**EN**

# Horizon Europe

# Work Programme 2026-2027

*5. Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society*

*(European Commission Decision C(2025) 8493 of 11 December 2025)*

# Table of contents

**Introduction ..... 6**

**CALLS 2026 ..... 11**

**Call - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026 ..... 11**
Overview of this call ..... 11

**Call - Cluster 2 Partnerships ..... 14**
Overview of this call ..... 14

**CALLS 2027 ..... 16**

**Call - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027 ..... 16**
Overview of this call ..... 16

**Call - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027 - Two-stage ..... 19**
Overview of this call ..... 19

**DESTINATIONS ..... 21**

**Destination Innovative Research on Democracy and Governance ..... 21**
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-01: Tackling gender-based violence against politically active women and LGBTIQ people ..... 22
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-02: Understanding the forms of local democracy in low-income and low-middle income countries ..... 25
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-03: Government in transition – how governments change the way they work and prepare the civil service for the future ..... 28
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-04: Sustainable paths to media viability ..... 31
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-05: Research and Innovation Network for a Union of Equality ..... 35
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-06: Governing global commons sustainably ... 37
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-07: Supporting post-conflict democracy and reconstruction ..... 41
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-08: Electoral integrity in the digital context ... 43
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-09: Citizenship education as part of lifelong learning ..... 46
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-10: Digital and media literacy as drivers for democratic and civic resilience ..... 48
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-01: Advisory support and network for countering and preventing radicalisation, extremism, hate speech and polarisation ..... 50

HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-02: Women's, LGBTIQ and minority rights in a context of autocracy, conflict and geopolitical shifts ..... 53
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-03: Student and family engagement for developing a culture of democratic/civic participation ..... 55
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-04: Addressing the impact of artificial intelligence, cyberviolence, and deepfakes on equality, democracy and inclusive societies ..... 58
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-05: Development aid and democratic governance ..... 61
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-06: Identifying user-focused solutions to support news media freedom ..... 64
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-07: The role of private companies in democracy ..... 66
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-08: Global Human Rights and EU values ..... 69
HORIZON-CL2-2027-02-DEMOCRACY-09-two-stage: Open topic on reinvigorating and shielding European democracy ..... 71

**Destination Innovative Research on European Cultural Heritage and Cultural and Creative Industries ..... 75**
EUROPE'S SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY AND COMPETITIVENESS ..... 77
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-01: "Artistic intelligence" : harnessing the power of the arts to address complex challenges, enhance soft skills and boost innovation and competitiveness ..... 77
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-02: Boosting creative startups for disruptive innovation ..... 81
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-03: AI integration in CCSI work practice: catalysing innovation and competitiveness ..... 84
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-04: Towards a fair and transparent market for cultural and creative content in the era of generative AI ..... 87
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-05: Creative alliances: Fostering global partnerships in cultural policies and CCI innovation ..... 90
SUPPORTING PEOPLE, STRENGTHENING OUR SOCIETIES AND OUR SOCIAL MODEL ..... 93
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-06: Safeguarding linguistic diversity in Europe ..... 93
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-07: Preventing and fighting illicit trafficking of cultural goods ..... 97
EUROPE'S SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY AND COMPETITIVENESS ..... 101
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-01: Towards a consolidated culture and creativity driven European innovation ecosystem ..... 101
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-02: AI4Creatives Support Platform: embracing a fair AI revolution ..... 104
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-03: Crafting routes to a circular economy ..... 106
SUPPORTING PEOPLE, STRENGTHENING OUR SOCIETIES AND OUR SOCIAL MODEL ..... 111

HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-04: Culture, heritage and creative industries for health and well-being ..... 111
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-05: Re-imagining the creative economy: the interplay between the cultural and creative sectors and industries and the social economy ..... 113
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-06: Future-proofing sustainable cultural tourism 116
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-07: Societal impact of cultural heritage ..... 120
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-08: Safeguarding & transmission of intangible cultural heritage ..... 124
HORIZON-CL2-2027-02-HERITAGE-09-two-stage: Open topic: Impact-driven research on realising the full potential of cultural heritage, arts and cultural and creative industries ..... 126

**Destination Innovative Research on Social and Economic Transformations ..... 129**
HORIZON-CL2-2026-02-TRANSFO-01: Co-funded European Partnership for Social Transformations and Resilience ..... 131
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-02: Open topic: Strengthen Europe's social model and sustainable competitiveness through productivity ..... 135
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-03: Tackling child poverty and ensuring disadvantaged children's access to Early Childhood Education and Care ..... 137
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-04: The impact of the use of digital tools outside school and for communication on educational outcomes and mental health ..... 138
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-05: Contribution of basic skills to productivity, innovation, competitiveness and economic growth ..... 141
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-06: Making Europe a global magnet for talent - Attracting and retaining students, researchers and high-skilled workers from outside the EU ..... 142
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-07: Fostering competences for the green transition ..... 144
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-08: Strengthened implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and a focus on inclusion, integration, and health ..... 147
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-09: Rethinking long-term care policy in the face of EU demographic shifts ..... 150
HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-10: Fostering cooperation and integration between SSH and STEM research and innovation in the EU ..... 153
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-01: Impact of access to nature-positive environments in promoting social cohesion and reducing inequalities in urban and peri-urban settings 155
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-02: Impact of in-kind benefits on income distribution and on vulnerable populations ..... 158
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-03: Rethinking sustainable competitiveness beyond traditional perspectives: role and contribution of the Social Economy ..... 160
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-04: The impact of EU labour mobility on the Member States of the EU ..... 163

HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-05: The effective use of artificial intelligence in learning environments in pre-primary and primary education ..... 166
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-06: Closing the learning gap: uncovering causes and effective policy interventions for declining youth skills in mathematics, reading, and science ..... 168
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-07: Persons with disabilities: opportunities for labour inclusion and social protection through the life course ..... 171
HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-08: Scaling and deploying innovations in migration management ..... 173
HORIZON-CL2-2027-02-TRANSFO-09-two-stage: Improving socio-economic outcomes for persons with dementia and informal caregivers ..... 175

**OTHER ACTIONS not subject to calls for proposals ..... 179**

**Grants to identified beneficiaries ..... 179**
1. Presidency event (Lithuania): Re-thinking EU's competitiveness: How do cultural and creative industries contribute? ..... 179
2. Presidency event (Greece): Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Futures ..... 180

**Public procurements ..... 182**
1. Studies, conferences, events and outreach activities ..... 182
2. Studies, conferences, events and outreach activities ..... 182

**Other budget implementation instruments ..... 183**
1. Expertise for the design, implementation and evaluation of Cluster 2, Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society ..... 183
2. External expertise - Monitors ..... 184
3. Expertise for the design, implementation and evaluation of Cluster 2, Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society ..... 184
4. External expertise - Monitors ..... 185

**Budget ..... 187**

# Introduction

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

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

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

Activities contributing to the **destination "Innovative Research on Democracy and Governance"**, will provide knowledge, data and scientifically robust recommendations to reinvigorate and strengthen democratic governance, improve critical thinking and trust in democratic institutions. In the long-term, this will contribute to help safeguard fundamental rights to empower active and inclusive citizenship. Research will contribute to understanding current challenges and threats and mapping future pathways for innovative solutions to issues such as addressing the impact of AI and the digital transformation of democracy, reinforcing democratic resilience and civic preparedness and preserving the role of free and plural media as key tenets of democracy. Projects will develop a robust evidence base on which to build effective, relevant and sensible policies that bolster the resilience of democratic systems and protect them from threats, while contributing at the same time to rebuilding citizens' trust in democracy, its institutions, and the sense of political participation in its widest possible sense.

Activities contributing to the **destination "Innovative Research on the European Cultural Heritage and the Cultural and Creative Industries"**, will support research and innovation to boost sustainable growth and job creation through the cultural and creative industries. They will contribute to Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness by boosting the innovation-driving role of the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), and by focusing in areas such as creative startups, the impact of artificial intelligence technologies on creativity and CCIs and promoting a circular economy and global partnerships in cultural policies and CCIs. They will help supporting people and strengthen our societies and our social model by boosting the role of culture, the arts and creative industries for well-being, the social economy and society. R&I actions will explore and strengthen the role of culture, heritage and CCIs in shaping the technologies of the future and focus on safeguarding intangible heritage and

linguistic diversity, on sustainable cultural tourism and on countering illicit trafficking of cultural goods, among others.

At the same time, through the **destination "Innovative Research on Social and Economic Transformations"**, actions will help tackle social, economic and political inequalities, support human capital development and contribute to a comprehensive European strategy for inclusive growth. Activities will improve the understanding of how technological, climate, economic and demographic changes impact society. They will inform the design of policies addressing existing and emerging challenges, harnessing new opportunities (particularly in the areas of employment, education, mental health and well-being) and contributing to reaching the objectives set out by the Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights. A key focus of the activities will be to boost sustainability and inclusion, by supporting vulnerable groups and protecting individuals from discrimination (based on sex, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation).

A new **European Partnership on Social Transformations and Resilience**[1], focused on the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), will be launched under the Cluster 2 work programme part. The partnership will fund research and innovation activities in the areas of the future of work, modernisation of social protection and essential services, education and skills development and a fair transition towards climate neutrality.

Horizon Europe is the research and innovation programme in a system of European and national funding programmes which share policy objectives. Through the programme, special attention will be given to ensuring cooperation between universities, scientific communities and industry, including small and medium enterprises, and citizens and their representatives, to bridge gaps between territories, generations and regional cultures, especially caring for the needs of the young in shaping Europe's future. Funded projects could be EU Synergies grants, meaning that as such, they have the possibility to also receive funding under other EU programmes. To enable synergies by design in this context, project proposers should consider and actively seek strategic combinations with, and where appropriate possibilities for further funding from, other R&I-relevant EU, national or regional and cross-border programmes (such as ERDF including Interreg, ESF+, JTF, EMFF, EAFRD and InvestEU), as well as private funds or financial instruments.

The EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) aims at financing projects that directly tackle the economic and social impacts from the Coronavirus crisis and support the green and digital transition. For project ideas that directly contribute to these objectives and that have a strong focus in one Member State it is advisable to check access to the RRF for a fast and targeted support.

Synergies with relevant Union programmes will be sought, regarding the take-up of research results and innovative solutions developed under Horizon Europe, for example via the following programmes:

[1] see topic HORIZON-CL2-2026-02-TRANSFO-01 in this Work Programme

- Creative Europe: it improves the safeguarding and valorisation of cultural heritage and further supports the cultural and creative sector. Creative Europe can improve sectorial networking and cooperation of Member States and non-EU Participating Countries in the Creative Europe Programme[2] to apply the latest technologies, stimulate new scientific approaches and boost innovation potential stemming from Horizon Europe.

- Erasmus+: it supports efforts to efficiently use the potential of Europe's talent and social assets in a lifelong learning perspective throughout the education, training and youth fields. It promotes measures for the inclusion of people with fewer opportunities, including newly arrived migrants, and supports skills development and citizens' participation and engagement, encouraging young people to engage and learn to participate in civic society and democratic life, raising awareness about EU values, including via online platforms and tools for virtual cooperation. As regards Cluster 2, Erasmus+ projects could benefit for instance from the use of innovative practices for migrant integration in education, up-take of innovative methods for citizen engagement and education for fostering EU values and democracy stemming from Horizon Europe.

- Global Europe, the EU's Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument: it supports and consolidates democracy, rule of law and human rights, supports civil society organisations outside the EU, furthers stability and peace and addresses other global challenges including migration and mobility. The actions can benefit from drawing on the findings of H2020 and Horizon Europe projects regarding trust in governance, countering disinformation and citizens' participation and engagement.

- Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL): while Horizon Europe supports research and development of digital technologies, DIGITAL supports the wide uptake and deployment of innovative digital solutions in areas of public interest (including public administration, justice and education), by setting up and making accessible Europe-wide data spaces and platforms and providing SMEs and public administrations access to the latest digital technologies, for example via Digital Innovation Hubs. Priority actions for the first four years of DIGITAL include "Safer internet for kids", a "Platform for combating disinformation", supporting the EU language technology industry in developing and deploying latest AI-based technologies in all EU languages, contributing to the skills and employment of ICT professionals (including women and girls) and the EU digital platform for cultural heritage, Europeana, which supports the digital transformation of cultural heritage institutions.

- Technical Support Instrument (TSI): by supporting the efforts of the national authorities in improving their administrative capacity to design, develop and implement reforms, the TSI can benefit from the good practices, innovative processes and methodologies identified or developed in H2020 and Horizon Europe projects, and get access to the expertise in research bodies participating to such projects.

[2] list-3rd-country-participation_crea_en.pdf (europa.eu)

- Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV): the programme can draw on the results of H2020 and Horizon Europe projects in the field of citizens' engagement, to support civil society organisations in encouraging and facilitating active participation in the construction of a more democratic Union and awareness raising of EU rights and values.

- European Social Fund Plus (ESF+): The programme aims to promote social cohesion and equip people with the skills needed for the evolving demands of the labour market. Member States and regions can use the ESF+ to mainstream and upscale innovative technologies and solutions in the areas of employment, social inclusion, education and training, including successful models and practices developed under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe. In addition, the ESF+ can support operations and researchers granted a Seal of Excellence under Horizon Europe.

- European Regional Development Fund: ERDF focuses, among others, on the development and strengthening of regional and local research and innovation ecosystems and smart economic transformation, in line with regional/national smart specialisation strategies. It can support investment in research infrastructures, activities for applied research and innovation (including industrial research), experimental development and feasibility studies, building research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies and roll-out of innovative solutions from the Framework Programmes for research and innovation through the ERDF. It helps governments reap the benefits of digitisation and encourages investments in social and cultural infrastructure, the development of cultural services and the conservation of cultural heritage. Interreg is a main instrument of ERDF to support cooperation across regions and countries. Support to the protection and development of cultural heritage, to SMEs, to social innovation in culture and creative industries is central to Interreg. Interreg can also complement Horizon Europe's initiatives by supporting policy learning and regional cooperation.

- European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD): relevant stakeholders can benefit from the dissemination and take-up of R&I results in the field of cultural heritage, in particular in rural and remote areas.

- The InvestEU Programme can fund the uptake of R&I results related to Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) and cultural heritage.

- The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) supports the EU migration policy to strengthen and develop all aspects of the common European asylum system, support legal migration to the Member States and effective integration policies. It contributes to countering irregular migration. Horizon Europe contributes to the implementation of the AMIF providing an evidence base for policies and projects, as regards asylum protection, legal and irregular migration management and migrant integration.

To increase the impact of EU investments under Horizon Europe, the European Commission encourages collaboration between EU-funded projects to build on complementarities through

networking, joint workshops, knowledge exchange, best practices, and joint communication activities. Complementarities can be explored between projects funded under the same or different topics, Clusters or pillars of Horizon Europe. This includes collaborations between projects funded under Cluster 1 and Cluster 2 for complementary actions, such as promoting social inclusion, health equity (including gender equality and support for marginalised groups), and mental health initiatives in education, work, and daily life (including through culture and the arts). The cross-cluster complementarities are set out in detail in the Strategic Plan of Horizon Europe for 2025-2027.

In line with the EU's Global Approach to Research and Innovation, and similarly to the previous Work Programmes, the Work Programme 2026-27 will remain almost completely open to the participation of non-associated third countries to all Research and Innovation Action (RIA) and Innovation Action (IA) topics. In support of the Global Gateway Strategy[3], projects involving international partners should lead to increased scientific knowledge and transfer of technology among partner countries allowing to address global challenges across the world and create sustainable growth and jobs. Cooperation should take place in a value-based way, creating linkages, not dependencies.

Applicants are encouraged to consider, where appropriate, interweaving in the methodology of their proposals open science practices beyond the mandatory requirements of Horizon Europe, such as early and open sharing of research (e.g. through preprints), measures to ensure reproducibility of research outputs, open access to research outputs other than publications or data, participation in open peer-review.

Applicants are encouraged to consider, where relevant, the services offered by the current and future EU-funded European Research Infrastructures, particularly those in the social sciences and humanities domain[4].

Eligibility to participate is subject to the 'Participation of Chinese universities linked to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT)' eligibility condition (see General Annex B of the General Annexes). Furthermore, 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.

The topics in this cluster require the effective and extensive contribution of SSH disciplines and the involvement of SSH experts, institutions as well as the inclusion of relevant SSH expertise, to produce meaningful and significant effects enhancing the societal impact of the related research activities.

---

3 https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/stronger-europe-world/global-gateway_en

4 For a full list of ESFRI-listed research infrastructures see https://ri-portfolio.esfri.eu/ri-portfolio/table. In the social sciences and humanities domain, see for example: CESSDA - Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives (https://www.cessda.eu/), ESS – European Social Survey (https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/), SHARE - Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (https://www.share-eric.eu/) or the European Research Infrastructure for Heritage Science (https://www.e-rihs.eu).

# CALLS 2026

## Call - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026

***HORIZON-CL2-2026-01***

### Overview of this call[5]

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

| Topics | Type of Action | Budgets (EUR million) | Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million)[6] | Indicative number of projects expected to be funded |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2026 | | |
| Opening: 12 May 2026<br>Deadline(s): 23 Sep 2026 | | | | |
| Destination Innovative Research on Democracy and Governance | | | | |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-01: Tackling gender-based violence against politically active women and LGBTIQ people | RIA | 12.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-02: Understanding the forms of local democracy in low-income and low-middle income countries | RIA | 12.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-03: Government in transition – how governments change the way they work and prepare the civil service for the future | RIA | 8.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 2 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-04: Sustainable paths to media viability | IA | 12.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 3 |

[5] 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 2026 and 2027.

[6] Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-05: Research and Innovation Network for a Union of Equality | CSA | 4.50 | 4.00 to 4.50 | 1 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-06: Governing global commons sustainably | RIA | 12.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-07: Supporting post-conflict democracy and reconstruction | RIA | 12.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-08: Electoral integrity in the digital context | RIA | 12.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-09: Citizenship education as part of lifelong learning | RIA | 16.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 4 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-10: Digital and media literacy as drivers for democratic and civic resilience | RIA | 12.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 3 |
| Destination Innovative Research on European Cultural Heritage and Cultural and Creative Industries | | | | |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-01: “Artistic intelligence” : harnessing the power of the arts to address complex challenges, enhance soft skills and boost innovation and competitiveness | RIA | 15.00 | 4.50 to 5.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-02: Boosting creative startups for disruptive innovation | IA | 12.00 | 5.00 to 6.00 | 2 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-03: AI integration in CCSI work practice: catalysing innovation and competitiveness | IA | 15.00 | 4.00 to 5.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-04: Towards a fair and transparent market for cultural and creative content in the era of generative AI | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-05: Creative alliances: Fostering global partnerships in cultural policies and CCI | RIA | 15.00 | 3.00 to 3.75 | 4 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| innovation | | | | |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-06: Safeguarding linguistic diversity in Europe | RIA | 11.50 | 5.00 to 5.75 | 2 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-07: Preventing and fighting illicit trafficking of cultural goods | CSA | 5.00 | 4.50 to 5.00 | 1 |
| Destination Innovative Research on Social and Economic Transformations | | | | |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-02: Open topic: Strengthen Europe's social model and sustainable competitiveness through productivity | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-03: Tackling child poverty and ensuring disadvantaged children's access to Early Childhood Education and Care | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-04: The impact of the use of digital tools outside school and for communication on educational outcomes and mental health | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-05: Contribution of basic skills to productivity, innovation, competitiveness and economic growth | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-06: Making Europe a global magnet for talent - Attracting and retaining students, researchers and high-skilled workers from outside the EU | RIA | 10.00 | 3.00 to 3.30 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-07: Fostering competences for the green transition | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-08: Strengthened implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and a focus on inclusion, integration, and health | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-09: Rethinking long-term care policy in the face of EU demographic shifts | RIA | 15.00 | Around 3.75 | 4 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-10: Fostering cooperation and integration between SSH and STEM research and innovation in the EU | CSA | 3.50 | Around 3.50 | 1 |
| Overall indicative budget | | 298.50 | | |

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

**Call - Cluster 2 Partnerships**

***HORIZON-CL2-2026-02***

**Overview of this call**[7]

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

| Topics | Type of Action | Budgets (EUR million) | Expected EU contribution | Indicative number of |
|---|---|---|---|---|

[7] 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 2026 and 2027.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2026 | per project (EUR million)[8] | projects expected to be funded |
| Opening: 12 May 2026<br>Deadline(s): 13 Oct 2026 | | | | |
| Destination Innovative Research on Social and Economic Transformations | | | | |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-02-TRANSFO-01: Co-funded European Partnership for Social Transformations and Resilience | COFUND | 60.00 | Around 60.00 | 1 |
| Overall indicative budget | | 60.00 | | |

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

[8] Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

# CALLS 2027

## Call - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027

***HORIZON-CL2-2027-01***

### Overview of this call[9]

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

| Topics | Type of Action | Budgets (EUR million) | Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million)[10] | Indicative number of projects expected to be funded |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2027 | | |
| Opening: 13 May 2027<br>Deadline(s): 23 Sep 2027 | | | | |
| Destination Innovative Research on Democracy and Governance | | | | |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-01: Advisory support and network for countering and preventing radicalisation, extremism, hate speech and polarisation | CSA | 3.50 | 3.00 to 3.50 | 1 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-02: Women's, LGBTIQ and minority rights in a context of autocracy, conflict and geopolitical shifts | RIA | 12.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-03: Student and family engagement for developing a culture of democratic/civic participation | RIA | 12.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-04: Addressing the impact of artificial intelligence, | RIA | 20.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 5 |

[9] 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 2026 and 2027.

[10] Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| cyberviolence, and deepfakes on equality, democracy and inclusive societies | | | | |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-05: Development aid and democratic governance | RIA | 12.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-06: Identifying user-focused solutions to support news media freedom | RIA | 12.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-07: The role of private companies in democracy | RIA | 8.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 2 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-08: Global Human Rights and EU values | RIA | 12.00 | 3.50 to 4.00 | 3 |
| Destination Innovative Research on European Cultural Heritage and Cultural and Creative Industries | | | | |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-01: Towards a consolidated culture and creativity driven European innovation ecosystem | CSA | 5.00 | 4.50 to 5.00 | 1 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-02: AI4Creatives Support Platform: embracing a fair AI revolution | CSA | 5.00 | 4.50 to 5.00 | 1 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-03: Crafting routes to a circular economy | RIA | 10.50 | 3.00 to 3.50 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-04: Culture, heritage and creative industries for health and well-being | RIA | 16.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 4 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-05: Re-imagining the creative economy: the interplay between the cultural and creative sectors and industries and the social economy | RIA | 10.50 | 3.00 to 3.50 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-06: Future-proofing sustainable cultural tourism | RIA | 14.50 | 4.00 to 4.80 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-07: Societal impact of cultural heritage | RIA | 15.00 | 2.50 to 3.00 | 5 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-08: Safeguarding & transmission of intangible cultural heritage | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |

| Destination Innovative Research on Social and Economic Transformations | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-01: Impact of access to nature-positive environments in promoting social cohesion and reducing inequalities in urban and peri-urban settings | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-02: Impact of in-kind benefits on income distribution and on vulnerable populations | RIA | 10.00 | 3.00 to 3.30 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-03: Rethinking sustainable competitiveness beyond traditional perspectives: role and contribution of the Social Economy | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-04: The impact of EU labour mobility on the Member States of the EU | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-05: The effective use of artificial intelligence in learning environments in pre-primary and primary education | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-06: Closing the learning gap: uncovering causes and effective policy interventions for declining youth skills in mathematics, reading, and science | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-07: Persons with disabilities: opportunities for labour inclusion and social protection through the life course | RIA | 12.00 | 3.00 to 4.00 | 3 |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-08: Scaling and deploying innovations in migration management | IA | 15.00 | 3.00 to 3.75 | 4 |
| Overall indicative budget | | 277.00 | | |

| **General conditions relating to this call** | |
|---|---|
| *Admissibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General |

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

**Call - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027 - Two-stage**

***HORIZON-CL2-2027-02-TWO-STAGE***

**Overview of this call[11]**

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

| Topics | Type of Action | Budgets (EUR million) | Expected EU contribution per project (EUR million)[12] | Indicative number of projects expected to be funded |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2027 | | |
| Opening: 02 Mar 2027<br>Deadline(s): 04 May 2027 (First Stage), 30 Sep 2027 (Second Stage) | | | | |
| Destination Innovative Research on Democracy and Governance | | | | |

[11] 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 2026 and 2027.

[12] Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-02-DEMOCRACY-09-two-stage: Open topic on reinvigorating and shielding European democracy | RIA | 22.00 | 2.00 to 3.70 | 6 |
| Destination Innovative Research on European Cultural Heritage and Cultural and Creative Industries | | | | |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-02-HERITAGE-09-two-stage: Open topic: Impact-driven research on realising the full potential of cultural heritage, arts and cultural and creative industries | RIA | 20.00 | 2.00 to 4.00 | 5 |
| Destination Innovative Research on Social and Economic Transformations | | | | |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-02-TRANSFO-09-two-stage: Improving socio-economic outcomes for persons with dementia and informal caregivers | RIA | 16.00 | Around 3.20 | 5 |
| Overall indicative budget | | 58.00 | | |

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

# DESTINATIONS

## Destination Innovative Research on Democracy and Governance

The rule of law, respect for human rights and democracy are foundational values of the EU laid down in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. These values provide the Union with principled orientations to meet the inevitable geopolitical economic, social and demographic changes that could not be foreseen at the time the Treaties were drafted. This includes how the digital transformation would affect how the debate and political processes would be shaped.

Democracy is cultural practice as much as it is a political system. It is a key strength of European societies, helping ensure respect for equality, the rule of law, fundamental rights and liberty. Actors with anti-democratic tendencies attack democracies and their institutions because democracy is a safeguard against them [13]. Even traditionally well-functioning democracies face many challenges, which means that they also continuously need to adapt as conditions change. Social sciences and humanities (SSH) research plays a crucial role in understanding current challenges and threats and mapping future pathways for innovative solutions. Building on historical, cultural, social, legal and philosophical perspectives, research will foster the further development of democracy with a view to enhancing citizen participation and inclusive policymaking, promoting equality and inclusiveness, addressing the impact of AI and the digital transformation of democracy. It will also reinforce democratic resilience and civic preparedness, and preserve the role of free, independent and plural media as key tenets of democracy, among other objectives.

Expected impact:

Proposals for topics under this destination should set out a credible pathway to contributing to the following expected impact of the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan:

- Reinvigorating democratic governance by improving the independence, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and trustworthiness of institutions and policies based on rule of law, and through the expansion of active and inclusive citizens' participation and engagement empowered by the safeguarding of fundamental rights.

The aim of the research investment supporting this impact is to develop a robust evidence base that can inform the establishment of effective, relevant and sensible policies, which bolster the resilience of democratic systems and protect them from threats. At the same time, it seeks to foster critical thinking while also reinforcing citizens' trust in democracy, its institutions, and the sense of political participation in its widest possible sense.

[13] The 2025 report of the V-Dem Institute ("25 years of Autocratization-Democracy Trumped?") confirms the appalling signs, indicators and tendencies captured over previous years of measurement: "The trend of the 'third wave of autocratization' is deepening and spreading. That includes weakening of democracy in some established liberal democracies, breakdown of democracy in countries that were democratic for most of the 21st century, as well as deepening of autocracy in already autocratic states […] The global democratic decline deepens, regardless of how we slice the data and whichever measure we use" (pp. 9 and 10)

The destination seeks synergies with other relevant EU programmes, in particular for the uptake of research results and innovative solutions developed under Horizon Europe. Interaction – among others – with the following programmes is encouraged: Digital Europe (DIGITAL), Technical Support Instrument, CERV (Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values), Erasmus+, ESF+ and Global Europe: Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument.

Applicants are encouraged to consider, where relevant, the services offered by the current and future EU-funded European Research Infrastructures, particularly those in the social sciences and humanities domain[14]. Where applicable, proposals should leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud, as well as data from relevant Data Spaces.

As the destination aims directly at citizen engagement and at producing lasting change, it is of particular importance that the research and innovation actions promote the highest standards of transparency and openness. Particular efforts should be made to ensure that the data produced in the context of this destination is FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable). When applicable, it is encouraged to open up the process, criteria, methodologies and data to civil society in the course of the research.

To maximise the impacts of R&I under this Destination in line with EU priorities, international cooperation is encouraged whenever relevant in the proposed topics.

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-01: Tackling gender-based violence against politically active women and LGBTIQ people**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions |

[14] For a full list see https://ri-portfolio.esfri.eu/ri-portfolio/table. In the social sciences domain, see for example: CESSDA - Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives (https://www.cessda.eu/), ESS – European Social Survey (https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/), SHARE - Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (https://www.share-eric.eu/) or the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (https://ehri-project.eu/)

| | |
|---|---|
| *Agreements* | apply:<br>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) [15].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- EU and national policymakers and relevant stakeholders get an enhanced understanding of the drivers of violence against women and LGBTIQ people who are politically active or political aspirants.
- Enhanced prevention and early intervention through better understanding of the drivers and impacts of violence (short- and long-term) on women and LGBTIQ people engaged, or aspiring to engage, in online and offline political activities and how their participation evolves after experiencing violence and harassment.
- Uptake of evidence-based policy recommendations by policymakers and relevant stakeholders on tackling gender-based violence alongside violence against politically active women and LGBTIQ people, promoting equal political participation and addressing harmful narratives.
- Broader adherence to media guidelines on responsible, ethical, and safe portrayals of and reporting on gender-based violence in a political context, embedding gender-sensitive and intersectional reporting and incorporating successful practices with demonstrable, positive outcomes.
- Promotion of an inclusive environment that encourages political participation of women, and LGBTIQ people, notably from underrepresented groups, through collaboration across key public, political and civil society actors.

Scope: The increased participation and visibility of women and LGBTIQ people in public life[16] coincides with a rise in two severe forms of violence: politically motivated violence

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

[16] Entails, but not limited to, public representatives, journalists, investigative reporters, human rights defenders, activists, civil society actors, political figures, and anonymous individuals engaging in the public sphere.

targeting public figures and gender-based violence (GBV).[17] When these two forms of violence intersect, they obstruct progress toward equality, reinforce traditional gender norms and stereotypes, power imbalances, and pose significant threats to democratic societies.

The EU Directive on combating violence against women acknowledges the impact of violence on women active in public life, particularly its silencing effect. The European Commission's 2024-2029 political guidelines place the fight against GBV at the heart of the post-2025 Equality Strategy, notably to empower women in politics[18]. The Roadmap for Women's Rights[19] recalls that women "face higher risks of threats and violence limiting their participation in public life", while the Equality Commissioner's Mission Letter identifies hate-motivated harassment and (online) violence as a key focus for the EU LGBTIQ equality strategy for 2026-2030. The mission letter to the Commissioner for Democracy, Justice and the Rule of Law emphasises strengthening the protection of political candidates and elected representatives facing growing threats and undue pressure.

This violence occurs in various forms, including sexual and physical threats and assaults, harassment, character assassinations, hate speech, disinformation campaigns exploiting misogynistic or anti-LGBTIQ narratives and deceptive image manipulation. With technological advancements, the methods of violence and harassment have moved online and become increasingly sophisticated and viral, exemplified by phenomena like cyber pile-on harassment and deepfakes. Their consequences, however, extend to the physical world, causing physical and psychological harm, as well as impacting professional and personal reputations, quality of life, and family. Proposals should, therefore, explore the wide range of impacts, including the chilling effect on victims, such as their withdrawal from social media public debates or public offices, including political ones. As situations of social, economic or political instability can exacerbate GBV and LGBTIQ-phobic violence, proposals are encouraged to explore how crises affect the nature, prevalence, and prevention of these types of violence, as well as victims' access to support and justice.

Both political and media spheres, including radio, television, print, and online platforms, play a key role in shaping societal norms. Yet, coverage of GBV and cases of LGBTIQ-phobic violence are often sensationalised and biased, particularly when it involves public figures. For instance, little is known on how fictional and non-fictional narratives influence public awareness and perceptions of violence against politically active women and LGBTIQ people. Such gaps can lead to inadequate responses and support systems, while reinforcing gender

---

17 In this topic, political activities and being "politically active" should be understood as going beyond formal institutional structures to include a wide range of public engagement activities, such as activism, community organising, and civic participation. Moreover, the topic calls for research that goes beyond those already active in public life, by examining how violence and harassment affect the aspirations, motivations, and trajectories of girls, women, and LGBTIQ people who seek to engage in public and political spheres.

18 Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029, https://europa.eu/!wywg4P, page 20.

19 COM(2025)97 - Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A Roadmap for Women's Rights. Principle 7 of the Roadmap's annex reaffirms every woman's right to active and safe participation in public life and outlines key objectives to protect and promote this right.

stereotypes and contributing to victim blaming. Proposals should gather data on this impact and counteract sensationalism and misogyny to position media as driver of positive change. Proposals should also include analysis of the impact and potential gaps of existing EU legislation such as the Digital Services Act, and provide recommendations to policymakers.

Proposals are encouraged to explore cultural beliefs and practices, considering fields such as cinema and literature alongside social media platforms to explore how cultural representations and national context influence perceptions and responses to intersecting violence.

In addition, given that politically motivated violence, GBV and LGBTIQ-phobic violence intersect with various forms of discrimination, including racism[20], proposals must consider at least three intersecting factors, such as disability, racial or ethnic background, age, religion or belief or other relevant intersecting dimensions. An intersectional lens is key to understand how the perpetration and experience of violence, including to report and access support, vary according to social, economic and identity-related characteristics of victims and perpetrators.

A multi-country approach using quantitative and qualitative data is key. Proposals should draw on a range of relevant disciplines (including SSH), and engage stakeholders, civil society organisations and individuals directly affected by the issues in the design and implementation of research activities. Engaging men and boys in preventing violence and challenging norms should be an integral part of the research. This could include exploring how arts and humanities approaches can foster critical reflection on gender norms, violence and discrimination.

Where applicable, proposals should leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC). Particular efforts should be made to ensure that the data produced in the context of this topic is FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable).

Proposals are encouraged to identify other relevant EU-funded projects, and to explore potential collaboration opportunities with them.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-02: Understanding the forms of local democracy in low-income and low-middle income countries**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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 |

[20] Racist and anti-LGBTIQ rhetoric especially is on the rise: https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2024/lgbtiq-crossroads-progress-and-challenges; https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2023/black-people-eu-face-ever-more-racism; https://www.ilga-europe.org/report/annual-review-2023/

| | |
|---|---|
| | selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [21].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- EU institutions and national decision-makers are equipped with science-based tools, toolkits, training models, monitoring frameworks, and recommendations to proactively promote inequality reduction, human rights and democracy, in order to lead to more resilient and inclusive democratic societies in low-income and low-middle income countries[22]
- EU institutions and national decision-makers are better able to proactively promote democratic values, principles and practices in low- and low-middle income countries grounded in a better understanding of the actors at local level including their capacity and needs when engaging in democratic practices.
- EU institutions, national decision-makers, and civil society organisations can access and use (evidence-based) good practices for working in fragile contexts[23]

[21] 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

[22] In the context of this call "low-income and low-middle income countries" are understood as the low to middle income non-associated third countries in the list of participating countries according to the Horizon Europe rules for participation and proposal procedure. Source: European Commission, "List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe," Version 5.3 (24.01.2024), p. 3. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

[23] Fragile contexts refer to low- and middle-income countries or situations characterized by weak or failing institutions, limited governance, conflict or violence, economic instability, and humanitarian crises, which hinder the achievement of development goals and undermine the well-being of citizens. These contexts are often marked by a lack of transparency, accountability, and participation in decision-making processes, and may be identified through various indicators.

- EU institutions and national decision-makers understand the role of decentralization processes in low-income and low-middle income countries, and its impact on the quality of public services and on acceptance of democratic processes among citizens.

In addition, projects should contribute to at least one of the following expected outcomes:

- Policymakers, public authorities, and service delivery providers have a better understanding of the link between efficient delivery of public services and pro-democratic sentiment in low-income and low-middle income countries.

