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Acronym: BIOLAWEB

Boosting Institute of Chemistry,

Technology and Metallurgy in

Water Biomonitoring

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Support Actions (HORIZON - CSA)

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Duration: 36 months



Info day, UB-ICTM, Belgrade, August 2025

The WIDERA Draft Work Programme 2026–2027

Vladan Ćosović, Head of ICPO UB-ICTM





From EU priorities to work programme destinations



Source: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/temp-form/af/af_he-ria-ia_en.pdf





Implementing Horizon Europe





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The three key strategic orientations in Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2025-2027

THE GREEN TRANSITION

Horizon Europe R&I activities must support Europe to become the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and to tackle biodiversity loss and pollution. At least 35% of Horizon Europe's resources are committed to be spent on climate action and 10% for 2025-2027 on biodiversity action.

THE DIGITAL TRANSITION

Research to support the digital transition is key to Europe's competitiveness and open strategic autonomy, and to setting human-centred standards. It is also key to achieving the green transition. In 2021-2027, it is agreed to invest at least EUR 13 billion from Horizon Europe in core digital technologies.

A MORE RESILIENT, COMPETITIVE, INCLUSIVE AND DEMOCRATIC EUROPE

Europe's social rights and democratic values and principles need a strong foundation so they can be promoted globally. Horizon Europe research activities will help provide this foundation. This includes research on civil security, on a fair and environmentally friendly economic model, on health and wellbeing and on democratic participation.



CLUSTER 6

Food, Bioeconomy, Natural

Resources, Agriculture & Environment

of and adaptation to

climate change in areas

and sectors covered by

on a path to recovery,

and protecting and

restoring ecosystems and

and forests, as well

as clean air, fresh and

marine water, whilst

ensuring water resilience

and the transition to a

clean, competitive and

circular economy and

sustainable bioeconomy

and nutrition security

by making agriculture.

fisheries, aquaculture

and food systems

sustainable, resilient,

inclusive and within

planetary boundaries

Cluster 6

their services



The strategic plan for the period 2025-2027 sets out 3 key strategic orientations and 6 clusters, based on which 32 expected impacts have been defined.









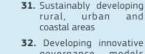


in global space-based

infrastructures, services,

applications, and data

20. Digital and industrial



governance models and tools enabling sustainability and resilience

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systems and services

for climate-neutral,

smart, inclusive, and safe

mobility



STRATEGIC PLAN

VORK PROGRAMME

Set of strategic objectives within the EC policy priorities where R&I investments are expected to make a difference

IMPACT AREAS

Group of expected impacts highlighting the most important

transformation to be fostered through R&I

EXPECTED IMPACTS = DESTINATIONS Wider long term effects on society (including the environment), the economy and science described under a given destination and enabled by the outcomes of R&I investments

EXPECTED OUTCOMES = TOPICS

Expected effects of the projects supported under a given topic, fostered by the dissemination and exploitation measures. This may include the uptake, diffusion, deployment, and/or use of the project results by target groups.

PROJECT RESULTS

What is generated during the project implementation e.g. know-how, innovative solutions, algorithms, proof of feasibility, new business models, policy recommendations, prototypes, demonstrators, datasets, trained researchers, new infrastructures, networks, etc.

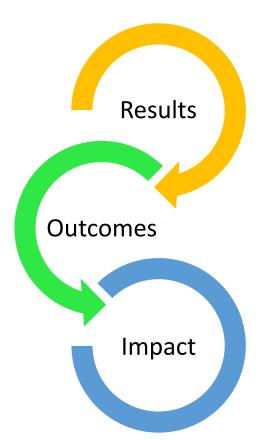
PROJECT PROPOSALS

Application process (researchers





The project's pathways towards impact



Results – These would be immediate, short-term outputs of the project.

Examples include: know-how, innovative solutions, algorithms, proof of feasibility, new business models, policy recommendations, guidelines, demonstrators, datasets and databases, trained researchers, new infrastructures, networks, etc. The project's results must correspond to its objectives.

Outcomes – These are expected effects, over medium-term, of projects supported under a given topic.

The results of a project should contribute to these outcomes fostered, in particular, by the dissemination, communication and exploitation measures. The project's outcomes should directly correspond to the expected outcomes set in the topic description.

Impacts – These are wider, long-term effects on society (environment included), the economy and science, enabled by the outcomes of R&I investments.

They generally occur sometime after the end of the project. Impacts should refer to the specific contribution of the project to the Work Programme's expected impacts described in the Destination under which the chosen topic is situated.





Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026-2027

"Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area" (WIDERA)

HORIZON EUROPE **EURATOM** SPECIFIC SPECIFIC PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTING HORIZON EUROPE & EIT* PROGRAMME: Exclusive focus on civil applications **EUROPEAN** Pillar I Pillar II Pillar III DEFENCE Fusion **EXCELLENT SCIENCE GLOBAL CHALLENGES &** INNOVATIVE EUROPE FUND **EUROPEAN INDUSTRIAL** Exclusive focus on COMPETITIVENESS defence research **European Research Council** Health **European Innovation** & development · Culture, Creativity & Council Inclusive Society Marie Skłodowska-Curie Civil Security for Society European innovation Digital, Industry & Space Fission ecosystems Research Research Infrastructures · Climate, Energy & Mobility actions Food, Bioeconomy, Natural European Institute of Resources, Agriculture & Innovation & Technology* Environment Joint Research Centre Joint Development Research actions Center WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND STRENGTHENING THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA Widening participation & spreading excellence Reforming & Enhancing the European R&I system



* The European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) is not part of the Specific Programme

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Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area (WIDERA)

Destinations:



Communication on a New ERA for Research and Innovation (2020)

Communication on the implementation of the ERA (2024)

The Pact for Research and Innovation in EU (Pact for R&I, 2021)



Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence

- Teaming, Twinning, ERA Chairs,
- European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST)
- Boosting National Contact Points' (NCPs) activities, preproposal checks and advice
- Brain circulation
- Excellence initiatives:
- Possibility for entities from widening countries tojoin already selected collaborative R&I actions
- Recognition of participation
- Matchmaking services

Reforming and enhancing the EU R&I system

- Strengthening the evidence base for R&I policy
- Foresight
- Support for policy makers to the ERA development
- Support to national R&I policy reform, including Policy Support Facility
- · Attractive researcher careers and links with higher education
- Open science, citizen science and science communication
- Gender equality
- Ethics and integrity
- Support to international cooperation
- Scientific input to other policies
- Support to the Programme implementation
- Support for National Contact Points
- Support to dissemination & exploitation



Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area (WIDERA)



The calls and actions

The calls and other actions in the 2026-2027 WIDERA work programme are designed to contribute toward the implementation of the four priority areas of the Pact for R&I:

Priority I:

Deepening a truly functioning internal market for knowledge;

Priority II:

Taking up together the green transition and digital transformation and other challenges with impact on society, and increasing society's participation in the ERA;

Priority III:

Enhancing access to R&I excellence across the Union and enhancing interconnections between innovation ecosystems across the Union;

Priority IV:

Advancing concerted R&I investments and reforms.







Destination:

WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND SPREADING EXCELLENCE





Expected impact

- 1. Increased science and innovation capacities for all actors in the R&I system in widening countries;
- 2. Structural changes leading to modernised and more competitive R&I systems with increased attractiveness and retention of research talents;
- 3. Mobilisation of national and European resources for strategic investments;
- 4. Higher participation in Horizon Europe and more leadership roles;
- 5. Stronger linkages between academia and business and improved career permeability;
- 6. Greater involvement of regional actors in the R&I process;
- 7. Excellent talents attracted to institutions including research infrastructures;
- 8. Balanced circulation of R&I talents including intersectoral mobility, and improved gender balance;
- 9. Improved linkages and increased mobility between academic and business, notably by overcoming sectoral barriers;
- 10. Free circulation of knowledge and expertise in line with ERA priorities.





Teaming Synergies

- The call topic aims at fostering collaboration among existing and future Teaming Centres of Excellence in view of supporting their efforts towards sustanability and increased impact at regional, national and European level.
- Participation as coordinators to the call is limited to legal entities established in Widening countries
- Complementary members of the consortium can provide specific expertise on e.g. communication, training, knowledge valorisation and IPR issues.
- The consortium has to demonstrate a geographical coverage of its activities that is able to reach all past, existing and future Teaming CoEs that wish to participate in the activities and benefit from the services offered by the consortium.
- The duration of this action should be 5 years.
- Budget: 7 mil EUR, about 7 mil EUR per project (1 project expected to be funded)
- Deadline: 24 Sep 2026





Teaming Synergies

- Projects are expected to contribute to all the following outcomes:
- The action is expected to include at least the following activities:
 - O Strategic Clustering for thematic collaboration (Conducting an in-depth analysis of CoE' capacities, research domains, innovation potential, and their role in national and regional quadruple helixes)
 - Pilot Implementation of thematic clusters (Establish clusters and support the coordinated implementation of activities)
 - Capacity building for knowledge valorisation (Offering specialised training, peer learning, expert coaching, and workshops to improve CoE' expertise in knowledge valorisation)
 - Networking and matchmaking (Organising dedicated matchmaking events, policy forums, and startup pitching events)
 - Teaming online platform (Developing a digital networking platform to improve cooperation among CoE)
 - Teaming conference (Establish the conference as an internationally recognized event)
 - Entrepreneurship and tech transfer support (Entrepreneurship and tech transfer support)





