

Horizon Europe – European Innovation Ecosystems

What is Horizon Europe?

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation with a budget of €95.5 billion for the period 2021-2027. It tackles climate change, helps to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts Europe's competitiveness and growth.

The programme facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges. It supports the creation and better sharing of knowledge and technologies.

It also creates jobs, fully engages Europe's talent pool, boosts economic growth, promotes industrial competitiveness and optimises investment impact within a strengthened European Research Area.

For information on UK participation in the programme see UKRO's [dedicated factsheet](#).

What are European Innovation Ecosystems?

'European Innovation Ecosystems' is the second component of the 'Innovative Europe' pillar of Horizon Europe, intended to better connect innovation ecosystems at the European, national and regional levels. It does this by improving enabling conditions and promoting collaboration between different actors to maximise the impact of innovation ecosystems. Complementarities and synergies with other EU, national and regional programmes and funds, and close association with private entities, are encouraged.

What does the 'European Innovation Ecosystems' part fund?

This part of Horizon Europe funds activities aimed at connecting with regional and national innovation actors and supporting the implementation of joint cross-border innovation programmes by Member States and Associated Countries. Funding is provided for a range of activities from the enhancement of soft skills for innovation to collaborative research and innovation projects to boost the effectiveness of the European innovation system at various levels. This complements the European Regional Development Fund's (ERDF) support for innovation ecosystems and interregional partnerships around smart specialisation topics.

Through this programme part, the Commission funds the [European Innovation Council \(EIC\) Forum](#) to gather together public authorities and bodies in charge of national innovation policies in the Member States and Associated Countries. The main aim of the Forum is to discuss the development of innovation-friendly regulation; promote the alignment of R&I agendas with EU efforts to consolidate an open market for capital flows and investment; enhance coordination between national innovation programmes and the EIC, and establish a joint communication strategy on innovation in the EU.

Opportunities for universities and research organisations

While many of the calls for proposals target national authorities and innovation agencies, some opportunities for higher education institutions exist, for example, in calls focused on expanding academia-industry collaborations.

Relevant EU policy areas and developments

This Work Programme part contributes to all key strategic orientations and impact areas of Horizon Europe and to increasing innovation cohesion.

It also works in complementarity with the [European Innovation Council \(EIC\)](#), the [European Institute of Innovation and Technology \(EIT\)](#), including its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) and the Regional Innovation Scheme, as well as the “Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area” Work Programme part.

It will also ensure synergies with the Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) instrument (European Regional Development Fund) under the EU Cohesion Policy and the regional Smart Specialisation Strategies, Euroclusters under the Single Market Programme, and the Digital Europe Programme.

Furthermore, complementarities will be ensured with the [Start-up Villages as part of the Long-term Vision for Rural Areas](#), the [EU Partnerships for Regional Innovation](#), as well as other relevant funding and policy initiatives at EU, national, regional and local levels, such as the [Enterprise Europe Network](#) and the [European Defence Fund/European Defence Innovation Scheme](#).

More information

- [Horizon Europe website](#)
- [2023-2024 European Innovation Ecosystems Work Programme](#)

Horizon Europe’s legal basis:

- [Regulation establishing Horizon Europe](#)
- [Decision establishing the Specific Programme of Horizon Europe](#)
- [First Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe \(2021-2024\)](#)

UKRO Portal

- [UKRO Portal](#) (subscriber access required)