- Civil society organisations, and other relevant actors, working in the fields of development cooperation and promotion of human rights have better tools to promote democratic practices at local level in low-income and low-middle income countries.

Scope: Democratic backsliding and human rights rollbacks are increasing globally, especially in low- and middle-income countries, driven by internal instability and external interference promoting non-democratic models. These trends also represent a risk to the security of European citizens and businesses, and a destabilisation factor in the countries and regions with which the EU maintains diplomatic and economic relations. To tackle this, the EU has developed and started to implement several strategies to promote and defend democracy and human rights in third countries[24].

Developing countries with strong local democratic practices, such as elections and representative democracy at levels below the national government, tend to be more resilient against democratic backsliding. Proposals should therefore gather evidence on how actors in economic, political, and social ecosystems at the local level could foster democratic practices, increase citizens' trust in governance and democratic institutions, improve transparency of decision making, and promote respect for human rights. Proposals are also encouraged to gather evidence on different forms of democratic participation and governance at local level, paying particular attention to the inclusion of women and marginalised and underrepresented groups.

In countries where central governments face significant territorial challenges and lack effective control over certain areas, the EU and Member States are left to cooperate with administrations at sub-national levels. In these cases, the objectives of the research projects may be achieved through the consultation and engagement of local administrations and civil society partners. Proposals are encouraged to investigate how EU and national public authorities can operate in these fragile contexts, where central governments do not have sound control of areas of the country.

---

[24] Such as the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020 – 2027, which is linked to the Global Gateway initiative and EU cooperation instruments linked to the Global Gateway initiative and EU cooperation instruments: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2024/Action-Plan-EN_2020-2027.pdf, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2024/Action-Plan-EN_2020-2027.pdf. Examples of EU initiatives include Team Europe Democracy, the Territorial Approach to local Development, and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument, which aim to promote human rights and democracy worldwide by supporting good governance, the rule of law, and human rights protection.

In addition, proposals are encouraged to investigate the link between efficient public service delivery and pro-democratic sentiment, experiences, and outcomes (measured, for example, by civic participation or trust in institutions), deliver a critical analysis of the evidence collected and identify good practices, conditions and methods for their transferability to other contexts.

Research activities should meaningfully involve a wide range of stakeholders and societal actors at local level (public authorities, economic and institutional actors, trade unions, traditional and faith leaders, indigenous people, women's and LGBTIQ groups, and others), including non-scientific and non-academic actors. Proposals are encouraged to involve entities in low- and middle-income countries, to rely on their first-hand competences to steer the methodological approach and perform the data collection and analysis. Proposals are also encouraged to make use of participatory research approaches to enhance inclusivity and stakeholder engagement and experimental methods. They should adopt a multidisciplinary approach, integrating SSH fields such as political science, public administration, economics, cultural studies, sociology, gender studies, geography.

Proposals are encouraged to identify other relevant EU-funded projects, and to explore potential collaboration opportunities with them.

Given the geographical scope of this research, international cooperation is strongly encouraged. Proposals are encouraged to foster collaboration with entities in alignment with the New EU Agenda for EU-Latin America and the Caribbean, New EU Agenda for EU-Latin America and the Caribbean, EU–Central Asia Strategy, and AU–EU Innovation Agenda.

Where applicable, proposals should leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), as well as data from relevant Data Spaces. Particular efforts should be made to ensure that the data produced in the context of this topic is FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable).

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-03: Government in transition – how governments change the way they work and prepare the civil service for the future**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 8.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding as a beneficiary with zero funding, or as an associated partner. The JRC will not participate in the preparation and submission of the proposal - see General Annex B. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [25].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes.

- Country government innovation info sheets, trends, inspiring good practices, the most innovative solutions recently developed or work in progress for next-generation governance and future-informed public decision making in EU Member States and Associated Countries (MS/AC).
- Policy recommendations for both EU level and MS/AC level actions on adopting new governance paradigms, and strategies for enhanced (technical and financial) support for internal government innovation efforts.
- Publication of lessons learned to enlighten government officials and the public about the often-invisible internal innovation strategies and impactful solutions in national governments.
- A comprehensive MOOC (Massive Online Open Course) for government officials with relevant examples and cases.
- Fostering of closer ties and collaboration among MS/AC (and any other relevant actors) to leverage national capabilities in innovative governance and maintain peer learning through e.g. relevant networks and knowledge exchange platforms.

[25] 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

Scope: In an era characterized by numerous concurrent crises, accelerated technological development, and waning public trust in government, the pivotal objective of this topic is to furnish a precise depiction of the current condition of public service in MS/AC, highlight the substantial challenges governments are endeavouring to manage at the same time, the general state of the civil service and the evolution of related public employment management, including HR policy, the organizational framework conditions conducive to innovation and agile operations, and organizational development efforts. Enhancing government capacities to define strategies and develop complex public policies in a swiftly evolving context is imperative. Traditional methods are increasingly ineffective, necessitating a reinvention of government operations.

This investigation intends to shed light on the disruptions currently reshaping the work of governments, the complex tasks they are grappling with, their internal innovation efforts and change processes little known by the public, and to showcase the immense investment and good practices governments developed and are developing to deal with their core business in radically new ways. Governments take various paths that best suit their ambition, vision, leveraging power and the characteristics of their national context.

Proposals are expected to cover all three focus areas detailed below:

1. **New governance paradigm:** Focus on new governance approaches and reforms in response to declining public trust, from preparation for crisis to anticipatory governance, agile leadership, using an innovation portfolio approach to strategic planning, working with the innovation ecosystem in strategic decision-making, the impacts of digital technology (especially the role of AI, automation, the redefinition of tasks, related opportunities and threats,), open government approaches, democratic participation and central communication strategies, information flows (including social media), and related civil service development governments undertake to stand the ground today and to prepare for tomorrow.

2. **Innovative approaches to public service and policy development:** Solving complex issues needs multidisciplinary (including from SSH disciplines) and innovative approaches to high-quality public service and effective administrative delivery, policy- and decision making, such as citizen participation, stakeholder engagement, systems thinking, role of technology/AI and interconnected data systems and experimentation (i.e. evidence-informed policymaking).

3. **New public employment management and civil service empowerment**: Enabling governments to explore possibilities and transforming the civil service through innovation and public intrapreneurship, HR policy, including a public administration health-check, and capacity building (e.g. upskilling, reskilling, future literacy), the organizational framework conditions (also sensitive to the needs of the next generation of civil servants) conducive to innovation and building resilience, and cooperation with other EU governments (data exchange, mutual support) while building a modern, future-ready civil service.

While national governments in the EU and Associated Countries are the primary focus for this investigation, regional and local governments as well as documented, highly inspirational good practice cases from the global context are of interest to learn from.

This should give voice to the civil service, examining how civil service officials (in various roles, functions and level of decision making, and in their diversity, including gender, age, socio-economic background, experience level, and other relevant personal characteristics) see the changing role of the state, their own role, organizational framework conditions (i.e. people, knowledge, ways of working, and rules and processes), how they cope under the current pressures, and what their visions, hopes and needs are for the future.

The research should build on existing work (data, reports, case studies, networks) by EU institutions, international organizations (World Economic Forum, OECD, United Nations, Chandler Institute of Governance, etc.), schools of governance, national governments and innovation agencies in EU Member States and Associated Countries, complemented by primary data to be collected through large-scale surveying, in-depth interviews, strategic reflection workshops covering key issues in the public governance domain (e.g. the core tasks of government, internal innovation strategies, regaining citizens' trust, etc.), and key stakeholder engagement. The proposals should elaborate on the planned collection and analysis of the primary data (beyond desk research), and on the proposed engagement with senior officials in national government, at European level and international organizations (as relevant), demonstrating deep reach into the national civil services as key factors for the successful delivery of the work.

Proposals are encouraged to take stock of the uptake of provisions of Commission Communication COM(2023) 667[26], and seek complementarity with relevant EU-funded projects, the OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, and the relevant work of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-04: Sustainable paths to media viability**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following |

[26] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023DC0667

| | |
|---|---|
| *conditions* | exceptions apply:<br>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.<br>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, consortia must include, as beneficiaries or affiliated entities, at least one news media organisation[27]. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [28].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Reinforced digital transformation of the news media industry by facilitating the development of new business models, contributing to a more resilient and inclusive democracies.
- Citizens, particularly those facing systemic disadvantages, are empowered and better equipped to make informed decisions, and news media's role as contributor to a healthy, reinvigorated and fair democracy is enhanced.
- Stronger engagement with emerging media creators (such as influencers and other online content producers) to promote transparency and accountability in their role in sharing information, and to foster reliance on trustworthy media sources.

Scope: Democracies are at risk when reliable and independent journalism is at risk. Yet, in order to be truly independent, media need sustainable financing models. At present, journalistic newsrooms are under severe economic pressure. Social media forces them to compete for citizens' attention with other forms of infotainment, which sometimes entail unverified opinions and low-quality or malicious sources. To promote a well-informed

[27] News media organisations are those in which a core activity is the regular production and dissemination of professional news content and/or factual programming, irrespective of its format (audio-visual media, broadcasting, printed news, newswires, multimedia, radio, online, etc.), under the editorial workflows, standards and responsibility of the said organisation.

[28] 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

democratic debate, citizens must be able to distinguish quality journalism abiding by professional standards, from opinion pieces and other forms of content, as free speech can thrive in ecosystems that enhance access to verified information and empower citizens to recognise it. Such ecosystems need to help distinguish sources that apply journalistic principles, including methods to ensure accuracy, independence, objectivity, impartiality, inclusivity and plural viewpoints.

To compete in the digital age, European media need to embrace innovation. The Commission's 2023 European Media industry outlook[29] signalled that "an early adoption and usage of new technologies is key to adapt and open new markets". Thus, applicants are invited to work together with news media organisations from the start to enhance innovation across the news media sectors, including by designing industrial and user-driven applications, on areas and aspects such as:

a) development and take up of methods to recognise content produced with journalistic standards (e.g. through trust indicators, browser plugins, etc.), to categorise such content (e.g. through industry-led crawlers, common taxonomies, metadata standards, etc.) and to promote such content (e.g. through inclusive and transparent news-oriented algorithms, recommender systems that show multiple views and prioritise quality information);

b) identification of AI models that can help media build attractive services (e.g. chat bots, search tools, aggregators) and other relevant models which can generate revenues (e.g. dynamic paywalls, advertising, copyright revenues, etc.);

c) innovative methods to ensure user-centric design and user engagement strategies, in compliance with journalistic standards;

d) roll-out of these models and methods towards the development of truly pan-European innovative platforms and/or interoperable standards within the project lifetime;

e) initiatives to federate media industries along a joint innovation agenda.

Innovation projects should focus on concrete ways to help journalistic content serve democracy by addressing aspects such as:

- ensuring that journalistic content remains economically viable in AI-intermediated information spaces;
- ensuring that journalistic content retains relevance and prominence in AI-driven search tools and future information ecosystems in Europe;
- ensuring that algorithms based on journalistic standards (such as accuracy and inclusion) are developed enhancing professional journalism and preserving a trustworthy information ecosystem;

[29] The European Media Industry Outlook | Shaping Europe's digital future

- making sure that citizens are presented with multiple views online to make well-informed decisions;
- development and integration of journalistic trust indicators in recommender systems, browsers and/or European news aggregators;
- take-up of recommender systems that prioritise trusted sources and professional journalism;
- development of better digital advertising business models for news producers, through proprietary systems that offer more brand safety and sufficiently detailed feedback to advertisers through joint metadata and audience measurement tools;
- development of EU-level business case studies, explaining their impact on creation of advertising revenues, subscription revenues, etc.;
- development and adoption of prototypes for recommender systems, proprietary crawlers, proprietary metadata generators, paywalls, advertising systems or other revenue-generating systems that can strengthen the economic viability of journalism.

Proposals are encouraged to investigate the behavioural dimensions of news consumption, focusing on how reader habits, trust, and perceptions influence engagement with journalism. This may include examining the role of behavioural science in designing interventions (such as nudges, gamification, or educational tools) to counter misinformation and strengthen critical thinking among audiences. Proposals are also encouraged to explore the evolving trust dynamics between human-curated journalism and AI-driven news delivery, addressing how public perceptions of reliability, bias, and transparency differ across these sources.

Where relevant, proposals are encouraged to investigate the need for transparency and accountability mechanisms for influencers and content creators who rely on media content in their work. This may entail advocating for clear disclosure of sources, partnerships, and potential biases, as well as fostering collaboration between content creators and media actors, to amplify the visibility and credibility of reliable information sources, ensuring audiences are informed by fact-based, ethically produced content.

Projects are encouraged to involve the relevant parts of the news media ecosystems to ensure take-up of the proposed models. All news media segments are eligible under this action (public, private media, sectoral media, etc) and collaboration across segments and across borders is encouraged. The participation in the consortia of research and academic actors from relevant disciplines, such as information science and media studies, as well as tech companies (e.g. ad-tech or other) to build workable prototypes, and SSH, is strongly encouraged. Where applicable, applicants should leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), as well as data from relevant Data Spaces.

Clustering and cooperation among the selected projects under this topic are strongly encouraged.

## HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-05: Research and Innovation Network for a Union of Equality

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 4.00 and 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 4.50 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Coordination and Support Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [30]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Policymakers are made aware and are equipped with the knowledge and tools to integrate inclusive and intersectional perspectives into their policymaking, which strengthens their capacity to promote and protect democracy, fundamental rights, and EU values.
- Researchers gain insights on how to translate their findings on intersectional inequalities and democracy into actionable, evidence-based recommendations, enabling them to effectively inform policy and practice at local, regional, national, and EU levels.
- Innovative solutions developed under Horizon Europe and other EU-funding programmes empower equally all citizens, to participate in democratic processes and decision-making.

Scope: This call topic aims to establish a Research and Innovation Network for a Union of Equality. The proposed network should bring together academic institutions, public bodies

[30] 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

and civil society organisations to collaborate and promote the advancement of inclusive, equal, and resilient democratic societies.

The proposed network should contribute to the development of a comprehensive approach to democracy, fostering a culture of participation and inclusivity, and promoting the EU values of equality, justice, and human rights. It should also address how equality and intersectionality are defined across the EU's diverse socio-political landscapes to ensure inclusive policies that account for varying cultural and social contexts. It could also reflect on how to foster the implementation of EU strategies under the Union of Equality.[31]

The network should support the implementation of gender-inclusive and intersectional strategies to counter disinformation, reduce societal polarisation, and re-engage citizens in democratic practices. These efforts could also aim at promoting critical thinking, media literacy, and active civic participation across diverse groups including youth and underrepresented groups. The network could also leverage foresight to anticipate emerging challenges to democracy and inform effective policy responses. Its work should be informed by close contact with elected representatives at local, regional, national and EU levels.

As soon as possible in the network's lifecycle, a dedicated online platform should be established to share evidence-based recommendations and innovative solutions to strengthen democratic practices based on Horizon Europe projects' results and other relevant sources. This platform should be backed by a comprehensive repository that gathers information on existing tools, trainings, data, including disaggregated data, and methodologies for gender mainstreaming and addressing intersectional inequalities. It could also include a collaborative webpage for stakeholders to share information on events, calls for papers, and funding opportunities related to inclusive democracy, gender equality, and intersectionality.

The network should ensure and support the translation of research findings (including from SSH disciplines) into actionable, evidence-based proposals, and to enable the development of practical and effective recommendations that drive positive change at different level of actions (local, national, supranational). Living labs and innovation hubs could be used to provide a collaborative environment for stakeholders to co-create and test solutions.

To foster collaboration and drive progress, the network should host an annual thematic forum, providing a platform for stakeholders and policymakers to meet in person and share innovative ideas, receive feedback, and learn from one another.

As a research and innovation area where freedom of science is enshrined and protected, the European Union offers an ideal environment to advance a career. Therefore, the network should also explore how to ensure a safe and enabling research environment, protecting

[31] In 2020 and 2021, the Commission adopted five strategies to create the conditions for everyone to live, thrive and lead regardless of differences based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation: the LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025, the gender equality strategy 2020-2025, the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030, the EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025, the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion, and participation 2020-2030. Under the 2024-2029 political cycle, the Commission has committed to renew the strategies on Gender Equality, LGBTIQ and anti-racism.

researchers from backlash, hate speech and harassment, and promoting academic freedom and integrity when researching on democracy, inclusive societies, and intersectionality.

The network's actions should contribute to ensuring that the results and innovations generated by Horizon Europe projects related to inclusiveness in the public space, democracy, and governance are taken up and made available to relevant stakeholders. It could particularly build on past and on-going EU-funded projects, such as those under the topics HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01-03, HORIZON-CL2-2022-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-05; HORIZON-CL2-2022-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-08 and HORIZON-CL2-2024-DEMOCRACY-01-05. Proposals are encouraged to identify other relevant EU-funded projects, and to explore potential collaboration opportunities with them.

The action to be funded should have a minimum duration of 4 years.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-06: Governing global commons sustainably**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Procedure* | The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:<br>To ensure a balanced portfolio covering the topic's different thematic areas, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to those that are the highest ranked within each area provided in the scope (areas A, B, and C), provided that the corresponding applications attain all thresholds. Proposals should clearly indicate the thematic area(s) they have selected to work on. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [32].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- EU institutions, Member States and decision-makers worldwide, relevant international organisations, civil society organisations and other societal actors have a better shared understanding of the systemic challenges and the underlying drivers and motivations that undermine managing global commons sustainably.
- EU institutions, Member States and decision-makers worldwide, relevant international organisations, as well as academies of science, higher education institutions and research-performing organisations are better equipped with the tools needed to improve the science-policy interface in the area of foreign and security policies in general, and multilateral / national science advisory bodies in the field of foreign policy in particular with a recognition of the need to engage citizens in a more participatory and inclusive approach to research and policy-making.
- Rules-based multilateralism is strengthened by the development of concepts, methods, processes, and information relevant for decision-making that foster the sustainable governance of global commons within the evolving geopolitical context, thereby informing also the EU's science diplomacy actions.

Scope: Global commons—resources shared by all humanity—are increasingly threatened by overuse and degradation by state and non-state actors. Spaces beyond national jurisdiction, in particular, require collective management to ensure sustainability for future generations. Not doing so will deepen the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and possibly lead to cascading and compounding effects and crossing irreversible tipping points and planetary boundaries. Evolving geopolitical tensions, weakened multilateral cooperation, technological advances, and rising commercial interests from non-state actors, have intensified pressures on global commons. Declining trust in science further complicates efforts to agree on their fair and sustainable governance, risking instability and conflict.

Against the current geopolitical background, there is a need to review the effectiveness of existing legal instruments and to accompany with research the implementation of new instruments. In addition, there is a need to further enhance the impact of existing and evolving

[32] 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

science-policy fora[33] and their links to relevant conventions and agreements. To this end, proposals should perform a comprehensive mapping of actors' motivations and values on societal, corporate and state level that covers different regions and coalitions of countries around the world[34].

Research is also needed into how the current governance of global commons affects intergenerational justice and human rights, including gender equality and the impact on different social groups, and how civil society can be enabled to access information, provide knowledge (including Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities knowledge), and participate in the governance of global commons. This may include conducting research aimed at enhancing citizen engagement and trust in governance processes and efforts, exploring motivations and drivers underlying stakeholder positions in multilateral fora. Proposals are also encouraged to study the rights of appeal and redress in policies related to the global commons, including but not limited to the "rights of nature".

The underlying question is how a sustainable governance of global commons can look like in a multipolar world with competing hegemonic powers that do not necessarily share a common understanding of the merits of cooperation, multilateralism, or even international law. Hence, the overall aim of this call is to develop multi- and interdisciplinary concepts and solutions for governing the global commons sustainably, including through the use of science diplomacy as a soft power and by learning from best practices in the different types of commons, such as the Ocean, Antarctica and Outer Space.

Proposals are encouraged to explore how imbalances in the governance of global commons may contribute to geopolitical tensions, including the outbreak of direct conflicts or proxy wars, as well as the erosion or violation of human rights. They are also encouraged to consider the wider implications of such governance gaps for international stability and the rules-based global order.

Proposals are expected to address one of the following thematic areas:

**Area A: Climate governance**. Projects should consider past and current global climate governance efforts, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, and develop insights for strengthening climate governance, considering the current geopolitical context. Specific attention should be given to analysing the drivers underlying the reproduction of diverging positions towards climate change among stakeholders and possible solutions as well as reinforcing the role of science-policy interfaces such as the IPCC and other relevant science-based mechanisms, e.g., through enhanced citizen engagement to increase trust. Proposals should inform and develop recommendations for EU and global science diplomacy action.

---

[33] Such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution (ISP-CWP), the International Resource Panel (IRP), and the International Platform for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS)

[34] Such as the G7, G20, G77, BRICS, Small Island Developing States, etc.

**Area B: Biodiversity governance**. Projects should consider past and current global biodiversity governance efforts, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, related Conferences of the Parties and their subsidiary bodies, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Projects are encouraged to examine in particular the integration of rights of appeal and redress in environmental decision-making processes, including legal mechanisms to address grievances and ensure accountability, particularly in the context of the "rights of nature" and other innovative approaches to environmental justice. Taking into account the current geopolitical environment, projects should develop options for reinforcing the role of science-policy interfaces such as the IPBES, IPR and other relevant science-based mechanisms, including the Global Knowledge Support Service for Biodiversity and the Subregional Technical and Scientific Cooperation Support Centres, with the aim of informing and developing recommendations for EU and global science diplomacy action. This should include a focus on enhancing access to environmental information for citizens and civil society organisations to empower biodiversity action, as well as mainstreaming gender equality and human rights considerations into biodiversity policy frameworks, in alignment with the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UN HCHR) on the development of human rights norms for biodiversity protection.

**Area C: Governance of spaces beyond national jurisdiction**. Projects should provide a cross-cutting assessment of how different types of spaces beyond national jurisdiction have been governed so far, notably the ocean, polar regions, outer space including the Moon, Low Earth Orbit, the use of the radio spectrum, and dark and quiet skies. This may include a comparative review of the legal frameworks (e.g., Antarctic Treaty, UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, High Seas Treaty, Outer Space Treaty, etc.). Projects should study in a holistic, multidisciplinary manner current and emerging pressures on these spaces, with specific emphasis on the role of non-state actors and develop approaches to governing these spaces sustainably despite geopolitical fragmentation, thereby informing EU science diplomacy action. Examples of application include, and are not limited to, the protection of deep-sea ecosystems, the management of space debris, or the preservation of a dark and quiet sky.

Research activities should meaningfully involve experts with practical experience in the relevant processes and bodies, including policymakers, diplomats, the business sector, academia, and civil society, including indigenous rights holders. Engagement with international partners is strongly encouraged. Involvement of the EU's outermost regions is particularly welcome for area C. Research should have a multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinary systemic perspective, bringing together expertise across natural sciences and engineering as well as social sciences and humanities (including history, law, ethics, and other disciplines). The selected projects should cooperate with each other to foster synergies and links between the different governance frameworks. Proposals are encouraged to identify other relevant EU-funded projects and to explore potential collaboration opportunities with them.

## HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-07: Supporting post-conflict democracy and reconstruction

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [35].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- EU national and local policymakers develop and implement effective strategies for sustainable peace and democratic reconstruction in post-conflict areas, promoting stability, inclusivity, equity, security, human rights, and strengthening integrity and anticorruption measures to ensure transparent, accountable, and ethical use of reconstruction aid.
- EU and national policymakers inform their decision-making with evidence-based recommendations on international cooperation, EU democracy support, and civil society engagement in post-conflict reconstruction, leading to more effective, inclusive and sustainable reconstruction efforts.

[35] 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

- Local civil society organisations and community groups, with a focus on persons and groups in a vulnerable situation in post-conflict countries, provide guidance and support to educators, media professionals, public administrators, and other stakeholders on promoting reconciliation, accountability, and sustainable peace.

- Specialised service providers, including NGOs and community organisations, offer support services and programmes to veterans and the persons and groups in a vulnerable situation affected by the conflict reintegrating them into democratic societies, addressing their socio-economic and psychological needs and promoting successful reintegration into civilian life.

Scope: The aftermath of conflict poses significant challenges for rebuilding democratic institutions, promoting social dialogue, and achieving sustainable peace. In conflict and post-conflict areas, the destruction of infrastructure, institutions, and social fabric can lead to prolonged instability, increased inequalities, human suffering, and a decline in democratic governance.

This research aims to investigate the complex relationships between post-conflict reconstruction, democracy, inequality, and international cooperation, with the ultimate goal of promoting reconciliation, accountability, and social dialogue in conflict and post-conflict areas. By analysing the causes and consequences of conflicts, examining the role of historical narratives and cultural sensibilities, and gathering evidence on key factors such as ethnic violence, inequalities, and conflict legacies, this research seeks to inform the development of effective prevention, resolution, and reconciliation strategies. Proposals are encouraged to examine the prevention of fractured transitions in post-conflict situations, assessing past, present, and future divisions, and incorporating intergenerational and transgenerational perspectives to address potential challenges and promote a more sustainable transition.

Research should have an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on insights from SSH disciplines such as contemporary historiography, sociology, psychology, legal, political science and cultural studies, to examine the complex economic, social, psychological and institutional factors that influence post-conflict rebuilding efforts.

Proposals should adopt a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach, bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders, including research institutions, specialized service providers, local authorities, civil society organizations, local actors, media and information providers, schools, educational organizations, cultural institutions and heritage institutes. In addition, particular could be brought to the role of women as peacebuilders[36].This integrative approach should combine expertise and experience in areas such as conflict resolution, democratic governance, state rebuilding and social cohesion to explore new approaches to post-conflict reconstruction.

Proposals may incorporate participatory research approaches to enhance inclusivity and stakeholder engagement, and should also examine innovative methods, such as participatory

[36] https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/10/compilation-the-power-of-women-peacebuilders

governance, inclusive economic development, and community-led reconstruction, to identify effective strategies applicable in diverse conflict and post-conflict areas.

Proposals are encouraged to identify other relevant EU-funded projects related to EU democracy support, civil society engagement, and international cooperation on sustainable peace and democratic governance, and to explore potential collaboration opportunities with them. In order to achieve the topic's expected outcomes, international cooperation is encouraged.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-08: Electoral integrity in the digital context**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding as a beneficiary with zero funding, or as an associated partner. The JRC will not participate in the preparation and submission of the proposal - see General Annex B. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [37].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

[37] 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

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- EU, national and local policymakers possess the necessary knowledge to inform the development of election regulations, standards and tools that address the use of digital technologies in elections and political campaigns, ensuring their integrity, inclusiveness, accessibility, fairness, transparency, and security.

- Organisations involved in electoral processes develop and implement guidelines for the responsible use of digital technologies in elections and political campaigns, aligned with EU and national regulations.

- Enhanced transparency and accountability in AI-powered political campaigns, achieved through requirements for AI system audits, data disclosure, transparency regarding algorithms and sources of Large Language Models (LLMs), and responsible AI development.

Scope: The integrity of electoral processes in Europe is facing challenges in the digital age. The digital transformation of democratic processes has created new avenues for citizen engagement, but it also poses significant risks from disinformation to the integrity of electoral and other democratic processes. Concerns about foreign interference, exemplified by Russia's activities, but also other third countries, have underscored the need for robust measures to safeguard the electoral processes, including enhancing cybersecurity and voter verification to prevent perceived electoral manipulation. Social media platforms, in particular, have become increasingly critical battlegrounds in the fight for public opinion, with AI-powered tools being used to artificially amplify and spread disinformation, manipulate public discourse, and influence voter behaviour.

To address these challenges, it is essential to examine the effects of digital technologies on public opinion and governance, and investigate the development of ethical AI, transparent political advertising, and tools to counter misinformation, disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI). This includes exploring the potential of digital technologies to transform and improve democratic processes, investigating multi-stakeholder approaches, with particular attention in fostering dialogue with online platforms, media and political parties and movements, as well as strengthening the traditional and new media and securing alternative platforms to enhance electoral resilience.

Proposals should also investigate the risks new technologies pose to democratic integrity, particularly through the manipulation of public opinion and electoral processes, while also exploring ways to leverage these new technologies to better understand and mitigate these threats. Proposals are also encouraged to examine how AI-generated content across media, including entertainment media, influence public opinion, social narratives, gender stereotypes and norms, and civic engagement. Moreover, proposals may consider strategies for the implementation of appropriate cryptographic measures, including the investigation of approaches based on post-quantum cryptography.

The EU institutions have been actively engaged in addressing the key challenges for election integrity, including the artificial amplification of disinformation, online platform accountability, and the protection of democratic processes. Proposals should take into account ongoing political and strategic initiatives, notably the Political Advertising Regulation, the AI Act, the Digital Services Act (DSA) election guidelines [38] and the Commission's 2023 Recommendation on inclusive and resilient elections, and Code of Conduct on Disinformation[39].

The ultimate goal is to understand how to create robust and resilient electoral systems that can meet the challenges of the digital age, ensure the safety and integrity of electoral processes, and promote free, fair, inclusive, accessible and transparent elections. This requires investigating the risks of cyberattacks and foreign interference on electoral processes, developing strategies to enhance voting system security and promote election transparency, developing early warning systems, effective debunking strategies, and accountability measures for platforms.

Research should have an interdisciplinary approach (including SSH disciplines), bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders, including – but not limited to - electoral authorities and other national authorities with responsibilities in electoral matters – notably those represented in the European Cooperation Network on elections – civil society organisations, new and traditional media and digital platforms.

Projects may also focus on how FIMI can influence political discourse via digital platforms, particularly during electoral periods, including in ways that undermine the rights of women, LGBTIQ people, persons with disabilities and other underrepresented groups. This also involves examining the safety of electoral processes, protecting the integrity of elections, and maintaining public trust in the democratic process, with a particular focus on ensuring the safety and security of political candidates, especially women and LGBTIQ people and other members of minority groups, from violence, intimidation, and harassment. Addressing these concerns requires a comprehensive understanding of how AI shapes political campaigns, media narratives, public engagement, and the spread of (gendered) disinformation.

Proposals are encouraged to identify other EU-funded projects related to electoral integrity under the Horizon Europe programme (including but not limited to those in the fields of cybersecurity and research and development of AI), and complementary funding schemes, such as the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme and the Digital Europe Programme, and to explore potential collaboration opportunities with them.

Applicants may consider the participation of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) to leverage its broad range of scientific and technical capabilities, including its expertise in digital technologies, data science, and cybersecurity, to support the projects' objectives and enhance their overall impact.

---

38 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_1707

39 https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/code-conduct-disinformation

## HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-09: Citizenship education as part of lifelong learning

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 16.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [40].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Policymakers, educators, and other relevant actors have tools and recommendations to put in place more opportunities for lifelong civic and citizenship[41] learning, in support of democracy and democratic participation, including by relying on the opportunities offered by digital means, notably civic tech.
- Policymakers at local, regional, national and EU level have tools and recommendations for ensuring the participation of citizens in democratic life, whatever their background, especially those who face barriers to participation in democratic processes.

[40] 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

[41] The Action plan on basic skills (March 2025) explicitly recognises citizenship as a basic skill, and it defines it as: "The ability to act responsibly and participate fully in civic life, grounded in an understanding of social, economic, legal and political structures. This involves understanding and evaluation of civic and democratic concepts, institutions and processes, including democracy, media literacy, crisis preparedness and respect for others and freedom of speech."

Scope: A healthy democracy relies on citizens being able to make informed democratic choices, in free and fair elections. Meaningful and inclusive citizens' participation and engagement can further complement and reinforce representative democracies and foster trust in public institutions. Education plays a major role in supporting active interest in democratic participation and citizen engagement. Accessible education in matters of democracy and participation in public-policy making is a lifelong process that concerns all age groups in society regardless of their educational and socio-economic backgrounds.

Lifelong learning about democratic processes, civic rights and obligations is crucial. It is a long process that concerns not only young people but also older ones. A healthy democracy relies on meaningful, inclusive engagement from citizens across all ages and demographic groups on a continuous basis. It is important to sustain lifelong civic participation, as technological, geopolitical and economic changes pose new challenges to social cohesion and the equal participation of all citizens in democratic processes.

The focus of this topic is on how citizenship education as part of lifelong learning can boost citizens' democratic involvement and civic engagement. Research should look at how vocational education and training (VET) (e.g. at secondary and post-secondary levels), including apprenticeships, or adult education programmes, can raise civic knowledge, political awareness, and attachment to democratic values, such as respect for human dignity, freedom, equality and the rule of law. Projects should examine either VET or adult education programmes. Research should further investigate how involvement in these programmes is linked to increased civic participation actions like voting or standing as a candidate in elections, engaging in public policy-making processes, or broader democratic participation such as volunteering or engaging with civil society organisations.

Research could also explore how VET or adult learning programmes could support citizens including persons with disabilities, in enhancing their digital and media literacy skills, and navigating and understanding the rapidly changing democratic information ecosystem, for example by being able to recognise disinformation and make use of digital tools for democratic engagement.

Research should test and pilot innovative methods and curricula to develop citizenship awareness for VET or adult education teachers and students.

A gender and intersectional perspective should be systematically integrated throughout the research, as well as the perspective of other groups that are marginalised, underrepresented in political decision-making, face barriers due to accessibility issues, or are at risk of disengagement.

Research may also examine digital and media literacy to foster critical thinking, to shape and develop citizens' media and other competencies of citizens, and make recommendations for best practices in this area. Proposals may also examine democratic participation among ageing populations for whom digital tools are a barrier and propose recommendations for solutions to improve their participation. While digital tools can support engagement, research may also

examine non-digital, person-to-person approaches that support participation, including in an inter-generational setting.

Proposals should seek collaboration with the European Partnership on Social Transformations and Resilience.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-DEMOCRACY-10: Digital and media literacy as drivers for democratic and civic resilience**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding as a beneficiary with zero funding, or as an associated partner. The JRC will not participate in the preparation and submission of the proposal - see General Annex B. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [42].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

[42] 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

- EU institutions and national decision-makers, have a better understanding of how to foster democratic resilience through media and digital literacy, equipping societies to adapt and thrive in the face of evolving technological, political, and societal challenges.

- Citizens are empowered to navigate the digital landscape with discernment and critical thinking, actively engaging with media and other source of information, ensuring informed democratic participation.

Scope: As recalled by the "Safer together" report[43], "over the past years, the Commission has already taken steps to counter hybrid threats (including foreign information manipulation and interference/FIMI) and enhance democratic resilience across the EU. It adopted, among other initiatives, the European Democracy Action Plan[44] to build more resilient democracies across the EU by promoting free and fair elections, strengthening media freedom, countering disinformation and FIMI and promoting information integrity. With the adoption of the Digital Services Act[45] (DSA) and its binding obligations for online platforms to combat the spread of disinformation, the Commission also strengthened the Code of Practice on Disinformation, which became a Code of Conduct within the framework of the DSA. Moreover, the launch of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) and its hubs increased the capacity to detect, analyse and expose disinformation campaigns."[46]

The Preparedness Union Strategy[47] underlines how preparedness is a collective responsibility. It also points at the need to make our democracies more resilient, in particular in view of strengthening trust in institutions, which can be crucial in crisis situations as seen for instance during the COVID pandemic. Groups in a vulnerable situation in particular, such as children, senior citizens and persons with disabilities, ethnic or religious minorities, LGBTIQ people, those suffering poverty and/or social exclusion, are disproportionately affected by crises, often exacerbating pre-existing disadvantages, barriers and inequalities.

Disinformation is particularly harmful as it undermines public confidence and can exacerbate the impact of crises. Engaged, informed and empowered citizens are the best guarantee for the resilience of our democracies. Public authorities, schools, universities and training institutions, youth initiatives, civil society organisations and associations, social partners, businesses, local networks and communities, and citizens from an early age, all play a vital role in such collective endeavour, and the proposed research should take a multi-actor approach.

