter and human-centric valorisation;
- Enabling more value creation to be retained in Europe, by testing research-based solutions with high potential for scale up.

Scope: Knowledge valorisation is crucial for boosting the Union's industrial competitiveness internationally, strengthening its resilience and fostering its open strategic autonomy. Effective knowledge valorisation enables the Union to create and retain economic and societal value by turning research results to new innovative solutions, benefiting society and creating prosperity for all.

<sup>230</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)



The aim of this topic is to strengthen EU capacity to respond to complex and urgent challenges through research and innovation, increase industrial and economic competitiveness and make transdisciplinary research deliver for society. This entails testing the effectiveness of at least 10 transdisciplinary valorisation pilots to “be ready” for scale up across Europe.

The trans-disciplinary and cross-sectoral scale-up pilots will use mature results from research and innovation while simultaneously unlocking untapped value-creation opportunities and promoting collaboration of many different stakeholders from the early stages. Competition among the 10 pilots may be promoted to enhance their quality and help identify the highest potential impact to the Union’s industrial competitiveness, for example through a voting - based mechanism. In the preparatory to the potential scale-up phase, the pilots will also provide new insights to the possibilities and challenges of transdisciplinary approaches to address complex challenges and to the skills, resources and tools needed. Within the scope of the topic are also targeted trainings for cross-disciplinary projects with scale-up potential, as well as other methodological tools and guidelines. This may also include best practices in harnessing the power of cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration to enhance capacity, drive innovation, and unlock new opportunities for value creation across industry, academia, and the public sector.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-64: Pilot initiatives on Technology Infrastructures (CSA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 0.50 and 1.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 5.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>231</sup>.</p>

<sup>231</sup> 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:



Expected Outcome: The projects funded under this topic will have the following expected outcomes:

- Provide evidence and understanding of the European landscape of Technology Infrastructures, including existing facilities and their services;
- Develop a sound understanding of the specific needs of industrial users for Technology Infrastructures;
- Improve availability of Technology Infrastructures facilities and strengthen the provision of services for enterprises across the EU, in particular SMEs and start-ups, with increased opportunities for testing, up-scaling and deployment of new technologies;
- Make Technology Infrastructures in Europe stronger and more resilient with improved, strategic service offer, better adapted to user needs;
- Strengthen the innovation and technology development capacity of the European industry;
- Contribute to the validation of a European approach to Technology Infrastructures, test different strategies and instruments, and their feasibility, to address availability and service gaps at EU level, as well as learn from their implementation experience.

Scope: Proposals should identify a specific technology area or industrial ecosystem in which they will implement the activities proposed for a pilot initiative. This should take into account the selection criteria for pilot actions developed in the final report of the Commission Expert Group on Technology Infrastructures<sup>232</sup> and could cover the priority areas proposed in this report.

The proposals should cover different strategic steps needed to lead to and achieve the expected outcomes, depending on the starting point for the proposed area, building on earlier analysis and consultations.<sup>233</sup>

The proposed actions should lead to a comprehensive understanding of the landscape of Technology Infrastructures, provide evidence of their benefits and added value in the area covered by the proposal, and of any specific needs to improve their availability, accessibility and impact. The actions should also identify possible barriers to addressing the identified needs.

The activities should in particular build on or carry out a detailed mapping of the available Technology Infrastructures in Europe in the pilot area covered by the proposal, and the analysis of main types of services offered and used. The actions should result in an in-depth

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

<sup>232</sup> Link to the report of the Commission Expert Group on Technology Infrastructures will be provided in due time.

<sup>233</sup> See the report from the above-mentioned Expert Group.

understanding of user needs for Technology Infrastructures in relevant industrial ecosystems as well as identify the potential gaps in Technology Infrastructures services or mismatch between supply and demand, both in terms of the types of facilities and services offered and their availability across the entire EU. This analysis should consider both the current state of play and a forward-looking perspective, as well as needs of large companies, SMEs and start-ups.

The proposed actions should include development of a strategy, roadmap or agenda with identified measures that would help overcome the existing gaps and barriers. In particular, the actions should identify measures needed to improve infrastructures service provision to industry, including their outreach strategies and pricing policies, facilitate access to these services and increase their visibility, especially across regions and countries, as well as identify potential investment priorities.

Such a strategy could include for example the specifications for new or upgrade of existing TIs, development and deployment of new TI services, developing EU-level networks or ecosystems of TIs with integrated service offers, including both technology and non-technology services (e.g. technical assistance and training services for companies in the technologies and services offered by the TIs, support to standardisation, financing, market analysis or addressing regulatory issues).

The pilot projects should develop proposals for implementation modalities of the proposed strategy, roadmap or agenda, including the part of the infrastructure operators/owners as well as suggested actions and/or support measures at the EU, national, regional level, potentially leading to the establishment of an appropriate coordination mechanism. As a basis, a mapping of already available support measures at EU and national/regional levels should be carried out, as well as identification of relevant actors needed to implement the strategy, roadmap or agenda, and the necessary financial resources, as relevant.

Successful proposals will demonstrate the relevance of the technology areas or industrial ecosystems they choose to cover for EU competitiveness and strategic autonomy as well as the need for action in these areas. They will involve all relevant stakeholders including in particular industrial partners, including SMEs and large enterprises, organisations hosting Technology Infrastructures and other infrastructures offering relevant services for industry, as well as technology, market and legal experts as needed.

Projects should build on or seek collaboration with relevant existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives, funding programmes and platforms.

**HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-65: System innovation experimentation for Industry 5.0 (IA)**

**Call: INDUSTRY**

**Specific conditions**

<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 3.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 3.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties. The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. The maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 60 000.</p> <p>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).<sup>234</sup>.</p>

Expected Outcome: Proposals are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Demonstrated successful incentives for systemic transformation towards Industry 5.0<sup>235</sup> and for skills upgrading and boosting the competitiveness of EU industries.
- Development and application of Industry 5.0 enabling conditions, processes and methods for systemic transformation, organisational learning capacities and revitalisation of industries at regional/local level.
- Demonstrate / provide evidence on the implementation of Industry 5.0 innovations for better adaptation of industries to new challenges linked to twin transition (enhanced resilience), organisational agility, and contribute to tackling the skills gap / attraction of best talent in regional industrial ecosystems

Scope: Industry 5.0 is a framework grounded in system thinking approach which aims to bolster the economic and environmental resilience of industrial ecosystems and companies and contribute to enhancing the sustainable competitiveness of EU industries.<sup>236</sup> Industry 5.0

<sup>234</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

<sup>235</sup> [Industry 5.0 - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

<sup>236</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Renda, A., Schwaag Serger, S., Tataj, D. et al., Industry 5.0, a transformative vision for Europe – Governing systemic transformations towards a sustainable industry, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/17322>

innovations such as human-centric technologies or learning organisation models contribute to tackling the new emerging challenges linked to ongoing green and digital transition such as addressing the skills gap, attracting the best talent or accelerating uptake of clean technologies.<sup>237</sup>

Proposals should elaborate on an Industry 5.0-driven methodology framework via system innovation experimentation in different industrial ecosystems in European Regional Innovation Valleys and other regions, to support deployment of Industry 5.0 innovations or methods at regional / local industrial ecosystems level:

- a) offer innovative approaches to accelerate industrial transformation at regional/local level while tackling the new emerging challenges such as skills gap or attracting the best talent.
- b) experiment to develop incentives towards longer-term industry 5.0 transformation.

The project should build on the results of the “Community of Practice on Industry 5.0”<sup>238</sup> and other Horizon Europe Industry 5.0 (or related) funded projects. Proposals should involve appropriate expertise in Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), in particular in systems thinking or complexity science and their practical implementation as part of system innovation or transformation initiatives.

The proposal should include details on processes to identify a concrete long-term transformative innovation challenge for the industrial ecosystems or actors participating, to formulate concrete objectives addressing systemic issues related to how the industrial ecosystem could boost its future competitiveness, and achieve Industry 5.0 goals, and in particular focused on attracting skilled employees, creating the conditions for learning ecosystems or learning organisations. The challenge should guide the next steps on industrial transformation processes and experimentation.

For each of the identified transformation challenge, the project should engage stakeholders in transdisciplinary research and innovation activities, including in:

- a) Identifying and testing new Industry 5.0 driven methods and measures for organisational transformation, learning organisation implementation and system innovation, to support the scaling up of Industry 5.0 and skills for competitive and future-oriented industry transformation:
  - Identifying the package of systemic innovations available to reach the set goals, including advanced technologies designed with responsible practices (human-centric, ecological, bio-inspired, biomimicry, nature-based solutions etc.), business models, new work processes, organisational models, governance or social innovations that can support Industry 5.0 transformation.

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<sup>237</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *ERA industrial technologies roadmap on human-centric research and innovation for the manufacturing sector*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/0266>

<sup>238</sup>

- Assessing skills needs and learning areas for the workforce and organisations in the industrial innovation ecosystem, in view of the identified systemic innovations.
- Identifying the incentives, leverage points and / or behavioural aspects that would support the organisations' evolution to industry 5.0, building on existing results of Industry 5.0 funded projects and connected initiatives.
- Identifying successful methodologies to develop systemic innovation incentives to promote Industry 5.0 paradigm change, human-centric enabling technologies, learning organisation model adoption and skills upgrade for Industry 5.0 goals.

b) Developing and testing the new methodologies through sandboxes, open innovation approaches or participatory processes for systemic transformation by prototyping new incentives schemes or enabling measures. The sandboxes should involve quadruple or quintuple helix stakeholders at regional/local level to support the achievement of the identified transformational challenge and contribute to acceleration of place-based industrial transformation:

c) Develop tools/measures to build evidence on and promote the impact of Industry 5.0 methods for industrial transformation at regional/local level, such as:

- Digital or AI-enabled tools to support rapid conversion and orchestration of information that can support decision-making and anticipation of the pipelines of innovations, value chain evolution, skills needs or transformation opportunities.
- Peer learning across the supported ecosystems, focused on the improvement of organisational learning capacity, learning ecosystems development and new innovation capacity for Industry 5.0 transformation, inspired by new paradigms in organisational design, learning and innovation. This should also include actions catalysing leadership for Industry 5.0 paradigm change. Document the results to inform and advise policy-makers in view of their potential upscaling.

Proposals submitted under this topic should include an exploitation strategy.

The project should build on or seek collaboration with existing projects developing Industry 5.0 solutions and/complementary to Industry 5.0 pillars and methods such as Regional Innovation Valleys or New European Bauhaus. It should also develop synergies and ensure complementarities with other relevant European, national or regional initiatives, funding programmes and platforms, such as Digital Innovation Hubs, European Partnerships like Made in Europe, Process4Planet, AI, Data and Robotics Partnership and the relevant EIT KICs.

The Commission considers that proposals in this topic with an overall duration of typically 36 months would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other durations.

## **HORIZON-CL4-INDUSTRY-2025-01-HUMAN-66: Assessment of Technology Infrastructure needs in Ukraine (CSA)**

<b>Call: INDUSTRY</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.00 and 1.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 1.50 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).<sup>239</sup>.</p>

Expected Outcome: The project funded under this topic will have the following expected outcomes:

- A comprehensive understanding of the existing landscape of Technology Infrastructures<sup>240</sup> in Ukraine, including existing facilities and their services;
- Assessment of the loss of capacities in Technology Infrastructures in Ukraine in result of the Russian aggression;
- A sound understanding of the specific needs of industrial users, including large companies and SMEs, for Technology Infrastructures in Ukraine;
- An investment agenda for Technology Infrastructures in Ukraine addressing the gaps related to the capacity loss due to war and in view of the future technology development capacity of the Ukrainian industry in support of the reconstruction process.
- Identification of Technology Centres in Ukraine that could pilot an integrated approach to the provision of Technology Infrastructure facilities and services Ukrainian companies

<sup>239</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

<sup>240</sup> Add the definition of TIs prior to the final version.

to strengthen the connection between research and industry through technology transfer, lowering the risks for private R&I investments.