Twinning

- Coordinators must be legal entities established in Widening countries (countries with lower R&I performance).
- At least two leading research institutions in other EU or Associated States must be involved in consortium.
- Objective is to enhance networking between research institutions in Widening countries and top-class leading counterparts in other EU/Associated countries to transfer knowledge and best practices.
- Focus on building excellence through collaborative research and innovation capacity strengthening.
- Budget: 238 mil EUR, between 0.8 and 1.5 mil EUR per project in the form of a lump sum (around 200 projects expected to be funded)
- The duration of the Twinning project should be up to 3 years.
- Deadline: 09 Apr 2026





Twinning

• Twinning actions intend to raise the research profile of the institution from the Widening country and its staff, including strengthening the research management capacity.

Projects are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Improved research excellence and capacities in Widening countries closing the research and innovation gap within the European Union;
- Enhanced strategic collaboration between the research institutions or higher education establishments of the Widening countries and at least two internationally-leading research institution or higher education establishments at European Union level;
- Raised reputation, research profile and attractiveness of the coordinating institution, and improved research profile
 of its staff;
- o Strengthened research management capacities of the coordinating institution,
- Development of novel approaches in R&I collaboration with increased mobility (inwards and outwards) of researchers.





Twinning

- Twinning proposals should clearly outline the strategy for stepping up and stimulating scientific excellence and innovation capacity in a defined area of research and innovation
- The strategy should be supported by a comprehensive set of activities such as, but not limited to short term staff exchanges; expert visits and short term on-site or virtual trainings; workshops; conference attendance; organisation of joint summer schools; dissemination and outreach activities.
- A research / innovation component not exceeding 30% of the total Horizon Europe grant (including the indirect costs) At least 50% of the budget for this component should be allocated to the coordinator.

EXAMPLES OF FUNDED TWINNING PROJECTS

PFAStwin - Twinning to address the PFAS challenge in Serbia

STEPUPIORS - <u>Twinning for a european consortium of rectal cancer research institutions through stepping up</u> scientific, technological and innovation excellence of iors

BIOLAWEB - Boosting Institute of Chemistry, Technology and Metallurgy in Water Biomonitoring





Excellence Hubs

- Minimum requirement: Two placed based innovation ecosystems from two different countries, all
 components of quadruple helix (research institution, business, regional/local government, societal actor)
 need to be represented
- Quadruple helix ecosystems (four different categories of actors i.e. a) academic institutions (universities and/or non-university research centres or labs), b) business entities, c) public authorities or authorised agencies operating at regional or local level and d) societal actors (e.g. civil society organisations, citizens, end users, media, cultural actors etc.).
- Ecosystems or individual partners from outside the Widening countries may participate in the consortium as long as they prove added value
- Total indicative budget for the topic: 100 mil EUR, about 1.5-4.5 mil EUR per project (funding rate is 70 % of the eligible costs, and about 30 projects expected to be funded)
- The expected duration of the project is up to 4 years
- Deadline: 04 Mar 2027





Excellence Hubs

- Focus on innovation in Widening countries by creating better linkages between academia, business, government and society
- Networks of place-based innovation ecosystems in Widening countries
- Need to upscale from regional context to European and International
- Relevance of the chosen scientific domain by its alignment with regional (in particular RIS3),
 national and/or European R&I strategies and policy priorities
- Core components (activities) of the project:
 - Cross-border joint R&I strategy aligned with strategic priorities
 - Joint R&I project consolidating academia business linkages
 - Action and investment plan for implementation of the strategy
 - Conceptual design and pre-planning for pilots and demonstrators
 - Accompanying measures: e.g. to raise visibility, citizen engagement, technology transfer, entrepreneurship training, staff exchange, mutual learning