Against this background, the proposed research should explore the complex and dynamic patterns of user behaviours in the digital age, investigating how individuals seek, evaluate, and engage with information online, and offline. Such an exploration will benefit from

43 https://commission.europa.eu/topics/defence/safer-together-path-towards-fully-prepared-union_en
44 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2250
45 https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-services-act_en
46 https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/european-digital-media-observatory
47 Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European Preparedness Union Strategy

including an analysis of the emotional dynamics in the dissemination of disinformation and polarization on digital platforms. This is especially relevant in crisis contexts in which foreign information manipulation and disinformation can be leveraged to increase panic and confusion. Proposals should investigate how algorithms amplify emotive content, fostering polarization and undermining trust in democratic institutions, as well as crisis response and develop digital and media literacy strategies to counter emotionally manipulative narratives, such as populist and post-truth discourses.

The research should also examine the factors that influence digital literacy, information-seeking habits, and online engagement, with a focus on improving citizen's' participation and engagement through digital means (including through civic tech) and informed decision-making. At a time when disinformation is used to sow discord by exploiting the fears of citizens, it is crucial to ensure that democratic decisions are informed by the most reliable and widely accepted facts and sources of information available. Research should explore the critical role digital and media literacy can play in fostering societal resilience and information integrity, by allowing citizens to navigate and resist misinformation and disinformation.

Proposals should plan a critical assessment of media and digital literacy initiatives[48] to assess whether existing efforts are enhancing citizens' resilience, or whether new approaches are needed to more effectively equip citizens against evolving manipulation tactics.

Research should identify strategies to improve media literacy and digital and media literacy, in order to enhance critical thinking, promote evidence-based decision-making, and counter the negative impacts of disinformation on democratic societies. To facilitate the generation of practical solutions for educators and policymakers, the research could utilise computational tools, such as Social Network Analysis and Natural Language Processing, to map and mitigate the dissemination of disinformation across multiple platforms. This includes identifying Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour and analysing both textual and visual content to inform media literacy initiatives.

Proposals are encouraged to identify other relevant EU-funded projects related to media and digital literacy, and to explore potential collaboration opportunities with them. Clustering and cooperation with other selected projects under this topic and other relevant projects are strongly encouraged.

The projects selected for funding are encouraged to collaborate with the JRC to seek synergies with its work on innovation for democracy and public governance.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-01: Advisory support and network for countering and preventing radicalisation, extremism, hate speech and polarisation**

**Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027**

[48] For instance, "Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training", Publications Office of the European Union, 2022,**https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/28248**; or the UNESCO's "Global Standards for Media and Information Literacy Curricula Development Guidelines"

| **Specific conditions** | |
|---|---|
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 3.00 and 3.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 3.50 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Coordination and Support Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>Due to the scope of this topic, legal entities established in non-associated third countries may exceptionally participate in this Coordination and Support Action as a beneficiary or affiliated entity and are exceptionally eligible for Union funding. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [49]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Political, societal, educational stakeholders, and researchers have an improved understanding of theoretical models and provided pathways for implementing solutions to combat extremism, radicalisation, hate speech and polarisation.
- Public authorities, law enforcement agencies, local authorities, NGOs, and community actors are more engaged in implementing and adapting solutions addressing radicalisation, extremism, hate speech, and polarisation in their respective contexts.
- EU institutions, national policymakers and judicial bodies can draw on an enhanced evidence-base for their decision-making through scientific, political, and legal assessments of research results in real-life contexts, enabling replication of methods, legislative changes, and innovation.

[49] 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

- Improved understanding of the root causes of hate and polarisation, of methodologies to combat online hate ecosystems and of the role of traditional media in shaping public opinion, including the correlation between media consumption and polarisation, to inform strategies for protecting victims and addressing hate crimes and speech.

Scope: The European Union has been actively working to combat racism, xenophobia, hate speech, hate crimes, and extremism in recent years, developing and implementing various strategies to address these issues[50]. Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe have also played a crucial role in funding projects that aim to develop research and collect evidence on how to counter and prevent radicalisation, polarisation, hate speech and extremism. These phenomena pose significant risks, as they can undermine trust in democratic institutions, weaken the social contract, and contribute to rising inequalities and instability.

European research (including research by SSH disciplines) should combine a clear understanding of the mechanisms that play a fundamental role in the circulation of online hate speech, radicalisation, extremism, and polarisation with the development of strategies to prevent and counter these phenomena. At the same time, it should promote the Union values enshrined in the Treaty on European Union, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, and the protection of democratic institutions, as a condition for everyone's talents to flourish and for fostering a cohesive society and a culture of tolerance and pluralism. This will contribute to enhance the prevention of violent extremism, hate speech and hate crime and the promotion of a more inclusive and resilient society.

The spread of hate speech and extremist ideologies online has become a major concern, and the need for effective solutions to address these issues is pressing. Hate speech and extremism can be criminal offences, but also more broadly contribute to polarisation and have a chilling effect on freedom of expression, also limiting the engagement of individuals in public life (e.g. elected officials stepping down from elections because of hate attacks). Moreover, the polarisation of society and the erosion of trust in institutions pose a threat to social cohesion and democratic values.

To address these challenges, it is essential also to foster the understanding on the root causes of radicalisation, extremism, hate and polarisation, including as concerns the impact of socio-economic factors. This requires also collaboration with end-users, such as civil society organisations and practitioners[51], who can provide valuable insights and help develop solutions that are tailored to their specific needs and contexts.

Proposals are encouraged to identify other EU-funded projects related to preventing radicalisation, extremism, hate speech, and polarisation, financed by the Horizon programmes (Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe) and complementary funding schemes (such as the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme, the Internal Security Fund, or others) and to explore potential opportunities for collaboration with them. Proposals should integrate a

[50] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/combating-hate-speech-and-hate-crime_en

[51] See, for example: https://edmo.eu/

gender-sensitive and intersectional approach to illustrate how radicalisation, extremism, hate speech and polarisation disproportionately affect different groups and groups of different ages.

Initiatives of research such as the ones in the EU Knowledge Hub on Prevention of Radicalisation[52] (previously Radicalisation Awareness Network) or the forthcoming online knowledge hub under the Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online should be considered when developing initiatives to upscale and exploit solutions to combat extremism, hate speech and radicalisation. Research activities should meaningfully involve a wide range of stakeholders and societal actors, particularly civil society organisations, including non-academic and non-scientific actors. Projects should link appropriately with the envisaged European Centre for Democratic Resilience and seek to make best use of its stakeholder platform.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-02: Women's, LGBTIQ and minority rights in a context of autocracy, conflict and geopolitical shifts**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [53]. |

[52] https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/eu-knowledge-hub-prevention-radicalisation_en

[53] 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

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Policymakers, public administrations, human rights organisations, and civil society actors have strengthened mechanisms to protect groups in a vulnerable situation (such as women, LGBTIQ people, persons with disabilities and minorities) in contexts of autocracy, conflict, and geopolitical instability.
- Researchers and data collection bodies benefit from robust methodologies to systematically document and analyse the impact of democratic backsliding, conflict, and geopolitical shifts on the rights of these specific groups in a vulnerable situation.
- Civil society organisations and grassroots movements have enhanced their resilience and advocacy strategies, thanks to the identification of best practices and innovative approaches to counter repression, expand civic space, and promote inclusive governance, including in authoritarian or conflict settings.

Scope: Autocratic regimes, armed conflicts, and global geopolitical shifts pose significant threats to fundamental rights. These challenges manifest in the rollback of legal protections, increased political violence, shrinking civic space, and targeted discrimination, both offline and online. In this context, a deeper understanding of the disproportionate impact of these crises on different groups is key to developing more targeted and effective policies.

The proposed research should examine the intersection of age, gender, sex, sexual orientation, minority status, or migratory background, in contexts of democratic erosion, authoritarian governance, and geopolitical crises. It can focus on one or multiple groups in a vulnerable situation, such as women, LGBTIQ people, ethnic and/or religious minorities, people with disabilities, children or the elderly. Case studies could be selected to reflect a wide range of geopolitical contexts, including regions undergoing democratic erosion, post-conflict reconstruction, or consolidation of authoritarian rule.

The proposed research should analyse how legal and institutional frameworks are weaponised and leveraged by authoritarian actors to restrict rights, the role of civil society in resisting repression, and the impact of digital surveillance, algorithmic discrimination and online disinformation in targeting specific groups in a vulnerable situation.

Particular attention should be given to the restricted access to sexual and reproductive health rights during crises, armed conflicts, and geopolitical shifts, as well as the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV). In such contexts, GBV can be frequently used as a coercive tactic, reinforcing discrimination and reversing progress on gender equality. Hate-motivated violence can become even more complex when directed at women and groups in a vulnerable situation, further limiting their access to humanitarian assistance and undermining their fundamental rights. Therefore, the proposed research should develop prevention and response strategies for public administration, law enforcement, and military bodies to combat GBV effectively in crisis situations.

Proposals should take an interdisciplinary approach, combining SSH disciplines with insights from computer science and data analytics. They should integrate a strong data-driven approach and could explore aspects such as:

- Mapping and measuring the compounded effects of conflict, forced displacement, and democratic backsliding on access to rights, services, and political participation.
- Developing new methodologies and indicators to assess the impact of shrinking civic space and legal rollbacks on gender and minority rights.
- Creating data-driven tools or policy dashboards to monitor the evolving risks faced by women, LGBTIQ people, and/or various minority groups in authoritarian and post-conflict settings.

Proposals should adopt a multi-scalar approach that connects grassroots-level experiences of discrimination and exclusion with macro-level geopolitical, legal and policy frameworks. Proposals could assess how international and European actors can effectively counter these trends through diplomatic efforts, development cooperation, and targeted support for civil society. Engaging with policymakers, human rights organisations, and affected communities is essential.

Proposals are encouraged to identify other relevant EU-funded projects, notably in cluster 2 and 3, and to explore potential collaboration opportunities with them. In order to achieve the topic's expected outcomes, international cooperation is encouraged.

Where applicable, proposals should leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), as well as data from relevant Data Spaces. Particular efforts should be made to ensure that the data produced in the context of this topic is FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable).

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-03: Student and family engagement for developing a culture of democratic/civic participation**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions |

| | |
|---|---|
| *set-up of the Grant Agreements* | apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [54]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Policymakers, education and training institutions, and educators will be provided with an evidence base, toolkits, and recommendations on the types of collaboration mechanisms with families that are most effective in supporting schools' efforts to provide citizenship education[55].
- Policymakers, education and training institutions, and educators will have a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of student councils and other student participatory mechanisms on influencing school decision-making and on student civic engagement.
- Policymakers, education and training institutions, and educators will have a deeper understanding of the impact of family involvement in citizenship education in schools.
- Educators have frameworks, guidance, and tools for evaluating social-emotional learning, including values and attitudes, as part of citizenship education.

Scope: Research should examine schools as a locus for practicing participation and developing innovative participatory practices.

Research should examine student and family engagement to foster a democratic culture via school activities. It should consider schools as social places for intergenerational dialogue.

Research should examine the role of socio-emotional learning in tackling sensitive topics in the classroom and in fostering civic agency development among learners. Research could explore the emotions that drive civic engagement and investigate strategies to help students emotionally cope with frustrations when their civic engagement efforts do not unfold as

[54] 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

[55] The Action plan on basic skills (March 2025) explicitly recognises citizenship as a basic skill, and it defines it as: "The ability to act responsibly and participate fully in civic life, grounded in an understanding of social, economic, legal and political structures. This involves understanding and evaluation of civic and democratic concepts, institutions and processes, including democracy, media literacy, crisis preparedness and respect for others and freedom of speech."

expected. Research should integrate an intersectional approach that is sensitive to gender and ability, by studying how students contribute to and respond to civic engagement efforts differently according to their identity and backgrounds.

Research should examine the active role of families in building children and young people's civic identity. Parents/caregivers and the wider family are key in children and young people's informal learning, shaping their interests, values, and world-views; family involvement in school citizenship education might vary in more diverse communities, depending on the family's cultural, migrant or socio-economic backgrounds; some families may not appreciate the importance of teaching about social issues, democracy, or civic participation or may feel excluded or disconnected from schools' efforts to provide citizenship education. Research should examine how citizenship education is reinforced or challenged outside the classroom, especially with growing polarization and diversity of our societies. The research should provide recommendations of how to effectively engage families from diverse backgrounds in their children's citizenship education. The main focus should be on parents and caregivers (legal guardians); exploring other wider family influences is also possible.

Research should examine families' and students' views on the content of citizenship education and examine the role of curriculum design in promoting inclusive civic engagement among students from diverse backgrounds. Arts and humanities can be part of the disciplines examined where relevant. Research should aim to identify the types of collaboration that not only bolster students' civic competence but also ensure inclusivity in their engagement.

The research should investigate the effectiveness of student councils and other participatory mechanisms in providing meaningful opportunities for student influence. Research should investigate the incentives and motives behind participation and uncover possible restrictions and motives for non-participation. It should exploit the tools that have been already developed in previous research projects in the area of civic participation.

Research should address the lack of formal monitoring and evaluation of these participatory mechanisms. It should develop frameworks, guidance, and tools for evaluation of socio-emotional learning, including values and attitudes as part of citizenship education.

Research can explore whether and how engaging families in citizenship education and fostering of a democratic culture at school influences both the civic participation of children and young people, and that of their families. Emphasis could be placed on schools in marginalised areas or with high migrant populations, to uncover structural barriers to civic engagement in those settings.

Research should include pilots or living labs, developing innovative participation practices in schools, where students learn to recognise and exercise their citizenship rights and obligations, strengthen the value of democracy, and build their identity as active citizens. Projects should collaborate with schools and education authorities in the development and running of these pilots and living labs.

Projects may freely choose the age group they will examine, as long as it remains within primary and/or secondary education levels.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-04: Addressing the impact of artificial intelligence, cyberviolence, and deepfakes on equality, democracy and inclusive societies**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 20.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding as a beneficiary with zero funding, or as an associated partner. The JRC will not participate in the preparation and submission of the proposal - see General Annex B.<br>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [56]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

[56] 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

- Enhanced understanding of the impact of AI-driven technologies, including AI-generated deepfakes and automated content generation on equality, political participation, democratic processes, public trust, and social cohesion, with evidence-based insights into their role in mitigating or exacerbating disparities.

- Uptake of evidence-based policy frameworks for responsible, trustworthy, and transparent AI governance, integrating ethical, legal, and societal considerations to safeguard fundamental rights, mitigate risks of disinformation, and ensure fair and safe AI deployment, in line with the obligations set out in the EU Regulation on artificial intelligence[57].

- Increased public awareness and media literacy to empower citizens to identify and critically assess disinformation, use of deepfakes for malicious purpose, and online harm, alongside the uptake of evidence-based tools for preventing, detecting, and mitigating these harms.

- Strengthened capacity of academic institutions to conduct societally relevant AI research and drive the development of trustworthy, ethical AI models, enabled by increased academia-industry collaboration and better access to e.g., computing infrastructure, high-quality datasets, collaborative tools, and funding.

Scope: The rapid development and deployment of AI technologies, along with their malicious use such as the creation of artificially generated and manipulated content,, profoundly impacts democracy, equality, social inclusion, and knowledge production, and contributes to the rise of cyberviolence. Although AI can offer many opportunities, its misuse can facilitate/amplify inequalities and power imbalances, spread misinformation and cyberviolence against women, children and minorities, concentrate data control, and undermine democratic processes. Hence, this topic addresses both the malicious use of AI (e.g. AI-generated disinformation, deepfakes, cyberviolence) and its unintentional societal consequences (e.g. algorithmic opacity, amplification of bias).

AI's role in media influence and public trust demands urgent attention, as the rise of AI-generated or manipulated content, including deepfakes, threatens democratic processes and epistemic rights. A key area of concern is how AI and artificially generated content is impacting cyberviolence, and the effect it has on individuals or groups who distrust democracy, particularly where this distrust intersects with far-left and far-right populism and foreign interference.

Proposals should explore how AI-driven technologies and their use may either exacerbate or mitigate[58] inequalities and discriminations based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic background, religion or belief, age, and disability, particularly in access to information,

[57] Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act).

[58] Including how trustworthy and human-centric AI can be leveraged to support content moderation, fact-checking, and online monitoring.

decision-making, and representation. A critical analysis is needed of how data - often reflecting existing social biases - can reinforce or challenge dominant social structures and safety, and how such technologies shape public perceptions and knowledge production.

The research should also explore the risks these technologies pose to democratic integrity, particularly through the manipulation of public opinion, electoral processes, and governance systems. Deepfakes and AI-generated misinformation and disinformation can distort facts, spread false narratives, and undermine public trust. Addressing these concerns requires a comprehensive understanding of how AI may be (mis)used to shape political campaigns, media narratives, public engagement, and the spread and dissemination of (gendered) disinformation. Proposals are encouraged to examine how AI-generated content across media, including entertainment media, influence public opinion, social narratives, gender stereotypes and norms, and civic engagement.

Furthermore, proposals should look into how cyberviolence, including online harassment, cyberbullying, threats, and gender-based violence, is exacerbated by sharing manipulated content like deepfakes, deep nudes and AI-driven sextortion on online platforms through manipulated content like deepfakes, deep nudes and AI-driven sextortion. Research should identify how AI may be used to amplify and upscale harm, what the nature of the AI-powered output is, and which groups are disproportionately affected by it, looking particularly at women and minorities, and explore interventions to prevent and mitigate these risks. This includes analysing not only the unintended reproduction of cyberviolence through biased outputs, but also the ways in which AI-powered platforms may be misused by users to generate and/or spread harmful, discriminatory or violent content. A comprehensive assessment of unregulated AI-induced risks of sexual exploitation, violence, and gender-based harm is largely missing for effective regulation, oversight, and prosecution. A multidisciplinary review is needed to evaluate AI-driven risks exposing children, young people, women, older persons and LGBTIQ people to such violence online and offline.

Proposals should research on policy and concrete practices that can effectively address the challenges posed by AI technologies, taking into consideration the EU Regulation on artificial intelligence and subsequent guidance being developed to support its implementation. Proposals should identify best practices and regulatory measures to ensure the ethical deployment of AI and AI literacy while safeguarding equality and democratic integrity. A key aspect of this research is recognising AI’s growing role in shaping policy and judicial decisions. While its integration can improve efficiencies, concerns about bias and fairness persist. Proposals are encouraged to explore AI’s influence on legal and policy outcomes, including unintended consequences.

Additionally, proposals should consider AI’s use and impact on young people. Although AI is not specifically designed for minors, youth are among its most active users. Biases within AI-generated or manipulated content, particularly related to sex gender, sexual orientation, ethnic and racial background, can shape young users’ perceptions, perpetuate stereotypes, affect engagement and mental and physical well-being. Research should investigate how AI systems

influence these aspects, and the opportunities and risks associated, including the potential psychological effects of exposure to biased or harmful content.

A key focus should be interdisciplinary research on AI's role in societal resilience, countering misinformation and disinformation, enhancing civic engagement, and supporting marginalised communities. Proposals should explore inclusive and innovative tools and methodologies for detecting and mitigating deepfakes, disinformation, and cyberviolence facilitated through AI, designed for broad adoption by policymakers, technology developers, media organisations, and the general public.

Effectively addressing these multifaceted challenges demands to combine data-driven analysis, drawing on expertise from a wide range of fields, including both academic disciplines (e.g., computer science, and SSH disciplines such as communication and media sciences, ethics, law, political science, sociology, psychology, and gender studies) and the applied perspectives of those involved in shaping and steering AI technologies in practice.

This research should contribute to the EU's broader AI strategy, supporting the implementation of the Artificial Intelligence Act and aligning with the EU's Political Guidelines for 2024-2029. This research should also contribute to the implementation of other EU legislative frameworks, such as the Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence, that criminalises various cyberviolence offences, including malicious deepfakes, and the Digital Services Act, which addresses illegal content online, including false or manipulated information inciting hate or discrimination. It should also inform global discussions on ethical AI governance and responsible innovation.

Proposals are encouraged to identify other relevant EU-funded projects, and to explore potential collaboration opportunities with them.

The projects selected for funding are encouraged to collaborate with the JRC to seek synergies with its work on innovations in public governance[59].

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-05: Development aid and democratic governance**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |

[59] https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/projects-and-activities/innovations-public-governance_en

| | |
|---|---|
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [60]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- EU and national policymakers and development aid agencies are better equipped to deal with the complexities and challenges of the relations between the EU and low- and middle-income countries and increase their intelligence to develop EU strategies and policies that promote a more inclusive and equitable multilateralism.
- Organisations for development cooperation have enhanced capacity and solutions to support democratic institutions and address key global challenges, such as climate action, democracy and rule of law, human rights and gender equality.
- Strengthened multilateral partnerships between the EU as a donor of development aid and low- and middle-income countries in the field of development cooperation.

Scope: The European Union's development aid efforts face significant challenges in promoting democracy and stability in third countries, despite substantial investments in development assistance. Many countries continue to face challenges related to democratic governance, and the relationship between aid and its impact on inequality reduction, poverty alleviation, sustainable peace and security, as well as the strengthening of democratic institutions and processes, remains unclear. The resurgence of authoritarianism and the erosion of democratic values globally pose considerable challenges to EU foreign policy, underscoring the need for more effective diplomatic, security and development cooperation frameworks and strategies.

There is a pressing need for research (including by SSH disciplines) to elucidate the complex relationships between development aid, democratic governance, equality, security, and global challenges. This includes examining the effects of development aid on democratic institutions

[60] 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

and processes, identifying gaps in funding for democratic governance, and exploring innovative approaches to supporting democratic governance and reducing inequality. In this context, the role of other non-EU aid donors, including public, private, and philanthropic actors, must be understood. This includes examining the influence of the EU's economic and geopolitical competitors, to see why their support may be more attractive to developing countries, and how they are filling vacuums left by cuts from traditional donors, creating new socio-economic dependencies and power relations.

The scope of this research topic is broad, encompassing the interplay between development aid, security, and democratic governance, with a focus on reducing socio-economic and gender inequalities, fostering democratic resilience, and promoting inclusive governance. By investigating these dynamics, researchers can uncover new insights and strategies to align development assistance with democratic strengthening, ultimately contributing to more effective and sustainable development outcomes.

Key areas of investigation include the impact of development aid on democratic institutions, the reduction of socio-economic and gender inequalities, and the identification of funding gaps for democratic governance initiatives, as well as the consequences of declining democratic trends on the effectiveness of global development strategies and the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Proposals should also seek to identify new opportunities to enhance the EU´s soft power and geopolitical influence across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus, including through the development of dedicated diplomacies (e.g., climate diplomacy, water diplomacy, science diplomacy, etc.). The actions should strive to include development aid civil society organisations in the activities.

Proposals should use a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach in their research.

Proposals are encouraged to identify other relevant EU-funded projects related to EU democracy support, civil society engagement, and international cooperation on sustainable peace and democratic governance, and to explore potential collaboration opportunities with them.

Proposals may also incorporate participatory research approaches to enhance inclusivity and stakeholder engagement.

The geographical scope of this research includes the EU Enlargement, Neighbourhood[61] and low- and lower middle-income countries[62], with a focus on the relationship of these with the EU. Therefore, international cooperation is strongly encouraged.

---

[61] In the context of this call, the “EU Neighbourhood” is understood as the group of countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which includes countries to the East (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) and to the South (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia). For more information: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy_en and https://north-africa-middle-east-gulf.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/southern-neighbourhood_en

## HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-06: Identifying user-focused solutions to support news media freedom

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [63]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Key data gaps affecting the news media sectors at European level are addressed and all relevant stakeholders dispose of an updated and comprehensive knowledge base.

---

62 In the context of this call "low-income and low-middle income countries" are understood as the low to middle income non-associated third countries in the list of participating countries according to the Horizon Europe rules for participation and proposal procedure. Source: European Commission, "List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe," Version 5.3 (24.01.2024), p. 3. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

63 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

- Users' consumption patterns of news are identified (online and offline).

- News media organisations and journalists are equipped with better knowledge and tools to adapt to digital transformation, to reach new audiences and to ensure a more resilient public sphere, especially for news sectors that are of particular relevance for democracy.

Scope: Free and independent news media are key tenets of our democracies as they keep citizens informed, facilitate civic engagement across all democratic processes, and keep under scrutiny those in power. At present, journalistic newsrooms are under severe economic pressure and they face increasing forms of political influence and threats against media pluralism and independence. Social media forces them to compete for citizens' attention with other forms of infotainment, which sometimes entail unverified opinions and low-quality or malicious sources. This is particularly affecting forms of journalism relying on original content, which takes more time and resources to produce (e.g. local media, investigative journalism, public interest news, journalistic magazines, etc.). There is evidence of market failures affecting these sectors, with phenomena such as emerging news deserts, limited coverage of certain regions and/or societal groups and newsrooms closing. As a result, certain societal groups are underserved in the media landscape, so the proposed research will benefit from adopting an intersectional approach.

There are still important quantitative and qualitative data gaps at European level that can help the news media sectors address these concerns, including accurate diagnoses of the challenges and opportunities for the news sectors. The Commission's 2023 European Media Industry Outlook[64] signalled that "the future competitiveness of this sector will depend on its capacity to invest and innovate, as well as to manage and monetise content and data". Applicants are invited to contribute to enhancing innovation across the news media sectors, in particular by addressing data gaps, researching inspirational examples of scalable models and testing industrial models that can advance financial independence as well as editorial independence. This should include areas and aspects such as:

a) providing comparable European consumer data, market data and models to analyse audience behaviour (including audience measurement tools) across societal groups and across Europe, so as to help news media improve their relevance, editorial quality, distribution channels and business models (including emerging formats, mediums, and technologies such as AI and XR);

b) identification of market failures in news sectors of specific relevance to democracy, such as local media and investigative journalism, mapping of priority regions and/or themes, identification and analysis of business models that can address them;

c) development, prototyping and testing of small-scale innovative user-centric business models that foster the involvement of citizens in high quality information production, monetisation, distribution and consumption (including community-based, local and accessible solutions, either physical or online);

64 The European Media Industry Outlook | Shaping Europe's digital future

d) mapping and development of audience measurement systems, concrete suggestions to increase interoperability of tools and systems around common standards, and proposals for metadata taxonomies, to federate the news sectors and improve their negotiation power vis-à-vis tech and advertising companies.

e) sharing of conclusions and concrete, hands-on action plans and practices for the industry and policy makers, through regular consultation, interactive sessions, active communication, etc.

Consortia should:

- bring together academia (including from SSH disciplines), civil society organisations and multiple news sectors representatives (including influencers and other content creators);
- where applicable, leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), as well as data from relevant Data Spaces;
- ensure that the data produced in the context of this topic is FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable);
- seek collaboration whenever possible with relevant projects selected under previous EU-funded calls, such as the Horizon 2020 call topic TRANSFORMATIONS-10-2020 – "Evolving European media landscapes and Europeanisation" or the Horizon Europe one HORIZON-CL2-2022-DEMOCRACY-01-06 – "Media for democracy – democratic media".

Clustering and cooperation among the selected projects under this topic and other relevant projects are strongly encouraged.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-07: The role of private companies in democracy**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 8.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions |

| | |
|---|---|
| *set-up of the Grant Agreements* | apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [65]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- EU and national policymakers have a better understanding of corporate influence on democratic processes and outcomes, including activities through service providers in the EU internal market, enabling them to develop strategies to mitigate negative effects and promote a more just and inclusive society.
- EU and national policymakers have access to evidence-based recommendations and develop more effective policies and regulations for promoting responsible corporate behaviour, rules on integrity and transparency, preventing corruption and protecting democratic values.
- Civil society organizations and citizens have a greater understanding of the complex relationships between private companies and democratic governance, enabling them to hold corporations and policymakers accountable for their actions.

Scope: The relationship between private companies[66] and democratic governance is becoming increasingly complex and contentious. As corporate interests continue to grow in influence, this raises concerns about the potential risks and benefits of private sector involvement, particularly in policymaking on contentious topics such as climate change adaptation, environmental protection, data protection, privacy, civil rights, and the rights of minorities. Thus, there is a pressing need to investigate the impact of private sector involvement on democratic processes and outcomes, as well as its long-term effects on political inequalities and shifts in power dynamics.

Large corporations and lobbying groups can inform policymaking with valuable evidence and expertise, but also potentially exert undue influence that may compromise the public interest.

[65] 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

[66] In this context, when referring to private companies, we specifically mean large undertakings, namely multinational and global corporations, including industry and tech platforms, as opposed to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The implications of corporate power for democratic values, human rights, and the public good are far-reaching and require careful examination.

Moreover, external private actors, such as foreign investors and multinational companies, together with influence activities within the EU internal market through service providers (for instance lobbying or political advertising) can shape democratic processes and outcomes, and, if not conducted responsibly, risk undermining the integrity of democratic debate.

To address these challenges, research is needed (including by SSH disciplines) to explore the complex relationships between private companies, lobbying groups and democratic processes, to develop tools to assess democratic impact of corporate practices, and to identify strategies to promote responsible corporate behaviour, to uphold transparency and democratic accountability of business practices and to ensure that private companies serve the needs of democracy and the public good.

Proposals should investigate the influence of large corporations, business lobbying groups, and external actors on democratic processes, exploring the implications of corporate power on democratic values, diversity, equality (including age equality), inclusion, human rights, and the public interest. This examination should also extend to the impact of private companies on multilateral decision-making, including at the EU level, and analyse how corporate interests shape decision-making processes at the transnational level.

Particular attention should be given to the role of corporate lobbying, public-private partnerships, the role of corruption, perceived corruption, and undue influence originating from the private sector in undermining democratic governance and the public interest. This includes examining the potential for corrupt practices to emerge, such as bribery, revolving doors, and other forms of undue influence, which can erode trust in institutions and perpetuate inequalities. Furthermore, it is essential to investigate direct interferences by corporations that go beyond legitimate ways of involvement in public sector decision-making. These interferences can take many forms, including artificially spreading or amplifying disinformation in order to, influence public opinions, and steering behaviours, contributing to the normalization of extremist or polarizing actors and discourses, which can have far-reaching consequences.

Proposals are encouraged to critically examine the structural power of capital in shaping policy agendas and public discourse, and to consider how this power contrasts with that of labour and civil society. Proposals could encourage structured and sustained dialogue among business actors, citizens, regulators, and watchdog organizations, with the aim of developing inclusive and accountable governance frameworks that reflect diverse interests and promote transparency.

Proposals are encouraged to investigate the influence of private companies on democratic governance, such as – but not limited to – the potential risks and benefits of private sector involvement in sortition-based citizens' panels and other forms of participatory and deliberative democracy processes.

Proposals should use a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach in their research to analyse how the actions of private companies in a democracy impact individuals' rights differently based on their identities.

Proposals are encouraged to identify other relevant EU-funded projects exploring the role of private companies in democracy and consider exploring potential collaboration opportunities with them[67].

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-DEMOCRACY-08: Global Human Rights and EU values**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [68]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- EU and national policymakers promote and protect human rights and gender equality globally by developing and implementing effective mechanisms for investigating and prosecuting international crimes, and cooperation frameworks with third countries to ensure humanitarian assistance, security, and respect for international law.

[67] For instance, but not limited to: HORIZON-CL2-2023-DEMOCRACY-01-03: New approaches for combatting corruption and other undue influences on political decision-making.

[68] 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

- Organisations in the EU Enlargement, Neighbourhood[69] and low- and lower middle-income countries empower groups in a vulnerable situation and excluded or marginalized individuals, including, by promoting and protecting human rights and gender equality, providing essential services, and advocating for policy changes that advance equality and social justice, through enhanced capacity, awareness, strengthened partnerships, and effective reporting of human rights abuses.

- EU and national policymakers integrate human rights considerations into trade policies and practices, ensuring that trade agreements, supply chains, and labour standards promote human dignity, equality, fairness and well-being, and prevent human rights abuses.

Scope: The promotion of human rights and gender and age equality is a pressing concern for the European Union in today's multipolar world, where vulnerable groups in a vulnerable situation and excluded or marginalized individuals, including ethnic and religious minorities, people with disabilities, migrants, as well as women, and LGBTIQ people, face persecution, discrimination, and violence. The EU's response to these issues is influenced also by the complexities of global governance, trade, human rights and rule of law, and geopolitical interests.

The EU's values and human rights are being tested in a global context, where trade policies, supply chains, and labour rights are increasingly intertwined. The impact of sanctions and trade, conditionality, and other measures on human rights is unclear, and the role of national and international courts and international organisations in promoting accountability is uncertain and increasingly contested.

Moreover, the EU's external actions and Member States' foreign policies have internal consequences, for instance undermining their democratic reputation and values if they are perceived as inconsistent or hypocritical, or producing negative impacts on European enterprises in terms of access to markets or to critical raw materials. For groups, such as refugees, women, LGBTIQ people, elderly persons, and indigenous peoples, who are already subject to various types of exclusion and discrimination and who might be further disenfranchised by the EU's foreign policy, this is particularly problematic.

There is a need for research (including by SSH disciplines) to better understand these complex relationships and to identify innovative approaches to promoting and protecting human rights and gender equality. This includes examining the impact of trade policies and investments policies on human rights (including Global Gateway infrastructure investment strategy), and on the perception of the EU as a values-based actor, developing effective

[69] In the context of this call, the "EU Neighbourhood" is understood as the group of countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which includes countries to the East (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) and to the South (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia). For more information: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy_en and https://north-africa-middle-east-gulf.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/southern-neighbourhood_en

diplomatic strategies and cooperation frameworks, and investigating the role of national courts and international organisations in promoting accountability.

Proposals may also incorporate participatory research approaches to enhance inclusivity and stakeholder engagement.

Proposals are encouraged to identify other relevant EU-funded projects related to EU democracy support, civil society engagement, and international cooperation on sustainable peace and democratic governance, and to explore potential collaboration opportunities with them.

The geographical scope of this research should include the EU Neighbourhood[70] and low- and lower middle-income countries[71], with a focus on the Western Balkan and the accession countries. International cooperation is strongly encouraged.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-02-DEMOCRACY-09-two-stage: Open topic on reinvigorating and shielding European democracy**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027 - Two-stage** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 2.00 and 3.70 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 22.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Admissibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:<br>Applicants submitting a proposal for a blind evaluation (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). |

[70] In the context of this call, the "EU Neighbourhood" is understood as the group of countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which includes countries to the East (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) and to the South (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia). For more information: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy_en and https://north-africa-middle-east-gulf.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/southern-neighbourhood_en

[71] In the context of this call "low-income and low-middle income countries" are understood as the low to middle income non-associated third countries in the list of participating countries according to the Horizon Europe rules for participation and proposal procedure. Source: European Commission, "List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe," Version 5.3 (24.01.2024), p. 3. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

| | |
|---|---|
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding as a beneficiary with zero funding, or as an associated partner. The JRC will not participate in the preparation and submission of the proposal - see General Annex B.<br>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, consortia must include, as beneficiaries or affiliated entities, (i) at least one relevant public body with a policy-making role; and (ii) at least one relevant civil society organisation. |
| *Procedure* | The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:<br>The first-stage proposals of this topic will be evaluated blindly. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [72].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- EU institutions and national decision-makers, civil society organisations and other societal actors and citizens at large are better equipped, with new data, knowledge and methods, to confront threats and challenges of democracies as well as to enhance their inclusiveness and participatory elan.
- Strengthened citizens' long-lasting engagement in the democratic life, including but going beyond electoral processes, and increased trust in democratic institutions.

Scope: The Political Guidelines for 2024-2029 of the European Commission[73] announced a new European Democracy Shield. Building on the European Democracy Action Plan[74] and

[72] 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

[73] https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf

the Defence of Democracy Package[75], this initiative aims to safeguard, strengthen and promote democracy in the EU and to reinforce public trust. The Democracy Shield will aim to reinforce citizens' participation and engagement in the democratic life, promote free and fair elections and support free and independent media. It will also address the increasing threats to democratic systems, institutions and processes within the EU, often driven by various hostile actors aiming to undermine citizens' trust in democracy and its institutions. In addition, the Commission is also preparing a Civil Society Strategy and has also announced an updated strategy on LGBTIQ equality, a new anti-racism strategy, a new gender equality strategy, and a roadmap for women's rights[76] It also continues implementing the Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030[77], in line with the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which the EU and its Member States are parties to[78].