Scope: Proposals should put forward a robust methodology to comprehensively analyse the current landscape of Technology Infrastructures facilities and services available in Ukraine and assess the damages to such capacities in result of the war. To this end, the proposed activities should engage with Ukrainian authorities at national and regional level as well as relevant organisations within the R&I ecosystems, such as RTOs, technical universities, research institutes and technology centres, hosting such infrastructures.

Activities proposed under this action should include a comprehensive analysis of user needs for Technology Infrastructures, both in the public and the private sector. This analysis should take into account in particular strategic technologies and long-term development needs of the Ukrainian economy.

This should lead to an analysis of capacity gaps and the mismatch between supply and demand for Technology Infrastructure facilities and services.

Building on these analyses, the project funded under this action will develop an investment agenda for Technology Infrastructures in Ukraine in view of the post-war reconstruction of the country. This agenda should identify priority areas for investments as well as the type of investments that are most urgently needed to foster the innovation capacity of the Ukrainian economy. It could also propose specific large-scale investments in individual facilities, development and deployment of new TI services, developing national networks or ecosystems of TIs with integrated service offers, building partnerships with TIs operating in the EU, as well as other actions strengthening the provision of TI services in Ukraine.

The action funded under this call should identify a set of Technology Centres in Ukraine that would pilot the establishment of an integrated network providing Technology Infrastructure services in selected technology area or industrial ecosystem. Such a network should include a critical mass of RTOs, universities and research institutes, as well as the private sector as relevant, that would develop a joint offer of research and technology services and other business support services to Ukrainian companies. Based on this pilot, the project should also develop a strategy and actional plan of scaling-up such networks on regional, national and international levels.

Methodologies proposed under the activities envisaged in this action should take into account the relevant work carried out at EU level as well as build on the experience of EU organisations hosting such facilities. Proposals should ensure strong engagement from all relevant stakeholders in the public and the private sector.

Projects should build on or seek collaboration with relevant existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant national, European or international initiatives on Technology Infrastructures, such as for example Open Innovation Test Beds, Testing and Experimentation Facilities or European Digital Innovation Hubs.

## International Cooperation

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-03-HUMAN-19: International cooperation in semiconductors (CSA)**

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

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

- Evidence-based advice to the Commission and the Member States on joint actions with leading semiconductor countries (including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, USA, Canada, and India) in support of EU policies.
- Support to the Commission to define and implement measures aiming at strengthening the position of Europe's industry in the global semiconductor value chain.
- Support to the Commission in implementing actions related to research cooperation, e.g. within the Digital Partnerships.
- Factual elements (e.g. mapping supply chains in leading countries, analyses of state-of-the-art, emerging technologies...) that help the Commission in assessing potential areas of cooperation.

Scope: Within the context of semiconductor and semiconductor-based photonics (e.g. silicon photonics), the CSA will support the Commission and the Member States in the following activities:

- Preparation of a regional mapping of leading semiconductor countries outside of the EU regarding supply chains, industrial strengths, gaps and their expected evolution;



- Identification of emerging opportunities (e.g. technologies, approaches) for cooperation with other regions;
- Definition of research areas in which international cooperation would result in tangible benefits for Europe;
- Analysis of risks to the EU's technological advancements, technological competitiveness, and access to leading-edge technology vis-à-vis international cooperation countries;
- Analysis of risks related to EU economic security in the semiconductor area including due to potential over-capacities for production of mainstream chips<sup>241</sup>, export controls and non-market policies and practices.
- Promotion and contribution to standardisation activities;
- Organisation of joint events contributing to the above outcomes;
- Promotion of mobility of researchers in specific topics (in cooperation with other support schemes);
- Preparation of a comparative analysis of modalities for cooperation and their applicability.

The Commission will actively engage with Member States via the European Semiconductor Board ensuring that their interests and views are taken into account.

Projects are expected to ensure complementarities with projects funded under the following topics:

- HORIZON-CL4-2022-DIGITAL-EMERGING-01-38: International cooperation in semiconductors (CSA)
- Chips Diplomacy Support Initiative - EU action grant in the field of pilot projects and preparatory actions<sup>242</sup>
- Chips Joint Undertaking's HORIZON-Chips-2024-3-RIA: Joint call with Korea on Heterogeneous integration and neuromorphic computing technologies for future semiconductor components and systems

And to develop synergies with projects funded under the Digital Europe Programme (DEP).

#### **HORIZON-CL4-2025-04-HUMAN-08: GenAI for Africa**

<b>Call: DIGITAL - HADEA</b>
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<sup>241</sup> Mainstream chips denote semiconductor devices manufactured at node sizes equal or greater than 28 nm.

<sup>242</sup> See Chips Diplomacy Support Initiative | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)

<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.00 and 2.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 5.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to start at TRL 4 and achieve TRL 6 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.

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

- African societies benefit from innovative solutions on GenAI applied to key areas:
- Local technological companies in some locations in Africa benefit from the technological capacity to develop targeted solutions to unlock the full potential of GenAI Digital in key areas with the primary focus on rural communities in Africa and women, being an underrepresented group but with a key role in the foundation of these societies.

Scope: Generative AI (GenAI) holds the potential of creating in Africa a rich ecosystem of transformative solutions and practical applications addressing the specific societal challenges and opportunities most of the countries are facing.

The proposals should address one or more of the following:

- **Agriculture optimisation:** GenAI can analyse satellite imagery and sensor data to monitor state of crops, soil conditions, and weather patterns, enabling farmers to boost crop yields and enhance food security through sophisticated predictive analytics and efficient resource management like water and pesticides. This is crucial to mitigate climate change and poor irrigation infrastructures in some areas of Africa.
- **Healthcare:** GenAI can diagnose diseases from medical images and patient data, enhancing healthcare in remote areas; forecast disease outbreaks and aid in preventive planning, and with the help of chatbots and virtual assistants can offer medical advice and connect patients with doctors, expanding telemedicine services, making healthcare more accessible to remote populations. Particular attention should be paid to the gender dimension in addressing AI biases, sex-specific healthcare needs, and intersecting gender and racial inequalities in health and access to health services.
- **Infrastructure and urban planning:** GenAI optimises energy usage, integrates renewables, and ensures efficient distribution, while managing water (including groundwater but also rainfall use) and waste (e.g. plastic reduction and reuse) effectively for sustainability,

and enhancing safety with real-time incident detection. It also provides support for reconstruction following natural or human-made disasters. This is vital for some African communities with scarce natural resources like water and facing high temperatures by using Digital Twins on urban and rural areas. All these technological solutions depend strongly on the existence and quality of connectivity infrastructure, as a key enabler for unlocking the Digital and Green Transition.

- **Digital Skills and learning:** Generative AI can personalize learning paths, create multilingual educational content, and offer on-demand virtual tutoring, benefiting rural communities with low resources and fully relying on mobile phones to access online services. Additionally, adaptive learning platforms can use data analytics to tailor teaching, while engineers craft queries to help AI models understand local languages and nuances to set up conversational chatbots for local communities.

The proposals should approach these objectives by:

- Conducting an evidence-based analysis to identify particular needs in Africa that GenAI technologies could solve, for one or several of the topics mentioned above.
- Identifying solutions on GenAI developed in the EU that could be applied in Africa for one or several of the topics mentioned above.
- Based on existing EU-based solutions and particular needs, developing and integrating generative Artificial Intelligence models and algorithms specifically adapted for one or several of the abovementioned key areas.
- Involving and supporting start-ups and local networks in 3 to 5 locations in Africa to create innovative solutions to uniquely African challenges in those areas based on GenAI. Co-creation and living lab methodologies should be explored to boost social uptake of proposed solutions. Living labs are ecosystems of experimentation and open innovation, with a systematic approach to co-creation among their users, whether they are researchers, businesses, civil society or public administrations. These open innovation spaces will enable researchers and local actors from the public and private sectors work together using digital technologies to co-create knowledge and solutions that respond to their societal needs, while improving territorial cohesion.
- The approved projects should take into account the AI Act and GDPR as the main legal frameworks to ensure data protection of the data used within third countries.

Where relevant proposals are encouraged to build on, or seek collaboration with, existing projects and develop synergies with other relevant European initiatives. In particular links are encouraged with the projects funded under international cooperation on AI for public good, in the areas of health, digital twin for reconstruction, emergency response and electric grid optimisation, Destination Earth, Copernicus.

## **Other actions not subject to calls for proposals**

### **Public procurements**

#### **1. Heading 5 of Space - Using Space on Earth – Satellite navigation - EGNSS Evolution Mission and Service-related R&D activities**

The objective is to study potential new user needs, as well as the resulting enhancement of services, and determine whether and how the EGNSS programmes Galileo and EGNOS shall evolve to answer these new user needs. This includes the preparation of contributions and technical analysis supporting the EU position in multilateral and bilateral working groups and meetings. The upstream R&D actions in this area will cover the assessment of new mission concepts and of services improvements and of new services or capacities to be introduced based on the user needs, developing the service concept including with international partners when relevant, assessing costs to the programme versus benefits to users and defining the roadmap of activities until an operational service could be provided.

Some procurement actions under this section will affect the essential security interests of the Union. In accordance with Art. 136 of the EU Financial Regulation, restricted participation will therefore be established in the tender specifications on a case-by-case basis.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative budget: EUR 2.00 million from the 2025 budget

#### **2. Heading 10 of Space - Boosting Space through training and education activities**

The objective is to conduct public procurement activities for the implementation of training and education actions in support of upskilling and reskilling efforts pursued by the European Space Policy, European R&I research agendas related to Horizon Europe.

Support will be given to the successful tenderer for the implementation of the following actions, already developed in a pilot phase in the years 2024 – 2025:

- CASSINI Job Placement Scheme: targeting university students and young graduates, to give them an opportunity to gain hands-on experience through internships in space companies. This action aims to connect academia with industry, in particular new space companies, by providing students and young graduates with practical experience on top of the theoretical knowledge acquired at university. This will help students access the job market. At the same time, it will help industry identify and train prospective future staff. The action shall build on the pilot edition developed in the frame of the STARS\*EU project featuring the Space Career Launchpad platform and a voucher scheme for paid internships.

- **CASSINI Space Camp:** targeting students aged 14-18. It is aimed to spark the interest of teenagers to pursue a vocation in space, with a particular focus on New Space. This action will build on a pilot activity to be developed throughout 2024 and 2025. Following the model of Cassini Hackathons, it foresees the involvement of local organisers that will implement each space camp locally in the local language where the space camp takes place. The added value in relying on local organisers is their connection with the local ecosystem and local stakeholders (e.g. schools, universities, companies, museums, planetarium, observatory, etc.) that would facilitate the promotion of the programme as well as the rolling out of the various activities.

In addition, the action will cover the continuation of the EU Space Academy Learning Platform offering space entrepreneurs and enthusiasts a free and customizable online development programme offering online lectures, individual mentoring and thematic workshops.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative budget: EUR 5.00 million from the 2025 budget

### **3. Heading 12 of Space - Boosting Space via support to entrepreneurship – 2025 CASSINI activities**

Business development, acceleration and upscaling of start-ups will be fostered across all space areas under the CASSINI Space Entrepreneurship Initiative. CASSINI will provide support to business and innovation-friendly ecosystems, including the strengthening of business skills in the space market segments and digital services based on space data. The objective is to make start-ups and scale-ups investment-ready and able to secure venture capital funding. Synergies with the InvestEU programme and the Space programme will be established. The following two actions will be funded:

- CASSINI innovation support.
- CASSINI Business Accelerator.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative budget: EUR 8.50 million from the 2025 budget

### **4. Digital conferences, outreach, studies and other activities**

In addition to calls for proposals, other actions are also expected to be undertaken on specific activities that DG CONNECT will support. These include:

- Other events and publications (e.g. information, communication, dissemination etc.), either through the use of existing Framework Contracts, or the launch of indicatively 25 calls for tenders during 2025. Indicative budget in 2025: EUR 1.5 million.
- Studies including socio-economic and impact analysis studies, and studies to support the monitoring, evaluation and strategy definition for the ICT priority of Cluster 4 in Horizon Europe. DG CONNECT plans to procure via framework contracts and calls for tender. The calls for tenders are expected to be launched in the 2nd and 3rd calendar quarter of 2025. It should be noted that internal outsourcing of studies to other Commission departments based on Administrative Agreements can be used as an alternative to public procurement.
- Policy support activities, including benchmarking activities, evaluation and impact assessments, the development of ad hoc support software, possibly using existing Framework Contracts. DG CONNECT plans to procure via framework contracts and calls for tender. The calls for tenders are expected to be launched in the 2nd and 3rd calendar quarter of 2025. It should be noted that internal outsourcing of studies to other Commission departments based on Administrative Agreements can be used as an alternative to the public procurement.

