

Horizon Europe

Specific provisions and opportunities for EU outermost regions

The outermost regions face permanent constraints recognised in Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which provides for specific measures to support these regions. It is in this spirit that many EU funds and programmes 2021-27 include specific provisions applicable to the outermost regions. In its [Communication](#) "Putting People first, securing sustainable and inclusive growth and unlocking the potential of the EU's outermost regions", the European Commission has committed itself to facilitating outermost regions' uptake of EU tools to boost research and innovation (R&I), capitalising on their assets, to improve access to excellence and overcome the innovation divide. The Horizon Europe programme is a key tool for this purpose¹.

About Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation. The programme facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges. It promotes the creation and wider dissemination of excellent knowledge and technologies.

Horizon Europe is divided into different pillars, as outlined in the figure below.

Structure of Horizon Europe²

Key Facts

Programme duration: 2021-2027

Total budget: € 95.5 billion

Thematic categories: Research and Innovation (R&I)

Target group: Private enterprises, NGOs and civil society organisations, public authorities, knowledge centres.

Type of funding: Grants, procurement, prizes, investments, equity financing.



1. This factsheet has been elaborated as part of the organisation of seven virtual workshops for EU outermost regions on the following EU competitive programmes: Connecting Europe Facility (CEF); Digital Europe Programme; Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE); Erasmus+; Horizon Europe; Creative Europe Programme; Single Market Programme.

2. Available at: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/ec_rtd_he-investing-to-shape-our-future_0.pdf

Opportunities for EU Outermost Regions

The outermost regions have unique potential and assets that can benefit the entire Union. They provide a European presence in strategic areas of the world and have exceptional geographical and geological characteristics, which make them singular laboratories for research and innovation in scientific domains such as biodiversity, terrestrial and marine ecosystems, pharmacology, renewable energies, and space sciences. Outermost regions have updated their smart specialisation strategies to promote innovation in key sectors, such as circular economy; biodiversity and ecosystems; blue economy (including aquaculture); agro-economy and food safety; biotechnology; (renewable) energy; climate change mitigation and adaptation; ICT and digital technologies; space science; health; tourism, among others. However, their potential remains under exploited, due to their permanent constraints such as remoteness, insularity and small size.

Horizon Europe can support R&I in the outermost regions in these key sectors. The programme reflects the outermost regions' specificities, notably through the inclusion of topics relevant to these regions in its multiannual work programmes. In particular, the outermost regions can benefit from **funding, advisory and international collaboration opportunities** under the **Widening component of Horizon Europe** - with their recent inclusion in the list of eligible parties. The OR can also participate in all other competitive calls under each of the **three pillars of the programme**, as any other EU legal entity, and in the **EU Missions**.

Widening participation and spreading excellence

The dedicated Widening component of the Horizon Europe programme aims to reduce the innovation divide towards a more integrated and cohesive European Research Area (ERA) and contributes to building R&I capacity for countries lagging behind as well as the nine EU's outermost regions. With the inclusion of outermost regions in the beneficiaries of "widening" - which targets "low R&I performing countries" in the current Horizon Europe programme³ - **legal entities from outermost regions are fully eligible as coordinators under the widening component**, which offers various key opportunities for R&I stakeholders in these regions:

Teaming for Excellence: Teaming actions aim to create new or modernise existing centres of excellence in Widening countries through strategic partnerships with leading institutions abroad. The impact can be amplified through complementary investment from cohesion policy funds or other sources.

Twinning: Aims to enhance networking activities between research institutions of the Widening countries acting as coordinators, and top-class leading counterparts at EU level, by linking at least two research institutions from two different EU countries or Associated Countries. Therefore, it builds on the huge potential of networking for excellence through knowledge transfer and exchange of best practices.

European Excellence Initiative (EEI): The action aim to engage with universities and empower them further to be actors of change in research and innovation. It will raise excellence in science and in value creation through deeper and geographically inclusive cooperation in alliances of higher education institutions.

Pathways to Synergies: The purpose is to provide support for setting up the interfaces between two different funding systems, where barriers still occur due to the mismatches of regional versus European approaches. The main goal of the pathway is to move formerly single beneficiaries of cohesion policy programmes out of isolation via cross-border collaboration and prepare for participation in Horizon Europe calls.

Dissemination and Exploitation Support Facility: help beneficiaries of widening actions to improve the effectiveness of their dissemination and exploitation and unlock new sources of funding. Improving knowledge dissemination, technology uptake and spill-over effects is fundamental to ensure that researchers and their institutions build on the latest available knowledge.

3. Article 2(17) of Regulation (EU) 2021/695 establishing Horizon Europe. Available at : <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/695/oj>

Hop-on Facility: Allows research institutions from Widening countries to join already ongoing research and innovation actions under Horizon Europe Pillar 2 and EIC Pathfinder.

Excellence Hubs: Will strengthen regional innovation excellence, through innovation ecosystems in Widening countries and beyond, by teaming up, and creating robust linkages between academia, businesses, governments and civil society.

ERA Chairs: By attracting high-level researchers to a Widening university or research centre, it increases its research capacity. It will establish a research team fully integrated in the coordinator's institution to significantly improve its research performance in a scientific domain of choice.

ERA Fellowships: Supports excellent applicants to Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) fellowships from widening countries who could not be funded on the amin list due to lack of budget.

ERA Talents: Aims to boost interoperability of careers and employability of research and innovation talents across sectors, with a centre of gravity in widening countries. Focused on cross-sectoral talent circulation and academia-business collaboration for knowledge transfer.

COST: Enables researchers and innovators to set-up their own research networks in a wide range of scientific topics.

Pillar I: Excellent science

The [European Research Council \(ERC\)](#) provides funding to top researchers to pursue the most promising avenues at the frontier of science on the basis of EU-wide competition based solely on the criterion of excellence.