Ensuring full, equal and meaningful political participation for everyone, regardless of sex, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, socioeconomic status, employment or age, fosters more stable and resilient democracies. Decision-making processes that incorporate a wider range of perspectives and experiences leads to policies that are more comprehensive and attuned to the needs of all citizens.

Under this open topic, proposals should address existing, upcoming or unforeseen challenges and/or creative or disruptive solutions for protecting European democracy, enhancing citizens' trust and political participation, expanding inclusiveness and fairness of democratic institutions and practices and supporting and protecting civil society. Proposals are encouraged to investigate the opportunities offered by digital and other new technological solutions, notably from the civic tech sector. Proposals should address unmet research needs, complementing previous Horizon Europe calls.

In that sense, proposals should consider, build on – if appropriate – while not duplicating, previous research, including but not limited to, SSH disciplines and/or research by other Horizon Europe projects, in particular in the context of this destination. Coordination among the successful proposals from this topic should be envisaged to avoid duplication and to exploit complementarities as well as opportunities for increased impact.

Given the multifaceted character of the challenges confronted by democracies, applicants should ensure effective interdisciplinary collaborations by building consortia with the participation of all relevant disciplines, depending of course on the nature of the selected democratic challenge and research angle.

Applicants are encouraged to adopt innovative approaches, including also by considering alternative and complementary models for democratic participation and engagement, facilitating the development and potential uptake of solutions. To ensure the active

---

74 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2250
75 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_6453
76 For the roadmap for women's rights, see the announcement of its adoption with links to the communication and its annex: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_681
77 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52021DC0101
78 https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities

involvement of and timely feedback from relevant democracy practitioners and policymakers, proposals should plan a mid-term deliverable consisting in the assessment of the project's mid-term contributions to the expected outcomes, performed by the democracy practitioners and policy-makers. Proposals should directly engage citizens, as well as civil society organisations, to enable broader public debate and explore uptake of democratic innovations and better anticipate potential risks.

Proposals are encouraged to collaborate with the JRC Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy, particularly with respect to demonstrating how structured opportunities for citizen participation strengthen inclusiveness and fairness of democratic institutions and practices, and foster evolution in democratic public spaces.

Where applicable, proposals should leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), as well as data from relevant Data Spaces. Particular efforts should be made to ensure that the data produced in the context of this topic is FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable).

**Destination Innovative Research on European Cultural Heritage and Cultural and Creative Industries**

Europe's rich cultural heritage and strong creative industries not only reflect our past but also shape our future. It is by building on this foundation and developing our strengths that we can face the great challenges of our time with confidence and shape a desirable common future. Europe's cultural heritage originates from the interaction between people and places through time and is constantly evolving[79]. Every citizen has a right to engage with the cultural heritage of their choice, while respecting the rights and freedoms of others, as an aspect of the right to participate freely in cultural life[80].

Europe's diverse tangible and intangible cultural heritage and dynamic cultural and creative industries (CCIs) are strategic assets. They enrich our lives, foster social cohesion and societal resilience, and contribute to a sense of belonging. They underpin a growing economy that generates more employment than the automotive industry and a similar trade balance as food, drinks and tobacco combined. Many of Europe's multinational companies build their international success on European heritage and creativity. At the same time, the sector is nurturing large numbers of dynamic small, medium (SMEs) and micro enterprises, creating employment not the least for young people, while deploying their creativity not only to generate income but also to contribute to social and cultural sustainability, wellbeing and to projecting European values at home and abroad. The cultural and creative industries are engines of innovation not only in themselves, but across the entire economy, thus contributing strongly to Europe's overall competitiveness and future prosperity.

This destination adopts a people-centred perspective and places cultural heritage and the cultural and creative industries at the very heart of the European economy, its competitiveness and sustainability. R&I activities under this destination will be aligned with the main principles and objectives of the Culture Compass for Europe and support objectives such as circular and just fashion and textiles value-chains, social cohesion and resilience through arts, design and cultural practices and creative entrepreneurial ecosystems for regional development. R&I activities under this destination will support and strengthen European cultural heritage and cultural and creative industries essentially along the following lines:

**Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness**: To secure Europe's future prosperity and competitiveness, it is necessary to unlock the innovative power of our cultural heritage and CCIs. The CCIs contribute strongly to drive innovation not only in themselves but also in other industries and economic sectors, shape new technologies and can contribute to user-driven innovation, open innovation and cross-sectoral innovation, in addition to their wider societal contributions such as to cultural wealth, social cohesion and resilience.

[79] Council conclusions of 21 May 2014 on cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe (2014/C 183/08) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XG0614(08)

[80] CETS 199 - Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (coe.int)

R&I actions under this area will focus on boosting the innovation-driving role of the CCIs, on creative startups, on the impact of artificial intelligence technologies on creativity and CCIs, while ensuring that new technologies are fairly deployed, along with the contributions of artistic intelligence and soft skills, boosting a circular economy and global partnerships in cultural policies and CCIs, among other things.

**Supporting people, strengthening our societies and our social model**: Cultural heritage, the arts and the CCIs have a crucial role to play for resilient and socially sustainable societies, shaping and strengthening the values that hold us together and give meaning and a sense of belonging.

R&I actions under this area will focus on boosting the role of culture, the arts and creative industries in contributing to well-being, to the social economy and in general the societal impact of cultural heritage. R&I actions will explore and strengthen the role of culture, heritage and CCIs in shaping the technologies of the future and focus on safeguarding intangible heritage and linguistic diversity, on sustainable cultural tourism and on countering illicit trafficking of cultural goods, among others.

Some actions funded under this Destination will need access to and/or generate data. Where appropriate, actions should leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud or included in the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) and the ESFRI roadmap, as well as data from relevant European Data Spaces. In particular, projects that produce data or digital tools of potential interest to cultural heritage institutions or researchers should, as appropriate, establish links to and/or consider integrating their results in the European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage (ECCCH)[81].Particular efforts should be made to ensure that the data produced in the context of actions under this Destination is FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable).

The innovation ecosystems created and nurtured by the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), in particular the KIC “EIT Culture and Creativity”, may contribute to actions under this destination, and may as appropriate be considered by applicants. Furthermore, applicants are invited to consult funding opportunities in other parts of the Horizon Europe Work Programme, including for instance the funding opportunities for companies, high potential start-ups, entrepreneurs and innovative researchers offered under the European Innovation Council.

R&I actions under this Destination will help ensure Europe’s sustainable prosperity and competitiveness, support people, strengthening our societies and our social model, contribute to protecting our democracy, upholding our values and boosting a global Europe, leveraging our power and partnerships. They will contribute to reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals and to building a stronger, more participatory and crisis-resilient society

[81] See further for instance https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/social-sciences-and-humanities/cultural-heritage-and-cultural-and-creative-industries-ccis/cultural-heritage-cloud_en

and economy. They will support the realisation of the full potential of cultural heritage, arts and cultural and creative industries as drivers of sustainable innovation and a European sense of belonging.

To maximise the impacts of R&I under this Destination in line with EU priorities, international cooperation is encouraged whenever relevant in the proposed topics.

Expected impact:

Proposals for topics under this Destination should set out a credible pathway to contributing to the following expected impact of the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan:

- The full potential of cultural heritage, arts and cultural and creative industries and sectors as drivers of both sustainable innovation and a European sense of belonging is realised through a continuous engagement with society, citizens and economic sectors.

**EUROPE'S SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY AND COMPETITIVENESS**

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-01: "Artistic intelligence" : harnessing the power of the arts to address complex challenges, enhance soft skills and boost innovation and competitiveness**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 15.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding as a beneficiary with zero funding, or as an associated partner. The JRC will not participate in the preparation and submission of the proposal - see General Annex B.<br>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks. |
| *Legal and* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions |

| | |
|---|---|
| *financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | apply:<br>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) [82].<br>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.<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Proposals should contribute to the first two expected outcomes, and either the one listed under Focus 1, or the one listed under Focus 2.

- The potential of art-science and/or technology collaborations to address societal challenges and drive innovation is better understood. Guidance, toolkits, and actionable methodologies are developed to promote these collaborations, providing policymakers, professionals, and training organisations with clarity on intervention scope, applicability across various fields, and evaluation methods, metrics, or tools.

- New and existing national, European or international networks for art-science-technology collaborations are established or strengthened, expanding opportunities for artists to engage with science and technology.

**Focus 1**

Approaches, methodologies and model interventions for integrating arts and creative practices to enhance soft skills across public and private sectors are developed, tested and disseminated.

**Focus 2**

The effectiveness of critical artists' engagement in interdisciplinary teams is demonstrated alongside the assessment of the viability of research-intensive emerging technologies through at least three low technology readiness level (TRL) pilot demonstrators.

Scope: Artistic research fosters inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary thinking, inspiring innovative problem-solving and offering new avenues for innovation across policy areas, akin

[82] 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

to scientific research. EU initiatives such as SciArt and S+T+ARTS[83] show that art-science-technology collaborations enhance scientific and technological progress. Art acts as a catalyst for innovation, developing creative solutions to complex challenges and brings fresh perspectives to the scientific community. Artistic research is increasingly fostering mutual fertilization between the arts and academia. Collaboration with artists leads academics to adopt experimental practices, while artists increasingly engage with theoretical aspects of their practice. Closer collaboration between artists and companies in emerging technologies ensures that technological developments are guided by diverse, human-centred perspectives. Artistic research offers cross-disciplinary insights that challenge conventional thinking, spark innovation beyond technical efficiency, and address societal challenges holistically. Furthermore, artistic intelligence[84] makes complex concepts accessible and engages audiences emotionally and culturally. Artistic expression facilitates the adoption of innovative concepts and practices and catalyses social innovation, supporting sustainable and inclusive societal transformations and the cultural uptake of socio-scientific issues. Now is the time to consolidate understanding of the transformative potential of art-science-technology collaborations, distil it for application across policy areas and levels, and develop methods to evaluate their impact both quantitatively and qualitatively. Projects are expected to:

- Gather evidence on art-science-technology collaborations for addressing societal challenges and spurring innovation in science and technology.

- Collect case studies, produce and disseminate guidance, toolkits, and methodologies supporting policymakers in promoting these collaborations and strategies for cross-disciplinary innovation. Mechanisms, span of possible interventions, applicability to diverse fields and contexts will be clarified and exemplified.

- Develop concrete use cases, such as (but not limited to): artists supporting ethical, inclusive, human-centred AI; addressing societal challenges and complex transformations through art-science-technology collaboration, advancing emotional storytelling, experiential art and public engagement through AI and real-time data; public sector roles in the art-science-technology uptake; role of artists in catalysing innovation in policymaking; participatory art-science-technology initiatives and citizen science.

- Develop and test qualitative and quantitative methodologies and key performance indicators for evaluating such interventions, assessing their impacts, measuring their medium to long-term benefits and identifying what constitutes success.

---

83 For information on these initiatives, see https://science-art-society.ec.europa.eu/front and https://starts.eu/

84 In the context of this topic, artistic intelligence can be understood as the collaborative capacity of artistic research and practice to generate and drive innovation, impact, and value by integrating creativity with scientific, technological, and cultural knowledge, particularly through cross-disciplinary collaboration, as demonstrated in initiatives such as STARTS and SciArt. Proposals can critically explore and develop the definition.

- Increase opportunities for artists to engage in art-science-technology collaborations, through network establishment or consolidation, interdisciplinary initiatives or other methods.

Project consortia should include artists and creatives/representatives of creative industries. Through leveraging creativity, projects should boost EU productivity and competitiveness while improving artists and creative professionals' employment conditions and preserving the autonomy and freedom essential to artistic practice and democratic society.

Financial support to third parties of up to EUR 60.000 in the form of grants may be considered, with the aim of actively engaging artists and creative professionals, for example through residencies, to facilitate development of solutions and innovative experimentations.

In addition to the main focus area, proposals should choose between the following two focuses:

**Focus 1.** Enhancing soft skills through creativity and the arts

Policies and strategies for introducing creative thinking and cross- and transdisciplinary methods in education, research and the broader public and private sectors are needed. In the workforce, engaging with creative practices and the arts enhances soft skills -such as creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, emotional intelligence - crucial for productivity and competitiveness in an increasingly automated world[85] and to meet the demands of a changing market. Supporting research and innovation in this area will help individuals and institutions develop the skills and mindsets needed to thrive and increase creativity, productivity and well-being, including mental health, in a complex, interconnected society. Projects are expected to develop, experiment, and disseminate frameworks for using the arts and creative practices to strengthen soft skills in various public and private sectors, including education and lifelong learning, public administration and corporate environments, and showcase best practices. Proposals may choose their own areas of application.

**Focus 2.** Pilots on emerging technologies

Proposals should develop at least 3 small scale pilots on emerging technologies in interdisciplinary settings involving artists, to assess, demonstrate and streamline research-intensive technologies. Candidate technologies could include, among others, immersive arts, grid sensing networks, multisensuality, ubiquitous XR, spatial computing, VLM/LLM and historical data, crowd digitization or virtual reality. Pilots should demonstrate the effectiveness of artists' engagement.

Proposals should clearly indicate the focus they have selected.

Proposals should consider the involvement of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) based on its experience, in particular with the SciArt programme, and with

[85] M. Draghi (2024), The future of European competitiveness. Part B: In-depth analysis and recommendations, p. 258, 272.

respect to the value it could bring in providing an effective interface between research activities and policymaking.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-02: Boosting creative startups for disruptive innovation**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Innovation Actions |
| *Procedure* | The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:<br>To ensure a balanced portfolio, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to those that are the highest ranked within each of the two options provided in the scope (Option a and Option b), provided that the applications attain all thresholds. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [86].<br>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.<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

[86] 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

- Deepened knowledge of specific factors favouring the growth of creative startups[87], in particular those with potential for disruptive innovation [88] and/or cross-sectorial innovation impacts, is made available and promoted to policymakers, investors, funding- and enterprise support bodies.

- Effective methods to favour the growth of creative startups, in particular those with potential for disruptive innovation and/or cross-sectorial innovation impacts, are developed, tested and put in practice by industry, investors, funding- and enterprise support bodies, and relevant decision makers.

- Examples of creative startups scaling up and/or engaging in disruptive innovation are made available, with a view to increase the visibility and recognition of the innovative power of Europe's creative startups.

In addition, proposals should contribute to at least one of the following expected outcomes, depending on the option chosen (a or b below):

- The effectiveness of the methods developed is demonstrated by at least one creative startup supported via the action becoming a scaleup [89] in a Member State or an Associated Country.

- The effectiveness of the methods developed is demonstrated by at least one creative startup or scaleup supported via the action succeeding in bringing a disruptive innovation to the market.

Scope: The cultural and creative industries (CCIs) count a high rate of startups. Data indicate that CCIs are among the early adopters of new technologies, especially in the digital realm. For instance, the European Monitor of Industrial Ecosystems (2024)[90] notes that artificial intelligence-based technology startups were most common among the CCIs and in the health sector. Furthermore, creative startups drive innovation through crossovers with other sectors. They can be a motor of growth in local economies, unlocking opportunities, investment, jobs and higher productivity. That is why a host of initiatives like creative clusters, innovation hubs, smart specialisation strategies, innovation ecosystems, etc. foster the emergence of creative startups. Also at EU level, there are a number of initiatives to support startups and/or

87 In the context of this topic, a 'creative startup' should be understood as a private company that falls under the definition of cultural and creative industries as defined in the European Parliament Resolution 'A coherent EU policy for cultural and creative industries' (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016IP0486&from=EN), is younger than ten years and has an innovative product and/or service and/or business model that it aims to scale up.

88 In the context of this topic, 'disruptive innovation' should be understood in the sense used by the European Innovation Council, but with no requirement to be based on deep tech; as an innovation which radically changes the way of operation ('of doing things'), and therefore creates new market(s) or has a significant impact on current markets, on economic activity of firms and/or on the public sector or society at large.

89 The definition of scaleups by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) requires that a company grows at an annual rate of 20% or more over three consecutive years in terms of number of employees or turnover. In the context of this call topic, such growth rate in one year / 2 consecutive years is sufficient.

90 SWD(2024) 77 final https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52024SC0077

cultural and creative industries[91], and there is a clearly stated ambition to make EU the preferred choice for startups and scaleups, as expressed in the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy[92].

However, in order to better support European creative startups to grow into scaleups and to multiply their potential as high-impact disruptive innovators, in line with the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy, additional measures are needed.

The challenge is to deepen the knowledge of the most important factors that favour the scaling up of creative startups in Europe and unleashing their potential for disruptive innovation, with a particular focus on those factors that distinguish them from startups in other sectors.

Proposals are expected to focus either on:

**Option a**: Boosting the growth of creative startups into scaleups.

**Option b**: Boosting creative startups or scaleups with a potential for disruptive innovation.

Proposals should clearly indicate the option they have selected.

Approaches should be devised that boost the growth of creative startups in Europe and/or encourage engaging in disruptive innovation. Approaches developed may build on existing methods, such as shared technological resources/platforms to lower investments needs, credible assessments of technologies, IPR or of creative companies to increase investor readiness, matchmaking platforms, etc. However, the approaches to be developed under this action should be innovative and go beyond the existing ones. They should be effective and feasible across Europe under the current legal framework.

In order to validate and refine the proposed approaches, projects should carry out at least 3 pilot trials in different settings under real-world like conditions. These should involve piloting the scaling-up of a creative startup or positioning a creative startup/scaleup for bringing disruptive innovation to the market, according to the option chosen (a or b above). Financial support to third parties may be considered, with the aim of engaging diverse innovative creative startups, facilitating the uptake of solutions devised by the projects, experimenting with innovative approaches, or engaging other funders in co-financing.

To the extent appropriate, projects should build on and take advantage of previous research, networks, policy initiatives and infrastructure at European and national levels. This may include building on results of or structures developed by relevant R&I projects funded under Horizon Europe or other EU funding programmes that focus on boosting the innovation potential of CCIs, the EIT Knowledge and Innovation Community 'EIT Culture and Creativity' [93], or other relevant projects and networks. Such existing networks and

[91] E.g. the EIT Culture & Creativity KIC , Cultural and Creative Regional Ecosystems , Digital Innovation Hubs in the cultural and creative sectors , Creative Innovation Labs

[92] See further COM(2025) 270 https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2f76a0df-b09b-47c2-949c-800c30e4c530_en

[93] https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/

infrastructures may also include business incubators or accelerators, venture capital networks[94], etc.

To the extent appropriate, the Commission expects projects funded under this topic to establish coordination mechanisms in order to achieve the strongest possible common impact. One such area of cooperation could be communication and dissemination efforts.

The Commission estimates that a project duration of at least 4 years is appropriate, in order to be able to achieve the expected outcomes.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-03: AI integration in CCSI work practice: catalysing innovation and competitiveness**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 15.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [95].<br>Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties. The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants. The |

[94] Such as for instance https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-fund/trusted-investors-network_en

[95] 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

| | |
|---|---|
| | maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 60 000.<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Insights, recommendations, strategies, guidelines, methods and tools supporting full AI integration in CCSI practices become available to CCSI, policymakers, and stakeholders.
- Scenarios for co-created solutions tailored to CCSI needs, utilizing quality data and federated data sources, along with digital infrastructures, and inclusive cooperation processes, become available.
- Generally made available AI-powered and ethically designed solutions, tools and services in several CCSI areas benefit creators, cultural professionals, and society, including persons with disabilities and other specific needs, fostering innovative creative expressions and improving creative business models while preserving and enhancing cultural diversity, and inclusion.
- By mastering ethical and inclusive AI, CCSI are empowered drivers of culture, innovation, competitiveness and societal wellbeing.

Scope: AI technologies are transformative, providing unprecedented opportunities for human creativity, experimentations and co-creations. AI profoundly impacts cultural and creative sectors and industries, changing practices, facilitating new ways of working and making innovative services and products possible. Artists, industry players, and cultural organisations increasingly use AI, for assistance in content creation, production, and management, to predict trends, personalise market content, engage audiences, enhance cultural heritage preservation and accessibility, and many more purposes.

Cultural and creative sectors and industries (CCSI)[96] need to fully harness AI's potential to maintain relevance, expand their impact and value, increase competitiveness, and keep their

[96] "CCSI relate to all sectors and industries whose activities are based on cultural values, cultural diversity and individual and/or collective artistic and other creative expressions, whether those activities are market or non-market oriented, whatever the type of structure that carries them out, and irrespective of how that structure is financed. Those activities include the development of skills and talent with the potential to generate innovation, the creation of wealth and jobs through the production of social and economic value, including from intellectual property management. Those activities relate also to the development, the production, the creation, the dissemination and the preservation of goods and services which embody cultural, artistic or other creative expressions, as well as related function**s** such as education and management. The cultural and creative sectors include, inter alia, architecture, archives, the arts, libraries and museums, artistic crafts, audiovisual (including film, television, software, video games, multimedia and recorded music), tangible and intangible cultural heritage, design, creativity-driven high-end industries and fashion, festivals, music, literature, performing arts (including theatre and dance), books and publishing (newspapers and magazines), radio and visual arts, and advertising" Decision (EU) 2021/820 of 20 May 2021 on the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) 2021-2027: Boosting the Innovation Talent and Capacity of Europe and repealing Decision No 1312/2013/EU, Appendix I, footnote nr. 26.

vibrant, inclusive nature. Embracing and co-creating ethical AI solutions tailored to CCSI needs will, among other benefits, enable the automation of low-creativity tasks, allowing to increase focus on high-value activities that enhance creativity and productivity, thus unlocking unprecedented possibilities. Production times and costs can be reduced, market reach expanded, preservation, interpretation and inclusive access to cultural heritage enhanced, and new job categories could emerge.

Although several initiatives are on the ground, a comprehensive understanding of enabling frameworks and factors and of what is still lacking in terms of data, standards, infrastructures, computing power, tools, knowledge and capacity for the CCSI to fully embrace the opportunities opened by AI is essential for effectively integrating AI technologies into CCSI practices and workflows. Proposals should assess the current level of AI readiness in the CCSI, investigate the specific barriers to AI adoption in the sectors, and highlight areas where AI can offer the most benefits. In continuous engagement with the sectors, based on the analysis of current practices and through concrete use cases, proposals should produce strategic guidance to extensively and seamlessly integrate AI into CCSI operations, enhancing efficiencies, averting risks, and facilitating cross-sector collaboration. Based on this analysis, they should develop a set of tailored tools designed to address the specific gaps and leverage the opportunities uncovered during the assessment. These tools should be strategically aligned with the sector's needs, ensuring they provide targeted solutions to enhance AI adoption and maximize its potential benefits. They should be scalable, affordable for smaller, less-resourced CCSI actors and accompanied by related documentation and training materials and documentation.

Proposals should address one of the following two options, and are allowed to address both:

- Develop scalable pilots for innovative AI-enabled products and services across diverse segments of sectoral value chains, in cooperation with CCSI. These pilots are expected to address identified gaps in CCSI operations and prioritise solutions that catalyse innovation in sectors whose business models are not yet taking full advantage of AI. Applicants should have flexibility to select their preferred application areas.

- Design and pilot innovative, inclusive, ethically driven, transparent AI solutions to foster cultural and linguistic diversity, and enhance accessibility, with a focus on engaging individuals in vulnerable situations, particularly youth, older people, persons with disabilities and individuals with special needs. Applicants should have the flexibility to select their preferred application areas.

Pilots should aim at leveraging AI for facilitating new revenue streams for the CCSI, as well as sustainable business models, and will highlight marketable solutions.

Financial support to third parties may be foreseen, with the aim of engaging entities external to the consortium in the development of pilots.

Consortia should include representatives of the cultural and creative sectors and industries and technology developers.

Proposals should consider relevant policy initiatives, such as the AI Continent Action Plan[97], and build upon existing research and innovation outcomes, particularly insights and resources from Horizon Europe-funded projects focused on digital transformation, innovation, or competitiveness in the CCSI, and science-technology-art collaboration, and should liaise with the EIT KIC Culture and Creativity. Whenever relevant, they might make use of existing facilities and platforms such as the European High-Performance-Computing network, the European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage (ECCCH), the Common European Data Space for Cultural Heritage, ALT EDIC and other data spaces, European Digital Innovation Hubs, AI Factories, and relevant research infrastructures.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-04: Towards a fair and transparent market for cultural and creative content in the era of generative AI**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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 |

[97] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions" AI Continent Action Plan" COM (2025) 165 final https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/ai-continent-action-plan. Under the umbrella of the AI Continent Action Plan, the Apply AI strategy aims at boosting the use of AI in EU strategic industries, including the cultural and creative sectors. The AI Continent Action Plan also announces the preparation of a dedicated AI strategy for the cultural and creative sectors focused on ensuring that AI enables and reinforces human creativity and that it contributes to safeguarding European cultural and linguistic diversity.

| | |
|---|---|
| | Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025) [98].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- An in-depth analysis of the socio-economic dimensions and impacts of generative AI on the cultural and creative sectors and related societal implications. Particular attention should be paid to rights and remuneration of creators, diversity of cultural expression, audience perception, consumption patterns, market dynamics, value chains, royalty allocation and the effectiveness of copyright infrastructure.

- Scenarios, value chains, standards and robust, agile solutions to ensure transparency and trust in the generative AI supply chain are developed, aiming for a fair and transparent market for cultural and creative content. This includes: systems for content provenance detection of AI-generated and manipulated creative content; tools and infrastructure that reinforce rights management, creators' consent, control, and fair compensation for the use of their works in AI training and generation; measures supporting the findability and discoverability of trustworthy cultural and creative content; mechanisms for the long-term preservation and stewardship of AI-generated creative works.

- Adaptive policy frameworks, recommendations, and solutions that embed cultural and ethical considerations in AI development for/with CCSI. These should ensure a fair and ethical market for cultural and creative content, products and services. Concrete solutions to address identified challenges and ensure equitable and sustainable creative economies, including agile mechanisms to ensure equitable value distribution, are proposed.

- A systemic innovation framework for sustainable CCSI is developed and validated. It enables agile experimentation, design, and testing of future-proof business models, that support compliance with ethical standards, legal requirements, and resource-efficient practices adaptable to market and technological changes.

Scope: The impact of generative AI on the CCSI and society is complex and multifaceted[99]. While it offers new possibilities, it also raises concerns, particularly regarding copyright, revenue models, employment patterns, and audience engagement. Understanding these socio-economic impacts, including how AI shifts the way the arts and culture are understood, created, practiced, and learnt, is crucial.

---

98 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

99 See, among others, JRC's *Generative AI Outlook Report - Exploring the Intersection of Technology, Society and Policy*,2025.

Generative AI can produce outputs potentially competing with human-created content. AI can also facilitate the manipulation of creative works, potentially infringing copyright or misleading users. Increasing transparency of AI generated or manipulated content may help to distinguish between human-created and machine-generated content and inform new practices for content dissemination and consumption.

Challenges related to the availability of quality data for AI applications and to the accuracy and reliability of cultural content should be investigated and addressed. In particular, the development of Generative AI technologies requires access to vast amounts of content that is often still protected by copyright. One of the challenges in this context is linked to the difficulty to identify copyrighted works, rightsholders and information on how their works may be used. The purpose of the insights gained is to inform novel practices for managing AI-generated content in cultural and creative fields, including the preservation of valuable outputs, such as artworks created by using AI, and to inform the establishment of adequate policy and legal frameworks and infrastructures.

Proposals should primarily address the following dimensions:

- Investigate and identify emerging trends, including through scenario analysis, and estimate the economic and social implications and impact of AI-generated outputs on the creative content market and related services, and on different actors and sectors, with a special focus on creators' rights, earnings, allocation of royalties, as well as on diversity, inclusion, consumption and user perception of cultural products and services.

- Examine and propose policy and legal frameworks to ensure a sustainable and innovative creative sector in the age of AI.

- Propose standards and robust solutions to map the generative-AI supply chain, identify, trace and find trusted content, and ensure authenticity; tools for strengthening consent, control, rights management and compensation for the use of artistic and creative data in AI; suggest other measures to ensure a fair and transparent market for cultural and creative content, including solutions to increase the discoverability of trustworthy cultural and creative content, including copyright protected content that could be used for the AI training.

- Investigate new, efficient ways to redefine value creation and transformed business models. This includes looking at uncovering opportunities that support human creation, and increase profitability, while providing frameworks for the distribution of AI-generated and/or assisted creative content, and measures for long term preservation of valuable works created with the use of AI.

- Systemic and agile innovation: propose a validated framework to experiment, design, prototype and test new business models that can adapt to a rapidly evolving market, are resource efficient, and comply with ethical and regulatory frameworks.

By integrating these findings and insights, risks associated with generative AI can be mitigated and new positive prospects developed. Insights gained are expected to contribute to the EU's global leadership in creativity and innovation.

Proposals should consider relevant policy initiatives, such as the AI Continent Action Plan and the envisaged AI dedicated strategy for the cultural and creative sectors[100], and build upon existing research and innovation outcomes. Proposals selected under this call should collaborate and, if relevant, build upon the research developed by projects retained under call HORIZON-CL2-2025-01-HERITAGE-04.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-05: Creative alliances: Fostering global partnerships in cultural policies and CCI innovation**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 3.00 and 3.75 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 15.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>In order to achieve the expected outcomes, of the action, the consortium must include at least three entities from at least one of the world regions identified (Africa, the Far East, South-East Asia, Latin America). Legal entities from these regions must take part in the project as beneficiaries. Due to the scope of this topic, legal entities established in these regions are exceptionally eligible for Union funding. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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 |

[100] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions" AI Continent Action Plan" COM (2025) 165 final https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/ai-continent-action-plan. Under the umbrella of the AI Continent Action Plan, the Apply AI strategy aims at boosting the use of AI in EU strategic industries, including the Cultural and Creative Sectors. The aAI Continent Action Plan also announces the preparation of a dedicated AI strategy for the cultural and creative sectors focused on ensuring that AI enables and reinforces human creativity and that it contributes to safeguarding European cultural and linguistic diversity.

| | |
|---|---|
| | 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) [101].<br><br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Deepened understanding and comprehensive evaluation of cultural policy models, creative industry ecosystems, and strategies for promoting creative industries across world regions, identifying good practices, success stories and replicable models. Innovative practices, policy approaches, shared challenges, and opportunities for cross-regional collaboration and global development of creative industries are identified.

- International equal partnerships and collaborations are established to exchange cultural policy approaches, boost creative industries, and/or support collaborative production or co-creation, facilitating knowledge transfer and capacity building among participating actors.

- Actionable strategies are available to policymakers, businesses, and stakeholders, for cross-regional collaborations that strengthen cultural ties, leverage creative industries, culture, and the arts as central to Global Europe, and support global culture- and creativity-driven innovation and resilience.

Scope: This topic explores how international partnerships can strengthen cultural policies and creative industries innovation, promote cross-cultural collaboration, and support sustainable development and global relations. Proposals should examine innovative approaches that benefit partners worldwide while enhancing Europe's global standing through cultural cooperation. The topic has two distinct but interconnected focuses; proposals should select one but may also consider complementarities and synergies with the other.

**Focus 1: Cultural and creative industries' innovation beyond borders**

Creative industries are gaining global attention for their multifaceted impact on economies and societies, driving economic growth, job creation, opportunities for youth, women, and persons with disabilities, while generating value and fostering wellbeing across regions. By investing in digital and green transitions, adopting ethical and open AI, and leveraging cultural heritage, the EU offers a compelling paradigm for creative industries worldwide. This approach strengthens creativity within Europe and can inspire other regions developing their own cultural and creative economies, contributing to a flourishing global creative ecosystem.

[101] 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

Creative industries support resilient, inclusive, balanced and mutually respectful partnerships that create new markets and drive innovation, advancing a global Europe. There is a growing need to explore diverse approaches to promoting cultural and creative industries, fostering knowledge exchange and mutual learning to amplify positive impacts worldwide, with Africa, the Far East, South-East Asia, Latin America being particularly promising regions for cooperation. Proposals should establish pilot projects to demonstrate the potential of cross-regional cooperation in creative industries, addressing specific regional challenges and opportunities. They may leverage the EU Global Gateway strategy to foster resilient, inclusive, and innovative global partnerships.

**Focus 2: International cultural relations for global resilience**

While often used interchangeably, cultural diplomacy, international cultural relations, and soft power each reflect different layers of collaboration and competition: cultural diplomacy often advance national interests through cultural exchange, international cultural relations emphasise mutual and reciprocal engagement, and soft power highlights the subtle influence of culture and creativity in shaping global perceptions.

As traditional diplomatic channels face pressures, these approaches have become vital for enhancing mutual understanding, building trust, and fostering dialogue and cooperation across borders—even amid political disagreements. They promote societal resilience and peaceful coexistence by highlighting common values, easing tensions, and bridging divides. International cultural relations also offer opportunities to strengthen existing partnerships or forge new ones—important also for Europe's own strategic autonomy—by leveraging shared values, cooperation mechanisms, existing networks (including the EU Global Gateway), and diverse cultural diplomacy strategies in today's geopolitical landscape.

Proposals under this focus should establish **pilot projects** to test innovative forms of international cultural relations, such as initiatives fostering intercultural dialogue among communities experiencing tension or affected by conflict; collaborative artistic projects promoting mutual understanding and countering nationalism, xenophobia or conflict; cultural partnerships that avoid asymmetric power dynamics; or joint activities demonstrating how culture can strengthen societal resilience through inclusion, diversity, openness and how arts, design and cultural practices contribute to social cohesion. Africa, the Far East, South-East Asia, Latin America are regions of particular interest for this focus area as well. Proposals should clearly indicate the focus they have selected.

Projects should establish mechanisms for ongoing collaboration that leverage each region's cultural assets and industry innovations to address global and local challenges

Proposals addressing either focus may also explore ways to address unequal access to global markets and imbalances in partnerships within the creative economy, with attention to gender and other intersectional aspects shaping opportunities and participation. Research organisations, policy think-tanks, creative industries representatives, artist organisations/artists, tech communities, and cultural organisations from Europe and partner world regions are encouraged to participate.

Proposals should involve CCSI representatives from the outset to ensure their central role. Proposals need not cover all CCSI but may focus on a specific area for in-depth analysis to develop a strong knowledge base and highlight strategic directions and routes to improvement. Proposals should explore synergies with other EU programmes supporting international cultural and creative partnerships, including the European Spaces of Culture,[102] and may seek complementarities with projects funded under the topic HORIZON-CL2-2025-01-HERITAGE-07. In order to achieve the topic's expected outcomes, international cooperation is encouraged.

## SUPPORTING PEOPLE, STRENGTHENING OUR SOCIETIES AND OUR SOCIAL MODEL

### HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-06: Safeguarding linguistic diversity in Europe

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 5.00 and 5.75 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 11.50 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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 |

[102] Among others: *Cultural Relations Platform*, connecting cultural practitioners worldwide; S+T+Arts4Africa digital innovation in African sub-Saharan culture and digital innovation hubs; *Africa-Europe Partnerships for Culture*, focusing on artistic co-creation and cooperation; *European Spaces of Culture:* innovative collaboration models in cultural relations between EU and extra-EU local partner organisations; *Creative Africa: Audiovisual* for cross-border cooperation in the audio-visual sector across the entire value chain; *Strengthening African-European Museum Partnerships:* an African-European museums platform to develop a new multilateral framework based on co-creation; *CreatiFI:* Financial instrument to support creative industries; *ACP-EU Culture:* assist the socio-economic development of the ACP countries by supporting their cultural and creative sectors; *ProCultura:* contribute to the increase of employment and income-generating activities in the cultural and creative sector of the Portuguese-speaking African countries and East Timor; *EU-UNESCO Facility*: technical assistance to support cultural policy strengthening and the implementation of the UNESCO 2030 Culture Indicators, the framework to measure and assess culture's contribution to sustainable development; *Transcultura:* deepen integration within the Caribbean region and strengthening people-to-people cooperation with the European Union.

| | |
|---|---|
| | Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025) [103].<br>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.<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all the following expected outcomes:

- Enhanced understanding, accompanied by documented good practices, showing what works to encourage multilingualism in society and what type of practices have led to safeguarding linguistic heritage, including lesser used, endangered and historically marginalised languages.