Indicative budget for Studies and Policy support in 2025: EUR 2.5 million.

Details will be provided in the texts of these calls for tender.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Second quarter of 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 4.00 million from the 2025 budget

## **5. Conferences, outreach, studies and other activities on AI in Science**

The adoption of Artificial intelligence technology and related tools in research and innovation has a tremendous potential to accelerate the discovery process, increase scientific productivity, as well as fast-track innovation processes to have a huge contribution to solving societal challenges. Further understanding and monitoring the impact of AI in R&I is needed. At the same time, it is also important to gauge the potential impact on the research and innovation ecosystems. Other actions are expected to be undertaken on the impact of Artificial Intelligence in R&I. These may include:

- Events and publications (e.g. information, communication, dissemination etc.)
- Studies including socio-economic and impact analysis studies
- Policy support activities, including benchmarking activities, evaluation and impact assessments

Details will be provided in the texts of these calls for tender.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative budget: EUR 0.35 million from the 2025 budget

## **6. Conferences, outreach, studies and other activities on Industry 5.0**

Industry 5.0 is a new paradigm promoting a path towards human-centric, resilient and sustainable industry. Active stakeholder engagement and co-creation activities are needed, in order to scale-up the adoption of new practices for Industry 5.0; raise awareness and further develop the concept; support new business models driven by Industry 5.0; and monitor the impact of Industry 5.0 impact on productivity and competitiveness, based on net measures such as net domestic product.

Actions to be undertaken on Industry 5.0 may include:

- Events and publications (e.g. information, communication, dissemination etc.)
- Studies including socio-economic and impact analysis studies - on measures of productivity and competitiveness, based on net measures such as net domestic product.
- Policy support activities, including benchmarking activities, evaluation and impact assessments, taking into account new metrics going Beyond GDP.

Details will be provided in the texts of the calls for tender.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative budget: EUR 0.60 million from the 2025 budget

## **7. Space Events, Studies and Platforms**

In addition to calls for proposals and delegated actions, events, studies and online platforms are needed on specific activities in order to assemble, maintain and evolve the EU Space R&I ecosystem. These include:

- Events and publications (e.g. information, communication, dissemination etc.).
- Studies including trends, market and impact analysis.
- Online platforms gathering activities of the EU Space ecosystem, supporting networking, exchange of best practices, analysis for policy-making, etc.

These activities will be carried out either through the use of existing Framework Contracts, or the launch of open tenders. Details will be provided in the texts of those tenders.

Indicative budget in 2025: EUR 0.8 million.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative budget: EUR 0.80 million from the 2025 budget

## **8. Conferences, outreach, studies and other activities on industrial R&I support policies**

For the EU to reach the target of investing 3% of GDP in R&D, a significant increase of investments in the private sector is necessary. This requires a better understanding and integration of existing policy tools at European, national and regional levels, showcasing good practices in their application. Recognising the existing gaps, targeted policy measures need to be further developed to support and promote industrial R&I as well as strengthen technology development capacities and support services which are essential for an effective transformation of our industry towards climate neutrality and for strengthening its competitiveness at global level. This requires an active engagement and co-creation with all relevant stakeholders.

Activities supporting a policy toolbox for boosting industrial R&I in the EU may include:

- Events and publications (e.g. information, communication, dissemination, etc.) ;
- Studies including technology assessment and foresight, needs and impact analysis, stakeholder engagement and consultations;
- Policy support activities, including technical support.

Details will be provided in the texts of the calls for tender.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative budget: EUR 0.70 million from the 2025 budget

## **9. Raw Materials Events**

It is envisaged to procure activities for the organisation of events (conferences, workshops or seminars), including the Raw Materials Week through Framework Contracts before the end of 2025.

DG GROW is organising the Raw Materials Week in the fourth calendar quarter of 2025, covering set of events including the High-Level Conference on Raw Materials.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement



Indicative timetable: Q4 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.80 million from the 2025 budget

#### **10. Update of the Material System Analyses (MSA)**

The Material System Analysis (MSA) data sets investigate the flows of materials through the EU-27 economy in terms of entry into the EU, flows through the economy, stock accumulation, incl. end-of-life management. They contain key material specific data and information, to support the monitoring of the circular economy as well as providing useful information for other activities. The MSAs support the RM policy development, and in the mid-term provide a basis for developing sound sustainable resource management strategies. They also contain useful information supporting other activities, such as the monitoring of the circular economy. This action will entail collecting new data and information for the MSA of Critical Raw Materials.

Duration: 15 months

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q3 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.50 million from the 2025 budget

#### **11. Support for studies related to recognised schemes (Article 30, Annex IV) measure in the Critical Raw Materials Act CRM Act**

Under CRMA Article 30, scheme owners of CRM sustainability certification schemes may request recognition by the Commission. Recognised schemes may then be used to demonstrate compliance with the sustainability criterion for Strategic Projects. Beyond this immediate relevance, the recognition of certification schemes is also intended to give the Commission a tool to promote convergence and overcome fragmentation of sustainability standards systems by setting out key requirements and granting recognition to those schemes that fulfil them.

There is a need for a service provider to assist the Commission in implementation tasks related to the recognised schemes provisions of the CRMA.

Duration: 48 months

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q2 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.40 million from the 2025 budget

## **12. Analytical support for studies related to circularity and sustainability provisions under Art. 5 and 34 of the Critical Raw Materials Act**

Under CRMA Article 5, the Commission shall adopt, by 1 January 2027, delegated acts to supplement the CRMA by providing for Union recycling capacity benchmarks expressed as a share of the strategic raw materials available in relevant waste streams. There is a need for a service provider to assist the Commission in implementation of this delegated act.

CRMA article 34 sets out that the Commission is empowered to establish delegated acts linked with article 28 to inter alia specify requirements for the technical design and operation of the data carrier, refer to technical standards to be used, set out rules on unique product identifier. There is a need for a service provider to assist the Commission in implementation of these delegated acts. The estimated timing for the adoption of these delegated acts is November 2027 (same time as entry into force of the requirements of Art. 28).

Duration: 48 months

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q2 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.11 million from the 2025 budget

## **13. Impact assessment of the advanced materials act**

### **Impact assessment of the advanced materials act**

Objective: Reflecting the growing importance and demand for advanced materials to support the competitiveness of European industries and the twin green and digital transition, the European Commission will work on an Advanced Materials Act to support the research and innovation process through to manufacturing and deployment, as announced in the mission letter of Commissioner Zaharieva.

The objective of this action is to assess the need for EU action and the potential economic, social and environmental impacts of alternative policy options that could be proposed in the Advanced Materials Act. The impact assessment will collect evidence and assess the need for action, including legislative or non-legislative proposals. It will support the Commission in the design of the advanced materials act. Among other aspects, it must:

- Analyse the problem and problem drivers ;
- describe relevant objectives for the EU action;
- describe policy options, assess their potential impacts and
- suggests how expected results could be monitored and evaluated.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q4 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.50 million from the 2025 budget

#### **14. European Standardisation Panel Survey**

Expected outcome:

The European Standardisation Panel Survey (ESPS) will be designed to collect data on standardisation activities of companies. The ESPS aims to create a comprehensive dataset to analyse the standardisation activities of innovation ecosystem actors and to identify trends for use by standardisation policy makers and stakeholders, including standard development organisations. The ESPS will also contribute to assessing how public R&I funding addresses the standardisation needs of industry. The current action is the second edition of the survey.

The ESPS will serve as input for scientific research on the standardisation activities of companies and the implementation of standards, providing essential intelligence for further valorisation policy measures. The survey results can also be used to develop strategies for involvement in European and international standardisation, facilitating the identification of new trends.

The analysis will complement the Code of Practice on standardisation and the first edition of the ESPS by raising awareness of the importance of standardisation for businesses.

Scope:

For businesses, standardisation serves as a strategic tool by preparing the market for a new product, even if the new product is still in the early stages of development.

Despite progress in recent years, standardisation research, with all of its facets – from creation through the development process to implementation – remains less pivotal compared to innovation research. This is primarily due to the lack of comprehensive empirical data, despite excellent theoretical reviews on the topic. Following the successful implementation of the [first edition of the ESPS](#), there is a need to expand the geographical scope by ensuring full participation from more EU Member States. This action will also allow for comparative analytics and trend analysis of the data from the different editions.

Against this background, a second ESPS will be launched to collect and analyse data from European companies and research institutions in the field of standardisation.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q2/2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.06 million from the 2025 budget

**15. Analytical support for studies related to circularity and sustainability provisions under Art. 4-7 of the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR, REGULATION (EU) 2024/1781)**

As part of the implementation of ESPR legislation, the Commission is preparing a Delegated Act on iron and steel products, scheduled to be adopted by end of 2026. This delegated act, in compliance with ESPR Articles 4-7, may include performance and/or information requirements related to circularity and environmental sustainability aspects of steel products and products with high steel content. There is a need for a service provider to assist the Commission in implementation of this delegated act.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Q3/2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.10 million from the 2025 budget

**16. International Cooperation**

**16.1. AI for Public Good 1: Innovative AI-powered cancer imaging solutions for breast and prostate diagnosis**

As part of the international cooperation on AI for Public Good in the area of health, innovative solutions are to be implemented for cancer imaging detection relying on AI algorithms that later can be offered to hospitals and clinical centers in need of advanced technologies.

Technical teams will train, test, enhance and optimise existing AI models and algorithms for breast and prostate cancer diagnosis using images. The training will draw upon generative AI and machine learning as appropriate, and will use anonymised data (including synthetic data) from the EU, as well as learn from the experience of the initiatives launched under the European Cancer Imaging Initiative, including EUCAIM. The set of innovative services to be procured through domain experts by the EC for development and testing are:

- Train, test, enhance and optimise existing AI models and algorithms for breast and prostate cancer diagnosis using images. The training will draw upon generative AI and machine learning as appropriate, and will use anonymised data (including synthetic data) from the EU. The AI Act and GDPR legislation will be used as common frameworks to ensure data protection of the data used within third countries. When required, privacy-preserving technologies will be exploited to guarantee data is kept private.
- Sources of, mainly magnetic resonance imaging data will be identified and organised according to ethical and privacy requirements and equipped with efficient and secure

access mechanisms. Transfer learning and domain adaptation will be explored as potential sources to apply the AI models and algorithms to low and middle-income countries.

- Required level of enhanced accuracy of models will be identified and validated, prior to their testing. Testing will be undertaken for each use case (breast and prostate cancer) in low- and middle-income countries to be identified by the applicants.
- Following the tests, the experts will plan and initiate the steps towards regulatory approval of the algorithms, for use in real life scenarios.
- The enhanced AI models and guidelines to their use in diagnosis will be delivered as open access to EU researchers, as well as to stakeholders from other world regions (in particular to low-to-middle income countries).
- The teams should also assess the potential to provide the AI models and their diagnosis guidelines and training possibly using virtual and remote learning, as a service to countries in need through e.g. hosting in high computing facilities.
- Synergies with ongoing activities and projects already running under the scope of Cancer Mission and Digital Europe Programme will be sought.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Second quarter of 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 2.40 million from the 2025 budget

## **16.2. AI for Public Good 2: Innovative AI-powered solutions for emergency response and crisis management**

As part of the international cooperation on AI for Public Good in the area of emergency response, innovative solutions and services are to be implemented to face natural disasters such as wildfires and flooding. This will be done through a combination of advanced technologies including AI, geographic information systems, and real-time data analytics empowering emergency responders to anticipate, optimize, and track resource allocation, coordinate response efforts more effectively. The goal is to implement an **open, modular, accessible, multi-hazard platform** that harnesses the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) to significantly enhance emergency response capabilities during natural disasters, supporting them with accurate data. The ecosystem will leverage existing global, national and regional systems like the Global Wildfire Information System ([GWIS](#)) and National Emergency Response Information System [NERIS], and link. with/draw from EU initiatives providing relevant data, such as Copernicus or Destination Earth.

