
HORIZON EUROPE INFORMATION EVENT

European Innovation Ecosystems



João Labareda
Directorate-General for Research
and Innovation

EIE work programme: main elements

- **€0.5 billion budget** under Horizon Europe to create more connected, inclusive, and efficient innovation ecosystems
- **Holistic approach to R&I** focusing on the links between resources, organisations, investors and policymakers
- **Closing the innovation gap between regions** through calls that match regions with different performance levels
- **Bottom-up nature of the EIE calls** allows participants to be in driving seat in deciding on the specific challenges to address, in line with EU priorities
- **Covers diverse dimensions of efficient ecosystems**, including access to finance, experimentation practises, innovation procurement, gender equality and access to global chains for SMEs

Impacts of key EIE initiatives

WomenTechEU

- Supporting **women leading deep tech startups** through grants and business support services
- **50 promising deep-tech start-ups** led by women received funding under the WomenTechEU pilot
- **€10 million euro** were invested in additional **134 deep-tech companies** through the second WomenTech call
- **€12 million** to support further **160 women-led deep tech companies** from WP2023-2024

Regional Innovation Valleys (RIVs)

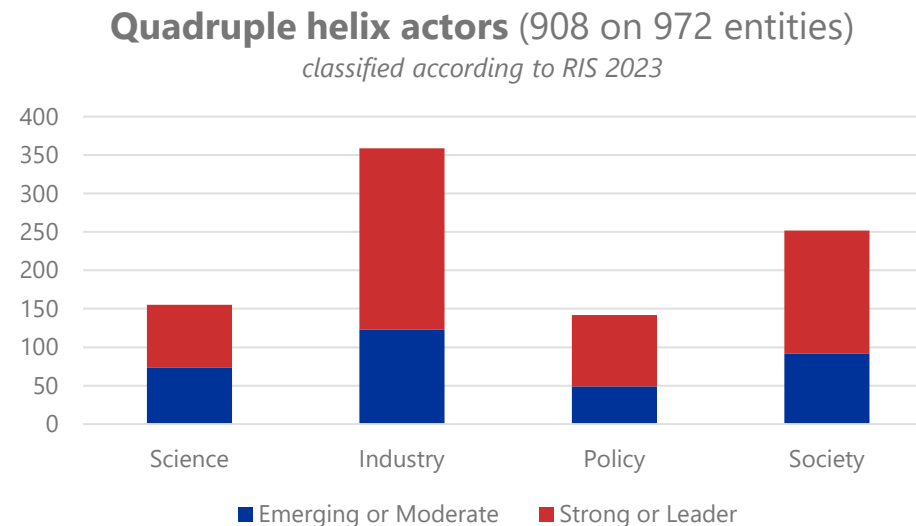
- **149 regions** were selected to become Regional Innovation Valleys
- Each consortia will develop **3-4 interregional innovation projects**
- **Five burning challenges**: reducing the reliance on fossil fuels, increasing global food security, mastering the digital transformation (including cybersecurity), improving healthcare and achieving circularity.
- **€54 million** from EIE WP for first set of projects, matched by **€ 62 million** from the 13 instrumented under the ERDF
- **Building synergies** : 13 regions from 8 MS declared the use ERDF to co-fund their activities

European Partnership on Innovative SMEs

- Eurostars (part of the Innovative SMEs partnership) is the **largest international funding programme for SMEs** wishing to collaborate on R&D projects that create innovative products, processes or services for commercialisation
- EU contribution of **€250 million** for the period 2021-2027, complemented by **€ 750 million** by Eureka EU members
- **680 organisations** funded each year
- **29% of applications** receive funding
- **84% of project partners** form long-term relationships

EIE work programme: A few indicators

- **Highly international dimension** of the programme:
 - All 27 Member States (90.1%)
 - 9 Associated Countries (7.9%)
 - 10 Third Countries (2%)
- In 2021-24 period **270 funded projects** with a cumulative **budget of EUR 384.4M**
- **Armenia doesn't have yet any project funded under EIE**



EIE work programme: future opportunities

Expanding Investment Ecosystems (call closes in January 2026)

- Coordination and Support Action, **EUR 1M per project**, total budget of EUR 5M
- Entities from at least 3 MS/AC, **at least one from a 'moderate' or 'emerging' innovator region and at least one from a 'strong' or 'innovation leader' region** (according to the Regional Innovation Scoreboard/European Innovation Scoreboard)
- Goals:
 - Increased foreign venture investments from funds from 'strong' or 'innovation leader' innovator regions,
 - increased foreign investors' awareness and access to the flow of local deals from 'emerging' or 'moderate' innovator regions;
 - improved foreign investors' knowledge on regulatory frameworks and networks/syndicates to support joint cross-border venture investment in underserved markets

EIE work programme: future opportunities

Expanding Investment Ecosystems (call closes in January 2026)

- **Types of activities**

- **market orientation/introduction programmes for foreign investors**, including establishment of central points of information for foreign investors providing them with knowledge on the ecosystem's establishment conditions, incentives, tax and local legislation;
- **assistance to foreign investors** during the whole process of investment, from the pre-entry stage until the exit, by ensuring support in administrative, legal, linguistic and cultural issues;
- **organisation of European international business forums**, conferences and events to attract and connect foreign investors with local investors;
- **establishing cooperation with public and private buyers of innovative solutions** and with the innovative companies they are buying from; **peer-matching of investors and business angels** and other networking activities to encourage joint ventures;
- a list of **recommendations for local authorities and European regulators** to better address investors' entry challenges and facilitate cross-border deals.

EIE work programme: future opportunities

Startup Europe (call opens in June 2027)

- Coordination and Support Action, **EUR 2M per project**, total budget of EUR 18M
- At least 50% of the beneficiaries in a consortium must be established in **moderate or emerging innovator countries or regions**
- Goals:
 - **Support cross-border acceleration activities for startups and scaleups** that demonstrate traction
 - Increasing the market footprint of European startups in **strategic digital technologies and deep tech**
 - **Better connection of startups and scaleups** to relevant local and/or European ecosystems, communities, and potential new markets

EIE work programme: future opportunities

Startup Europe (call opens in June 2027)

- Types of activities:
 - Appropriate support to thrive in **product-market-fit, financial alignment, business model and revenue generation, team dynamics and leadership**, and **adaptability to external factors** including regulatory challenges, industry trends and market changes
- Projects are expected to prioritise:
 - Startups and scaleups that have already achieved market-product fit or scale ups that have raised at least a round of financing (seed or later); and
 - Startups and scaleups established in 'moderate' or 'emerging' innovator countries and/or regions; or
 - Women-led startups and scaleups

More info

Horizon Europe info day covering EIE call closing in January 2026:

[Online Info session: Interconnected Innovation Ecosystem - 2025 calls for proposals - European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency \(EISMEA\)](#)

Info days covering future calls will be announced in the future