- Rigorous policy-relevant evidence, strategies and policy recommendations for promoting multilingualism and safeguarding linguistic diversity are available to policy makers, and users are involved in their development, especially the younger generation. Non-linguistic benefits of language maintenance and revitalisation are well documented, communicated and understood by different stakeholders.

- Citizens are empowered and engaged in the sustainable management of their own linguistic heritage and resources, with a focus on intergenerational dialogue and education activities, with particular attention to communities where oral transmission is the primary mode of language preservation.

- Maps and visual presentations showing the linguistic diversity in Europe are available, including a variety of existing languages (regional and minority languages, indigenous languages, low resources languages etc.) and offering suited terminology and explanations.

Scope: Linguistic diversity is a fundamental part of Europe's cultural heritage. When languages disappear, a whole knowledge system disappears, and cultural diversity is impoverished. Linguistic diversity plays a key role in safeguarding cultural diversity. Languages are the expression of the identity, culture and the way peoples perceive their world. Knowledge and culture are lost when languages are lost.

The EU has 24 official languages and some estimated 60 other languages spoken in particular regions or by specific groups. They are an essential part of the rich fabric of European culture. The proposals would document and map the situation of linguistic diversity in Europe, taking

[103] 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

into consideration existing frameworks, initiatives and working terminology established by the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

The proposals should identify examples of good practice that have resulted in richer use of languages in society, thus promoting multilingualism, and would support sharing of knowledge and good practices.

Moreover, in recent decades, multilingual regions have been affected by a confluence of demographic, socio-economic, and sociocultural challenges. An aging population coupled with lower birthrates has strained these communities, leading to a decrease in the number of native speakers who can transmit their linguistic heritage to younger generations. The housing crisis affecting several of these regions, also driven by tourism, exacerbates this dilemma, as economic pressures force long-time residents to leave their ancestral homes. Migration, while enriching in diversity, often further dilutes the linguistic fabric as newcomers bring different linguistic traditions and younger generations gravitate toward globally dominant languages. The sociocultural landscape is equally challenging, with the loss of monolingual minority speakers and community life and the media environments that increasingly prioritize universal appeal and dominant languages over local authenticity. This is particularly acute for itinerant or dispersed communities, e.g. Roma communities, whose linguistic heritage is often overlooked in mainstream narratives.

The proposals should explore how these elements have changed the language situation in those areas and how the different regions have adapted to the new linguistic environment, and what are the effects on the local economy. Particular attention should be given to languages with limited institutional support to explore how better visibility and accurate representation could be achieved.

Another element changing the game for language learning and safeguarding heritage are digital technologies. The projects should address the online presence of different languages and explore how language technologies could overcome the deepening linguistic divide in the digital domain[104], while also documenting the availability of language data. Proposals should also look at the presence of different languages in different forms of media, arts and wider forms of cultural expressions. Projects could also explore how digital platforms and AI tools can aid in language preservation, especially for endangered regional languages.

The projects should explore the non-linguistic benefits of language maintenance, regeneration and learning. They could also look at how multilingualism and maintaining and learning heritage languages affects people’s wellbeing, self-respect and health due to the comfort, lower stress and sense of security at being able to speak their first language and not have their identity challenged. The actions should propose ways to encourage and support multilingual education and intergenerational transmission, including formal and non-formal learning settings. Particular consideration should be given to communities where formal education in the heritage language has historically been absent or discouraged.

[104] Building i.a. on the European Language Equality (ELE) project reports analysing the linguistic landscape of Europe, providing insights into the availability and quality of digital tools and resources for various European languages.

The proposals should comprise transdisciplinary collaborations (including SSH disciplines) in resolving this issue involving, for instance and not exhaustive, linguistics, heritage and museum studies, media studies, theatre studies, literary studies, socio-economic, socio-cultural and migration studies etc. Available results of existing research on safeguarding linguistic diversity and multilingualism should be taken into consideration, while identification of needs for further research in the field should be promoted. Research could explore, among others, the role of oral transmission and its gendered component, in safeguarding languages at risk and methods to ensure its conservation. This is particularly relevant for languages where oral storytelling, music, and intergenerational dialogue play a central role in cultural transmission.

The projects should have a dedicated place for linguistic cartography (meaningful representations of linguistic diversity) and explore what are the challenges of assigning language to space; current language mapping projects, and what are the opportunities for improving language mapping with current technology.

The projects could explore how language maps could serve as educational or research tools, to provide illustrations of linguistic and cultural diversity. Pursuing cultural awareness and cultural diversity understanding makes language mapping a significant research objective.

Proposals should develop recommendations for promoting multilingualism in our societies and safeguarding of linguistic diversity, empowering citizens to take ownership for safeguarding their linguistic heritage. These recommendations should also aim at combating marginalisation of disadvantaged linguistic communities, including itinerant and stateless groups.

Proposals should build on existing knowledge, activities, networks and platforms, notably the ones funded by the EU. For example, they could include past initiatives such as the 1996 Euromosaic study. The study documented the linguistic diversity of the 12 original EC countries and later of newer members which joined the EU. The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism also carried out many regional EU-funded dossiers, which would benefit from updating.

Synergies could also be created with the European Data Space for Languages and the ALT-EDIC initiative. [105]

Furthermore, links should be established and synergies sought with closely related actions, such as relevant R&I actions funded by Horizon Europe or Horizon 2020. In particular, proposals should establish links to, and where appropriate build on findings from, projects funded under the topics HORIZON-CL2-2022-HERITAGE-01-01: Safeguarding endangered languages in Europe and ‘HORIZON-CL2-2024-HERITAGE-01-05: Strategies to strengthen the European linguistic capital in a globalised world.

Proposals should engage local communities, citizens and civil society organisations, in the development of their actions, using participatory approaches.

105 ALT-EDIC - European Commission

## HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-07: Preventing and fighting illicit trafficking of cultural goods

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 5.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Coordination and Support Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks.<br>Due to the scope of this topic, legal entities established in non-associated third countries may exceptionally participate in this Coordination and Support Action as a beneficiary or affiliated entity and are exceptionally eligible for Union funding.<br>This topic requires the involvement, as beneficiaries, of:<br>• at least three security practitioner [106] organisations or agencies established in at least three different EU Member States or Associated Countries, and<br>• at least two scientific research institutions working on illicit trafficking in the specific field of Cultural Heritage.<br>For participants with practitioner status, applicants must fill in the table "Information about security practitioners" in the application form with all the requested information, following the template provided in the submission IT tool.<br>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.<br>If projects use satellite-based earth observation, positioning, navigation |

[106] Security practitioners has the meaning of organisations or agencies actively engaged in security operations, involved in e.g., law enforcement, customs, environmental crime management, smuggling and trafficking fighting and counter-terrorism, border and maritime surveillance, public safety, fundamental rights, etc.

| | |
|---|---|
| | 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). |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [107].<br>Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties up to 15% of the EU funding. 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. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Increased evidence collection and intelligence gathering, effective cross-border and cross-domain cooperation and uptake by the Law Enforcement Authorities (LEA) and experts of the consolidated tools and platforms within their operational systems and methodologies in accordance with the different user's requirements.
- Capacity building and consolidated training ecosystem, developed with concrete, validated, actionable, interactive training materials tailored to the specific needs of different user groups across EU Member States and beyond.
- European Union law enforcement, judiciary and other competent authorities and practitioners gain a better understanding and enhanced capabilities in addressing crimes related to cultural heritage thanks to the consolidations of existing solutions, standardized and tailored trainings and workshops and practical learning materials.
- Actionable solutions to the threat to cultural heritage trafficking by illicit excavations crime that do not necessarily amount to organised crime but are still illegal activities that considerably endanger Europe's cultural heritage, as well as cultural heritage in third countries.
- A robust and long-term sustainable support framework and plan which will ensure and make operational a long-term cooperation in the prevention and fight of illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

[107] 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

Scope: Trafficking in cultural goods is a serious crime that poses significant threats to cultural heritage, particularly in conflict and crisis areas. This illicit trade involves the illegal import, export, and transfer of ownership of valuable cultural items, including theft from institutions and private collections, looting of archaeological sites, assets laundering and forgery of cultural goods. At the EU level, combatting cultural goods' trafficking is supported by the EU Security Union Strategy 2020-2025[108], the EU Strategy to Tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025[109], the EU action plan against trafficking in cultural goods[110] and the related Council Conclusions[111], [112], [113], the EU Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (EU-SOCTA)[114]. Cultural goods' trafficking is a highly specialised criminal market. The criminals range from specialised criminal networks to corrupt dealers or expert dark web traders. Criminal networks and actors active in the area of cultural goods trafficking are characterised by a high degree of expertise and specialised knowledge[115]. To overtake the challenges there is the necessity to use advanced analytics, including machine learning and AI technologies, in order to curate, process and share large volumes of dynamic interoperable and high-quality data and transforming it into meaningful intelligence. By facilitating data exchange across borders and between stakeholders, it would ensure real-time access to relevant information, enhancing collaboration and coordination.

Proposals should strongly build on existing expertise and developments, focusing on (1) developing a cohesive ecosystem to be promoted among LEAs, with integrations and operational interfaces between existing tools, systems (including LEA systems) and the solutions developed to trace, protect, safeguard and repatriate goods, including methodologies for combating crimes through data and network analysis; (2) fostering the utilisation of the aforementioned systems by LEA and push them forward to market readiness level to ensure their effective impact on combating illicit trafficking cases; (3) strengthening the collaboration between the different stakeholders providing effective tools and actionable and standardized training materials for boosting capacity in cataloguing and provenance information analysis; (4) improving data quality, robust data governance and data interoperability across stakeholders and cross borders, improving LEA access to critical databases; (5) provide support to evidence collection thanks to the analysis and interpolation of different sources of information and open source and geospatial intelligence.

Proposals should design and consolidate the solution space, tools and the training ecosystem to demonstrate real uptake and adoption and ensure they reflect the priorities of diverse personas, including law enforcement authorities, customs officials, police authorities, cultural heritage professionals, policymakers and citizens. The training ecosystem should build on the

108 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0605
109 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0170
110 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0800
111 Council Conclusions on the fight against trafficking in cultural goods – Council conclusions (8 June 2023) (10249/23)
112 Concept on Cultural heritage in conflicts and crises. A component for peace and security in European Union's external action. (9962/21)
113 Council Conclusions on EU Approach to Cultural Heritage in conflicts and crises (9837/21)
114 https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-events/main-reports/socta-report
115 EUROPEAN UNION SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME THREAT ASSESSMENT 2025. THE CHANGING DNA OF SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME.

results and findings of relevant national and EU-funded projects, such as for example OPFA-CULT[116], in order to leverage existing knowledge and avoid duplication of effort. The development of these materials should be integrated with existing EU and international legal frameworks and measures on the trafficking of cultural goods, including those applicable beyond EU borders[117] [118] [119]. For police authorities' training-related aspects, cooperation of successful proposals with CEPOL is expected, provided that the Agency opts out from applying for funding.

The proposals should build on the achievements and findings of related previous national and EU-funded projects as well as create complementarities or synergies with projects and European research infrastructures in the field, such as, for example the ones funded under Horizon Europe Cluster 2 and Cluster 3, ERC, the Internal Security Fund (ISF), Creative Europe, the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), the European research infrastructure for heritage science (E-RIHS). Where possible and relevant, synergy-building and clustering initiatives with successful proposals in the same area should be considered, including the organisation of international conferences in close coordination with the Community for European Research and Innovation for Security (CERIS) 18activities and/or other international events.

Proposals are encouraged to seek synergies, and collaboration, with relevant initiatives already developed from international stakeholders working in the field of cultural heritage as well as in the security sector. The creation of new tools and the duplication of existing ones should be avoided; instead, priority should be given to leveraging opportunities for consolidation and maximizing impact. of existing tools and resources.

Scientists and practitioners doing research in the field of Cultural Heritage (such as archaeologists, museologists, art historians or related fields) must have an essential role in the production of the outputs assuring that they efficiently take into account the real needs and problems of the field, as well as in ensuring scientific quality of information and data.

Proposals are encouraged to actively collaborate, create synergies and developments with the European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage (ECCCH)[120] and the Europol Innovation Lab during the lifetime of the project, including validating the outcomes, with the aim of facilitating future uptake of innovations for the law enforcement community. Proposals should ensure alignment on the formats and standards used to exchange interoperable high-quality data with the Cultural Heritage Cloud.

Beneficiaries may plan their activities opting to provide Financial Support to Third Parties in order to support practitioners (such as Police Authorities, Non-Governmental Organisations/Civil Society Organisations, cultural and creative industries [CCIs], research

116 https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/projects-details/31077817/101003506

117 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0605

118 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0170

119 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0800

120 https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/social-sciences-and-humanities/cultural-heritage-and-cultural-and-creative-industries-ccis/cultural-heritage-cloud_en

groups and communities of practitioners in the field of Cultural Heritage) for expanding the proposed work in terms of, for instance, additional user groups and needs, complementary assessments, technology- or methodology-testing activities.

Proposals funded under this topic are expected to actively develop, configure and implement a long-term sustainable governance and cooperation framework which will ensure long term engagement beyond the duration of the funding. Particular emphasis should be placed on the co-creation of a detailed, realistic, and jointly agreed roadmap and validated business model to ensure functionality after the project ends. The model needs to be already validated and operational before the end of the funded project. The scope of the research should include under-studied regions, zones in conflict areas and under environmental disasters, considering existing initiatives, for example the Recommendation on Safeguarding Cultural Heritage in Ukraine[121].

## EUROPE'S SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY AND COMPETITIVENESS

### HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-01: Towards a consolidated culture and creativity driven European innovation ecosystem

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 5.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Coordination and Support Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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<br>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 |

[121] https://culture.ec.europa.eu/news/the-eu-presents-expert-recommendations-on-safeguarding-cultural-heritage-in-ukraine

| | |
|---|---|
| | Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025) [122]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- The number and impact of CCI[123]-driven innovations in Europe are increased thanks to a wide uptake of evidence-based measures stemming from EU-funded research. These results are followed up with appropriate assessments and Key Performance Indicators.
- Innovation driven by the cultural and creative industries continues to be boosted beyond project funding through a long-term economically sustainable ecosystem.
- A vision of European CCIs as an essential engine of sustainable innovation and competitiveness is broadly established, making CCIs a natural part of European, national, regional and local innovation efforts.

Scope: The transition towards a consolidated culture- and creativity-driven European innovation ecosystem represents a strategic imperative for Europe's future competitiveness and societal resilience. In an era where technological advancements alone no longer guarantee competitiveness, the CCIs emerge as essential drivers of transformative change and prosperity. It is necessary to unlock the innovative power of Europe's cultural and creative industries both in themselves and as drivers of innovation in other economic sectors. CCIs shape new technologies and can contribute to user-driven innovation, open innovation, cross-sectoral innovation[124] and to creative entrepreneurial ecosystems for regional development. CCIs are often the first to find productive uses for new technologies and establish meaningful connections between different technologies, thus paving the way for wider uptake that improves productivity and competitiveness in the wider economy. Europe's CCIs can thus act as a crucial technology incubator, in addition to their wider societal contributions such as to cultural wealth, social cohesion and resilience.

Significant research and innovation efforts have been made to boost CCIs and strengthen them as engines of innovation. Notably, Horizon Europe's Cluster 2 has launched more than 30 R&I projects with the collective objective to boost a culture and creativity driven European innovation ecosystem, establishing a collaborative platform for this purpose[125]. Furthermore,

---

122 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

123 CCIs as defined in the European Parliament Resolution 'A coherent EU policy for cultural and creative industries': https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016IP0486&from=EN

124 See for instance Open Method of Coordination report 'The role of public policies in developing entrepreneurial and innovation potential of the cultural and creative sectors'

125 Including projects funded under the call topics HORIZON-CL2-2021-HERITAGE-01-03, HORIZON-CL2-2022-HERITAGE-01-04, HORIZON-CL2-2022-HERITAGE-01-05, HORIZON-CL2-2022-HERITAGE-01-06, HORIZON-CL2-2022-HERITAGE-01-09, HORIZON-CL2-2022-HERITAGE-02-01, HORIZON-CL2-2023-HERITAGE-01-02, HORIZON-CL2-2023-HERITAGE-01-06, HORIZON-

the European Institute for Innovation and Technology has established a Knowledge and Innovation Community for the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries[126], and a Large-Scale Partnership for the Cultural and Creative Industries Ecosystem has been set up under the EU Pact for Skills[127] .

The challenge is to build on, consolidate and complement, as appropriate, the key results such as technologies, solutions, methods, networks and platforms developed by these R&I projects and initiatives as well as by other relevant actions, with the objective to achieve long-term impact in terms of thriving CCIs that proactively engage in innovation and achieve significant economic growth.

The project funded under this topic should build on and improve existing innovation ecosystems to make them effective for the CCIs. Difficulties to properly boost CCI-driven innovation need to be overcome, such as those linked to CCIs consisting mainly of small and micro enterprises with difficulties to fit into commonly applied innovation support models based on fast-growth startups, challenges in properly valuing the IPR of CCIs, inconsistencies between cultural and innovation policies, or issues linked to the particularities of CCI entrepreneurs. Solutions should go beyond common practice in innovation support and deploy for example portfolio approaches that make clusters of organisations investable entities. The project does not need to seek standardised approaches that work across the full diversity of the CCIs and of EU Member States and Associated Countries but should allow for taking local contexts into account. Nevertheless, the project should seek to establish common principles and active knowledge exchange across Europe.

To properly follow up the results of its work, the project should develop suitable Key Performance Indicators and assessment frameworks, including with a base line for the initial situation.

In order to achieve an enduring impact, the project should ensure long-term economically sustainable ecosystems. To be effective, it is important that the project, as appropriate, builds on previous work as well as complements and links to ongoing related initiatives. The long-term sustainable ecosystems should therefore, as appropriate, build on existing networks and/or platforms, and should involve the key stakeholders, covering most EU Member States and Associated Countries as well as a wide range of CCIs. Proposals should include an outline of the sustainable and adaptable economic model envisaged, but do not need to describe it in full detail.

In order to engage entities which are not part of the project consortium, such as important innovation support actors or CCIs, projects may award financial support to third parties. Such support can only be given in the form of grants.

---

CL2-2024-HERITAGE-01-02, HORIZON-CL2-2024-HERITAGE-01-03, HORIZON-CL2-2025-01-HERITAGE-04, HORIZON-CL2-2025-01-HERITAGE-05, HORIZON-CL2-2025-01-HERITAGE-06.

126 https://www.eit.europa.eu/eit-community/eit-culture-creativity

127 https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/about/industrial-ecosystems-and-partnerships/creative-and-cultural-industries_en

The Commission estimates that a project duration of at least 5 years is appropriate, in order to be able to achieve the expected long-term impacts.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-02: AI4Creatives Support Platform: embracing a fair AI revolution**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 5.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Coordination and Support Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [128]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- The cultural and creative sectors and industries (CCSI) have access to a dedicated European virtual AI support platform. This hub will facilitate collaboration among a strong and open network of CCSI networks, professionals, researchers, AI tech companies, creative startups, ethical AI experts, rights management infrastructures, other industries with a shared interest in the field of AI for culture and creativity and a focus on research and innovation.

[128] 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

- The AI4Creatives Support Platform provides easy access to shared services, expertise, capacity building, training, and tools needed to design, develop and adopt AI solutions tailored to cultural and creative processes and needs, enhancing innovation and competitiveness.

- Filling a gap, the platform enables the development and sharing of AI applications that adhere to EU values, principles and regulations, implementing transparency, ethical standards, promoting cultural diversity, addressing biases, and ensuring equitable access to culture and creativity.

Scope: This topic addresses the pressing need to coordinate, support, disseminate and capitalise on relevant outcomes from Horizon Europe Cluster 2-funded projects aimed to equip CCSI to leverage the digital transformation, from other relevant Horizon Europe projects, and from initiatives exploring AI in relation to CCSI under other EU programmes, such as the AI Continent Action Plan, (including AI Factories, GenAI4EU, Apply AI and the envisaged AI strategy for cultural and creative sectors and industries), AI Innovation package, and others. The aim is maximising their impact and driving innovation and competitiveness.

AI offers significant opportunities for CCSI, but challenges persist, including skill gaps, limited interaction with technology partners, structural weaknesses of CCSI, mostly small and micro enterprises with weak bargaining power against big tech providers, and limited resources to train dedicated AI models. Other challenges relate to AI ethics, transparency and intellectual property rights, including copyright. By transcending siloed approaches and establishing synergies, CCSI can take advantage of economies of scale, harness AI's potential and drive innovation. The goal is establishing a permanent, networked reference point for CCSI through a virtual support platform that builds capacity and facilitates networking and collaboration among CCSI, stakeholders, researchers, technology developers, AI ethicists, and other industries and startups, with the overall aim to enable artists, cultural professionals, creative companies and cultural organisations to engage with AI, including dealing with biases and risks. The Support Platform is expected to enable the CCSI to access and utilize available custom-made tools, quality data, resources, knowledge, training, and AI applications aligned with their specific needs and with EU principles and regulations, thus easing the adoption of appropriate innovative ethical solutions and approaches tailored to the CCSI. Among the possible functions of the Support Platform should be:

- Disseminate or develop frameworks, standards, best practices, and toolkits serving as strategic guidance for integrating ethical AI into CCSI value chains.

- Facilitate cross-sector collaboration, synergies, and partnerships between CCSI professionals, AI tech companies, and startups, liaising with initiatives like the European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage (ECCCH), AI Factories, research infrastructures on cultural heritage and digital humanities, European Digital Innovation Hubs, ALT EDIC and LLMs4EU, Common European Data Space for Cultural heritage and other data spaces, and other EU initiatives in this area.

- Build and develop a solid copyright infrastructure to support the use and licensing of copyright-protected content in the context of AI.
- Suggest education and training frameworks and provide training to foster effective AI use in CCSI. Encourage CCSI and SMEs to engage with available federated data sources, digital infrastructures, computational resources, other available platforms to develop their own AI-powered products and services.
- Develop a roadmap for emerging challenges in AI and other emerging technologies related to culture and creativity.
- Engage in policy dialogues with policymakers, industry leaders, and stakeholders to emphasize culture's contribution to quality, ethical, and fair AI developments.

The platform is expected to develop and operate based on a robust sustainability and business model, ensuring long-term viability beyond the initial project phase. The business model should align with the platform's objectives, ensuring it remains accessible to diverse organisations in terms of size and resources and that funding is not dominated by special interest groups.

The project should liaise with the EIT KIC Culture and Creativity to establish synergies, exchange information, and enhance mutual outcomes and impact. It should build on Horizon Europe funded projects in the area of AI and CCSI, particularly those funded under topics HORIZON-CL2-2025-01-HERITAGE-04: Leveraging artificial intelligence for creativity-driven innovation, HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-03: AI integration in CCSI work practice: catalysing innovation and competitiveness, HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-HERITAGE-04: Towards a fair and transparent market for cultural and creative content in the era of generative AI, and establish synergies with relevant projects, and initiatives supported by other relevant EU programmes, such as Digital Europe, Creative Europe and their successors. The project should conduct a pilot of the virtual platform to ensure alignment with CCSI needs, assessing technical and operational feasibility to ensure sustainability over time. The virtual Support Platform should be fully operational by the project's conclusion.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-03: Crafting routes to a circular economy**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 3.00 and 3.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 10.50 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [129]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- The cultural dimension of circular economy is better understood. Cultural factors and the potential of cultural and creative sectors and industries (CCSI) are leveraged to foster circular economy in the EU
- Scalable, sustainable and inclusive business models are developed with users and stakeholders, leveraging circular practices from CCSI for economic and environmental benefits (e.g. nature protection, reducing waste, increasing resource efficiency, promoting sustainable consumption and re-use patterns).
- Circular solution toolkit: A practical toolkit enables businesses in various sectors to apply CCSI-inspired frugal innovation principles, promoting circularity, sustainability and inclusion.
- Evidence-based recommendations and guidelines are available to policymakers to support the transition towards circular practices in CCSI and across other industries and to integrate frugal innovation[130] in circular economy strategies. They emphasize local adaptations of global strategies, allowing for customized approaches that respect and enhance local cultures, heritage and economies.
- Skills Enhancement: Training modules on frugal innovation, circular design, and circular economy practices inspired by crafts, local heritage and other CCSI are available to professionals in various industries.

129 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

130 "The frugal innovation process is a problem-oriented, creative approach to problem solving which starts from user needs and works from the bottom up to develop contextually appropriate solutions. It tends to be frugal both in ends and means," Study on frugal innovation and reengineering of traditional techniques,2017 https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/20d6095a-2a44-11e7-ab65-01aa75ed71a1 , see also https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/639c142b-f260-11ef-981b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

Scope: The transition from a linear to a circular economy[131] is crucial for Europe's prosperity, long term competitiveness and strategic autonomy. This shift can reduce dependence on raw materials, decrease greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, and waste, limit biodiversity loss, create jobs, and support environmental sustainability. The New European Innovation Agenda[132] recognises circularity as a key challenge to accelerate innovation across the EU. Securing essential resources is a high priority, but the transition to circularity requires more than new materials and products: it demands a paradigm shift and a systemic approach that combines different sectors, technological progress, actors, and disciplines with deeper industrial, economic, and societal changes. In advancing a circular economy and society, cultural dimensions are paramount; and cultural barriers can be as significant as economic or technical ones and should be addressed.

CCSIs can act as catalysts for change. Through storytelling and community engagement, they can reshape cognitive frameworks, influence consumer attitudes, and promote societal shifts towards circular principles. They can encourage other industries, such as manufacturing (including textile and fashion), tourism, or construction (including housing and urban development) to adopt circular approaches, promoting resource efficiency and designing for longevity and adaptability. Despite their potential, cultural aspects remain underexplored in circular economy strategies. This topic aims to investigate effective strategies and synergies between culture, creativity, and the circular economy, to inform policy, enhance education and lifelong learning, and inspire innovation. The goal is to develop robust frameworks supporting economic, environmental, and social sustainability across Europe, fostering an environment where culture, creativity, and economy combine to form resilient circular systems and societies. Where relevant, synergies with the New European Bauhaus may also be considered.

Proposals may address one or more of the following four focuses and may combine them with others as appropriate to their objectives.

**Focus 1. Crafts-led innovation for circular economy**

Crafts naturally align with circular economy principles through their use of natural, renewable materials, small scale tools and production, and the creation of durable products with cultural significance. Integrating circular economy concepts with craftsmanship helps address sustainability challenges, preserve cultural heritage and foster local economic development. Craft practices exemplify frugal innovation by efficiently using local resources and minimising waste, offering valuable insights for other sectors seeking to improve sustainability and resource efficiency. Key aspects of the relationship between crafts and the circular economy include traditional knowledge systems rooted in generations of sustainable,

131 "The circular economy is a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. In this way, the life cycle of products is extended. In practice, it implies reducing waste to a minimum." https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20151201STO05603/circular-economy-definition-importance-and-benefits

132 The New European Innovation Agenda - European Commission

place-based practices; local resource utilisation promoting efficiency; and upcycling and waste reduction through creative reuse of materials.

Furthermore, craftmanship is key part of the value chain in high-end industries such as fashion and textiles, with potential synergies to enhance sustainability and the use of recycled, reused and renewable materials and to foster circular and just fashion and textiles value-chains, supporting innovative approaches.

By leveraging circular economy and frugal innovation principles, craft practices offer affordable, accessible, inclusive and equitable solutions to sustainability challenges, emphasizing local resources and community-based production.

Collaborative, open innovation approaches can unlock creative solutions that promote a more sustainable, inclusive, and resource-efficient future.

Proposals should develop a framework integrating circular economy and frugal innovation principles derived from craft practices, applicable and adaptable across various industries and sectors. This includes models for cross-sector collaboration and knowledge transfer among craft practitioners, designers, researchers, and industry professionals to drive circular innovation, foster capacity building, and ensure equitable access to sustainable solutions.

Proposals may consider UNESCO Creative Cities, in particular the City of Crafts and Folk Arts.

**Focus 2 Evaluating adaptive reuse of built cultural heritage**

Cultural heritage buildings are vital for their historical and cultural significance, embodying the identity of local communities. At the same time, the built environment is a major driver of material demand, with significant economic, environmental and wellbeing impacts.[133] The Built4People SRIA[134] highlights the need for R&I in retrofitting and repair, including heritage buildings, using vernacular, bio-based, locally sourced materials, or innovative materials compatible with vernacular ones. The EU Circular Cities and Regions Initiative identifies adaptive reuse of cultural heritage as key to urban sustainability and resilience.[135] There is a need for systematic urban planning transforming building lifecycles from linear to circular models, leveraging cultural heritage to improve energy efficiency, reduce waste, and generate cultural, economic, social and environmental benefits. Participatory planning is crucial for achieving circularity, as are indicators for measuring impact. Adaptive reuse also delivers economic value as heritage sites attract visitors, support local businesses, and foster vibrant cultural economies, making cultural participation central to sustainable urban regeneration and the circular economy. Integrating service design approaches can further connect adaptive

133 http://unep.org/resources/Global-Resource-Outlook-2024

134 https://www.kowi.de/Portaldata/2/Resources/heu/coop/he-built4people-sria-2022-27.pdf

135 https://circular-cities-and-regions.ec.europa.eu/support-materials/papers-and-reports. On this topic, see also the Urban Agenda for the EU https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/sustainable_circular_reuse_of_spaces_and_buildings_handbook.pdf

reuse of heritage buildings with stakeholders and enhance cultural services and community activities.

Proposals should develop methodologies to evaluate the economic, social and environmental benefits of maintaining and reusing built heritage. They should establish criteria and indicators for assessing cultural heritage's contribution to circular city objectives, including energy and resource efficiency, waste reduction, social cohesion and economic sustainability, and explore evaluation tools for innovative circular financing, business and governance models for adaptive reuse of cultural heritage.

**Focus 3. Food heritage and gastronomic innovation for circular futures**

Food is deeply connected to cultural and creative sectors through gastronomic heritage, food-related crafts, and intangible traditions that shape cultural identities. Addressing food's cultural dimensions offers unique opportunities to advance circular economy principles. Food heritage promotes local sourcing, biodiversity, and waste reduction, while culinary tourism and creative food initiatives drive sustainable growth and cross-sectoral innovation. Proposals should develop a framework to integrate circular economy principles into gastronomy and food heritage and devise transferable methodologies linking food-related creativity with sustainable practices. Proposals might consider UNESCO Creative Cities, in particular the City of Gastronomy.

**Focus 4. Designing circularity: creative pathways and open innovation**

Design is pivotal in the transition to a circular economy, underpinning three principles: eliminating waste and pollution, circulating products and materials, and regenerating nature. By applying these principles, designers create durable, repairable, and recyclable products and services, aligned with circular economy goals. The fashion industry pioneered upcycling and make-to-order models, producing items only on demand to reduce overproduction and waste. Such models, alongside product-as-a-service, sharing economy initiatives, or closed-loop production systems, offer adaptable strategies for other sectors to enhance circularity. The dynamic creative sector catalyses innovation, serving as a platform to experiment with circular design approaches across creative and non-creative sectors, including open innovation practices.

Proposals should develop a comprehensive framework for integrating circular economy principles into design processes across cultural and creative industries, guiding designers to minimise waste and maximise resource efficiency. A collaborative environment should facilitate sharing circular design practices and transferring innovative solutions across industries.

## SUPPORTING PEOPLE, STRENGTHENING OUR SOCIETIES AND OUR SOCIAL MODEL

### HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-04: Culture, heritage and creative industries for health and well-being

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 16.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding as a beneficiary with zero funding, or as an associated partner. The JRC will not participate in the preparation and submission of the proposal - see General Annex B. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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<br>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) [136]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

[136] 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

- Deepened knowledge of the potential positive effects of cultural experiences on health and well-being[137] is developed and made available to relevant stakeholders, along with validated scalable and replicable practices to reinforce these effects

- Key industrial, health, cultural, educational and/or civil society actors are aware of validated systemic approaches to make cultural experiences improve health and well-being and are engaged in producing or supporting such cultural experiences

- Competitive European cultural and creative sectors and industries systematically contribute to improve health and well-being

Scope: It is widely recognised that cultural experiences, such as those offered by cultural heritage institutions (CHIs) or cultural and creative sectors and industries (CCSI), can be beneficial for health and well-being. Research done, though scattered and not always systematic, supports this conclusion, with for instance the World Health Organisation arguing that cultural experiences contribute to health in four areas: prevention of ill-health, promotion of healthy behaviour, as well as management and treatment of disease[138].

However, there is still a lack of systematic research into the key characteristics and circumstances of cultural experiences to best support health and well-being. The challenge is to remedy this situation by developing evidence-based and validated practices that can be understood and used by CHIs and CCSI as well as other key stakeholders to develop cultural experiences that effectively support health and well-being.

There are many possible ways to approach this challenge. Proposals are free to choose the focus considered to have the best potential to achieve a strong impact and should make sure to delimit the focus in a way that allows for sufficiently thorough work. Activities may thus concentrate on different kinds of arts and culture – interventions and/or experiences – online and/or in person – and/or on cross-sectoral issues. Proposals should, however, credibly explain why the chosen focus and approach are likely to achieve a strong impact.

One possible focus could be on arts and culture-based experiences as a societal support kit, in situations of crises or other circumstances where health or well-being is under threat. Decision-makers could thus benefit from a set of validated practices that help support well-being among the population in such situations. Such research might be based on good examples provided by Member States/Associated Countries or other stakeholders, with a view to consolidate and build on existing knowledge and practices.

Another possible focus could be on mobilising a particular cultural and creative industry to contribute to health and well-being, such as for instance the video games industry. Ever more people spend ever more time on games, making this an important and growing source of cultural experiences, with a strong interactive component. Besides being a source of

137 'Health and well-being' should in the context of this topic be understood in a comprehensive sense, comprising both mental and physical health and well-being.

138 See the 2019 WHO Scoping review "What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being?"

entertainment, video game communities give opportunities for isolated, underprivileged or discriminated people to find a sense of belonging, and to contribute to societal goals. At the same time, however, a context of competitivity and anonymity may invite harassment and discrimination in online multi-player video games.

A third possible focus could be an implementation research approach, exploring the obstacles to adoption of already validated arts and culture –based intervention(s) that support health and well-being, and developing effective way(s) to achieve broad uptake.

In order to achieve evidence-based and validated practices that can be understood and used by CHIs and/or CCSI as well as by other targeted key actors and stakeholders, projects should involve stakeholders from such sectors. To validate practices, projects may launch small scale pilot trials but may also choose other validation methods appropriate to the focus chosen. As appropriate for the focus chosen, projects should properly take the gender dimension into account, such as for instance gender differences in cultural participation and its consequences. Projects may award financial support to third parties in order to involve entities such as CCSI, CHIs or other important stakeholders which are not part of the project consortium. Such support can only be given in the form of grants.

To the extent appropriate, projects should build on previous research and innovation and established methods. In particular, as appropriate, projects may establish links to the project funded under call topic 'HORIZON-CL2-2025-01-HERITAGE-09 Impacts of Culture and the Arts on Health and Well-being'.

Proposals may consider, as appropriate considering the focus chosen, the involvement of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), based on its experience for example with the SciArt and artist-in-residency programmes, and the value it could bring in providing an effective interface between research activities and policymaking.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-05: Re-imagining the creative economy: the interplay between the cultural and creative sectors and industries and the social economy**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 3.00 and 3.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 10.50 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions |

| | |
|---|---|
| *set-up of the Grant Agreements* | apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [139]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Evidence-based policy frameworks and guidelines promoting the convergence of creative and social economy models.
- Case studies, indicators, and evaluation methods to measure the social and economic impact of CCSI in social economy frameworks. These tools are provided for policymakers and stakeholders, with areas for improvement identified.
- Hybrid CCSI business models that incorporate social economy principles, balancing profitability and social responsibility, showcasing scalable examples across different regions and sectors.
- Workforce development strategies addressing precarious employment in creative sectors, including alternative employment structures, skill-sharing, and professional development, and enhancing socio-economic diversity and mobility in creative industries, using gender-sensitive and intersectional approaches to address inequalities.