The set of innovative service to be procured by the EC for phases II (development), III (testing) are:

- Development of the platform and integrating the existing Global Wildfire Information System (GWIS) that already covers the entire planet. Synergies with EU initiatives providing relevant data, such as Copernicus or Destination Earth, are to be sought.
- Host the platform in cloud-based servers.
- Deployment in several countries in Latin America (mainly Central America, the Carabean and Colombia).
- Support for the EU (DG ECHO) to use the platform as part of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).
- Assess the potential to provide the platform as a service, hosted in high computing facilities in order offer emergency response capabilities to countries in need at broader scale. Prepare the scaling-up and hosting.
- Initial analysis on how to expand the platform's capabilities to a second disaster (flood).

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Second quarter of 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 2.00 million from the 2025 budget

### **16.3. AI for Public Good 3: Innovative AI-powered solutions for urban reconstruction**

Under this proposal, a Local Digital Twin for reconstruction based on AI models will be developed. The tool will allow urban planners to simulate and evaluate potential rebuilding scenarios based on damage assessments and precise reconstruction costs.

The set of innovative services to be procured by the EC for phases II (development), III (testing) are:

- Expert teams from EU and outside will identify data sources and datasets containing 3D virtual replicas of buildings in urban areas of third countries where digital twin will be tested/deployed (e.g. Ukraine).
- The technical team will organise the data and make it accessible according to security, ethical, privacy etc. requirements as agreed upon by all stakeholders including end-users.
- The technical team will develop and train supporting AI algorithms for building damage assessment and precise reconstruction estimates.
- The virtual replicas and the AI algorithms will be integrated into a Geographical Information System (GIS)-based solution for a complete offering of a digital twin based on AI-algorithms for reconstruction.

- The technical team will design, develop and test the productive version of a Digital Twin for reconstruction based on requirements gathered from potential users and the pilots conducted in Phase I.
- Initial stages of deployment of the productive solution in one country: Ukraine.

The technical team will also assess the technical feasibility of offering the Local Digital Twin as a service to countries in need at broader scale, hosted in cloud-based facilities. Existing EU initiatives and programmes will be explored to that end. A proposal of roadmap will be provided.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Second quarter of 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 2.00 million from the 2025 budget

#### **16.4. AI for Public Good 4: Innovative AI-powered solutions for electric grid optimisation**

In the area of electric grid optimisation, innovative solutions will be implemented to dynamically integrate renewable energy sources and adapt to increasingly variable demands. Leveraging AI, these solutions will enhance energy efficiency, promote optimal usage, and support the transition to a more sustainable and resilient energy system.

The set of innovative solutions to be procured through domain experts by the EU are:

- Developing, training and optimising a comprehensive set of AI-based tools for the flexible management of digitally operated edge electric-grid systems. This will involve integrating existing modelling approaches to simulate long-term flexibility scenarios and provide a robust assessment tool.
- Running laboratory simulations to validate the proposed data exchange mechanisms and simulate complex systems.
- Testing and validating tools in real-world conditions across various EU locations.
- Deploying in third countries with specific needs, such as South America.

The teams should also assess the feasibility of providing grid optimisation tools as a service to countries with specific needs, leveraging cloud-based or high-performance computing solutions. To support this effort, existing EU initiatives and programs will be explored. To that end, a roadmap will be provided.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: Second quarter of 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 3.00 million from the 2025 budget

### **Grants to identified beneficiaries**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

#### **1. Quantum Internet Framework Partnerships Agreement– launching the second Specific Grant Agreement - Research and Innovation Action (SGA)**

##### **Expected outcome:**

Proposals submitted under the Second Specific Grant Agreement (SGA2) for the FPA on "Building the Quantum Internet" (HORIZON-CL4-2021-DIGITAL-EMERGING-02-19) are expected to achieve the following outcomes, building on the achievements made by the SGA1 and demonstrating concrete steps (in terms of improved functionality, distance, accessibility, cost-effectiveness and real-world deployments) towards the realisation of a quantum internet:

1. The realization of quantum communication technology that is scalable, secure, reliable, and ready for manufacturing.
2. The achievement of entanglement distribution over distances reaching or exceeding 500 km, incorporating quantum repeaters.
3. The demonstration of a proof-of-principle quantum internet infrastructure with a prototype (lab conditions) of a long-distance quantum communication fibre network that uses quantum repeaters capable of connecting metropolitan area networks, demonstrating interoperability of various approaches and scalability of the architecture.
4. The integration of advanced quantum network applications (e.g. secret key sharing, distributed quantum computation, blind quantum computation) into classical network infrastructures (i.e. orchestration platforms) over a quantum network including quantum repeaters.
5. Platform-independent software and network stack demonstration that can operate on a quantum communication network involving at least two quantum computing nodes with quantum memories, ensuring the network's resistance to known forms of cyber-attacks.
6. Demonstration of the maturity of quantum networks by showcasing the technologies developed by the project and demonstrating and validating use cases in a real-world environment.

##### **Scope:**

Projects should focus on making significant steps towards the practical realization of a quantum internet:



- Develop the foundational technologies and network architectures needed to establish a quantum internet that interconnects quantum computers, simulators, and sensors through quantum networks.
- Further develop and mature the hardware components and systems needed for a quantum internet, such as quantum sources, detectors, memories, and repeaters, using the platforms identified as most promising according to objective criteria.
- Further develop and mature the software for a quantum internet, as well as integrating quantum network applications into network infrastructure.
- Propel the innovation and deployment of quantum internet components and systems capable of operating across extensive real-world networks.
- Encourage collaboration across disciplines and sectors to address the technological, computational, and societal aspects of building the quantum internet, including maximisation of its potential contributions to economic growth, technological sovereignty, and strategic autonomy.
- Contribute to the development of international standards and ensure interoperability across different quantum technologies, facilitating the secure and efficient exchange of quantum information, while promoting, where possible, sustainable practices.
- Build and operate pilot testbeds, in order to demonstrate technologies, architectures, operation and integration of hardware and software elements and systems in real-world deployments, for taking further steps towards the realisation of a quantum internet.
- Demonstrate pilot use cases for a quantum internet, and evaluate them with a focus on enabling upgradability towards general quantum connectivity. Engage with potential end users and service providers to maximise the uptake potential of use cases, targeting future commercial services.

Proposals should demonstrate synergies with actions already carried out under HORIZON-CL4-2021-DIGITAL-EMERGING-02-19: Framework Partnership Agreements in Quantum Communications, and with any other relevant European projects.

Proposals should also contribute to spreading excellence across Europe, for example, through the involvement of EU Widening Countries.

In this topic the integration of the gender dimension (sex and/or gender analysis) in research and innovation content is not a mandatory requirement; however, should proposers consider it to be of relevance for their proposal, they are strongly encouraged to integrate it.

**Technology Readiness Level:** Activities are expected to start at TRL 4-5 and achieve TRL 6-7 by the end of the project – see General Annex B.

**Eligibility conditions - Participation limited to legal entities established in MS only, or in specified ACs or other 3rd countries in addition to MS:**

The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply: In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States, Iceland and Norway, and Israel.

For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, shall not participate in the action.

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

Type of Action: Specific grant agreement awarded without call for proposals in relation to a Framework Partnership Agreement

Indicative timetable: Second quarter of 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 47.50 million from the 2025 budget

## **2. Presidency Event (conference): Technologies for Europe 2026**

Events of a major strategic nature, which are focused and attract a broad spectrum of stakeholders, are important in assessing past activities, identifying policy options and priorities, and planning future actions.

The European Commission will support the organisation of a Presidency conference in 2026, in cooperation with a government holding the EU Presidency of the European Union at the time, as well as with interested regions.

This event may cover aspects of industrial technologies, including the twin green and digital transformation of European industry, in particular green and circular technologies and materials, as well as relevant digital technologies.

This event is co-funded and co-organised by the European Commission and the rotating Presidency of the Council, the latter of which is the named beneficiary of the grant in question, via a responsible ministry or agency of the EU Member State holding the Presidency.

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

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

Subcontracting is not restricted to a limited part of the action.

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

Legal entities:

This event is co-funded and co-organised by the European Commission and the rotating Presidency of the Council, the latter of which is the named beneficiary of the grant in question, via a responsible ministry or agency of the EU Member State holding the Presidency.

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

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

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

Indicative timetable: Q1-4, 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 0.20 million from the 2025 budget

### **3. Presidency Event (conference) on AI in Science 2025**

Expected Outcome: Informing of and providing a platform to debate and implement the AI in Science policies of the European Commission with stakeholders and Members States

Scope: Two days of discussions and matchmaking on AI in Science issues and trends with high level policy decision makers at Member State, European and international level, as well as scientific community.

Procedure – Evaluation Carried out by EU Staff: The evaluation committee will be composed fully of representatives of the European Commission.

This particular conference, organised by DG RTD and the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the latter of which is the named beneficiary of the grant in question (usually via a Member State Ministry), will raise awareness of the strategic importance of incorporating AI in science, bring together all stakeholders to discuss the challenges and opportunities and build a European AI in science community.

Grant awarded without call for proposals according to FR Article 198 (a, b, c, d, f, g).

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

Subcontracting is not restricted to a limited part of the action.

Legal entities:

This event is co-funded and co-organised by the European Commission and the rotating Presidency of the Council, the latter of which is the named beneficiary of the grant in question, via a responsible ministry or agency of the EU Member State holding the Presidency.

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

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

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

Indicative timetable: Q4 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.35 million from the 2025 budget

#### **4. Organisation of the Presidency Event European Quantum Technologies Conference (EQTC) 2025**

**Expected Outcome:** The EQTC 2025, the latest in the EQTC series, will be dedicated to reinforcing Europe's leadership in quantum technologies by fostering and promoting a collaborative ecosystem that includes academia, industry, and governmental bodies. This event will serve as a critical platform for discussing strategic directions, sharing innovations, and engaging the entire European quantum technology community.

**Scope:** This three-day conference will focus on a variety of quantum technologies such as quantum computing, quantum communication, quantum sensing and metrology, and quantum materials. High-level decision-makers from Member States, the European Commission, and key international stakeholders will engage in discussions aimed at advancing the quantum technology sector within Europe.

**Procedure – Evaluation Carried out by EU Staff:** The evaluation committee will be composed fully of representatives of the European Commission.

**Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements - Lump sum grant (flexible - option 2):** 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)<sup>243</sup>.

Legal entities:

Responsible ministry or agency of the EU Member State holding the Presidency

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

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

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

Indicative timetable: Third quarter of 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.30 million from the 2025 budget

## **5. Heading 7 of Space - Monitoring Space**

### **5.1. Consolidate European commercial SST capabilities on sensors**

<b>Specific conditions</b>		
<i>Expected contribution per project</i>	<i>EU</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 15.00 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 15.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>		Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>		The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:  The page limit of the application is 50 pages.