The [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions \(MSCA\)](#) supports researchers from all over the world at all stages of their careers, with a focus on their training, skills and career development. The MSCA also provide funding to institutions for the development of excellent doctoral and postdoctoral training programmes and collaborative projects. Particularly important for outermost regions, the MSCA can support the regions to build international strategic partnerships with their neighbouring countries and promote global research mobility and science cooperation, as organisations and researchers from non-EU countries can take part in the actions.

Pillar II: Global challenges & European industrial competitiveness

This pillar provides funding opportunities to boost key technologies and solutions underpinning EU policies & Sustainable Development Goals, divided into 6 clusters:

[Cluster 1: Health](#) aims to improve and protect the health and well-being of citizens of all ages by generating new knowledge, to develop innovative solutions and integrating where relevant a gender perspective to prevent, diagnose, monitor, treat and cure diseases.

[Cluster 2: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive society](#) aims to strengthen European democratic values, including rule of law and fundamental rights, safeguarding our cultural heritage, and promoting socio-economic transformations that contribute to inclusion and growth.

[Cluster 3: Civil](#) security for society responds to the challenges arising from persistent security threats, including cybercrime, as well as natural and man-made disasters.

[Cluster 4](#): Digital, Industry and Space aims to shape competitive and trusted technologies for European industry with global leadership in key areas such as manufacturing technologies, key digital technologies, emerging enabling technologies, advanced materials, artificial intelligence and robotics, next generation internet, advance computing and Big Data, circular industries, low carbon and clean industries, space and earth observation.

[Cluster 5](#): Climate, Energy and Mobility aims to fight climate change by better understanding its causes, evolution, risks, impacts and opportunities, and by making the energy and transport sectors more climate and environment-friendly, more efficient and competitive, smarter, safer and more resilient.

[Cluster 6](#): Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and environment aims at reducing environmental degradation, halting and reversing the decline of biodiversity on land, inland waters and sea and better managing natural resources through transformative changes of the economy and society in both urban and rural areas.

Pillar III: Innovative Europe

The [European Innovation Council \(EIC\)](#) promotes breakthrough innovation with scale-up potential. It provides financial support in the form of grants and equity investments, alongside business acceleration services for researchers, innovators, start-ups and SMEs.

The [European Institute of Innovation and Technology \(EIT\)](#) delivers cutting-edge solutions, entrepreneurial talent and the support environment for innovation to thrive. With its multi-disciplinary network, the EIT provides opportunities for students, innovators and entrepreneurs with entrepreneurial education courses, innovation driven research projects, business creation and incubation services.

EU Missions

EU Missions are a novelty of the Horizon Europe programme for the years 2021-2027. They aim to mobilise and activate public and private actors, such as EU Member States, regional and local authorities, research institutes, farmers and land managers, entrepreneurs and investors to create real and lasting impact. Missions also engage with citizens to boost societal uptake of new solutions and approaches. Each mission operates as a portfolio of actions – such as research projects, policy measures or even legislative initiatives - to achieve a measurable goal that could not be achieved through individual actions. There are 5 EU Missions:

[EU Mission: Adaptation to Climate Change](#) focuses on supporting EU regions, cities and local authorities in their efforts to build resilience against the impacts of climate change.

[EU Mission: Cancer](#) aims to provide a better understanding of cancer, allow for earlier diagnosis and optimisation of treatment, and improve cancer patients' quality of life during and beyond their cancer treatment. [EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters](#) aims to protect and restore the health of our ocean and waters through research and innovation, citizen engagement and blue investments. It supports regional engagement and cooperation through area-based "lighthouses" in major sea/river basins: Atlantic-Arctic, Mediterranean Sea, Baltic-North Sea, and Danube-Black Sea. Mission lighthouses are sites to pilot, demonstrate, develop and deploy the Mission activities across EU seas and river basins.

[EU Mission: Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities](#) involve local authorities, citizens, businesses, investors as well as regional and national authorities to (1) deliver 100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030 and (2) ensure that these cities act as experimentation and innovation hubs to enable all European cities to follow suit by 2050.

[EU Mission: A Soil Deal for Europe](#) aims to establish 100 living labs and lighthouses to lead the transition towards healthy soils by 2030. It aims to lead the transition towards healthy soils by funding an ambitious research and innovation programme with a strong social science component; putting in place an effective network of 100 living labs and lighthouses to co-create knowledge, test solutions and demonstrate their value in real-life conditions; developing a harmonised framework for soil monitoring in Europe; raising people's awareness on the vital importance of soils.

Example of funded projects

The [FORWARD project](#) - funded under the Horizon2020 programme and gathering all nine EU outermost regions - contributed to improve these regions' innovation potential, to improve their participation in EU research and innovation funded projects, and to link research activities with territorial development.

Several R&I projects have been funded by the Horizon 2020 programme in the EU outermost regions, such as the [European Biodiversity Partnership \(Biodiversa+\)](#) gathering 32 organisations from 21 European countries, mainland and overseas (including Azores, La Réunion, Canary Islands, Guadeloupe and French Guiana). Other examples of EU funded R&I projects in the outermost regions are available on the [FORWARD portal](#).

More information

How to apply?

Calls for proposals are published on the [EU Funding and Tenders Portal](#). There are currently more than 100 calls open for submission and more than 200 forthcoming calls.

More information for prospective applicants about currently open calls and upcoming calls can be found on the Horizon Europe [info days page](#).

Applicable EU law

[Regulation \(EU\) 2021/695](#) establishing the Horizon Europe programme.

Other information

Horizon Europe Programme: [information webpage](#)

Horizon Europe Multiannual Work Programmes: [2023-2024](#)

Horizon Europe Strategic Plan: [2025-2027](#)