Scope: The intersection of social economy [140]] and the cultural and creative sectors and industries (CCSI) provides fertile ground for advancing sustainable and inclusive development across public and private domains. Enhancing synergies between private initiatives (impact-oriented enterprises, cooperatives, associations) and public policy can unlock innovative models, fostering hybrid approaches that blend public mission with

139 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

140 The European Commission defines social economy in the Communication *'Building an economy that works for people: an action plan for the social economy'*, COM(2021) 778 final, p. 5 "The social economy covers entities sharing the following main common principles and features: the primacy of people as well as social and/or environmental purpose over profit, the reinvestment of most of the profits and surpluses to carry out activities in the interest of members/users ("collective interest") or society at large ("general interest") and democratic and/or participatory governance. Traditionally, the term social economy refers to four main types of entities providing goods and services to their members or society at large: cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations (including charities), and foundations." […

entrepreneurial strategies. Studies highlight the role of social economy entities in CCSI for local development through ecological approaches, territorial clustering, and community engagement, as well as for improving employment and working conditions and promoting inclusive growth[141].

The European Commission's 2021 Action Plan for the social economy, complemented by the EU Social Economy Gateway[142], and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) underscore the CCSI potential for economic growth, job creation, and innovation. The OECD further notes that integrating social economy models in culture and creativity can stabilise employment, improve working conditions in creative industries, which often face precarious employment and limited access to credit, and foster sustainability, innovation and social cohesion[143]. In April 2023, the UN General Assembly recognised the social economy as critical to inclusive and sustainable economies[144].

Embracing social economy principles in CCSI can address major societal challenges such as income inequality and social cohesion, while driving culture- and creativity-led innovation and inclusive growth across Europe.

Reimagining the creative economy requires CCSIs to engage with broader societal and economic frameworks. This topic aims to enhance the transformative potential of CCSIs' interplay with the social economy in Europe. Proposals are expected to investigate, develop, and test innovative frameworks and models that leverage social economy principles in culture and creativity to drive social impact, economic sustainability, quality jobs creation, and vibrant, resilient cultural and creative sectors. By moving beyond traditional market logics and adopting cooperative, participatory and socially oriented models, proposals will identify scalable strategies for ethical business, revenue diversification, and embedding social purpose in creative innovation. This may include developing technical or legal assistance and support services enabling CCSIs to access shared resources, enhance resilience, and build community capital. These efforts will empower CCSIs to catalyse inclusive, sustainable transformation and position Europe as a leader in a fairer creative economy.

Key areas of focus are expected to be addressed through inter-, multi- and trans-disciplinary approaches (taking into account – among others – contributions by SSH disciplines), including cross-sectoral cooperation and stakeholder involvement:

1. Sustainable Growth and Quality Employment

- Analyse social economy models' impact on CCSI sustainability, resilience, and growth, particularly during crises.

141 Among others, A. Costantini, *Social Economy Enterprises and Cultural and Creative Industries. Observations and best practices*, Bruxelles, Diesis 2018 CCIs-SEEs_-FINAL_2018.pdf

142 About the EU Social Economy Gateway - European Commission

143 The Culture Fix. Creative people, places and industries (2022) Full Report | OECD; Economic and social impact of cultural and creative sectors. Note for Italy G20 Presidency Culture Working Group Economic and social impact of cultural and creative sectors | OECD

144 Promoting the social and solidarity economy for sustainable development A-77-L60.pdf

- Examine how social economy principles address precarious employment, support alternative employment, and foster professional development, while contributing to creative entrepreneurial ecosystems for regional development that strengthen local economies.

- Explore financing mechanisms, fiscal incentives and solutions to sector-specific challenges, to incentivize social reinvestment.

- Investigate how social economy enterprises address socio-economic diversity, income inequality, inclusivity, and promote innovation including within CCSIs.[145]

2. Innovation, local development and social impact

- Investigate how CCSI social enterprises drive innovation (including social innovation), social participation, and empower marginalized groups and groups in vulnerable situations, such as persons with disabilities.

- Highlight social entrepreneurship's role in catalysing new business models and value-driven practices addressing societal challenges

- Assess CCSI social economy enterprises contribution to local development, social cohesion, and responsible consumption.

3. Policy and comparative studies

- Analyse and compare policy frameworks supporting the convergence of creative economy and social economy models in the EU and beyond.

Identify best practices and propose recommendations for integrated strategies enhancing sustainable, inclusive development and innovation.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-06: Future-proofing sustainable cultural tourism**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 4.00 and 4.80 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 14.50 million. |

[145] The 2021 study "Social mobility in the Creative Economy: Rebuilding and levelling up?" by the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) provides insights into class imbalances in the creative industries, highlights the need for systemic change to address deep-rooted structural inequalities in the creative industries and proposes a ten-point action plan for enhancing social mobility in the creative economy Social mobility in the Creative Economy: Rebuilding and levelling up?

| | |
|---|---|
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [146]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to the first expected outcome, plus those under either Focus 1 or Focus 2, depending on the chosen focus

- Evidence-based policy recommendations and solutions for integrating cultural tourism into strategies for regenerative sustainability, environmental protection (for example, from degradation or biodiversity loss), digital transformation, social inclusion and gender equality at all levels of government. As a result, cultural tourism becomes a stronger driver of regenerative sustainable development, increases workforce numbers and skills, and improves working conditions. Research impact is maximised through coordinated dissemination and policy co-creation, facilitating implementation of research-based solutions by policymakers and stakeholders.

**Focus 1**

- A comprehensive analytical framework for ethical AI integration in sustainable cultural tourism balancing sustainable competitiveness with cultural authenticity and inclusivity.
- Methodological frameworks and tools for AI-assisted foresight in cultural tourism enabling policymakers, civil society and stakeholders to anticipate changes and adapt strategies proactively.

**Focus 2**

[146] 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

- Evidence-based, community-centric models and strategies for sustainable cultural tourism in emerging and less-developed destinations, adaptable to diverse contexts within and beyond the EU.

- An international collaborative network for small business and civil society in cultural tourism, focused on cross-border partnerships, regenerative practices and equitable benefit-sharing. This network will connect stakeholders with researchers, policymakers, expertise, and resources to co-create culturally respectful, regenerative cultural tourism models and improve workforce conditions in underserved regions.

Scope: Cultural tourism accounts for about 40% of global tourism[147] and continues to grow as travellers seek unique, authentic, and immersive experiences. In addition to its economic benefits, cultural tourism enriches societies through cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding. The sector faces major transformation driven by technological advancement, shifting consumer expectations, climate change, sustainability imperatives, environmental degradation and threats to cultural integrity – including commodification and heritage degradation. Furthermore, there is a growing emphasis on inclusive and meaningful travel experiences, including accessibility for travellers with disabilities and others with specific needs. This topic takes a multidimensional approach to future-proofing sustainable cultural tourism amid technological, social and environmental change across the EU and beyond. Proposals should select either Focus 1 or Focus 2 and clearly state their selection:

**Focus 1: Transformative AI integration and strategic foresight for cultural tourism resilience**

Proposals are expected to explore how integrating AI-powered tools and other emerging technologies with cultural tourism can strengthen its resilience, inclusivity, and sustainability. Additionally, through AI-assisted participatory foresight proposals should address the need for tourism systems to move from reactive management to anticipatory governance models, building resilience to global challenges.

Proposals should investigate AI applications that reshape cultural tourism experiences while ensuring that they remain authentic and respectful of local integrity; enhance inclusivity, including equal access to technology and improved accessibility for persons with disabilities; help manage visitor pressure. They could leverage available public and private data and infrastructures, such as the European Data space for Tourism.[148] Building on recent developments in AI and immersive technologies, proposals could for example use AI-powered virtual and augmented reality to boost visitor engagement and cross-cultural appreciation of cultural sites while preserving historical integrity. They should investigate novel approaches to AI-driven personalisation that develop inclusive, non-discriminatory, tailored cultural experiences, which are ethically managed, and ensure fair representation of minority or lesser-known heritage and cultural expressions.

147 UN World Tourism Organization (2018), *Tourism and Culture Synergies*, p. 21. https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/epdf/10.18111/9789284418978

148 https://hadea.ec.europa.eu/calls-proposals/data-space-tourism_en

Proposals could analyse the integration of AI in multilingual interpretation and cultural mediation to overcome language barriers and deepen cultural understanding of local contexts or develop and refine AI-powered tools for visitor flow management, real-time heritage monitoring, and balancing preservation with inclusive tourism.

Furthermore, proposals are expected to develop methodological frameworks for applying AI-assisted foresight (scenario planning, horizon scanning, among others to anticipate trends and challenges in cultural tourism – such as shifts in visitor behaviour, cultural commodification risks, and potential disruptions (eg related to climate, pandemics, energy crises), enabling the identification of opportunities and risks and fostering proactive, data-informed policy responses. AI-based predictive analytics should be combined with participatory workshops to engage local communities, authorities, and cultural organisations in co-creating forward-looking sustainable tourism strategies.

**Focus 2: Cultural tourism as a catalyst for sustainable local development**

Proposals are expected to develop sustainable cultural tourism frameworks and strategies tailored to emerging and less-developed destinations, especially in low-income and lesser-known regions seeking to leverage culture and creativity for economic growth and social development, including through addressing depopulation and preventing overtourism. These frameworks may foster creative entrepreneurial ecosystems for regional development. Partnerships with non-EU countries are encouraged. Proposals should investigate cross-border collaboration models that enable mutual learning, upskilling, fair working conditions, knowledge transfer and capacity building between EU and non-EU partners. Proposals should identify and adapt proven sustainable cultural tourism models to diverse less-developed settings (urban, peri-urban, rural) emphasizing equitable benefit-sharing. The research should include the analysis of case studies of successful community integration in cultural tourism decision-making. Partnerships among local communities, creative industries (including crafts), local businesses and cultural heritage organisations should be prioritised to co-create economically viable, environmentally balanced, authentic and culturally respectful tourism offerings, potentially using living labs and pilot demonstrations. Projects are expected to establish collaborative networks for small businesses and civil society actors in cultural tourism, supporting them through access to researchers, policymakers, expertise, knowledge, resources and collaborative opportunities.

Regardless of focus, all proposals should ensure cooperation with and policy uptake of existing knowledge, tools, and best practices from past and ongoing EU-funded research on cultural tourism and related areas[149]. They should develop frameworks integrating cultural tourism with broader sustainability, digital transformation, and social inclusion goals. Furthermore, they should create co-creative policy development methodologies involving diverse stakeholders (policymakers across various government levels, local communities, NGOs, businesses, industry) to translate research insights into evidence-based strategies and contextually appropriate interventions boosting cultural tourism as a resource for sustainable

[149] This includes projects funded by Cluster 6 topic HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-02-2-two-stage: New sustainable business and production models for farmers and rural communities.

development and fostering workforce growth and skills, and improved working conditions in cultural tourism. Finally, they should establish continuous knowledge exchange mechanisms among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to ensure ongoing relevance and impact.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-07: Societal impact of cultural heritage**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 15.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Procedure* | The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:<br>To ensure a balanced portfolio, grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to those that are the highest ranked within each area provided in the scope (A, B and C), provided that the applications attain all thresholds. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [150]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

[150] 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

- Enhanced understanding of the societal impact of cultural heritage; Good practices and case studies to enable positive societal impact described and documented, for the context of the research area chosen.

- Capacity building and knowledge dissemination among practitioners and policymakers.

- Produce and disseminate policy recommendations, guidance, and toolkits, supporting policymakers, in. the context of the research area chosen as appropriate.

Scope: Heritage is a dynamic resource that can foster societal resilience, intercultural dialogue, and a sense of belonging in increasingly diverse and fragmented societies. It can contribute to social cohesion and resilience through arts, design and cultural practices. Thus, cultural heritage is central to the preservation of the social fabric and community cohesion. Understanding and amplifying the societal impact of cultural heritage is essential for reinforcing identity, cohesion, and global leadership based on shared values. Research proposals should explore how cultural heritage actively shapes civic engagement, social innovation, collective memory, and the transmission of democratic values.

Moreover, it is crucial to develop new narratives around heritage — ones that are forward-looking, critically aware, and deeply connected to Europe's evolving values. Such work will not only strengthen Europe's internal cohesion but also position cultural heritage as a strategic asset in addressing global challenges.

In this context, social innovation could also translate into working with cultural heritage practitioners and custodians to explore how cultural heritage can solve some of today's societal challenges (achieving better social inclusion, social cohesion, well-being, and equality). Whereas previous research (including contributions by SSH disciplines) has widely explored developing heritage-based education, contribution of culture to rural development and cultural tourism, there are some fields that could benefit from more research: cultural participation and access to culture, with a focus on young people; gender roles and identities; a shared cultural heritage and shared responsibility in the light of security challenges.

Research projects should choose one of the following areas:

A. **Cultural participation and access to cultural heritage**

Access to culture, acquired through socialisation and education, plays a crucial role in shaping cultural practices and preferences. As mentioned in the Political Guidelines [151] for the European Commission, there is a need to improve access to cultural heritage, in particular for young people, and contribute to tackle cultural inequality and strengthen a sense of identity and belonging. In addition, attention should be paid to disadvantaged groups, eventually solidifying participatory culture and democracy and fostering a sense of stewardship towards cultural heritage.

151 https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf

A Special Eurobarometer on Europeans' Attitudes Towards Culture[152], published in May 2025, showed that a majority of Europeans believe that their country and the EU should work more closely together when it comes to making arts and culture more accessible to everyone.

Prior research[153] indicates that increased cultural participation can potentially enhance civic engagement, social inclusion, and democratic governance, and counteract alienation and social disengagement. However, research also indicates profound and multifaceted barriers to access. These barriers include, for example, geography, including the challenge of rural isolation; under-representation of minority groups; economic disparity.

The proposals should explore good practices for fostering access to cultural heritage, with a focus on young people and ways to empower them to take an active role in their communities and strengthen social cohesion. Proposals should also explore which are the main barriers for access to culture and effective means to increase cultural participation, identifying specificities for different types of groups.

The proposals should employ interdisciplinary and participatory methods to identify effective models for inclusive cultural participation. Results are expected to guide policies on cultural access, with recommendations, for instance, for digital infrastructure, educational programmes, and cross-sector collaboration to foster inclusive citizenship.

B. **Gender roles and identities**

Cultural heritage has the power to promote diversity and inclusion by showcasing diverse narratives and histories, but it can also perpetuate inequality if stereotypes, cultural role models, and representations are limited or biased, silencing marginalised voices.

The proposed research should explore the complex relationships between cultural productions, representations and societal attitudes towards different sexes and gender identities, with a focus on understanding how culture can shape our cultural landscape and influence our attitudes and imaginaries.

Proposals should provide an analysis of the representation and overview of different gender identities and intersecting factors such as racial or ethnical background, disability or socioeconomic background, in cultural fields. Proposals should explore how gender aspects have been absent, or forgotten, in major supranational cultural narratives. Proposals should provide actionable recommendations on how to promote a more inclusive and diverse representation, including in the cultural content, and to address the absence of diverse representations in the cultural field. These recommendations should be developed in a dialogue with different stakeholders, for example researchers, policymakers, cultural heritage institutions, civil society representatives.

C. **Cultural heritage, cohesion and security**

152 https://culture.ec.europa.eu/news/eurobarometer-publishes-findings-on-europeans-attitudes-towards-culture

153 Culture and democracy, the evidence - Publications Office of the EU

The proposed research should explore the role and conceptualisation of cultural heritage as a distinctive element of our shared identities and democratic values. It should also examine the links between culture and security including issues of disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) etc. Proposals are expected to explore the notions of shared heritage and shared responsibility as an expression of our social interdependence, and culture as a factor of union and cohesion.

Cases of instrumentalisation of cultural heritage and the political influence on museums or other cultural institutions should also be taken into account in the research. Culture can also face factors of destabilisation, attacks on cultural heritage can destabilise society and jeopardize security while cultural content can greatly influence public opinion and the imaginaries. The proposals should explore how to deal with polarising narratives and controversial aspects of cultural heritage use.

The proposals should propose good practices, policy guidelines, run pilot projects and propose didactic materials to raise awareness on existing challenges, enhance “neutrality” in cultural heritage management, collective responsibility and cultural resilience; explore the notions of care and repair applied to cultural heritage.

Proposals shall clearly indicate the thematic area they have selected to work on.

Proposals should adopt a multidisciplinary approach (involving, for instance and not exhaustively, heritage and museum studies, cultural anthropology, ethnology, media studies, theatre studies, literary studies, musicology etc.) to assess and demonstrate how cultural heritage initiatives contribute to societal well-being, community empowerment, inclusion, and sustainable development while identification of needs for further research in the field should be promoted.

Proposals should prioritize empirical research, participatory methodologies, and policy innovation to maximize and communicate the transformative power of cultural heritage across all layers of society.

Proposals should connect to both formal and non-formal education, particularly arts education. Encouraging collaboration between cultural heritage actors and educational institutions would enhance impact.

Proposals should build on existing knowledge, activities, networks and platforms, notably the ones funded by the EU, for example paying attention to the future digital tools and platforms provided by the European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage (ECCCH), and the Common European Data Space for Cultural Heritage.

Furthermore, links should be established and complementarities sought with closely related actions, such as relevant R&I actions funded by Horizon Europe or Horizon 2020.

## HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-HERITAGE-08: Safeguarding & transmission of intangible cultural heritage

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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<br>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) [154]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Enhanced understanding of the state of play of the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), in the Context set by the 2003 UNESCO Convention, and an overview of successful methods for documenting and ensuring the transmission of ICH, including digital, audio-visual, and advanced technologies.

- Recognition of the significance and value of ICH in different social, cultural and economic contexts, and with attention to biodiversity preservation and links between ICH and the natural environment.

[154] 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

- Empowered communities take ownership and responsibility for safeguarding their ICH, with a focus on how inter-generational transmission is ensured, and on youth involvement and informal education.

- Innovative policy solutions are available, for the safeguarding of ICH and for mobilising ICH as a resource for fostering social and economic innovation, biodiversity protection and restoration.

Scope: Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) refers to 'the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces' that are 'transmitted from generation to generation' and are 'constantly recreated' – as defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH Convention)[155]. ICH is an essential part of a community's identity and is a vital component of its cultural and biological diversity.

The ICH Convention was adopted in 2003, by 148 countries and it recognizes the importance of ICH as a driving force for social cohesion, cultural diversity, and sustainable development.

However, the nature of ICH, as living heritage, to continually transform and evolve, makes it particularly challenging to keep alive. Therefore, safeguarding ICH encounters very different challenges than the built heritage sector. ICH is rooted in territories and communities and is essential for identity building and maintaining social cohesion and a harmonious relation to the natural environment. It is a source for creativity and innovation, and a critical factor for new competitive scenarios.

Transmission, education and intergenerational dialogue play a key role in this context, and there is an urgent need to research and foster participatory approaches, especially involving oral cultures and transmission. Different case-studies should explore various approaches to the safeguarding of ICH, considering the specific nature of competences, knowledge and cultural practices of creators and knowledge holders, with a focus on intergenerational transmission.

Proposals should contribute to defining the specificities of intangible cultural heritage. Additionally, they could examine and quantify the contribution of ICH to creativity, innovation, cultural and biological diversity, and economic benefits. Proposals should also contribute to the rethinking of cultural policies for the safeguarding of ICH including exploring links and correlations between cultural and biological diversity.

Proposed research projects could address in depth the following research questions:

1. What is the state of play of the safeguarding of ICH in Europe, following the UNESCO 2003 Convention?

2. What are the main threats and challenges to the erosion and loss of ICH in Europe?

3. What are the most effective strategies for securing ICH safeguarding initiatives?

155 https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention

4. How can advanced digital technologies be leveraged for the safeguarding & transmission of ICH?

5. How can ICH provide inspiration for innovative approaches to existing societal challenges (e.g. competitiveness, intergenerational dialogue democratic values, biodiversity protection and restoration [156])

6. What role can community-led initiatives play in safeguarding ICH, and how can communities be supported and empowered to safeguard it?

The role of advanced digital technologies to support ICH safeguarding and transmission should be considered, as appropriately.

The proposals should comprise transdisciplinary scientific collaborations involving, for instance and not exhaustive, heritage and museum studies, cultural anthropology, ethnology, media studies, theatre studies, literary studies, musicology etc. Available results of existing research on intangible cultural heritage should be taken into consideration, while identification of needs for further research in the field should be promoted.

Proposals should build on existing knowledge, activities, networks and platforms, notably the ones funded by the EU, for example paying attention to the future digital tools and platforms provided by the European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage (ECCCH), and the Common European Data Space for Cultural Heritage.

Furthermore, links should be established and complementarities sought with closely related actions, such as relevant R&I actions funded by Horizon Europe or Horizon 2020. In particular, proposals should establish links to, and where appropriate build on findings from, projects funded under the topics HORIZON-CL2-2025-HERITAGE-02: Innovative approaches to intangible cultural heritage for societal resilience.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-02-HERITAGE-09-two-stage: Open topic: Impact-driven research on realising the full potential of cultural heritage, arts and cultural and creative industries**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027 - Two-stage** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 2.00 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 20.00 million. |

156 As defined in the EU Nature Restoration Regulation https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/nature-and-biodiversity/nature-restoration-regulation_en.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Admissibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:<br>Applicants submitting a proposal for a blind evaluation (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). |
| *Procedure* | The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:<br>The first-stage proposals of this topic will be evaluated blindly. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [157].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to the following expected outcome:

- New groundbreaking findings and methods are developed, verified and put into practice that significantly contribute to realising the full potential of cultural heritage, arts or/and cultural and creative industries (CCIs)[158] as drivers of sustainable innovation and/or a European sense of belonging.

Scope: Applicants are invited to design the best possible and groundbreaking research and innovation to achieve that the full potential of cultural heritage, arts and/or cultural and creative industries as drivers of sustainable innovation and/or a European sense of belonging is realised.

Applicants are free to choose the focus that best addresses the expected outcome; it can be limited to certain areas or issues or be broader. However, research under this topic should

[157] 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

[158] CCIs as defined in the European Parliament Resolution 'A coherent EU policy for cultural and creative industries': https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016IP0486&from=EN

have an impact-driven focus and move beyond descriptive studies towards transformative, actionable knowledge.

As appropriate for the focus chosen, proposals should build on previous research, networks or platforms. Projects must not, however, duplicate activities already funded but should explore new areas.

**Destination Innovative Research on Social and Economic Transformations**

Projects funded under this destination should contribute to the following expected impacts in the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2025-2027[159]:

- Strengthening social and economic resilience and sustainability
- Boosting inclusive growth and reducing vulnerabilities effectively

The expected impacts reflect the two-pronged nature of the destination. On the one hand, research funded by this destination will improve the understanding of how the macro drivers of change (technological change, climate change, new global trade patterns, along with migration, human mobility, and other demographic changes) impact society and inform policy makers on how to mitigate negative consequences and harness newly created opportunities. The results obtained should improve the understanding of the interplay between different drivers of change and their social, ethical, political, and economic implications. The improved understanding of these challenges and their economic, social, and distributional impacts will fill in the research gaps while also inform the design and assessment of policies addressing existing and emerging challenges, including in the areas of education, well-being and mental health.

On the other hand, research and innovation investment should be geared towards deepening the understanding of how ongoing changes impact society, with a specific emphasis on the key objectives of boosting inclusive and sustainable growth and effectively reducing vulnerabilities, poverty and inequalities. This knowledge should provide valuable insights to policymakers to design and assess policies that effectively address vulnerabilities while capitalizing on emerging opportunities.

Overall, the destination's activities will help promote the EU's inclusive growth, resilience, and fair transition towards climate neutrality, by providing solid analytical evidence to implementing actions related to:

- The European Pillar of Social Rights, and its Action Plan with its three ambitious targets (78% employment rate, 60% of population with yearly training, and reduction of the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030)
- the European Education Area and its EU-level 2030 targets
- The Union of Skills (including envisaged initiatives on skills portability and the European Strategy for Vocational Education and Training, the Pact for Skills and the Skills Agenda)
- the first-ever EU Anti-Poverty Strategy and the European Affordable Housing Plan
- The Union of Equality policies and strategies, including:

159 https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6abcc8e7-e685-11ee-8b2b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

  - the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030[160] (in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[161]); the European Accessibility Act (Directive 2019/882), and the European Disability Card
  - The Gender Equality Strategy 2020 – 2025 and the Directive combating violence against women and domestic violence
  - EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025
  - The Strategic EU Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2020-2030
  - The LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025

- The Communication on Demographic change in Europe: a toolbox for action
- The EU's just transition policy framework, in line with the 2040 Climate Target Plan, including the Just Transition Mechanism, the Social Climate Fund, and the Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality
- The new Pact for European Social Dialogue and the Council Recommendation on strengthening social dialogue in the EU.
- The European Child Guarantee
- The Council Recommendation on adequate minimum income
- The Commission Communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health
- The new Pact on Asylum and Migration and its accompanying actions, initiatives and legislation.

A new European Partnership on Social Transformations and Resilience[162], focused on the social sciences and humanities (SSH), will be launched to make use of their potential to foster resilience, fairness and inclusiveness, and social cohesion in the light of changes in climate and environment, technology, demography, and unexpected shocks. The Partnership will fund research and innovation activities in the areas of the future of work, modernisation of social protection and essential services, education and skills development and a fair transition towards climate neutrality.

Applicants are encouraged to consider, where relevant, the services offered by the current and future EU-funded European Research Infrastructures, particularly those in the social sciences and humanities (SSH) domain[163].

160 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52021DC0101
161 https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities
162 see topic HORIZON-CL2-2026-02-TRANSFO-01 in this Work Programme
163 https://ri-portfolio.esfri.eu/ for example CESSDA - Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives

Where applicable, proposals should leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), as well as data from relevant Data Spaces. Particular efforts should be made to ensure that the data produced in the context of this research is FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable).

To maximise the impacts of R&I under this Destination in line with EU priorities, international cooperation is encouraged whenever relevant in the proposed topics.

Research on social and economic transformations funded by topics in the present Work Programme will build upon its predecessors in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe and further push the boundaries of state-of-the-art knowledge. It will do so by further engaging with a vast array of stakeholders, not limited to universities and research centres, but also extending to social partners (trade unions and business organizations), civil society organizations, practitioners, VET providers, and SMEs.

The destination will rely on a carefully balanced mix of actions, to bring together a balanced and appropriate set of stakeholders to achieve research of the highest quality, while aiming at providing recommendations to policymakers at European, national, regional and local level that could have a beneficial societal and economic impact. In order to facilitate the latter, it will maximise the feedback to policy and the dissemination and exploitation of research and innovation results and practices in the domain of social and economic transformations.

Proposals are invited against the following topic(s):

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-02-TRANSFO-01: Co-funded European Partnership for Social Transformations and Resilience**

| **Call: Cluster 2 Partnerships** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 60.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 60.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Programme Co-fund Action |
| *Procedure* | The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.<br>Representatives of the EU institutions will be part of the evaluation committee. |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The starting date of grants awarded under this topic may be as of the submission date of the application. Applicants must justify the need for a retroactive starting date in their application. Costs incurred from the starting date of the action may be considered eligible.<br>Beneficiaries may provide financial support to third parties (FSTP). The support to third parties can only be provided in the form of grants.<br>As a co-funded European Partnership, providing financial support to third parties is a core activity of this action in order to achieve its objectives. Consequently, the EUR 60 000 threshold laid down in Article 207 of Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 does not apply. The maximum amount of FSTP that may be awarded to any single third party is set at EUR 3 million for the entire duration of the action. This ceiling is justified by the fact that FSTP is a primary activity of this action, by its expected duration of 7–10 years (exceeding a standard project lifespan), and by the extensive experience gained under predecessor partnerships. However, if the objectives of the action would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult (and duly justified in the proposal) the maximum amount may be higher.<br>The funding rate is up to 30% of the eligible costs.<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

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

- Research funders, policymakers and research communities in the social sciences and humanities (SSH) are provided with a multi-annual R&I programme on social transformations and resilience, responding to megatrends like climate change and biodiversity loss, digitalisation, demographic changes and unexpected shocks.
- Research investments on social protection and essential services, future of work, education and skills, and a fair transition to climate neutrality are increased.
- Stakeholders, including social partners and civil society, and policymakers are provided with evidence-based knowledge, tools and innovative solutions, which contribute to new policies and strategies for strengthening resilience, fairness, inclusiveness and social cohesion at European, national and regional level.

Scope: Europe is undergoing critical social transformations driven by macro drivers of change, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, digitalisation and demographic change, which have been accelerated by events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war of

aggression against Ukraine. These transformations bring challenges and opportunities such as changing skills demands and labour shortages, new digital and intergenerational divides, increasing inequalities and threats to social cohesion, and rising costs of social protection, among others. The magnitude of these social transformations as well as the heterogeneity in welfare systems and labour markets call for combined inter- and transdisciplinary knowledge and resource sharing, and long-term concerted actions, on the basis of a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA).

Proposals for the co-funded Social Transformations and Resilience (STR) partnership should aim at creating a 7-year research and innovation programme[164] which will make use of the potential of SSH to build resilience, ensure fairness and inclusiveness and foster social cohesion in the light of changes in climate, the environment, technology, demography and unexpected shocks. To this end, proposals should pool the necessary financial resources from the participating national (or regional) research programmes, with a view to implementing joint calls for transnational proposals resulting in grants to third parties.

Innovations and scientific results achieved are expected to contribute to reaching EU priorities in the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU Green Deal, to strengthening the European Research Area (ERA) and the European Education Area (EEA) and to contribute to designing better national, regional and local policies, in line with their respective strategies.

An additional objective is to contribute to the implementation of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals number 1 (No Poverty), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 10 (Reducing Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 13 (Climate Action), and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

To achieve these objectives, the partnership is expected to launch annual transnational calls for proposals and additional activities in four interconnected impact areas:

- Supporting the modernisation of social protection systems and essential services
- Shaping the future of work
- Fostering education and skills development
- Contributing to a fair transition to climate neutrality

The STR partnership is expected to organise activities along the following six operational objectives:

- Collect data and evidence to measure social transformations, drawing from a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods in the social sciences and humanities, and use these to inform the development of evidence-based public policies and strategies.

[164] With an additional three years to wind down, i.e. administer and report on FSTP projects launched with the last calls.

- Promote comparative studies to identify and share best practices and failures at regional, national and EU level.
- Construct new, innovative ways to connect researchers with policymakers, stakeholders, citizens and social innovators in working together, communicating needs and results.
- Develop social and individual experimentations at all levels (subnational, national, European) to better understand the impact of social transformations and public policies.
- Encourage the development of new analytical, methodological and epistemological tools to better understand social transformations and resilience.
- Build capacity among the R&I community and policymakers to adjust and strengthen social infrastructures and services in light of unexpected shocks.

Proposals should build on the work of ERA-NETs CHANSE, as well as other relevant networks and initiatives, such as HERA and NORFACE, the Trans-Atlantic Platform for Social Sciences and Humanities (T-AP) and the Joint Programming Initiative More Years, Better Lives (JPI MYBL). By bringing together different stakeholders in academia, policymakers, social partners and trade associations, civil society and international organisations, the partnership should create a critical mass of knowledge and resources to implement a long-term SRIA.

The partnership should engage with the following stakeholders: (i) National research funding agencies and ministries in research and higher education; (ii) ministries responsible for labour, social affairs, employment, climate and environment, where possible, as well as other relevant public authorities in the four impact areas; (iii) researchers from the social sciences and humanities and transdisciplinary fields; (iv) social partners, citizens' organisations and NGOs at local, national and EU level, such as trade unions, employer associations, practitioners and non-profit organisations advocating for the rights of disadvantaged groups; (v) private sector, which may include employment agencies, providers of essential services, social entrepreneurs, and private education institutions.

As the partnership touches upon fundamental aspects of peoples' lives (work, social protection, education, and a fair green transition), it is instrumental to involve relevant actors, interest groups and potential end-users of the research results in the partnership's activities. Gender and intersectional aspects should be considered throughout all activities and joint calls.

EU agencies (e.g. Eurofound, ELA, CEDEFOP[165]) which deal with issues related to the four impact areas, such as working conditions, vocational education and training, and labour law, as well as international organisations such as the ILO and the OECD, need to be considered as stakeholders, as they can provide important inputs and resources to the partnership. Collaboration with existing research infrastructures (e.g. European Social Survey, SHARE, CLARIN, CESSDA, Eurostat) is encouraged. This should aim at facilitating access to data

[165] In line with rules for Horizon Europe on working with EU's Decentralised Agencies.

(e.g. on social security) and making use of relevant datasets in the projects that will be funded under this partnership.

The partnership is open to all EU Member States and countries associated to Horizon Europe and will remain open to third countries wishing to join. Partners are expected to contribute financially and/or through eligible activities[166], depending on the level of ambition of the proposed activities. The partnership should be open to new partners throughout its lifetime. Importantly, the EU contribution will not be increased.

To ensure coherence and complementarity of activities and leverage knowledge and joint activities, the partnership is expected to establish synergies with relevant Horizon Europe projects under relevant Clusters of Pillar II, partnerships - such as the Driving Urban Transitions (DUT) partnership or the Clean Energy Transition (CET) partnership, the Biodiversa+ partnership, the Missions - such as the Mission on climate-neutral and smart cities or the Mission on Climate Adaptation - and the New European Bauhaus Facility, among others.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-02: Open topic: Strengthen Europe's social model and sustainable competitiveness through productivity**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [167]. |

166 Any eligible activity that is distinct from and complements the financial support to third parties/joint transnational calls and contributes to the objectives of the partnership.

167 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

| | |
|---|---|
| | The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- The concept of sustainable competitiveness is analysed taking into account the shifts in geopolitics, global trade patterns, as well as changes in climate, the environment (including biodiversity loss[168]), technology and demography.
- Policymakers are provided with recommendations and innovative solutions, including a toolbox to boost Member States and Associated Countries (labour) productivity while ensuring high social and environmental standards and increasing competitiveness within planetary boundaries.

Scope: The Future of European competitiveness report (also known as the Draghi report)[169] analysed and discussed the reason for European declining competitiveness, productivity and growth vis-a-vis its main competitors. A competitive economy is defined as an economy whose sustained rate of productivity is able to drive growth and, consequently, income and welfare. Both the economy and the European social model have to adapt to the great drivers of change, including demography, technology, global trade patterns, climate, and geopolitical shifts.

From its side, the European social model is the basis of the still high level of productivity and competitiveness in the EU, and without continuously upgrading it and sustaining it, there is a risk of a series of negative consequences, ranging from an increase in poverty, to a deterioration of human capital and a decline in well-being.

Research (including by SSH disciplines) carried out should lead to recommendations to help Europe remain a world power through a high level of welfare, competitiveness and productivity, while analysing the tensions and opportunities created by the strengthening of the European social model and sustainable competitiveness through productivity. Proposals should look into possible opportunities and tensions between driving competitiveness, maintaining Europe's social model and high environmental and biodiversity standards.

Clustering and cooperation among selected projects under this call topic and collaboration with the Social Transformations and Resilience partnership are strongly encouraged.

168 Nature is an essential part of competitiveness. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has demonstrated that around 55% of the global GDP is generated by sectors moderately to highly dependent on nature. Around 72% of euro area companies are critically dependent on ecosystem services.

169 https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/draghi-report_en

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-03: Tackling child poverty and ensuring disadvantaged children's access to Early Childhood Education and Care**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [170].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Policymakers gain insights into the cost of child poverty and the returns from securing access of disadvantaged children to quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in the EU.
- Policymakers receive operational advice on ways to reduce this cost and support participation of disadvantaged children in quality ECEC to close the gap with other children in the EU.