<sup>243</sup> 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](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	<p>The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union’s strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security, namely avoiding a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to build on its strengths and to carefully assess and address strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States. Proposals including entities established in countries outside the scope specified in the call/topic/action will be ineligible.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union’s strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of ‘restrictions for the protection of European communication networks’ (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.<sup>244</sup></p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p>

<sup>244</sup>

The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

	<p>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.</p> <p>The evaluation committee could be partially composed by representatives of EU institutions.</p>
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties (FSTP). The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. Activities proposed by third parties (FSTP proposals) are to be selected according to selection criteria agreed between the granting authority and the beneficiaries.</p> <p>A “third party”, submitting a FSTP proposal, could be either an entity or a consortium of entities.</p> <p>In accordance with article 207 of the EU Financial Regulation the maximum amount to be granted to each third party can exceed EUR 60,000. This derogation is justified by the fact that the foreseen actions carried out by third parties will target breakthrough techniques and technologies to disruptively improve SST sensors performance and/or operations. Indeed, costly hardware (such as radar, optical...) development and implementation tests are sought on this topic.</p> <p>The minimum amount of <u>each</u> FSTP proposal is expected to be in the range of EUR 2 million.</p> <p>The funding rate for each FSTP proposal is 80%. Third parties shall be asked to co-finance 20% of the total amount of each FSTP proposal.</p> <p>The total amount of the EU contribution supporting FSTP proposals is expected to be in the range of EUR 14,5 million</p> <p>As per Article 16.2 (Ownership of results) of the EU Grants: AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement (V1.0– 01.05.2024), the granting authority does not obtain ownership of the results produced under the action. Similarly, the IPR generated in FSTP activities cannot be retained by the beneficiaries.</p>

The rationale behind the proposed set up of this topic is the following:

The EUSST Partnership (i.e. the identified beneficiary), foreseen in the Space Regulation (art. 54 -EU 2021/696) composed of 15 Member States, has been created (cf. Implementing Decision 2022/1245) in 2022. The EUSST Partnership is entrusted to contribute with their national assets to enhance capabilities to monitor, track and identify space objects and space

debris with the aim of further increasing the performance and autonomy of capabilities under the SST sub-component at Union level.

The implementation of the Space Regulation (cf. EU 2021/696) provisions related to the SST sub-component, foresees the incorporation of commercial capabilities (Art. 54(1.a) of the Space Regulation) so to complement national capabilities. The EUSST Partnership (i.e. the FSTP granting authority) will launch an open call for proposals in order to select the best FSTP proposals within the proposed scope.

The current set up of this topic allows to support in priority the development of innovative commercial sensors. Nevertheless, in case of low private sector participation on FSTP actions the beneficiary (i.e. EUSST Partnership) will be able to use the remaining budget for the upgrade and/or development of national sensors applying the same proposed co-funding scheme and scope. This logic is reflected in the wording : «The beneficiary MAY provide financial support to third parties (FSTP)”.

Hardware development, prototyping and high TRL requested at the end of the FSTP action (at least TRL 5) requires important budgets, well beyond 60k€. Furthermore, it is expected that, at the end of FSTP support, the beneficiaries will pursue the developments in order to reach the operational stage hence contributing to the overall EUSST sensors network.

We foresee to have at least 4 FSTP projects ; if there are only, or less than, 4 FSTP projects, the remaining budget will be used to upgrade national sensors with novel technologies & techniques. The same cofinancing scheme will be applied to national sensors upgrades.

The overall objective of this Topic is to stimulate fast integration of R&D technologies and technics in operational sensors. Co-funding from Third Parties is expected in order to confirm their engagement towards the achievement of operational SST capacities. This means that :

1. Out of the 15M€ indicative budget, 0,5M€ is expected to cover EUSST coordination activities (e.g. drafting the FSTP call for proposals SoW, managing the reviews of each FSTP action).
2. Coordination activities are funded at 100%.

Expected Outcome: Projects developed under this topic are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- To reinforce European strategic autonomy and resilience in space surveillance and tracking capabilities (sensors and associated data processing) by leveraging innovation and competitiveness of the European industry and start-ups
- To develop and/or improve existing commercially available assets and SST-related technologies fostering competition and market development, allowing the European SST industry and start-ups to be competitive on global markets.



- To complement, as defined by EUSST Partnership's architecture studies, existing Member States patrimonial SST capacities with European privately-owned ones, assuring interoperability and adopting global standards.
- To improve European SST operational capabilities by supporting the extension of space-tracking infrastructure located outside continental Europe.
- To prepare EU industry to capture new SST markets in the domains by proposing competitive, cutting-edge sensors.

Scope: The following sensors and data processing R&I activities, funded through FSTP, should be addressed to tackle the above expected outcomes:

- Novel, cost-effective sensor concepts and technologies capable of detecting, tracking and surveying objects in order to improve the state-of-the-art performance according to the target orbit regime (e.g. less than 10 cm in LEO, 30 cm in GEO). Note: Priority should be given to projects focusing on LEO detection even though preeminent proposals in other orbit regimes will be considered.
- Autonomous sensor concepts to increase operational robustness, to reduce response times, to reduce operation costs, amongst others.
- Tools, techniques, and technologies necessary to significantly improve the efficiency of future or existing commercial sensor's network by streamlining the scheduling and tasking of its sensors.
- State-of-the-art technologies and concepts improving sensors' tracking and surveillance performances (measurements quality (noise; bias; measurements rates ...), tracks accuracy (track noise; track duration...), sensors' field of view...
- Cost-effective tracking and/or surveillance sensor concepts expanding orbital coverage of Member States patrimonial SST capacities and/or meeting commercial market needs.
- Any promising technology for precise tracking and data processing.

FSTP proposals are expected to promote cooperation between different actors (industry, SMEs and research institutions) and consider opportunities to quickly turn technological innovation into commercial use in the space sector.

FSTP proposals are expected to start between TRL 2 and TRL 4 and reach at least TRL 5 by the end of the project. The reference TRL (Technology Readiness Level) definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector.

FSTP proposals under this topic should explore synergies and be complementary to already funded actions in the context of technology development at component level. In particular, it is expected that FSTP proposals make use of existing European technologies and/or building blocks at component level contributing to European non-dependence and strengthen

competitiveness. Furthermore, proposed activities should be complementary to national activities and activities funded by the European Space Agency (ESA).

Financial support to third parties is expected to start no later than 7 months after the start date of the grant.

Indicative timetable: in quarter Q4 of year 2025.

Legal entities:

The Constituting National Entities having concluded an agreement creating the SST partnership

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

Type of Action: Grant awarded without call for proposals according to Financial Regulation Article 198 (f)

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

Indicative budget: EUR 15.00 million from the 2025 budget

## **5.2. Consolidate European commercial SST capabilities on Services**

<b>Specific conditions</b>		
<i>Expected contribution per project</i>	<i>EU per</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 4.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>		Research and Innovation Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>		The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:  The page limit of the application is 50 pages.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>		The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security, namely avoiding a

	<p>situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to build on its strengths and to carefully assess and address strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States. Proposals including entities established in countries outside the scope specified in the call/topic/action will be ineligible.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees positively assessed by their eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security. Entities assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment within the meaning of 'restrictions for the protection of European communication networks' (or entities fully or partially owned or controlled by a high-risk supplier) cannot submit guarantees.<sup>245</sup></p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.</p> <p>The evaluation committee could be partially composed by representatives of EU institutions.</p>
<i>Legal and financial</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions</p>

<sup>245</sup>

The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that: a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that retrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action; b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate; c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.

<i>set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>apply:</p> <p>The beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties (FSTP). The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. Activities proposed by third parties (FSTP proposals) are to be selected according to selection criteria agreed between the granting authority and the beneficiaries.</p> <p>A “third party”, submitting a FSTP proposal, could be either an entity or a consortium of entities.</p> <p>In accordance with article 207 of the EU Financial Regulation, the maximum amount to be granted to each third party can exceed EUR 60,000. This derogation is justified by the fact that foreseen actions carried out by third parties target competitive, close-to-market, added-value SST services proposed worldwide by the EU industry to capture new SST markets.</p> <p>The total amount of the EU contribution supporting FSTP proposals is expected to be in the range of EUR 3,8 million.</p> <p>The amount to be granted to each action implemented by a third party is expected to be in the range of EUR 600,000.</p> <p>As per Article 16.2 (Ownership of results) of the EU Grants: AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement (V1.0– 01.05.2024), the granting authority does not obtain ownership of the results produced under the action. Similarly, the IPR generated in FSTP activities cannot be retained by the beneficiaries.</p>
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Expected Outcome: Projects developed under this topic are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- To prepare EU industry and start-ups to capture new SST markets by proposing innovative and competitive services.
- To reinforce European strategic autonomy and resilience in the SST domain by leveraging commercial services while enhancing EU SST operational effectiveness.
- To foster competition and market development in SST-related commercial services considering the needs of relevant actors such as, but not limited to, satellites Owners and Operators, insurances companies, regulators...
- To demonstrate and foster the development of an ecosystem of lucrative, advanced, and tailor-made commercial services, which may rely on, or be provided on top of, the basic public services delivered by EU SST.

Scope: The R&I areas, funded through FSTP, which should be addressed to tackle the above-mentioned expected outcomes are:

- Cost-effective techniques and technologies to develop future SST commercial services or to substantially improve existing ones, additional or complementary to the ones currently delivered by EU SST.
- Development or improvement of algorithms for added value services (with respect to EU SST public services), for instance: measurements correlation, initial Orbit determination, orbit determination, covariance estimation, objects characterisation, application of alternative metrics, manoeuvre detection, secure exchanges between Owners/Operators (for example taking advantage of, but not limited to, technologies such as AI or blockchain).
- Development of evaluation methods of collision probability applied, but not limited to manoeuvrable or non-manoevrable objects, including satellite constellations.
- Improvement of algorithms for data fusion for a more efficient use of data and information from the same object coming from different sensors.
- Expansion or improvement of EU industry proprietary space objects catalogue (targeting in priority debris below 10 cm in LEO and below 50 cm in GEO).
- Development or improvement of new orbit propagation models for efficient propagation of the orbital population (e.g. cloud propagation models to propagate the debris cloud generated after a collision or fragmentation ...).
- Development or improvement of simulators including in-orbit objects population and sensors, as trade-off support for future commercial services, added value services and sensors.

FSTP proposals are expected to promote cooperation between different actors (industry, SMEs and research institutions) and consider opportunities to quickly turn technological innovation into commercial use in space.

FSTP proposals are expected to start at least TRL 2 and reach at least TRL 6 by the end of the project – The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector. FSTP proposals under this topic should explore synergies and be complementary to already funded actions in the context of technology development at component level. In particular, it is expected that FSTP proposals make use of existing European technologies and/or building blocks at component level contributing to European non-dependence and strengthen competitiveness. Furthermore, proposed activities should be complementary to national activities and activities funded by the European Space Agency (ESA).

Out of the 4M€ indicative budget, 0,2M€ is expected to cover EUSST coordination activities (e.g. drafting the FSTP call for proposals SoW, managing the reviews of each FSTP action). Coordination activities are funded at 100%.

Financial support to third parties is expected to start no later than 7 months after the start date of the grant.

Indicative timetable: in quarter Q4 of year 2025.

Legal entities:

The Constituting National Entities having concluded an agreement creating the SST partnership

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

Type of Action: Grant awarded without call for proposals according to Financial Regulation Article 198 (f)

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

Indicative budget: EUR 4.00 million from the 2025 budget

## **6. Heading 2 of Space - Acting in Space**

### **6.1. ISOS Pilot Mission Coordination & Support Action**

<b>Specific conditions</b>		
<i>Expected contribution per project</i>	<i>EU per</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 2.00 and 2.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>		The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 2.50 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>		Coordination and Support Actions
<i>Admissibility conditions</i>		The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:  The page limit of the application is 60 pages.
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>		The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:  In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security, participation is limited to legal entities established in Member States and the following

	<p>associated countries: Norway and Iceland. Proposals including entities established in countries outside the scope specified in the call/topic/action will be ineligible.</p> <p>For the duly justified and exceptional reasons listed in the paragraph above, in order to guarantee the protection of the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, entities established in an eligible country listed above, but which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity, may not participate in the action unless it can be demonstrated, by means of guarantees approved by the eligible country of establishment, that their participation to the action would not negatively impact the Union's strategic, assets, interests, autonomy, or security.</p> <p>The guarantees shall in particular substantiate that, for the purpose of the action, measures are in place to ensure that:</p> <p>a) control over the applicant legal entity is not exercised in a manner that restrains or restricts its ability to carry out the action and to deliver results, that imposes restrictions concerning its infrastructure, facilities, assets, resources, intellectual property or know-how needed for the purpose of the action, or that undermines its capabilities and standards necessary to carry out the action;</p> <p>b) access by a non-eligible country or by a non-eligible country entity to sensitive information relating to the action is prevented; and the employees or other persons involved in the action have a national security clearance issued by an eligible country, where appropriate;</p> <p>c) ownership of the intellectual property arising from, and the results of, the action remain within the recipient during and after completion of the action, are not subject to control or restrictions by non-eligible countries or non-eligible country entity, and are not exported outside the eligible countries, nor is access to them from outside the eligible countries granted, without the approval of the eligible country in which the legal entity is established.</p> <p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.</p>

<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	<p>The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:</p> <p>Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025). <sup>246</sup>.</p>
<i>Security Sensitive Topics</i>	<p>Some activities resulting from this topic may involve using classified background and/or producing of security sensitive results (EUCI and SEN). Please refer to the related provisions in section B Security — EU classified and sensitive information of the General Annexes.</p>

**Expected Outcome:** The strategic objective of this topic is to support the development of capabilities to ‘Act in Space’ through demonstrating in space a pilot mission by 2030 related to In-Space Operations and Services (ISOS). The envisaged ISOS pilot mission shall provide the necessary seed components for a service infrastructure, available to the European in-space ecosystem (including the EU assets), driving the generation of a new in-space economy, providing enhanced in-orbit technology demonstration and maximising EU technology non-dependence.

This pilot mission will largely contribute to ensure EU’s freedom of action in space, increase the resilience and protection of EU assets in space and foster the development of the new in-space economy. A pioneering, novel and scalable mission concept, which is unique compared to other initiatives among all space-faring nations is envisaged. The mission will build on previous R&I with an operational mission concept, focusing on application and service demonstration, with a concrete view to commercial and governmental usage. The detailed mission concept will be derived in close coordination with EU Member States and EEA countries through a dedicated ISOS Pilot Mission Advisory Group (PMAG)<sup>161</sup>.

This Coordination and Support Action addresses the coordination of the development R&I actions for the **implementation of the ISOS pilot mission** and the support of its evolution towards a flagship for commercial and governmental services.

The project is expected to contribute to the following outcomes, in close and continuous coordination with the European Commission services and the ISOS Pilot Mission Advisory Group<sup>161</sup>:

<sup>246</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)



- Creating and promoting an inclusive, transparent and scalable ISOS ecosystem that allows on-boarding of governmental or commercial actors' initiatives putting Europe at the centre of a new in-space economy offering global in-space services;
- Contribution to the ISOS Pilot Mission Objectives provided in the technical annex<sup>163</sup>;
- Elaboration of the ISOS Pilot mission detailed architecture, based on the high-level mission requirements provided in the technical annex<sup>163</sup>;
- Coordination of the implementation of the four components identified in topics HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-21/22/23/24, in particular with regards to the determination of interfaces among the mission components, identification of dependencies, exchange of requirements and performance indicators;
- Support to the elaboration of key standards for future institutional and commercial ISOS missions together with the projects implementing the four mission components and other relevant stakeholders;
- Ensuring the availability of results to the next mission phases.

This topic will contribute to, in the medium to long term, developing, deploying global space-based services and contribute to fostering the European space sector competitiveness, as stated in the expected impact of this destination.

Scope: To tackle the above expected outcomes, the following R&I actions must be addressed taking into account the provided technical annex<sup>163</sup>:

- Overall coordination of the ISOS pilot mission preparation up to detailed design<sup>164</sup> and elaboration of a mission deployment plan and detailed system architecture that is modular and scalable, in close cooperation with all mission components and in continuous coordination and under the supervision of the PMAG;
- Ensure interoperability and compatibility between mission components (for instance interfaces among components and exchange of requirements and performance indicators);
- Perform mission minimum cost estimate and cost impact assessment for new plug-ins (mission components, service demonstrations, technologies, etc.) to the mission and system in coordination with the PMAG;
- Elaboration of an effective conflict resolution regime;
- Setup and management of a key technology and service provider group (TSPG) that will be composed of selected future beneficiaries of the four mission components identified in topics HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-21/22/23/24. The group composition is expected to consider and contribute to a balanced provision of Member States' countries expertise and capabilities to the overall ISOS pilot mission. This group should be integrated in the decision-making processes of the CSA;

- Dissemination and Communication activities on the ISOS pilot mission, including the creation of a professional video to visualise and promote the ISOS pilot mission;
- Derive an in-space services product tree – functional specification of the pilot mission system;
- Community consultation and preparation of a proposal for a *Pilot Mission and Future Space Ecosystem Plug-in Specification* which should allow third-party on-boarding the ISOS pilot mission ecosystem, at system and technology level;
- Proposal for a pilot mission evolution plan towards a flagship for commercial and governmental services (seed point for future flagship development and deployment plan, to be considered as future component of the EU Space Programme). The project should propose at least three use cases for the servicing of EU flagship assets through the delivery of a concept of operations (CONOPS);
- Contribution to standardisation, regulatory and legal framework actions including stakeholder consultation;
- System risk management plan: identification of global risks, incl. technical, operational, managerial, legal, IP, and related to external interferences, and elaboration of possible mitigation actions.

The project is expected to collaborate with those selected under topics HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-21, 22, 23, 24, in order to ensure interoperability and the necessary and sufficient documentation and information sharing for the implementation of the Pilot Mission, to make economies of scale in sharing best practices, defining common processes for addressing the different challenges, ensuring efficient monitoring and review, organising dissemination and communication activities, etc. Such collaboration among all those projects will be formalised by a collaboration agreement.

Indicative timetable: publication in Q4 of 2025.

Legal entities:

The beneficiaries will be the eligible coordinators of the awarded proposals from topics HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-21, 22, 23, 24.

Form of Funding: Grants not subject to calls for proposals

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

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

Indicative budget: EUR 2.50 million from the 2025 budget

## **Scientific and technical services by the Joint Research Centre**

### **1. JRC support on the obligations for monitoring (Art. 21) in the Critical Raw Materials Act**

Objective: To continue the collaboration with the JRC on various aspects of raw materials policy. JRC Petten will provide support to analyse and integrate data provided by Member States on the Critical Raw Materials projects (Art. 21).

Duration: 48 months

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

Indicative timetable: Q2 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.40 million from the 2025 budget

### **2. JRC analytical support for studies related to circularity and sustainability provisions under art. 28 of the Critical Raw Materials Act**

Objective: CRMA Art. 28 establishes that by 24 November 2025, the Commission shall adopt an implementing act establishing the format for labelling placing on the market certain products (MRI devices, wind turbines, industrial robots, various household appliances, motor vehicles and light means of transport, electric motors, including where integrated in other products). The obligations on economic operators apply from 2 years after entry into force of the implementing act (i.e. latest by 24 November 2027). While not required by the CRMA, the Commission may also provide guidance on the format for the information on removal steps, on chemical composition and any other details relating to the data carrier (the “information folder”). There is a need for analytical support by the JRC to assist DG GROW in the implementation of this delegated act. The JRC can build the analysis on in-house knowledge and the stakeholder interactions conducted in the context of the ELV permanent magnet provisions. Additional literature analysis and stakeholder interactions may be required. When necessary and possible, JRC will also liaise with standardisation bodies and relevant technical committees.

Duration: 48 months

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

Indicative timetable: Q2 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.09 million from the 2025 budget

## **Other budget implementation instruments**

### **1. Use of individual experts to support raw materials policy (1)**

This action will support the use of appointed individual independent experts for assisting the Commission with advising and assisting the Commission services with the implementation and design of the EU Raw materials policy, and reinforcing the Commission capacity to elaborate evidence-based raw materials policy and the industrial transition to a climate-neutral Europe. Individual experts will work on quantitative analysis of the criticality of individual raw materials based on the EU methodology; critical raw materials supply and demand; future raw materials trends and innovation potential; and technology, infrastructure and raw materials requirements for the industrial transition: review of national exploration programmes.

The tasks of individual experts would include attending bilateral meetings with Commission services, remote analysis, drafting and preparatory work. The experts will be highly qualified and specialised, and will be selected on the basis of objective criteria, following an open call for expressions of interest. A special allowance of EUR 450/day will be paid to the expert appointed in its personal capacity who acts independently and in the public interest.

Form of Funding: Other budget implementation instruments

Type of Action: Expert contract action

Indicative timetable: Q4 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.80 million from the 2025 budget

### **2. Use of individual experts to support raw materials policy (2)**

This action will support the use of appointed individual independent experts for advising and assisting the Commission services with the implementation of the European Critical Raw Materials Act. Individual experts will support the Commission in the assessment of applications for the recognition of a critical raw materials project as a Strategic Project. In this context, the experts will assess proposed projects that can cover extraction, processing or recycling of raw materials in terms of their technical feasibility, financial maturity, compliance with environmental-, social- and governance-related standards as well as with the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources.

The tasks of individual experts would include remote analysis, preparatory work, drafting of reports as well as participation in discussions and meetings with other experts and Commission services. The experts will be highly qualified and specialised, and will be selected on the basis of objective criteria, following an open call for expressions of interest. A special allowance of EUR 450/day will be paid to the expert appointed in its personal capacity who acts independently and in the public interest.

Form of Funding: Other budget implementation instruments

Type of Action: Expert contract action

Indicative timetable: Q2 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.93 million from the 2025 budget

## **Subscription Actions**

### **1. Support to Hydrogen in the Economy**

The Commission represents the European Union in the International Partnership for Hydrogen and Fuel Cells in the Economy. The annual financial contribution will be paid to the entity responsible for managing it.

Type of Action: Subscription action

Indicative timetable: As of Q1 2025

Indicative budget: EUR 0.05 million from the 2025 budget

## **Indirectly managed actions**

### **Indirectly managed actions delegated to ESA**

#### **1. ESA.1 - Heading 5 of Space - Using Space on Earth – Satellite navigation - EGNSS Evolution: Technology and infrastructure-related R&D activities**

Actions under this area will address upstream R&D activities. They will cover the maturing of the existing technologies and the development of new and emerging technologies (e.g. LEOPNT), the engineering activities for the further evolution of Galileo and EGNOS existing systems, technical studies for the assessment of exploratory system concepts and/or responding to new mission needs and a changing environment, the development and maintenance of state-of-art system tools and technical test-beds, the implementation of actions agreed at Programme level to reduce the dependence of the supply chain on non-EU markets, the definition, design, development and implementation of experimental satellite demonstrator, and others.

These activities will be implemented by ESA under the Contribution Agreement between the Commission and ESA. The procurement actions under this section will affect the essential security interests of the Union. In accordance with Art. 136 of the EU Financial Regulation, restricted participation will therefore be established in the tender specifications. In this case, participation should in principle be open only to entities established in the EU Member States. Participation of entities established in Horizon Europe associated countries or in third countries will be decided on a case-by-case basis with the approval of the annual work plan submitted to Commission under the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (FFPA).

Form of Funding: Indirectly managed actions

Type of Action: Indirectly managed action

Indicative budget: EUR 58.00 million from the 2025 budget

## **2. ESA.2 - Heading 3 of Space - Using Space on Earth – Telecommunications - IRIS2 Space infrastructure: Development and Validation**

The Commission has adopted a proposal for a Union Programme for Secure Connectivity. The future IRIS<sup>2</sup> system – Infrastructure for Resilience, Interconnectivity and Security by Satellites – should upon the GOVSATCOM component of the EU Space Programme, which should also take advantage of additional national and European capacities and develop further the European Quantum Communication Infrastructure (EuroQCI) initiative. This action should therefore enable and support the development and validation actions for the construction of the initial space and ground infrastructure required for the provision of governmental services.