Scope: Past studies researched the cost of child poverty, and the returns yielded by and ways to secure disadvantaged children's participation to ECEC, yet their relevance to the current EU context is limited (i.e. most of them were conducted outside of the EU or they are now outdated). Producing EU-specific insights on these issues is the aim of this topic, which

[170] 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

should help close the ECEC participation gap and improve social outcomes, in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights, while fostering fiscal sustainability and inclusive growth.

The proposals may:

- Define disadvantaged children, by going beyond monetary aspects of disadvantages, building on the EU's concept of risk of poverty or social exclusion, and taking into account systemically marginalised groups.
- Estimate the cost of child poverty and the returns yielded by participation to quality ECEC by taking into account:
    - children's needs and effective benefits targeting them,
    - the short and longer-term costs/returns,
    - the economic, social, wellbeing and educational aspects of these costs/returns,
    - children's, parents' and aggregate outcomes.
- Investigate barriers preventing disadvantaged children from accessing quality ECEC.
- Provide a mapping of the most efficient policies to reduce child poverty cost, comparing ECEC policies' value for money with other policies.
- Develop evidence-based and operational policy advice, including ways to better account for these costs/returns in policymaking and good (established or innovative) practices to close the ECEC participation gap. Scalability of these practices may be addressed.
- Use research methodologies of relevance (qualitative and quantitative, including experimental ones), building on multidisciplinary insights (including from SSH disciplines), and either make use of existing datasets (including administrative datasets), or collect new data. Experts by experience (i.e. vulnerable children and parents) may be involved.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-04: The impact of the use of digital tools outside school and for communication on educational outcomes and mental health**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [171].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Provide policymakers, education practitioners and citizens with a solid understanding of how social media, video gaming and other leisure uses of digital tools relate to the educational outcomes of young people, including through their impact on well-being and mental health.
- Generate rigorous, policy-relevant evidence about policies and practices aiming to inform and regulate young people's use of digital tools for non-educational purposes, such as smartphones, at school.
- Develop actionable advice for policymakers and citizens about how to promote young people's healthy use of digital tools for leisure, both at school and outside school.
- Describe and quantify the relationships of using digital tools for leisure and communication with students' motivation, study habits, attention span and concentration, time management, engagement, social integration and overall well-being.

Scope: The increasing prevalence of digital devices in young people's life has raised concerns about the potential impacts of the use of digital tools for leisure and communication on primary-, secondary- and higher education students' well-being and educational outcomes[172]. "Digital distraction" is emerging inter alia as a potential threat to academic performance and several countries have started to regulate the use of smartphones at school.

There is still limited evidence on the interrelation between the use of digital tools for leisure in-school or out-of-school and educational performance, in both primary and secondary

[171] 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

[172] Cf. European Commission initiative on 'A comprehensive approach to mental health' or the call for evidence for an EU Action Plan Against Cyberbullying'.

education, because most of the existing literature is purely correlational, or only focuses on effects on well-being. Moreover, most existing research is from extra-EU contexts, which may limit the transferability of findings to EU education and training systems.

Several interrelated research questions remain to be addressed, such as:

- Which types of digital device use do pupils perform during school and do their digital activities differ depending on different contexts (i.e., during class, during breaks or between classes)?
- How do different activities (e.g. playing games vs. chatting with a parent), on different devices, with different time durations of use, relate to students' attention span and concentration as well as general school motivation?
- How does frequent smartphone, social media use and other online leisure activities (such as video games) impact students' attention span, concentration, memory and relational capacities?
- 
- How can schools, educators and parents balance the use of those tools to enhance, rather than hinder, educational performance and students' well-being?
- What is the potential for addiction when using digital tools and what are the decisive factors for this on the part of the design of tools on the one hand and on the part of the users on the other?
- How can digital leisure activities contribute to skills development, such as problem-solving and digital literacy and what is the transferability of these skills into education? How do these benefits compare with potential harm?
- What is the role of parents and educators in guiding digital leisure activities? Explore parental digital literacy and its impact on the use of digital devices by the youth.

Proposals should explore the complex, context-dependent ways in which different forms of digital leisure affect attention, motivation, creativity, learning habits, critical thinking, and socio-emotional skills. They should consider variations across age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, cultural contexts, and types of digital engagement and include students with disabilities.

Proposals should apply rigorous experimental and/or quasi-experimental methods for their analysis and could complement them with experience sampling research, survey research methods and qualitative research methods. Close cooperation with educational authorities, educational institutions and educators in analysing existing policies and practices is essential. Proposals should also include the opinions of young people and other relevant stakeholders, such as media literacy organisations, for example, in the form surveys, interviews, consultations, as part of the data collection. Proposals could apply interdisciplinary

approaches (including from SSH disciplines), combining insights from economics, sociology, neurosciences, communication science (media psychology) and pedagogy. Clustering and cooperation with other selected projects under this call and other relevant projects are strongly encouraged.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-05: Contribution of basic skills to productivity, innovation, competitiveness and economic growth**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [173].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Provide policymakers with a more detailed understanding of the contribution of basic skills on the economy in the short and medium term, with a focus on their contribution to productivity and innovation, to sustain EU competitiveness and growth.
- Develop actionable advice about how, in a lifelong perspective, education and training systems can help foster basic skills.

[173] 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

- Promote productivity, innovation, competitiveness and growth, including by reducing gender, disability and socioeconomic gaps in basic skills.

Scope: In the context of the Union of Skills, the 2025 European Commission's Action Plan on Basic Skills identifies five basic skills: literacy, mathematics (including also financial literacy), science, digital and citizenship. Strong basic skill levels among young people and adults are key to sustaining EU productivity, innovation, competitiveness and growth, as also explained in the 2024 Draghi Report[174]. Other key EU initiatives support lifelong learning as a driver for productivity, innovation, and economic growth, for instance the 2022 Council Recommendation encouraging the implementation of Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) in Member States.

Evidence of causal relationship between basic skills on the one hand and productivity, innovation, competitiveness and economic growth, on the other is still limited in Europe, both at microeconomic and macroeconomic levels, mostly due to scarce use of longitudinal data. This also applies to the interplay between the basic skills and other skills (such as socio-emotional skills) in promoting productivity, innovation, competitiveness and growth.

There is also a need for better evidence (including from SSH disciplines) on which education and training policies and practices at all levels (school education, vocational education and training, higher education, adult education) can be effective in reducing gender, disability and socioeconomic disparities in basic skill acquisition and in subsequent labour market outcomes. The research should also better explore the competences that learners need to learn effectively with AI-based tools. Additional evidence is required on how to increase female participation in STEM and how to address teacher shortages, as well as on how to address barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

Proposals should address those research gaps by applying rigorous quantitative methods with a longitudinal perspective for their analysis and could complement them with qualitative research methods. Proposals should also evaluate the inclusion aspect, and the costs associated with the policies or practices analysed. Cooperation with education and training stakeholders is encouraged. Clustering and cooperation with other selected projects under the call HORIZON-CL2-2024-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-10: "Effective education and labour market transitions of young people" and other relevant projects, as well as the Social Transformations and Resilience Partnership are strongly encouraged.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-06: Making Europe a global magnet for talent - Attracting and retaining students, researchers and high-skilled workers from outside the EU**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** |
|---|
| **Specific conditions** |

[174] https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/draghi-report_en

| | |
|---|---|
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 3.00 and 3.30 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 10.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding as a beneficiary with zero funding, or as an associated partner. The JRC will not participate in the preparation and submission of the proposal - see General Annex B. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [175].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Generate rigorous, policy-relevant evidence on the factors that may influence students, researchers, and high-skilled workers from non-EU countries to move to and remain in the EU.
- Provide policymakers and higher education/research institutions with guidance on which policies and programmes could be effective in attracting talented students, researchers and high-skilled workers from non-EU countries to the EU.
- Develop actionable advice to policymakers and higher education/research institutions about how to retain talented students, researchers and high-skilled workers from non-EU countries to ensure a long-term positive impact on the EU economy's innovation and competitiveness.

[175] 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

- Provide evidence-based policy insights/options to improve the coherence of migration pathways for skilled talent across the EU. Support the development of more flexible and attractive mobility schemes, reducing administrative barriers, increasing accessibility and enhancing retention mechanisms to enhance the EU's competitiveness in research, innovation, and cultural exchange.

Scope: The EU's ability to compete on a global scale depends not only on retaining homegrown talent but also on actively drawing and retaining talent from outside Europe. The Union of Skills, adopted in March 2025, aims to make the EU and the European Research Area (ERA) a global magnet for talent, to attract and retain brilliant extra-EU tertiary students, top-level researchers and high-skilled workers. There is still limited research on what specific factors and their variability across Member States and Associated Countries (e.g. academic quality, career opportunities, cultural appeal, political context or funding availability) most influence the decision-making process for international students when choosing destinations. The same applies to the factors that can make a destination desirable for researchers and other high-skilled workers (e.g. quality of life, wages, professional opportunities, integration and family reunification measures, support to innovation ecosystem). More evidence is also needed about:

- How policies and programmes can be successful in retaining students, researchers and high-skilled workers from abroad into the EU (and into Horizon Europe Associated Countries) in the medium-to-long term. Projects should assess the functioning of Talent Partnerships.

- How to mobilise the professional potential of humanitarian migrants already in the EU in the context of global competition for talent.

Proposals should apply rigorous quantitative methods for their analysis of the abovementioned factors, policies and programmes and could complement them with qualitative research methods and relevant research from SSH disciplines. Proposals should also address the gender and disability dimensions of attracting and retaining talent. As the pull factors may differ among categories of migrants, proposals can choose which group to focus on: students, researchers and/or high-skilled workers.

Cooperation with higher education institutions, research institutions, non-academic organisations and notably industry, and social partners, as well as clustering and cooperation among selected projects under this call and other relevant projects, are strongly encouraged.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-07: Fostering competences for the green transition**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 3.00 and 4.00 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed |

| | |
|---|---|
| *project* | appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [176].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Provide policymakers, education and training institutions, and social partners with a solid understanding of which competences young people and workers need to support the EU economy towards the green transition to reach carbon neutrality and protect natural ecosystems.
- Develop actionable advice to policymakers and education and training institutions about which education and training programmes and policy measures can promote the acquisition of those competences by young people and workers in a lifelong perspective, including the gender and disability dimensions.
- Provide policymakers with guidance on how to address the interconnection between fostering the competences for the green transition and those for the digital transition.

Scope: Environmental challenges have been one of the key drivers of labour demand and skills supply across all sectors for the past years. More data and analysis from research on competences that young people and workers need for the green transition are warranted to properly implement the Union of Skills and support people in upskilling and reskilling. The availability of robust quantitative data is still limited, both at national and international levels. Moreover, most available research on the green transition focuses on macro-level policies, overlooking how workers and communities can drive change.

[176] 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

Fostering competences for the green transition also requires a better understanding of young people's and workers' attitudes, concerns and behaviours about climate change and climate action, biodiversity loss, pollution, circular economy and sustainable economic growth, as well as of new ways of developing capabilities and skills[177]. The transferability of skills across occupations and the need for upskilling and reskilling the current workforce are also key to advancing the green transition. These issues are interconnected with the ongoing digital transition.

The 'green transition' embraces a wide and diverse set of sectors and activities without one specific set of generic competences (in other words skills vary strongly depending on the sector). For example, according to Cedefop[178], among high climate impact sectors the demand for skills for the green transition is the highest in energy. Therefore, proposals should focus on one of the following sectors, which are particularly affected by an increasing demand for green expertise: 1) sustainable agriculture and food production, 2) automotive industry, 3) energy and 4) construction, 5) nature and climate adaptation.

Proposals should use quantitative and qualitative methods (including from SSH disciplines) and apply a lifelong perspective to address several research questions, such as:

- What are the most relevant competences required to actively contribute to the green transition in these industries?
- Which assessment methods and frameworks are most effective in measuring readiness for green jobs and sustainable innovation?
- What roles do digital skills and technological literacy play in equipping young people and workers for the green transition and how can education and training systems exploit the synergies between the competences for the green and digital transitions?
- How can policymakers, education and training institutions and employers collaborate to identify and address skills shortages that may hinder the green transition?
- How can vocational education and training systems become more accessible and flexible to respond effectively to evolving labour market needs for the green transition?
- How to ensure that women and persons with disabilities benefit equally from the opportunities of the green transition?
- How does an effective lifelong acquisition of competences for the green transition occur?
- How can we design and implement inclusive systems that improve career advice, and support the best decisions by all learners regarding t their career choices and pathways?

---

177 GreenComp, the European competence framework on sustainability, provides a conceptual model on the knowledge, skills and attitudes which support sustainability in a lifelong learning context.

178 https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/9197_en.pdf

- What works to get disadvantaged children onto the pathways that are proven to lead to upwards mobility (including helping those who are not in education, employment or training) and raising ambition where needed? At what age are interventions most effective?

- How can policymakers best create collaborations with industry to increase training opportunities, to ensure learners are as prepared as much as possible for work, and to reduce barriers to those from disadvantaged backgrounds?

Proposals should also consider the gender and disability dimensions in their analysis (ensuring that women, as well as persons with disability, benefit equally from employment and earning opportunities linked to the green transition). Clustering and cooperation among selected projects under this call topic and other relevant projects, for example from the Horizon 2020 European Green Deal Call and their results, are strongly encouraged.

Proposals should also explore synergies with the New European Bauhaus (NEB) Facility, including notably the NEB Academy on skills for sustainable construction, and the European Partnership on Social Transformations and Resilience.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-08: Strengthened implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and a focus on inclusion, integration, and health**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding as a beneficiary with zero funding, or as an associated partner. The JRC will not participate in the preparation and submission of the proposal - see General Annex B. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [179].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to either the first and second (combined), or the third and fourth (combined) of the following expected outcomes:

- Improved implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum through evidence-based insights in asylum and migration management, age assessment of minors, and resettlement frameworks, ensuring fair and efficient migration governance.
- Insight into legal pathways addressing both EU Member States' needs and potential offers of circular and permanent migration schemes in selected partner countries.
- Enhanced health equity for migrants, including refugees by integrating robust health data into national systems, addressing governance barriers, and tackling intersectional inequities in healthcare access, identifying data/indicators on basic needs in health and sanitation, including as compared to adequate treatment.
- Comprehensive evaluation of long-term social inclusion and integration strategies, providing evidence-based policy recommendations for labour market access, housing, education, health (including mental health), recognition of qualifications and validation of skills, youth participation, and social, political, and cultural inclusion.

Proposals should state clearly which expected outcomes their proposed research will contribute to.

Scope: The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum[180] has introduced several key mechanisms requiring robust evidence to support their effective implementation. Proposals should conduct a comprehensive analysis of the Pact's components, including, for instance, the solidarity mechanism, the age assessment framework for minors, crisis and force majeure migration management, the EU externalisation policies on global migration patterns and the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework. This analysis should account for diverse national institutional landscapes and propose tailored policy recommendations that uphold human rights and enhance practical implementation.

The landscape of health data concerning migrants, including refugees is fragmented, incomplete, and often of low quality. This situation is compound by political, governance,

[179] 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

[180] https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/pact-migration-and-asylum_en

legal and structural aspects that challenge the effective integration and utilisation of available data.

Proposals should map the existing landscape of health data integration for migrants, including refugees across national health information systems, evaluating existing data collection frameworks, methodologies, and technologies used to gather and integrate health information on migrant populations, highlighting potential systemic and organisational barriers. They should identify challenges and best practices that have successfully facilitated data integration while maintain high standard of data privacy and security and provide policy recommendations.

Moreover, there is a lack of research exploring how intersecting factors such as age, gender, disability and legal status influence health outcomes among migrant and refugee populations, including older migrants. Addressing these gaps (including through a contribution of SSH disciplines) is essential for the development of informed policies that ensure equitable health care access and improve overall health outcomes with special consideration to persons in a vulnerable situation. Proposals should incorporate analysis of the impact of intersectional factors in access to health for migrant and refugees' populations.

Beyond health, understanding the long-term impact of social inclusion and integration[181] strategies, is critical. Proposals should develop comprehensive and comparative evaluation frameworks to measure the effectiveness of existing strategies at the EU, national and local levels, identifying best practices at all levels (EU, national, local) and particularly the role of small and medium-sized towns; municipalities and recommending innovative policy adjustments. Areas of focus should include labour market access, mobility options of asylum seekers within the Dublin framework, housing, youth and women participation, the contribution of private sector and non-state actors and the broader social, political, and cultural inclusion of migrants, including refugee communities, including the role of education, as well as linguistic competence in the language of the receiving country. Proposals are encouraged to explore the biographical dimensions of integration, acknowledging the personal trajectories of migrants, including refugees. Research should also explore the relationship between migratory movements and social identity formation, ensuring that integration policies are adaptable to evolving societal dynamics and sustainable over time. Proposals should incorporate quantitative data and sound methodologies to identify effective practices, target groups, and enabling conditions to assess integration policies and in particular labour market integration outcomes. Wherever relevant proposals are encouraged to include migrants and/or refugees as participants in their research assessing first-hand their experiences, needs, attitudes and opinions.

Proposals may envisage JRC participation, drawing on its cross-cutting expertise in migration governance, social inclusion, and integration including from a health aspect. The JRC could, for example, contribute to comparative policy analysis, harmonised data collection across Member States, and evidence-based support to EU-level decision-making, utilising its

[181] Integration should be understood as a two-way process.

experience in modelling policy mechanisms, analysing data and developing indicators, analysing inequalities, and providing forecasting and foresight on migration trends.

Where relevant, proposals may consider citizen engagement and dialogue beyond migrants, including refugees, with a view to collecting broader input.

**HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-09: Rethinking long-term care policy in the face of EU demographic shifts**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 3.75 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 15.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding as a beneficiary with zero funding, or as an associated partner. The JRC will not participate in the preparation and submission of the proposal - see General Annex B.<br>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [182].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, |

[182] 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

| | |
|---|---|
| | as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Evaluate the effectiveness and resilience of existing long term-care (LTC) policies at national and regional levels.
- Provide policy makers with scientific knowledge and data for evidence-informed policies to address the rising demand for affordable, accessible and high-quality long-term care, with the focus on efficient use of resources, including human, financial and technological.
- Propose new policy solutions to address rising long-term care needs and to ensure smooth (in)formal care transitions, including from the perspective of active and healthy ageing policies and the development of integrated care service provision at local level.

Scope: In the EU, the number of people with long-term care needs is projected to increase in the future. In 2070, this number is expected to be 21% higher than in 2020.This increase is largely due to the acceleration of population ageing and also relates to higher needs for palliative care. At the same time, many Member States already struggle to meet all the long-term care needs now due to workforce shortages, which are likely to aggravate in future as the long-term care workforce is itself ageing and the sector is not attractive due to difficult working conditions, limited career development pathways and low professional standards.

Scientific evidence from research and innovation (including from SSH disciplines) is needed to help address the increasing demand for long-term care in the EU in the context of shrinking labour resources and increasing pressures on public and private budgets.

In line with the European Care Strategy and complementing the activities of the European Partnership on Transforming Health and Care Systems[183], proposals should:

- evaluate the effectiveness of existing national/regional long-term care policies in terms of meeting the current long-term care needs through sufficient and adequately skilled long-term care workers, making formal long-term care affordable, accessible and of high quality; in that respect, evaluate the role of integrated care and the interplay of long-term care and other social services;
- develop robust methodologies to model projections until 2070, for long-term care needs and supply including in terms of workforce and types of services, and corresponding public funding needs for at least 15 EU Member States; quantify the cost of non-action in terms of impact on unmet LTC needs, health and well-being outcomes, and missed opportunities for economic returns;
- identify and analyse innovative policy mixes, including based on social innovation, to address long-term care needs and long-term care supply challenges, with available

[183] See https://www.thcspartnership.eu/ or https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101095654

and/or new public/private resources, including by tapping into the potential of digitalisation and new technologies. Aspects for consideration may include addressing workforce and skills shortages by increasing the attractiveness of the long-term care sector through improved working conditions and social protection of the long-term care workforce; the deployment of digital solutions including AI-based; investigating the cost-effectiveness in the use of public budgets for health and social care and the role of private funding in the sector.

Applicants are encouraged to consider the data offered by European Research Infrastructures in the social sciences domain, [184] as well as the body of LTC policy analysis developed by the European Commission[185]. Where applicable, proposals should leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), as well as data from relevant Data Spaces. Particular efforts should be made to ensure that the data produced in the context of this topic is FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable).

Applicants aiming to address the implications of demographic changes on health and care systems should check in advance which areas are covered by the Transforming Health and Care Systems partnership and what research the partnership is performing to avoid a duplication of efforts or potential double funding.

Proposals should consider the involvement of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC)[186] based on its experience and with respect to the value it could bring in providing an effective interface between research activities and policymaking.

Proposals should integrate a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach to address the diverse long-term care policy needs of care-recipients and caregivers.

To maximise impact and avoid unnecessary duplication, proposals should envisage, as appropriate, cooperation with Horizon Europe projects such as the ones funded by the call topic HORIZON-CL2-2022-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-10, “Socio-economic effects of ageing societies”[187] and the HORIZON-CL2-2023-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-08 call topic entitled “Integrated care solutions leading to better quality, person-centred long-term[188].

184 https://ri-portfolio.esfri.eu/ri-portfolio/table/

185 https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/social-protection-social-inclusion/social-protection/long-term-care_en

186 DG JRC research activity on long-term care and demography aims to analyse the prevalence of neurodegenerative diseases (such as dementia) and implication on LTC demand and analysis of household composition (family structure changes) and implications on LTC provision.

187 https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-cl2-2022-transformations-01-10

188 https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-cl2-2023-transformations-01-08

## HORIZON-CL2-2026-01-TRANSFO-10: Fostering cooperation and integration between SSH and STEM research and innovation in the EU

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society 2026** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 3.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 3.50 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Coordination and Support Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [189]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Greater integration of SSH and STEM[190] research and innovation in R&I initiatives funded at EU level, national and/or regional level, as well as in R&I policies by promoting dialogue, mutual learning and strategic cooperation among research funders and policy makers in the EU.
- Developing and maintaining a new, common, comprehensive 'Monitoring and Impact Evaluation Framework' for SSH integration in current and future EU R&I initiatives.

Enhanced facilitation of knowledge exploitation and support to the cooperation between projects and stakeholders, as well as R&I policies involved in projects and other types of cross-border networks dealing with SSH and STEM research and innovation.

189 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

190 SSH integration involves actively supporting interdisciplinary research and innovation that combines SSH with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) to better address complex challenges such as climate change, public health issues, and technological innovation.

Scope: As mentioned in the Report 'Align, Act, Accelerate: Research, Technology and Innovation to boost European Competitiveness' [191], European RD&I can provide a new understanding of and solutions to tackle societal challenges. Social sciences and humanities (SSH) and Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) improve the research activities, outcomes and impacts of Horizon Europe, because they enable a greater understanding of societal and competitiveness benefits. The cooperation of SSH and STEM in through trans- and interdisciplinary science is part of a science that is excellent, as it not only delivers excellence in the technical aspects, but also in taking account different societal needs. Thus, there is need for a leading role at European level for this cooperation.

Proposals are expected to create an SSH-STEM Action, that focusses on SSH-STEM monitoring, SSH-STEM facilitation and SSH-STEM promotion, at European level, which should also include all the following aspects:

**1. Monitoring**:

Monitoring is a major aspect of the essential activities[192].

The action should create a new strategy in the first year of the project with the aim to develop and to monitor the SSH-STEM research cooperation (e.g. A.I. search tools). This monitoring strategy should meet the following requirements:

- Applicants should provide a clear justification of what significant steps forward they propose regarding methodology compared to previous reporting on SSH-STEM collaboration (see relevant reports), data management, analytical methods, data collection. Robust open data driven approaches are strongly encouraged.

- Applicants should describe what steps they will undertake to ensure the delivery of reporting on a yearly basis, which should include the data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of SSH-STEM related cooperation data (in EU-funded projects in Horizon Europe where there is SSH-STEM cooperation).

2. **Facilitation and promotion**:

Applicants should develop guidelines for SSH-STEM cooperation and support stakeholders in their projects when SSH-STEM cooperation is possible within the project, with a focus on increasing the quality and depth of cooperation and applying cooperation where most relevant. Applicants are encouraged to propose approaches, such as training to researchers on how to best integrate either STEM or SSH into their research. In addition, applicants should take into account the collaboration within SSH sciences on their own, as well as attention for not only quantitative SSH disciplines, but also qualitative SSH.

---

191 https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2f9fc221-86bb-11ef-a67d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

192 e.g. see the report 'Integration of social sciences and humanities in Horizon 2020' (https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/16b7df93-82b3-11ee-99ba-01aa75ed71a1/language-en) and the 'Horizon Europe Integration'-report for 2021-2023 (https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6cf8db13-62bb-11f0-bf4e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en).

The action should organize an annual event showcasing SSH and STEM cooperation; with exchanges with / for policy makers, best practice examples and showcasing funded projects/ programs at EU, national and other levels.

The action is also expected to provide a quantitative and qualitative R&D evidence base on how to ensure that policies (including funding) aimed at stimulating research & innovation are appropriate for the sectors which have the greatest potential to contribute to Europe's competitiveness. Applicants should propose evaluation metrics for SSH-STEM cooperation within research projects.

**3. SSH/ STEM Science for Policy**:

An important part of promotion is that the action acts as an SSH/ Science for policy exchange as well, providing the European Commission with feedback and advice on SSH-STEM cooperation, and informing the European Commission of the latest developments in SSH-STEM cooperation (which is why the inclusion of SSH experts is of the upmost importance).

The action is expected to be a forum that promotes dialogue and cooperation among research funders and policy makers in the EU (linked to the European Research Area) and beyond to further the integration of SSH and STEM in EU-funded R&I initiatives.

The action should provide monitoring guidance in SSH and STEM cooperation in R&I programmes at national/regional and European level.

The consortium should contribute to the priorities of the European Research Area, the EU Competitiveness Compass to strengthen the EU competitiveness and resilience. The consortium is expected to liaise with the two Cluster 2 co-funded European Partnerships and look into successful SSH integration projects and initiatives funded at EU level.

The action should recognize the diversity within SSH disciplines and their differing levels of integration with STEM. It should include targeted strategies to increase humanities' participation alongside qualitative and quantitative social sciences to ensure balanced SSH representation. STEM domain prioritization should be driven by thematic relevance and feasibility for SSH cooperation.

Projects should adopt a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach when integrating SSH and STEM. This means considering a variety of societal needs and perspectives to ensure inclusivity and equality in research and innovation in EU and national R&I policies.

### HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-01: Impact of access to nature-positive environments in promoting social cohesion and reducing inequalities in urban and peri-urban settings

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** |
|---|
| **Specific conditions** |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [193]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Policymakers and civil society organisations will have robust evidence on whether inclusive management of (peri-)urban environmental commons fosters climate and societal resilience, social inclusion, wellbeing and community participation, and whether lack of access to biodiverse green and/or blue spaces exacerbates existing social inequalities (e.g. poverty, marginalisation, and low community wellbeing among vulnerable groups) and people's sense of inequality and insecurity.

- Development of strategies and innovative solutions to quantify and integrate the distributional aspects of access to quality green and/or blue spaces into integrated spatial planning, accounting for non-market values when making decisions about long-term land use and (peri-) urban development with the aim of supporting nature restoration/preservation in the face of competing pressures and on-going change both in Europe and outside, while achieving a fair and equitable relationship between social groups and the environment.

Scope: Proposals should focus on exploring and better understanding the relationships between access to quality green and/or blue spaces in the pursuit of social and environmental justice, community cohesion and overall social fabric. Proposals may also look at how to

[193] 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

support fair transitions to climate-resilient communities from a climate adaptation and biodiversity perspective, ensuring a link to cohesion and social resilience. Targets, notably for urban ecosystem restoration, under the EU Nature Restoration Regulation[194] should be taken into account. Synergies with the EU Urban Agenda may also be considered.

Research to date has largely focused on the benefits of nature on individuals (e.g., improved health, reduced stress), while more and up-to-date knowledge is needed on their effects at a societal level and across cultural, geographical and socioeconomic contexts as well as the range of functional needs of different groups.

This topic aims to bridge the knowledge gaps surrounding a fair and equitable relationship between social groups and the environment, in particular the link between nature-as a public good and its role in fostering civic engagement that cultivates social cohesion, community wellbeing, shared identity and sense of belonging and place-making.

Studies show that disadvantaged communities have fewer and lower-quality green and/or blue spaces, but less is known about the mechanisms through which access to nature-positive spaces strengthens cultural identities (at the individual and group levels), cohesion and resilience, particularly in lower-income communities and across generations.

Proposals may explore:

- The community-level impacts of initiatives aiming to introduce green and/or blue spaces and an understanding of how intentional design and planning can help improve societal outcomes throughout the community, with special attention to how socially vulnerable groups may be impacted, which types of natural spaces are used for which activities and what distance constitutes 'accessible' or sufficient to promote social contact. When considering the notion of access to quality green and blue spaces, researchers should consider not only the physical distance to these spaces, but other barriers such as the state of desolation of public green and/or blue spaces, privatisation, as well as cultural, social, economic barriers to access nature.

- Knowledge gaps around the long-term impacts of lack of access to quality green and/or blue spaces, and how this amplifies existing socioeconomic inequalities, in particular the intersection with other determining factors of sociopsychological and mental wellbeing such as age, education, employment, housing, health, mobility and socioeconomic status, including aspects around ease of access, affordability and capacity to empower communities, particularly among vulnerable groups (such as marginalised urban communities, including migrants and informal settlements).

- The role that community-based projects – for example those aimed at social participation and inclusion, environmental preservation, circular economy and food security, and preserving natural heritage (e.g., urban gardening, traditional ecological knowledge practices, rewilding, nature conservation, nature-based solutions and citizen science) –

194 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R1991&qid=1722240349976

play in strengthening community agency, identity, place attachment, and sociopsychological, mental and material well-being and social capital.

- The role of green and/or blue spaces in the mitigation of inequalities in pollution exposure, a source of concern in many disadvantaged communities.
- The potential contributions of local businesses and social economy actors to the implementation of green and/or blue spaces, as well as the meaningful participation of individuals, representing different economic/labour sectors and collective identities within the community.
- The contribution of nature to place-making and the ways in which approaches from the arts and humanities can contribute to how we understand place, and shape future places, in concert with local communities.

Proposals are expected to adopt a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach to analyse differential access to nature-positive environments across population groups. Particular attention should be paid to identifying the structural and systemic drivers of these disparities, as well as assessing the social, economic and health-related impacts of unequal access on individuals and communities.

Interdisciplinary approaches (including from SSH disciplines), combining insights from sociology, anthropology, law, environmental philosophy and systems science, are encouraged. Clustering and cooperation with other selected projects under this and past calls are strongly encouraged, in particular topic HORIZON-CL6-2025-01-BIODIV-06: 'Assessing and modelling socio-economic impacts of nature restoration', topic HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-1: 'Enhancing social inclusion in rural areas: focus on people in a vulnerable situation and social economy' and topics under the New European Bauhaus (topic HORIZON-NEB-2026-01-PARTICIPATION-03: Understanding inhabitant's experiences of neighbourhoods to support their health and well-being, and topic HORIZON-MISS-2027-07-CLIMA-CIT-NEB-01: Urban nature: supporting restoration of urban ecosystems, along urban transport networks and in the built environment). Participation by entities from cities that are signatories of the Green City Accord[195] is encouraged. Proposals should engage civil society organisations in the development of their actions.

### HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-02: Impact of in-kind benefits on income distribution and on vulnerable populations

**Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027**

[195] The Green City Accord is a movement of European mayors committed to making cities cleaner and healthier. It aims to improve the quality of life for all Europeans and accelerate the implementation of relevant EU environmental laws. By signing the Accord, cities commit to addressing five areas of environmental management: air, water, nature and biodiversity, circular economy and waste, and noise. There are 119 signatory cities as of May 2025 (https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/urban-environment/green-city-accord_en).

| **Specific conditions** | |
|---|---|
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 3.00 and 3.30 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 10.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [196]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Policy makers get a mapping of in-kind benefits across Member States and a comprehensive measurement framework.
- Policy makers gain insights on the availability of in-kind services, on potential gaps in their provision, and on reasons for non-take up.
- Policy makers gain insights into the redistributive role of in-kind benefits and on the segregation of different social groups, through SSH research.
- Policy makers receive operational advice to make informed policy choices which reduce inequality and strengthen fairness and cohesion.

Scope: In-kind benefits refer to non-cash goods and services provided to individuals or households, typically by the government (national, regional and/or local), to support their well-being or fulfil basic needs. Unlike cash transfers, which can be spent at the recipient's discretion, in-kind benefits ensure that resources are used for specific purposes for free or at a subsidised cost (e.g. food banks, social housing, health and long-term care services, childcare,

[196] 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

schooling, sport infrastructure, public transport). Despite the wide range of in-kind benefits, there is poor empirical knowledge basis of the impact of in-kind benefits (except for healthcare) on the income distribution and on vulnerable groups, unlike the impact of cash benefits.

Research activities may focus, as a baseline, on establishing a full mapping of in-kind benefits (both for free and at a subsidised cost, universal and means-tested) provided by national, regional and local governments. This mapping, potentially structured along the life-cycle perspective and/or around specific groups, might help to develop EU indicators on in-kind benefits and improve comparability.

Proposals may develop a comprehensive measurement framework based on methods, tools, available data and indicators, both qualitative and quantitative and both ex ante and ex post. The framework may translate in-kind benefits into income and show their redistributive role (on income groups, vulnerable populations, marginal and/or small size groups) and ensure cross-country comparability.

Proposals may consider identifying the availability of in-kind benefits at local level, potential gaps, take-up rates for in-kind benefits and their reasons (e.g. capacities' incompatibility with the local needs). They may involve vulnerable communities in the evaluation design.

Proposals may provide operational advice to policy makers on how to translate the research results into concrete actions to reduce inequality and strengthen fairness and cohesion.

The overall aim is to close the knowledge gap covering various dimensions. Therefore, it is expected that proposals apply a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach, including age, to their research.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-03: Rethinking sustainable competitiveness beyond traditional perspectives: role and contribution of the Social Economy**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, |

| | |
|---|---|
| | object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [197]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Social enterprises, traditional firms and investors will benefit from a better understanding of the sustainable competitiveness factors of the social economy[198] in Europe through knowledge development and know-how on innovative products and services, improving quality and productivity, and increasing adaptability, social inclusion and sustainable, environmentally friendly (for example biodiversity-enhancing) practices.

- Citizens and traditional private sector will benefit from the increased contribution of the social economy to the EU's sustainable competitiveness and shared prosperity goals. The research will inform policy makers and private sector on best practice, policy and regulatory reforms aimed at enhancing the social economy's contribution to the EU's competitiveness and prosperity goals.

- The social economy's principles for sustainable competitiveness are promoted, through the development of practical and innovative solutions.

Scope: The European Union is committed to fostering a social market economy that promotes sustainable growth, social justice, and economic competitiveness. In this context, the social economy has emerged as a potential driver of innovation, job creation, and social inclusion. On the other hand, there is still a persistent knowledge gap in the literature when it comes to appreciate the multifaceted contribution social economy actors make in shaping and

197 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

198 The social economy covers entities sharing the following main common principles and features: the primacy of people as well as social and/or environmental purpose over profit, the reinvestment of most of the profits and surpluses to carry out activities in the interest of members/users ("collective interest") or society at large ("general interest") and democratic and/or participatory governance. Traditionally, the term social economy refers to four main types of entities providing goods and services to their members or society at large: cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations (including charities), and foundations. They are private entities, independent of public authorities and with specific legal forms. Social enterprises are now generally understood as part of the social economy. The social economy (associations, cooperatives, mutual societies, foundations, and social enterprises) provides monetary and non-monetary services, impacting on European sustainable competitiveness. Social economy actors also have a different approach to their working environment due to the societal objectives of their employers and the democratic governance of their ecosystems.

advancing economic competitiveness within and across the EU society and its impact on inclusive wellbeing and the environment (for example, the prevention of environmental degradation or loss of biodiversity[199]).