These activities are due to be entrusted to ESA under a Contribution Agreement between the Commission and ESA. In particular, ESA will perform the following tasks: infrastructure development and validation activities as required to achieve full validation activities (including performances) of IRIS<sup>2</sup>, that will be implemented by the future Concessionaire.

IRIS<sup>2</sup> implementation will include system architecture tasks, engineering and design of non-recurring items, development, manufacturing, security and technology EU non-dependence aspects and all necessary qualification and tests of space and ground segments. It will also include all the new developments that are needed to achieve the programme's objectives, as well as all the early validations deemed as necessary for an early elimination of the technical risks (e.g., interface and functional testing between blocks).

However, the detailed perimeter of activities for the Entrusted Tasks industrial activities will be based on the selected contractors' final proposal.

The procurement actions under this section will affect the essential security interests of the Union. In accordance with Art. 136 of the EU Financial Regulation, restricted participation will therefore be established in the tender specifications. In this case, participation should in principle be open only to entities established in the EU Member States. Participation of entities established in Horizon Europe associated countries or in third countries will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Proposals under this topic, aiming or contributing to technology development for EU non-dependence are expected to be complementary and in synergies with already funded actions directly managed by the Commission, in the context of critical space technology for EU non-dependence developments. In particular, the topics: Critical Space Technologies for EU non-dependence (HORIZON-CL4-2021-SPACE-01-81, HORIZON-CL4-2022-SPACE-01-82, HORIZON-CL4-2023-SPACE-01-72, HORIZON-CL4-2024-SPACE-01-73); HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-71: Space Critical EEE Components for EU non-dependence – RISC-V Microprocessor on 7nm; HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-72: Space Critical Equipment and Related Technologies for EU non-dependence – Chip Scale Atomic Clocks and Solar Cells; HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-73: Space Critical EEE Components for EU non-

dependence – Connectors; HORIZON-CL4-2025-02-SPACE-74: Space Critical EEE Components for EU non-dependence – Advanced Packages and Memories.

Form of Funding: Indirectly managed actions

Type of Action: Indirectly managed action

Indicative budget: EUR 75.50 million from the 2025 budget

### **3. ESA.3 - Heading 11 of Space - Boosting Space through IOD/IOV opportunities - In Orbit Demonstration/Validation (IOD/IOV) service**

To ensure EU non-dependence and competitiveness in technologies, there is a clear need for a regular, sustainable, cost-effective and responsive In Orbit Demonstration/Validation (IOD/IOV) service in the EU. Space flight heritage in real conditions and environment is often required to de-risk new technologies, products, concepts, architectures, services and operations techniques be that for unique or recurrent, institutional or commercial missions.

Intended results of the action is to provide a service for regular aggregation (if needed), launch and operations in orbit for IOD/IOV experiments; the objective is to have at least one opportunity every year during the Horizon Europe implementation period. This will contribute to reduce the time to market or operational use of new technologies, products, concepts, architectures, and operations techniques.

The IOD/IOV activities intend to provide a regular and cost-effective service and solution for common flight ticket actions (management, spacecraft design including reuse of existing solutions, assembly, integration and tests, launch and operations) based on EU solutions both for the spacecraft (i.e. platform, experiments aggregation, operations in orbit including preparation and associated Ground Segment) and for the launch services.

The scope of the activities may include mission design, integration and implementation, for all the necessary tasks to prepare, provide and operate spacecraft(s), together with the related ground segment, which accommodates the selected IOD/IOV experiments as well as the associated launch services.

For the aggregation and operations, the activities include:

- System studies, at ground and space level, including the compatibility with the available launchers;
- Input to the launch mission analysis performed by the launch service provider;
- Selection, assembly, integration and testing of the spacecraft(s) and related ground segment;
- Management of interfaces with and between the different IOD/IOV experiments, between the spacecraft and the launcher and between the spacecraft and the ground segment;

- Preparation of the spacecraft(s) for the flight;
- In-orbit testing and operations including data provision.

Concerning launch aspects, IOD/IOV activities should support the European launcher exploitation policy, therefore relying as far as possible on EU manufactured launcher solutions launched from the EU territory. The actions will include the provision of flight opportunities with EU manufactured launchers which encompass the mission analysis, the verification of interfaces between the spacecraft and the launcher, the preparation of launch campaign and the flight up to the injection of the spacecraft(s) on the required orbit(s).

These activities and associated procurement actions will be implemented by ESA in line with the Contribution Agreement between the Commission and ESA.

Form of Funding: Indirectly managed actions

Type of Action: Indirectly managed action

Indicative budget: EUR 8.00 million from the 2025 budget

### **Indirectly managed actions delegated to EUSPA**

#### **1. EUSPA.3 - Heading 12 of Space – Boosting Space through support to entrepreneurship – 2025 CASSINI activities**

Business development, acceleration and upscaling of start-ups will be fostered across all space areas under the CASSINI Space Entrepreneurship Initiative. CASSINI will provide support to business and innovation-friendly ecosystems, including the strengthening of business skills in the space market segments and digital services based on space data. The objective is to make start-ups and scale-ups investment-ready and able to secure venture capital funding, including by organising events. Synergies with the InvestEU programme and the EU Space programme will be established. The following action will be funded: CASSINI innovation support.

Legal entities:

European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA), Janovského 438/2 170 00 Prague 7 – Holesovice Czech Republic

Form of Funding: Indirectly managed actions

Type of Action: Indirectly managed action

Indicative budget: EUR 0.50 million from the 2025 budget

#### **2. EUSPA.2 - Heading 6 of Space - Using Space on Earth – Services & Data coming from satellites, both Earth Observation and navigation**

We need to make the best use of EGNSS and Copernicus capacities for EU citizens, companies and society. Research and innovation will foster the development of EGNSS and



Copernicus downstream applications and promote their adoption in the EU and worldwide. A call for proposals under this area will address downstream R&D activities to be launched by the European Union Space Programme Agency (EUSPA) in accordance with the specification included in Appendix below.

Legal entities:

European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA), Janovského 438/2 170 00 Prague 7 – Holesovice Czech Republic

Form of Funding: Indirectly managed actions

Type of Action: Indirectly managed action

Indicative budget: EUR 15.00 million from the 2025 budget

Appendix to action EUSPA.2

**Call - Services & Data coming from satellites**

***HORIZON-EUSPA-2026-SPACE-03***

**Overview of this call<sup>247</sup>**

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

Topics	Type of Action	Budgets (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million) <sup>248</sup>	Indicative number of projects expected to be funded
		2025		
Opening: 14 Oct 2025				
Deadline(s): 10 Feb 2026				
Heading 7 - Using Space on Earth – Services & Data coming from satellites, both Earth Observation and navigation				
HORIZON-EUSPA-2026-SPACE-02-51: Space Data Economy	IA	10.00 <sup>249</sup>	1.50 to 2.50	5
HORIZON-EUSPA-2026-SPACE-02-52: Innovative space-based applications enhancing capabilities for a resilient	IA	5.00 <sup>250</sup>	1.50 to 1.80	4

<sup>247</sup>

<sup>248</sup> Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

<sup>249</sup> Of which EUR 10.00 million from the 'na' budget.

<sup>250</sup> Of which EUR 5.00 million from the 'na' budget.

Europe				
Overall indicative budget		15.00		

**General conditions relating to this call**

**Destination 5: Open Strategic Autonomy in Developing, Deploying and Using Global Space-Based Infrastructure, Services, Applications and Data**

**Heading 7 - Using Space on Earth – Services & Data coming from satellites, both Earth Observation and navigation**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-EUSPA-2026-SPACE-02-51: Space Data Economy**

<b>Call: Services &amp; Data coming from satellites</b>	
<b>Specific conditions</b>	
<i>Expected EU contribution per project</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.50 and 2.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.
<i>Indicative budget</i>	The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 10.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>	Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>	If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 7-9 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector. Activities may start at any TRL.
<i>Procedure</i>	To ensure a balanced portfolio covering all the areas described in the scope section, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to one proposal that is the highest ranked within each priority area, provided that the applications attain all thresholds.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	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). <sup>251</sup> .
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Expected Outcome: This topic aims at supporting activities that are enabling or contributing to overcoming sectorial demand fragmentation and support scale up of the space data<sup>252</sup> use, increasing the wider uptake and mass adoption of the EU space data in selected priority areas that are strategic for Europe. To that end, proposals under this topic should aim to deliver results that are directed, tailored towards and contributing to some or all of the following expected outcomes:

- Foster the development and prepare for the commercialisation of innovative space-based solutions that supports an informed decision making of relevant stakeholders (e.g. energy operators, city and regional authorities, financial institutions, insurance companies, corporations, food/industrial manufacturing etc.);
- Leverage EGNSS-based and Copernicus-based capabilities to modernize and increase the efficiency and resilience of energy infrastructure and/or urban environment, and/or support the use of green financing schemes addressing environmental challenges as well as implementing climate resilient practices in the downstream sector;
- Analyse and support the consolidation of the sectorial demand for solutions based on EGNSS and Copernicus services and data, possibly also exploring the synergies with EU space based secure communication and surveillance, addressing the challenges identified in priority areas and leveraging the relevant regulatory environment.

Scope: Europe has made a considerable investment in its space infrastructure, resulting in two pivotal outcomes: first, a strategic autonomy of the continent, and second, a surge in economic growth driven by space-enabled applications. Additionally, Europe boasts a thriving sector offering space data, services and products, which continues to show steady growth.

The market for space data and services is fragmented, both on the side of supply and demand. A fragmented and underdeveloped demand from both public and private users does not allow for scaling up, hindering the realization of the full potential of the EU Space infrastructure.

Space data can be used in almost all industry verticals in the EU and worldwide. While some sectors are already using space data to high extent, providing benefits to the citizens, economy and environment, other sectors are only marginally testing the ground. The demand creation is progressing, however, in order to foster the space data economy, it is needed to scale up and accelerate the market uptake and mass adoption of space data, in the context of the applicable legal framework.

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<sup>251</sup> 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](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

<sup>252</sup> Space data relates to data and services provided by the EU Space programme components.

In order to achieve this, the proposals should focus on the development of innovative solutions, tailored to the specific needs of downstream industries and verticals and addressing inherent sectorial demand fragmentation issues. There is also an untapped potential of using space data to bolster green and digital transitions, presenting an opportunity to create innovative solutions in these domains.

Moreover, the projects should leverage the existing relevant sectorial regulations and policies, by exploring how the proposed solutions using space data and services can support these regulations.

Projects supporting the integration of EU Space data and services into vertical market segments should focus on one of the following selected priority areas (and identify which area is being addressed in the proposal):

- **Energy** (renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy infrastructure) In the face of energy supply shortages and climate change, the demand for renewable energy is rapidly increasing. Driving this demand is the fact that renewables are reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning the world towards a sustainable future. Moreover, energy efficiency initiatives aim to optimize energy consumption across various sectors, from manufacturing to residential spaces, fostering a more sustainable and responsible approach to energy use. To expedite this transition, space data and services enable energy stakeholders to make informed decisions about the deployment and management of renewable energy infrastructure and to gain insights into energy consumption patterns across diverse sectors and geographic regions. Examples of downstream innovation in this context is the use of GNSS and EO technologies to enhance energy infrastructure resilience and efficiency in smart grids by adapting to real-time demand changes or to facilitate the monitoring and management of electricity distribution networks.
- **Climate adaptation and Environmental footprint reduction**: The implementation of effective Climate adaptation measures can foster climate resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change, in communities, ecosystems and infrastructure. GNSS and EO technologies provide accurate and up to date data for assessing climate risks, prioritizing adaptation measures and allocate resources effectively to reduce environmental footprint, enabling a deeper understanding of climate change impacts and informing effective mitigation strategies. This includes the development of innovative downstream applications to prepare and respond effectively, improving disasters preparedness through early warning systems for extreme events, strengthening biodiversity and ecosystems services, promote afforestation and reforestation, manage water resources and water allocation more efficiently, implement climate resilient agriculture practices. Moreover, space-based solutions play a crucial role to reduce resource consumption, environmental impact, pollution and ecological degradation, fostering industry sustainability practices. Proposals should address one or more of the aforementioned areas, leverage digital tools based on innovative technologies such as AI/Big Data/Quantum/Blockchain/Digital Twins, etc., explore synergies with Satcom, as

well as ensure the involvement of private sector as end users for the proposed solution and commercial exploitation.