Sustainable competitiveness and shared prosperity are key a political priority of the new European Commission[200]. In this context, the notion of sustainable competitiveness is less about relative labour cost and more about skills, innovation, entrepreneurship and adaptation. It focuses on the ability for an individual, a firm, a sector, or a country to increase shared prosperity in relation to the current and future environment and society.

The link between social economy and sustainable competitiveness relies on innovation, which needs to be made broader, going beyond “mere” technological innovation and embrace social or even better societal innovation.

Proposals should focus on exploring the potential virtuous relationships between social economy, sustainable competitiveness and shared prosperity.

Research (including from SSH disciplines) should focus on a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to the sustainable competitiveness of social economy entities on one side and, on the other, its possible impact on EU sustainable competitiveness. This requires addressing knowledge gaps, such as the lack of a comprehensive framework to measure the social economy's contribution to sustainable competitiveness in the European Union.

Research may undertake a review of existing literature, analysis and develop case studies to identify the key enabling factors that make social economy entities competitive in a sustainable way, while considering the social, economic, and environmental dimensions.

To better capture the role of the social economy as one of the drivers of sustainable competitiveness, the research may develop a framework to measure its contribution including with existing and new indicators and metrics.

Research may identify best practices, develop toolkit and policy recommendations on how social economy in Europe can boost public and private competitiveness linked to EU shared prosperity goals (such as well-being and nature preservation).

The regulatory context and its impact on the social economy's ability to contribute to sustainable competitiveness should be considered.

Activities may involve interdisciplinary research, stakeholder engagement, and policy analysis. Researchers may need to draw on expertise from different fields (economics, sociology, environmental science, public administration) to develop a comprehensive

---

199 Nature is an essential part of competitiveness. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has demonstrated that around 55% of the global GDP is generated by sectors moderately to highly dependent on nature. Around 72% of euro area companies are critically dependent on ecosystem services.

200 https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf

understanding of the social economy's role in promoting sustainable competitiveness, in line with the EU Green Deal and in the Kunming Montreal Agreement..

The scope of this call topic is not limited to any specific sector, value chain or enabling factors, however, proposals may put emphasis on a specific one. Collaboration with stakeholders from the social economy, private sector, and public sector to develop a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between social economy and sustainable competitiveness is encouraged.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-04: The impact of EU labour mobility on the Member States of the EU**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [201]. |

[201] 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

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Policymakers gain insights into the economic and social effects of worker mobility across the EU, including effects on wages, fiscal budgets, and social systems for both sending and receiving regions.
- The benefits of mobility are maximised through actionable recommendations, which consider challenges such as demographic changes, regional effects, digitalisation and, to a suitable extent, further developments such as the green transition or adaptation to climate change (including its potential impact on the economic development and the attractiveness of regions) or the green transition and discussions around the accession of further countries to the EU and wider geopolitical instabilities.

Scope: While the EU facilitates free movement as one of the four freedoms of the single market, the long-term social and economic dynamics and implications for both receiving and, especially, sending regions remain underexplored. These include not only direct effects on fiscal and social budgets but also more subtle impacts, such as on the networks, skills, and experiences that individuals bring back to their home regions, but also on the income distribution in the country from which the movers originate.

Gaining a deeper, data-supported understanding of these diverse often complex effects is crucial for shaping policies that effectively harness the benefits of mobility across Europe. In doing so the research shall contribute to the ongoing efforts of strengthening the internal market and make Europe more competitive, while also ensuring social fairness and delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights, in particular with regard to fair working conditions and ensuring access to adequate income and social protection for all. For the variations across different groups (including - but not limited to - gender, age, level of qualification) could be explored. Harnessing the benefits of mobility is also to be seen in the wider context of the green and digital transitions, necessitating enhanced labour mobility to address skill mismatches and shortages and demographic challenges.

Proposals should build on relevant previous research (including from SSH disciplines), some of which has been conducted in previous Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020 projects[202]. Proposals should have a clear focus. Quantitative approaches and/or econometrics should be part of the proposed methodology. Approaches which can capture developments over time, such as panel analysis, might thereby be of added value.

Projects should analyse the effects of labour mobility on the functioning of social security systems (eventually differentiating between the different pillars of the social security systems, e.g. pension system, health, care, etc.) in countries of origin and destination and their

[202] See e.g. HORIZON-CL2-2022-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-02 - The impact of spatial mobility on European demographics, society, welfare system and labour market; https://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/a9351b1c-4d31-11ee-9220-01aa75ed71a1.0001.03/DOC_1 ; https://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/d697ee14-77ad-11ea-a07e-01aa75ed71a1.0001.01/DOC_1 ; https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/727072 ; https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/794030

coordination and/or provide research which fosters an informed debate on potential strategies for a future-proof and efficient EU-level social security coordination.

Beyond that, the projects may:

- Explore ways to improve the quantification of the volume of various forms [e.g. long-term movers, seasonal work and other forms of short-term mobility, postings, cross-border (tele-)work etc] of labour mobility and/or make available figures more comparable across Member States.
- Develop economic models to assess the EU-level economic effects of labour mobility.
- Pay attention to the ecological effects of labour mobility and link those with the socio-economic effects.
- Analyse whether and in which way the composition of movers (e.g. skill-level, age structure, status in labour market, etc.) matters for the socio-economic effects observed in the countries/regions of origin/destination.
- Provide a comparative analysis of intra-EU labour mobility with labour mobility in other world regions or to geographical mobility within Member States.
- Develop and test a model to forecast labour mobility in different scenarios (e.g. making assumptions about the economic and social development in different parts of the EU).
- Take an evidence-based position whether – and in which way - geographical mobility contributes to manage economic change (e.g. whether movers are more willing to work in another sector).
- Analyse to which extent and under which conditions regions with net-outward mobility have benefited or can benefit – eventually in the longer run – from this mobility.
- Investigate the economic and social differences between labour migration and labour mobility, the experience with EU enlargement might be used to analyse this.
- Provide evidence on which policy instruments are most suitable to ensure a labour mobility which is not perceived as unfair (e.g linked to exploitation, social dumping etc.).

These aspects illustrate thematic areas which could contribute to the objective of developing a vision for the future of labour mobility in the European Union and to discuss how legal and institutional frameworks can be adapted to support mobility in a way that is both economically and socially beneficial. This includes modernising the coordination of social security and ensuring that policies reflect the realities of modern society and work arrangements.

Where applicable, proposals should leverage the data and services available through European Research Infrastructures federated under the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), as well

as data from relevant Data Spaces. Particular efforts should be made to ensure that the data produced in the context of this topic is FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable).

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-05: The effective use of artificial intelligence in learning environments in pre-primary and primary education**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>Subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [203]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Provide policymakers and educators and parents with a solid understanding of the potential benefits, opportunities and challenges stemming from the use of artificial

[203] 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

intelligence tools in learning environments in pre-primary and primary education, including with regard to their ethical dimension.

- Generate rigorous, policy-relevant evidence on the impact of use of artificial intelligence tools in learning environments on educational performance and youth well-being.
- Develop actionable advice to educators about how they can make an effective use of artificial intelligence tools in their work, including for the assessment of learning outcomes.

Scope: The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in learning environments in pre-primary and primary education is rapidly growing. However, there is limited evidence on how AI can challenge and improve learning outcomes, enhance the teaching techniques and support the teaching profession and how automating administrative tasks helps teachers focus on pedagogy and teaching challenges. Most existing research is from extra-EU contexts, which significantly limits the transferability of findings to EU education and training systems and is often conducted on a limited number of participants and covering short-time spans, hindering the possibility of generalising its findings. Moreover, research on the implications of AI tools for equity and inclusion in education is lacking. There is also a need to better investigate the challenges that AI poses to teaching and learning as well as pupils' well-being. AI is developed to increase human efficiency yet also comes with often unexpected risks and challenges, especially when being applied to child audiences.

The research (including through SSH disciplines) could explore how AI can enhance curricula, improve teaching methods, and personalise learning through adaptive technologies. It should also consider the developmental appropriateness of AI tools for young learners, focusing on cognitive, emotional, and social growth. Research on AI's impact on early childhood education and its role in supporting foundational skills would be valuable. Additionally, the research should emphasise the aspect of teacher support, including how AI can assist with lesson planning, assessment, and feedback. It should also explore training programs to help educators use AI effectively. Finally, inclusivity and accessibility are key angles to consider, ensuring AI tools are suitable for all students, including those with disabilities or from diverse backgrounds, and promoting multilingual and multicultural education.

Longitudinal studies are also needed, as current research is fragmented and looking at the short term. Proposals should focus on the need to understand long-term cognitive, social, and emotional impacts, which requires sustained, multi-year investigations. Furthermore, the role of media and digital tools requires attention. Proposals should consider the devices and platforms through which children encounter AI (for example robots, tablets, smartphones etc) and how these shape interactions and learning outcomes.

Relevant research questions to address include:

- How can AI-powered tools personalise learning experiences safely and effectively and support teachers in addressing diverse student needs?

- What are the potential benefits and challenges of integrating AI into initial teacher education and continuous professional development programmes?
- How can AI assist teachers in automating administrative tasks, allowing them to focus more on pedagogy and student engagement?
- What ethical considerations and potential risks, including in relation to wellbeing, should be taken into account when using AI in education to support teachers and students?
- What is the typical profile of teachers who are currently using AI-powered tools and which uses and perceived gratifications motivate using AI-powered tool?
- How can AI tools motivate children to learn?
- How can AI-based interventions address learning gaps based on individual students' needs (including disabilities) and learning styles?
- What changes do educational programmes need to perform on a pedagogical level for the successful integration of AI?
- What do teachers need to implement the use of AI safely and effectively?

Proposals can apply a variety of methods including rigorous experimental and/or quasi-experimental methods, but also experience sampling and general survey methods, to evaluate the effectiveness of existing AI tools or to test new AI tools. Proposals should evaluate the costs associated with the policy measures or programmes analysed. Proposals should look at different forms of AI tools, e.g. Generative AI, Intelligent Tutoring Systems etc. Proposals should also apply qualitative research methods to cover the ethical dimensions. Interdisciplinary approaches and close cooperation with educational institutions and educators are essential. Cooperation with media literacy organisations is encouraged. Clustering and cooperation among selected projects under this call topic and other relevant projects are strongly encouraged.

Particular attention should be paid to identifying and mitigating biases in AI systems to ensure equity and inclusion in education systems.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-06: Closing the learning gap: uncovering causes and effective policy interventions for declining youth skills in mathematics, reading, and science**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [204]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Provide policymakers with a solid understanding of the structural causes for the decline in young people's skills levels in mathematics, reading and science, including low and top levels of achievement, observed in the EU over the past 15 years.
- Generate rigorous, policy-relevant evidence about which teaching practices, programmes and policy actions can be effective to reverse that decline, including the role of curricula, structural aspects of education and training systems, physical and digital learning environments, and innovative teaching and learning methods (including their accessibility).
- Develop actionable advice to inform policy measures, programmes, future evaluations and actions for education and training systems in the field of basic skills.

Scope: Young people's mathematics, reading and science skills, as measured by large-scale international assessments such as the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), have significantly declined in Europe over the past 15 years. This applies both to the low and top levels of achievement. Reversing that trend is one of the fundamental objectives of the Union of Skills.

While the research literature has well analysed the short-term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, the structural causes of the observed decline are still poorly understood. More in-depth

[204] 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

research is necessary, using various data sources at national and international level. Several interrelated research questions remain to be addressed, such as:

- How have changes in teaching methods, curriculum design, and assessment practices influenced the decline in mathematics, reading and science skills over time?
- What role do digital distractions and shifts in reading habits from paper to digital devices play?
- What is the role handwriting and drawing for cognitive development?
- What is the link between acquisition of cognitive skills in maths, science and reading on the one hand and the socio-emotional skills, learning skills, self-regulation, school climate on the other.
- To what extent does the increasing (also migration-related) heterogeneity of the students make it more difficult to organise learning at school?
- How does parental involvement affect educational performance?
- Do different levels of parental involvement affect educational performance?
- What is the role of cultural institutions such as museums and libraries?
- What is the combined impact of socio-economic background and gender on gaps in educational performance?
- How do different levels of investment in public education, and teacher shortages and working conditions affect the educational performance of children?

Proposals should also take into account the perspective of young people and other relevant stakeholders as part of the data collection. Close cooperation with authorities and/or other institutions owning the data is essential and should be ensured.

Understanding the causes of this decline is the pre-condition for analysing the causal impact of various remedial measures and identifying effective policies and programmes to improve young people’s skills in mathematics, reading and science. Proposals should apply experimental and/or quasi-experimental methods for their analysis and could complement them with qualitative research methods. Proposals should also evaluate the costs associated with the policy measures or programmes analysed. Interdisciplinary approaches, combining insights from economics, sociology, psychology, neurosciences and education sciences, and more generally, the social sciences and humanities (SSH), are encouraged. Clustering and cooperation among selected projects under this call topic and other relevant projects are strongly encouraged.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-07: Persons with disabilities: opportunities for labour inclusion and social protection through the life course**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | 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. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 12.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [205]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to two of the following expected outcomes:

- Provide implementable, quality, disaggregated and evidence-based data to policymakers and research and innovation stakeholders to bridge the employment gap between persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities.
- Deliver scalable and replicable inclusive person-centred interventions addressing the situation of persons with disabilities in relation to the labour market in a manner that they are transferable to the new contexts of work, studying and comparing their impacts.
- Develop innovative policy approaches in the area of social protection for persons with disabilities to compensate the cost associated to disabilities, removing barriers for their participation and encourage them to engage in employment in the open labour market, while at the same time guaranteeing them an adequate level of social protection.

[205] 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

Scope: The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[206] recognises the right to work for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others (Art. 27). However, only half of the 42.8 million persons with disabilities of working age in the EU is employed, this being translated into an employment gap in which only 51% of persons with disabilities are employed compared to 75% of persons without disabilities[207]. In addition, persons with disabilities are overrepresented among those inactive in the labour market, not looking for a job due to different barriers, such as a generalised lack of accessibility of workplaces, inaccessible transportation, built environment and infrastructure, insufficient or inadequate reasonable accommodation, lack of flexibility in employment, administrative burdens or incompatibility with disability benefits.

Thus, new and innovative ways of inclusion into the labour market of persons with disabilities need to be explored and tested with the objective to reduce the gaps between persons with and without disabilities, reduce inequalities and promote their social and economic inclusion on an equal basis with others. An assessment of the benefits, including for society and the economy, of employment of persons with disabilities could be carried out.

Research (including through SSH disciplines) should address the disadvantages and barriers faced for increasing inclusion in the labour market of persons with disabilities, collect data on proved effective measures to improve the situation, and provide a thorough analysis of the impact and efficacy of existing policy measures, such as positive discrimination provisions, quotas, employment targets and others. The role of employers, their concerns and good practices for labour inclusion of persons with disabilities needs to be assessed, as well as reasons to circumvent obligations to include employees with disabilities. Moreover, discrimination against persons with disabilities during the hiring process and the impact on job retention could be addressed.

Research should also take stock of existing accessible working environments tools and equipment, as well as reasonable accommodation tools and support at work already provided or still needed and their impact on the employment of persons with disabilities. The role of accessible digital services, digital skills and assistive technologies and other advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its potential for advancing the labour inclusion of persons with disabilities may be explored.

Different types of work - adapted to the often-hidden talents of persons with disabilities - should be explored, taking into account their competences and abilities, disability type, level, sex and age. The transition from supported/sheltered employment to the open labour market, including different models such as self-employment and entrepreneurship, re- and upskilling,

206 Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities: *Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities*

207 https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3e1e2228-7c97-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

vocational education and training, could be considered, looking for sustainable pathways to facilitate the process and to be maintained in the long run.

Persons with disabilities are at a higher risk of poverty due to insufficient labour market participation in combination with insufficient social protection and insufficient compensation for extra costs related to disability, including family-based care. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises the right to social protection and to the enjoyment of that right without discrimination on the basis of disability (Art. 28).

Thus, research is expected to address the issue of social protection through the life course of persons with disabilities, including different aspects such as disability benefits, possible in-kind benefits, coverage of extra costs associated to disabilities, the transition to pension age for persons with disabilities or acquiring disabilities after pension age. Attention should be paid to measures that disincentivise or create barriers to the employment of persons with disabilities in the open labour market. Proposals should consider also the in and out of employment and the possible compatibility with other benefits, such as disability benefits avoiding the benefit trap. The benefit trap needs to be addressed since it may act as a deterrent to take employment for persons with disabilities, who may lose their disability benefits and may be led to in-work poverty.

Data collection is essential to understand the employment participation of persons with disabilities and remains a challenge to collect data disaggregated per type of disability, sex, and age. Thus, applicants are encouraged to ensure harmonised data collection by using Eurostat standards and existing international sets of questions in their areas of research. Applicants are encouraged to involve persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, stakeholders, policymakers and public authorities, social services, citizens and civil society organisations, end-users and service providers.

Projects are also encouraged to explore potential complementarities with projects funded under the Cluster 2 topic HORIZON-CL2-2025-01-TRANSFO-9: “Good practices for increased autonomy of persons with disabilities, including physical, mental, intellectual and sensory disabilities” and Cluster 1 topic HORIZON-HLTH-2025-03-STAYHLTH-01-two-stage: “Improving the quality of life of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families”.

### HORIZON-CL2-2027-01-TRANSFO-08: Scaling and deploying innovations in migration management

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU contribution per project* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of between EUR 3.00 and 3.75 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 15.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Innovation Actions |
| *Eligibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex B. The following exceptions apply:<br>The Joint Research Centre (JRC) may participate as member of the consortium selected for funding as a beneficiary with zero funding, or as an associated partner. The JRC will not participate in the preparation and submission of the proposal - see General Annex B. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5.<br>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) [208]. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Enhanced impact of EU-funded migration research by identifying and scaling up promising innovations, methodologies, and tools from relevant Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe projects.
- A policy innovation ecosystem: Foster collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to adapt, scale, and deploy validated models, ensuring their scalability, sustainability, and practical application in diverse EU, national and local contexts.

Scope: Despite significant EU investment in migration research, many innovative solutions to gain insights and foresight remain underutilized in policymaking and practice. This topic aims to bridge that gap by systematically identifying, assessing, and facilitating the adoption of promising approaches developed in past EU-funded migration related projects to ensure a better fungibility between knowledge-oriented activities on past or future trends of migrations and policy making.

Proposals should map and analyse research outputs, methodologies, and innovations from relevant Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe migration projects, selecting those with high

[208] 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

potential for policy uptake, operational implementation, market deployment and scaling. Proposals should consider ways to validate, adapt, and scale up these solutions across different governance levels (EU, national, local) and migration-related domains implementing high ethical standards and ensuring fundamental rights and privacy of all individuals affected. Applicants are encouraged to engage key stakeholders - including policymakers, migration practitioners, researchers (including from SSH disciplines), the private sector; groups or individuals that represent the interests of refugees and migrants and the civil society - to ensure that identified innovations align with real-world needs and implementation pathways and taking into account the political, legal, and cultural specificities of each Member State that influence implementation, while ensuring the solutions are transferable across contexts. Proposals are encouraged to take into consideration the assessment of the societal and political impacts as well as recommendations of previously funded Horizon research projects on migration. To that end, proposals are encouraged to carry out a mapping exercise.

Activities may include pilots, policy labs, co-creation processes, or other mechanisms to enhance the transferability of research outcomes into policies and operational frameworks.

A core element of the action will be fostering a structured dialogue between the research community and decision-makers to ensure continuous knowledge transfer and innovation mainstreaming. The initiative should contribute to a more dynamic, responsive and anticipatory EU migration ecosystem in the intersection of policy and research, in line with the objectives of the EU Pact on Asylum and Migration and other relevant policy frameworks.

Proposals may incorporate a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach in their research if relevant, by collecting data based for example on age, ability, ethnic and racial background, sex, socioeconomic status, and religion or belief to ensure that identified migration-related innovations align with real-world needs of people in migratory situation.

Proposals should delineate the plans for further applications of the knowledge, solutions and findings generated by their research at national and EU level. Knowledge and findings may be used with EU co-financing of instruments such as the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and/or subsequent funding instruments.

Proposals may envisage JRC participation, particularly to support the assessment of relevance, scalability and uptake of innovative solutions in migration management. The JRC could contribute with its knowledge of EU's migration systems, foresight, and capacity to bridge research and policymaking.

**HORIZON-CL2-2027-02-TRANSFO-09-two-stage: Improving socio-economic outcomes for persons with dementia and informal caregivers**

| **Call: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - 2027 - Two-stage** | |
|---|---|
| **Specific conditions** | |
| *Expected EU* | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR |

| | |
|---|---|
| *contribution per project* | 3.20 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts. |
| *Indicative budget* | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 16.00 million. |
| *Type of Action* | Research and Innovation Actions |
| *Admissibility conditions* | The conditions are described in General Annex A. The following exceptions apply:<br>Applicants submitting a proposal for a blind evaluation (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). |
| *Procedure* | The procedure is described in General Annex F. The following exceptions apply:<br>The first-stage proposals of this topic will be evaluated blindly. |
| *Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements* | The rules are described in General Annex G. The following exceptions apply:<br>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) [209].<br>The granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results, as set out in the specific provision of Annex 5. |

Expected Outcome: Projects should contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Persons with dementia experience improved social, mental and socio-economic outcomes through the development and implementation of person-centred interventions that enhance autonomy, inclusion, and quality of life.
- Informal caregivers benefit from reduced emotional, financial, and physical burden thanks to evidence-based support measures, policies, and services that improve their well-being and economic resilience.

[209] 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

- Support networks, long-term care and healthcare systems provide more integrated and accessible care for people with dementia and their caregivers through strengthened coordination between healthcare providers, long-term care and social services, and community organisations.

- Researchers (including from SSH disciplines) and policymakers have access to improved, gender-sensitive data on dementia care to inform policies (in particular national strategies and EU aging policy), optimise resource allocation, and enhance the effectiveness of care models.

Scope: Dementia is a progressive neurological disease. The number of people with dementia will double by 2050 in the European Union, from 10 million currently. As people with dementia lose their ability to care for themselves, care is often provided by informal caregivers, which mostly include family members, and more specifically women. In fact, 71% of the estimated time devoted to unpaid care for people with dementia is devoted by women. Women, especially those in vulnerable situations such as those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, often face additional pressures in managing caregiving responsibilities, which may exacerbate pre-existing inequalities. Furthermore, the provision of informal care has a negative impact on the economic and social life of the caregiver, as the time spent on the person with dementia is time not spent in employment or with other friends and family. Additionally, informal care is unpaid and has been estimated to have negative financial consequences for the caregivers themselves and the society as a whole. Studies have also shown that people with dementia and their informal caregivers have higher rates of depression than the general population.

While there is a lot of attention for clinical research, there is far less attention for the aspects surrounding the economic and social life, financial stability and the mental health of persons with dementia and informal caregivers. Many innovative solutions have been proposed, but few have been implemented on a wide scale. Social public policies with different design and funding that take into account the substitution and complementarities between formal and informal caregivers have been implemented to reduce the burden of the informal caregivers. What is needed, are systemic interventions focussed on improving these aspects for patients and informal caregivers and addressing the gendered nature of caregiving.

Priority should be given to scaling up and contextualising interventions that have already shown promise or effectiveness at smaller scale, rather than developing entirely new or untested solutions. Applicants should provide a robust methodological framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the interventions. Proposals should also assess the economic feasibility and sustainability of the interventions, including cost-effectiveness and potential integration into existing health and social care systems or policy frameworks. Proposals can focus on groups in vulnerable situations (e.g. migrants, lower socio-economic populations, people with disabilities) for gender-responsive and inclusive interventions. Social inequality analyses are therefore also recommended. Community based models (e.g. dementia-friendly cities, peer-support groups) can be included, as well as analyses of the quality of residence of

people with dementia. Proposals are encouraged to include technology and digital tools in the scope of their work.

Considering the already high burden of dementia, interventions should be implemented in at least four Member States or Associated Countries. Considering the focus, it is of the upmost importance that informal caregivers are involved in the research throughout (in the design and implementation) to ensure that interventions are tailored to the real needs of caregivers and the individuals they care for.

Proposals should outline clear, evidence-based strategies for tailoring, deploying, and assessing these interventions at individual, family, community, and societal levels, while addressing the specific needs of different caregiver demographics.

# OTHER ACTIONS not subject to calls for proposals

## Grants to identified beneficiaries

### 1. Presidency event (Lithuania): Re-thinking EU's competitiveness: How do cultural and creative industries contribute?

**Expected Outcome:**

The project is expected to contribute to all the following expected outcomes:

- Policymakers, industry leaders, academics and practitioners are aware of effective policy approaches to boost the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) as drivers of prosperity and competitiveness and are motivated to put them in practice.
- Cross-sectorial dialogue has contributed to deeper shared insights on the key challenges, opportunities and best practice in boosting the CCIs.
- The understanding and consensus on the role and measuring of the socio-economic impact of CCIs in fostering the competitiveness of Europe as well as of digitalisation challenges and opportunities is enhanced.
- The collaboration between public and private stakeholders to foster innovation and technological adoption in CCIs is strengthened.
- A widely supported declaration summarizes the important conclusions and contributes to a common momentum across the EU.

**Expected Impact:**

The proposal should set out a credible pathway to contributing to the following impact of the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan:

- The full potential of cultural heritage, arts and cultural and creative industries and sectors as drivers of both sustainable innovation and a European sense of belonging is realised through a continuous engagement with society, citizens and economic sectors.

**Scope**:

The conference should gather experts from the EU Member States including representatives from cultural institutions, creative entrepreneurs, researchers, technology developers and policymakers. It should cover policy frameworks, innovation case studies, technological trends, and cross-sectoral impacts. The event should aim to catalyse actionable insights and foster a shared vision for the future of CCIs in Europe.

This grant will be awarded without a call for proposals according to Article 198(e) of the Financial Regulation and Article 20 of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme and Rules for Participation.

**Procedure**: The evaluation committee will be composed fully by representatives of EU institutions.

Legal entities:

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, legal entity (budgetary institution) code188683671, J. Basanavičiaus str. 5, LT-01118, Vilnius, E-mail: info@lrkm.lt.

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: First semester 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 0.30 million from the 2027 budget

**2. Presidency event (Greece): Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Futures**

**Expected Outcome:**

The project is expected to contribute to all the following expected outcomes:

**Culture and Tourism**

- Promotion of responsible and sustainable tourism that contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage and local identity
- Strategies for managing overtourism and mitigating its social, environmental, and cultural impacts
- Models for responsible planning and site management, including through the employment of AI and other advanced technologies, ensuring cultural heritage is safeguarded in harmony with natural landscapes and local ecosystems
- Participatory approaches that involve local communities and multiple stakeholders in the sustainable management of heritage and tourism
- Development of sustainable tourism practices aligned with the principles of circular economy, fostering cross-cultural appreciation of cultural sites while preserving historical integrity and cultural authenticity

**Culture and Climate**

- Present effective measures to mitigate extreme climate impacts on cultural heritage, including preventive strategies, adaptive reuse, and resilience planning.
- Propose innovative solutions for measuring and reducing the carbon footprint of the cultural and creative sectors.
- Introduce tools and methodologies to monitor the contribution of cultural heritage to sustainable economic growth, climate neutrality, and social well-being.
- Strengthen the adaptive capacity of the cultural heritage sector in response to climate change and other disasters.
- Highlight how tangible and intangible cultural heritage represent a resource for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

**Expected Impact:**

The proposal should set out a credible pathway to contributing to the following impact of the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan:

- The full potential of cultural heritage, arts and cultural and creative industries and sectors as drivers of both sustainable innovation and a European sense of belonging is realised through a continuous engagement with society, citizens and economic sectors.

**Scope**:

The event should tackle the dual challenge of safeguarding cultural heritage while advancing sustainable development and climate adaptability. It should explore the contribution of cultural heritage to the European Green Deal, the digital and social transitions, and sustainable tourism, with a particular emphasis on responsible planning, community-driven approaches, and the circular economy. The event should convene policymakers, researchers, cultural practitioners, tourism professionals, and local communities to share best practices, co-create innovative solutions, and foster inclusive, participatory management models that balance cultural, environmental, and economic objectives. Special focus should be given to addressing the impacts of climate change and overtourism on cultural sites - while ensuring that cultural heritage remains a dynamic, inclusive, and accessible resource for future generations.

This grant will be awarded without a call for proposals according to Article 198(e) of the Financial Regulation and Article 20 of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme and Rules for Participation.

**Procedure**: The evaluation committee will be composed fully by representatives of EU institutions.

Legal entities:

GENIKI GRAMMATIA EREVNAS KAI KAINOTOMIAS (GSRI), GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION, Mesogeion Avenue 14-18, Athens 115 10, Greece

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: Second semester 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 0.30 million from the 2027 budget

**Public procurements**

**1. Studies, conferences, events and outreach activities**

A number of specific contracts will be signed under existing framework contracts in order to: (i) support the dissemination and exploitation of project results; (ii) contribute to the definition of future challenge priorities; (iii) undertake citizen surveys such as Eurobarometers, (iv) carry out specific evaluations of programme parts; and (v) organise conferences, events and outreach activities. Should existing framework contracts prove unsuitable or insufficient to support the abovementioned activities, one or more calls for tender may be launched as appropriate.

Subject matter of the contracts envisaged: studies, technical assistance, conferences, events and outreach activities within the scope of Cluster 2 ‘Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society’.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 1.00 million from the 2026 budget

**2. Studies, conferences, events and outreach activities**

A number of specific contracts will be signed under existing framework contracts in order to: (i) support the dissemination and exploitation of project results; (ii) contribute to the definition of future challenge priorities; (iii) undertake citizen surveys such as Eurobarometers, (iv) carry out specific evaluations of programme parts; and (v) organise conferences, events and outreach activities. Should existing framework contracts prove

unsuitable or insufficient to support the abovementioned activities, one or more calls for tender may be launched as appropriate.

Subject matter of the contracts envisaged: studies, technical assistance, conferences, events and outreach activities within the scope of Cluster 2 'Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society'.

Form of Funding: Procurement

Type of Action: Public procurement

Indicative timetable: 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 1.00 million from the 2027 budget

**Other budget implementation instruments**

**1. Expertise for the design, implementation and evaluation of Cluster 2, Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society**

This action will support the provision of independent expertise for advising and assisting the Commission services with the design, implementation and evaluation of EU research and innovation policies in the thematic areas covered by Cluster 2. Individual experts will work in the following policy and thematic areas:

- Democracy and governance
- Cultural heritage, cultural and creative sectors and industries
- Social and economic transformations
- Migration, refugee and asylum policies
- Social sciences and humanities, including their integration in Horizon Europe programme parts
- Inter-, multi- and transdisciplinarity; impact assessment

The tasks of individual experts would include:

Portfolio analysis of projects funded under Horizon Europe or previous European research and innovation programmes; analysis of the state-of-the-art at European and international level; participation in international symposia organised by Commission services, including the drafting of reports; assistance for setting-up a research and innovation strategy for selected domains; policy recommendations and options assisting Commission services in elaborating evidence-based and scientifically sound policy proposals.

The advice provided by each individual expert will focus on specific areas and policy relevant projects' results and how results and outcome could be used for policymaking and policy

follow-up initiatives. These activities will not duplicate past or ongoing Commission work and will be essential to enable Commission services to support the policymaking process in the above-mentioned policy areas.

The individual experts' tasks will include attending bilateral meetings with Commission services, presentations at workshops and symposia, remote drafting and preparatory work. The experts will be highly qualified and specialised and will be selected on the basis of their knowledge and experience.

A special allowance of EUR 450/day will be paid to the experts appointed in their personal capacity who act independently and in the public interest.

Form of Funding: Other budget implementation instruments

Type of Action: Expert contract action

Indicative timetable: 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 0.20 million from the 2026 budget

**2. External expertise - Monitors**

This action will support the use of appointed independent experts for the monitoring of running actions (grant agreement, grant decision, public procurement actions, financial instruments) funded under Horizon Europe and previous Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation and where appropriate include ethics checks, as well as compliance checks regarding the Gender Equality Plan eligibility criterion.

Form of Funding: Other budget implementation instruments

Type of Action: Expert contract action

Indicative timetable: 2026

Indicative budget: EUR 0.60 million from the 2026 budget

**3. Expertise for the design, implementation and evaluation of Cluster 2, Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society**

This action will support the use of independent expertise for advising and assisting the Commission services with the design, implementation and evaluation of EU research and innovation policies in the thematic areas covered by Cluster 2. Individual experts will work in the following policy and thematic areas:

- Democracy and governance
- Cultural heritage, cultural and creative sectors and industries

- Social and economic transformations
- Migration, refugee and asylum policies
- Social sciences and humanities, including their integration in Horizon Europe programme parts
- Inter-, multi- and transdisciplinarity; impact assessment

The tasks of individual experts would include:

Portfolio analysis of projects funded under Horizon Europe or previous European research and innovation programmes; analysis of the state-of-the-art at European and international level; participation in international symposia organised by Commission services, including the drafting of reports; assistance for setting-up a research and innovation strategy for selected domains; policy recommendations and options assisting Commission services in elaborating evidence-based and scientifically sound policy proposals.

The advice provided by each individual expert will focus on specific areas and policy relevant projects' results and how results and outcome could be used for policymaking and policy follow-up initiatives. These activities will not duplicate past or ongoing Commission work and will be essential to enable Commission services to support the policymaking process in the above-mentioned policy areas.

The individual experts' tasks will include attending bilateral meetings with Commission services, presentations at workshops and symposia, remote drafting and preparatory work. The experts will be highly qualified and specialised, and will be selected on the basis of their knowledge and experience.

A special allowance of EUR 450/day will be paid to the experts appointed in their personal capacity who act independently and in the public interest.

Form of Funding: Other budget implementation instruments

Type of Action: Expert contract action

Indicative timetable: 2027

Indicative budget: EUR 0.20 million from the 2027 budget

**4. External expertise - Monitors**

This action will support the use of appointed independent experts for the monitoring of running actions (grant agreement, grant decision, public procurement actions, financial instruments) funded under Horizon Europe and previous Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation and where appropriate include ethics checks, as well as compliance checks regarding the Gender Equality Plan eligibility criterion.

Form of Funding: Other budget implementation instruments

Type of Action: Expert contract action

Indicative budget: EUR 0.60 million from the 2027 budget

## Budget[210] [211]

| | Budget line(s) | 2026 Budget (EUR million) | 2027 Budget (EUR million) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Calls** | | | |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-01 | | 298.50 | |
| | *from 01.020220* | *298.50* | |
| HORIZON-CL2-2026-02 | | 60.00 | |
| | *from 01.020220* | *60.00* | |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-01 | | | 277.00 |
| | *from 01.020220* | | *277.00* |
| HORIZON-CL2-2027-02-TWO-STAGE | | | 58.00 |
| | *from 01.020220* | | *58.00* |
| **Other actions** | | | |
| Grant awarded without a call for proposals according to Financial Regulation Article 198(e) | | | 0.60 |
| | *from 01.020220* | | *0.60* |
| Public procurement | | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| | *from 01.020220* | *1.00* | *1.00* |
| Expert contract action | | 0.80 | 0.80 |

[210] 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 2026 and 2027.

[211] The contribution from Cluster 2 for year 2026 is EUR 16.07 million for the Missions work programme part and EUR 2.96 million for the New European Bauhaus Facility work programme part.
The contribution from Cluster 2 for year 2027 is EUR 22.78 million for the Missions work programme part and EUR 4.06 million for the New European Bauhaus Facility work programme part.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *from 01.020220* | *0.80* | *0.80* |
| **Estimated total budget** | | 360.30 | 337.40 |