- **Green financing and insurance:** Green financing involves the allocation of funds to support environmentally sustainable projects. Concurrently, green insurance offers coverage for risks tied to sustainability, climate change, and eco-friendly activities. These insurance products incentivize responsible practices, providing protection against environmental challenges. Both green financing and insurance contribute to fostering sustainability by directing financial resources and risk management strategies toward initiatives that promote positive environmental and social outcomes. Space technologies can play a pivotal role by providing accurate data to ensure transparency, accountability and risk management for the assessment and monitoring of environmental projects funded by green financing.
- **Liveable cities of the future:** The share of the world's population living in cities is constantly increasing. Currently governments have the goal to move cities towards a better liveable future. Tomorrow cities can drive and take advantage of innovation and new downstream space technologies as they are the biggest digital platform. Solutions should develop space-based applications and technologies with focus on commercial exploitation for the modernisation of cities. Examples of areas to be analysed are smart waste and waste water managements, drinking water management, green constructions, urban green, urban mobility and public transports, urban logistics, health and well-being, public safety, sustainable tourism, as well as the monitoring of urbanisation patterns (e.g. land coverage, urban sprawl, heat islands), assessing the link between urban and peri urban/rural areas and interdependencies of cities with their regional areas, improving disasters preparedness and preventive/proactive urban planning, supporting investment in more climate resilient infrastructures etc. In parallel with modernisation of liveable cities another important objective is to preserve the past and valorise the cultural heritage trough monitoring sites mitigating the effects of mass tourism, climate change, subsidence and pollution. Synergies with satellite communications can also be explored. Proposals are expected to ensure the involvement of cities' authorities as either end users or regulatory authorities supporting the uptake of the proposed innovative solutions.

Each proposal should address only one of the four areas outlined above, which must be clearly identified.

The proposals under this topic should present a business plan.

Proposals are expected to promote cooperation between different actors (industry, SMEs and research institutions, city authorities, and where relevant, Copernicus Entrusted Entities) and consider opportunities to quickly turn technological innovation into commercial exploitation.

When applicable and upon request of the granting authority, the beneficiaries may be asked to interact with the EU Space Programme, through the most relevant expert group(s) configuration(s), with the purpose of giving feedback about the EU Space Programme.

Proposals under this topic should explore synergies with Space Based Communication, Navigation and Surveillance (CNS) systems, and be complementary to already funded actions in the context of technology development at component level. In particular, it is expected that projects make use of existing European technologies and/or building blocks at component level contributing to European non-dependence and strengthen competitiveness. Furthermore, proposed activities should be complementary to national activities and activities funded by the European Space Agency (ESA) and if applicable Destination Earth.

Proposals addressing Galileo PRS (Public Regulated Service) related applications are not in the scope of this action.

International cooperation is encouraged in this topic.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

**HORIZON-EUSPA-2026-SPACE-02-52: Innovative space-based applications enhancing capabilities for a resilient Europe**

<b>Call: Services &amp; Data coming from satellites</b>		
<b>Specific conditions</b>		
<i>Expected contribution per project</i>	<i>EU per</i>	The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 1.50 and 1.80 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 5.00 million.
<i>Type of Action</i>		Innovation Actions
<i>Eligibility conditions</i>		<p>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation and/or related timing data and services, beneficiaries must make use of Copernicus and/or Galileo/EGNOS (other data and services may additionally be used).</p> <p>The following additional eligibility criteria apply: This topic requires participation, as beneficiaries, of at least two crisis or security practitioner<sup>253</sup> organisations or agencies, established in at least two different EU Member States or Associated Countries. For participants with practitioner status, applicants must fill in the table “Information</p>

<sup>253</sup> Crisis or security practitioners has the meaning of organisations or agencies actively engaged in crisis or security operations, involved in e.g., law enforcement, customs, environmental crime management, smuggling and trafficking fighting and counter-terrorism, border and maritime surveillance, critical infrastructure operators, public safety, fundamental rights, disaster first/second responders, civil protection authorities, humanitarian aid etc.

	about security practitioners” in the application form with all the requested information, following the template provided in the submission IT tool.
<i>Technology Readiness Level</i>	Activities are expected to achieve TRL 7-9 by the end of the project. The reference TRL definition is the ISO 16290:2013 applicable to the space sector. Activities may start at any TRL.
<i>Procedure</i>	To ensure a balanced portfolio covering all the areas described in the scope section, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to one proposal that is the highest ranked within each priority area, provided that the applications attain all thresholds.
<i>Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements</i>	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). <sup>254</sup> .

**Expected Outcome:** Projects’ results are expected to contribute to some or all of the following outcomes:

- Foster the development and validation of integrated synergistic space technologies that support the operational work of crisis and security practitioners (e.g. law enforcement, customs, first/second responders, critical infrastructure operators, border or coast guards, civil protection authorities etc);
- Improve, operationalize and mainstream EGNSS-based and possibly Earth observation-based services that enhance the resiliency and security (including cybersecurity) of the EU, reinforcing their acceptance, adoption and usage of the developed solution(s) among practitioners. Synergies with secure satellite communications can also be explored;
- Improve the wide uptake and penetration of EU Space Programme data and services, and in particular EGNSS differentiators (OSNMA - Open Service Navigation Message Authentication, HAS - High Accuracy Service, RLS - Return Link Service, EWSS – Emergency Warning Satellite Service etc.), in the everyday operations and tasks of crisis and security practitioners, increasing their awareness and ability to operate efficiently and with safety;

<sup>254</sup> This [decision](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf) is available on the Funding and Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under ‘Simplified costs decisions’ or through this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision\\_he\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf)

- Identify new, and analyse existing, capability gaps of security practitioners, that space technologies can bridge, demonstrating on the field innovative solutions based on EGNSS and possibly other EU Space Programme components such as Copernicus;
- Create new space-based commercial opportunities for innovative businesses serving practitioner organisations.

Scope: Proposals should be built on the exploitation of the distinguishing features of Galileo and EGNOS seeking to enhance the way practitioners prepare for and manage crises and security operations. Proposals should develop applications and technologies that focus on commercial exploitation in one of the following priority areas, which must be clearly indicated:

- Development of EGNSS-based spoofing-proof downstream solutions to support the digital transformation of security practitioners in security-critical operations (e.g. Law Enforcement Agencies, Custom Authorities, Border and Coast Guards, etc) in various applications, including: environmental crimes management, prevention of smuggling and trafficking, counter-terrorism, border and maritime surveillance, migration management, fugitive search, public safety and fundamental rights, illegal poaching, customs operations and Electronic Freight Transport Information, dangerous goods transportation, usage of robots and/or automated Galileo-enabled platforms for surveillance, etc.;
- Development of EGNSS-based downstream solutions to support the resiliency and functioning of critical infrastructures in EU (e.g. digital infrastructure, drinking water supply and distribution, water waste management, healthcare, e-government, etc.);
- Development of EGNSS-based downstream solutions to support crisis management operations: drone-supported operations, improved and safer asset management systems, AR/VR for first responders, novel EGNSS smartphone-sized or wearable technologies, UneXploded Ordnance (UXO) risk assessment and clearance for humanitarian operations, etc.

Proposals are also expected to address cybersecurity threats in the description of the solution(s).

Proposals should, when relevant, integrate other data sources/services from other EU Space Programme components, in particular Copernicus and/or GOVSATCOM. Where appropriate, the beneficiaries are encouraged to interact with the relevant Entrusted Entities managing the Copernicus Emergency Management Service and/or the Copernicus Security Service.

The action focuses on the development of close to market EGNSS downstream applications through the realisation of large-scale demonstration and implementation projects, with the participation of relevant crisis and/or security practitioners.



Developed applications should have a clearly defined commercial potential and should respond to user needs. The solution(s) developed is/are expected to achieve TRL 7-9 by the end of the project.

Proposals should deliver new innovative applications, identifying and addressing existing gaps, leveraging the existing relevant sectorial regulations and policies and exploring how the solutions implemented using space data and services can address these regulations and be commercialised. Proposals should also highlight the expected impact and define a clear market uptake strategy, presenting a credible post-project pathway to operations. The developed solutions may integrate other non-space technologies like IoT, big data, artificial intelligence, drones, 5G, augmented/mixed reality etc.

For proposals under this topic:

- A Business Plan should be provided as part of the proposal, to evidence the user requirements, the sustainability of the project, and opportunities for wide adoption in Europe according to standards and operational needs;
- Participation of industry, in particular SMEs and midcaps, is encouraged;
- Participation of, or outreach to, entities based in countries without a space tradition is encouraged;
- Involvement of post-graduate researchers (engineers, scientists, and others) is also encouraged, for example through professional work experience or through fellowships/scholarships when applicable;
- When appropriate, Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) should be considered to maximize public trust in the solution and robustness and quality of results/data.

Proposals addressing Galileo PRS (Public Regulated Service) related applications are not in the scope of this action.

Proposals should seek to leverage and/or create synergies with relevant projects and activities funded under Horizon Europe Cluster 3: Civil security for society, reinforcing the cross-fertilization of research and innovation in this domain.

In this topic, the integration of the gender dimension (sex and gender analysis) in research and innovation content should be addressed only if relevant in relation to the objectives of the research effort.

**Horizon Europe - Work Programme 2025**  
**Digital, Industry and Space**

**Budget<sup>255 256</sup>**

	Budget line(s)	2025 Budget (EUR million)	2027 Budget (EUR million)
<b>Calls</b>			
HORIZON-CL4-2025-01		476.00 <sup>257</sup>	45.00
	<i>from 01.020240</i>	476.00	45.00
HORIZON-CL4-2025-02		134.00 <sup>258</sup>	
	<i>from 01.020240</i>	134.00	
HORIZON-CL4-2025-03		404.10	
	<i>from 01.020240</i>	404.10	
HORIZON-CL4-2025-04		132.00	
	<i>from 01.020240</i>	132.00	
HORIZON-CL4-2025-05-two-stage		161.00	
	<i>from 01.020240</i>	161.00	
<b>Other actions</b>			
Public procurement		33.82	
	<i>from 01.020240</i>	33.82	

- <sup>255</sup> The budget figures given in this table are rounded to two decimal places.  
The budget amounts are subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for 2025.
- <sup>256</sup> The contribution from Cluster 4 for the year 2025 is EUR 100.77 million for the Missions work programme part and EUR 18.38 million for the New European Bauhaus Facility work programme part.
- <sup>257</sup> To which EUR 12.00 million from the 'Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment' budget and EUR 6.00 million from the 'Climate, Energy and Mobility' budget will be added making a total of EUR 494.00 million for this call.
- <sup>258</sup> To which EUR 5.00 million from the 'Climate, Energy and Mobility' budget will be added making a total of EUR 139.00 million for this call.

**Horizon Europe - Work Programme 2025**  
**Digital, Industry and Space**

Specific grant agreement		47.50	
	<i>from</i> <i>01.020240</i>	<i>47.50</i>	
Grant awarded without a call for proposals according to Financial Regulation Article 198(e)		3.35	
	<i>from</i> <i>01.020240</i>	<i>3.35</i>	
Grant awarded without a call for proposals according to Financial Regulation Article 198		19.00	
	<i>from</i> <i>01.020240</i>	<i>19.00</i>	
Provision of technical/scientific services by the Joint Research Centre		0.49	
	<i>from</i> <i>01.020240</i>	<i>0.49</i>	
Expert contract action		1.73	
	<i>from</i> <i>01.020240</i>	<i>1.73</i>	
Subscription action		0.05	
	<i>from</i> <i>01.020240</i>	<i>0.05</i>	
Indirectly managed action		157.00	
	<i>from</i> <i>01.020240</i>	<i>157.00</i>	
<b>Estimated total budget</b>		1570.04	45.00