Excellence Hubs

- Blue Culture Technology Excellence Hubs in EU Widening Member States
 - o Focusing on Blue Culture Technologies (BCT) supporting the Underwater (UW) Cultural Heritage (CH) scientific research and tourism valorization. 15 partners from Greece, Malta and Bulgaria
- Excellence hub in green technologies: Introducing innovation ecosystems in the Mediterranean food value chain
 - o Innovation ecosystems focusing on the production of nutritious food products and the valorization of food industrial side-streams. Collaboration between 14 project partners from Greece, Malta and France
- MetaCities Excellence Hub in South-Eastern Europe
 - Three place-based innovation ecosystems in Cyprus, Greece and Bulgaria partner together to create an Excellence Hub for Future Cities and Regions in Southeast Europe (SEE). 20 project partners
- <u>Strengthening the capacity for excellence of Slovenian and Croatian innovation ecosystems to support the digital and green transitions of maritime regions</u>
 - 17 partners from Slovenia, Croatia and Belgium
- <u>Promoting Innovation Excellence in Transformation of Coal Regions to Climate-Neutral, Thriving Economies</u>
 - 16 partners from Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and Germany





Hop on Facility

- A consortium funded under Pillar 2 or the EIC Pathfinder actions with a valid grant agreement but with no partner from a Widening country
- The proposal must be submitted by the coordinator of the consortium
- The proposal should include a detailed description of the profile of the new partner and its role in the existing project
- The budget increase must be exclusively for the benefit of the new partner + additional coordination fee
 of up to 10% of the increased budget
- Concrete tasks to be carried out either as a new work package or contributions to existing WPs.
- Duration of the proposed "new" activities cannot be extended after the end of the original GA.
- List of funded projects under Horizon Europe pillar 2 and the EIC Pathfinder here
- Budget: 30 mil EUR, between 100k and 600k EUR per project. Around 60 projects expected to be funded
- Deadline: 24 Sep 2026





Research Management Facility

- Applications must be submitted by a consortium including at least three independent legal entities, each
 established in a different Member State or Associated Country and two of which are established in a
 Member State.
- This action aims at **creating a research management facility to provide support services** including trainings to research institutions and their staff in widening countries that want to establish or upgrade existing capacities and competencies in research management.
- The project should establish a facility inviting research performing organisations from Widening countries to support them in assessing their needs for excellent research management capacities, and develop implementation plans to improve their institutional capacity.
- The facility may also support successful applicants of ERA Research Manager actions in identifying leading research manager internationally.
- Budget: 7 mil EUR, about 7 mil EUR per project (1 project expected to be funded)
- Deadline: 24 Sep 2026





ERA Fellowships

- Mono-beneficiary action to support post-doctoral research and careers that builds on the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2026/27 calls
- Host organisations located in Widening Countries
- Target group: postdoctoral researchers (PI: require PhD at the call deadline) + up to 8 years research experience, with exceptions (career breaks, work outside Europe)
- Applicants must submit their proposal to the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships call
- Focus on i3 (international, inter-sectoral, interdisciplinary) exposure for research and transferable skills beyond academia
- Secondments worldwide up to 1/3 of the fellowship duration + optional additional placement of up to 6
 months in a non-academic European organization, at the end of the fellowship
- Bottom-up: all fields, including Euratom areas
- Budget: 8 mil EUR, about 50 project expected to be funded
- Deadline: 09 Sep 2026





EIC Pre-accelerator – Widening

2027.

- Applications may only be submitted by one legal entity (mono-beneficiary) that is a small and medium enterprise (SME) established in a Horizon Europe Widening country.
- The call is designed to enable **promising deep-tech startups** to develop further their innovations (from TRL 4 to TRL 5/6), attract the investment amounts needed for scale up in a shorter timeframe and successfully apply and attract funding from EIC Accelerator or other sources.
- The applicants are expected to demonstrate in their application that they:
 - have developed technology validated in the lab (at least TRL 4);
 - o possess the necessary Intellectual Property Rights to ensure freedom to operate and adequate protection of the idea;
 - o have a clear vision on the intended pathway and route to market. This includes specific milestones together with concrete and verifiable KPIs to assess progress towards the market.
- Budget: 35 mil EUR, between 300k and 500k EUR per project in the form of a lump sum, the support is max 70% funding of the eligible costs, other 30% to be covered by the beneficiary through its own resources (around 90 projects will be funded)
- Deadline: 18 Nov 2027



ERA CHAIRS

2027.

- Mono-beneficiary host organisation from widening country
- ERA Chair holders excellent researchers and/or innovators in the chosen field of research should
 establish a fully integrated research teams to become game changers at institutional level, develop new
 research strands and raise level of excellence
- New local and international research and innovation partnerships, institutional and/or R&I system changes (various levels), increased research intensity (i.e., new scientific publications directly linked to the project's area, protected IPR) and best research management practices
- Deadline: 14 Sep 2027
- Budget: 170 mil EUR, between 1.5 and 2.5 mil EUR per project (around 80 projects will be funded),
 including research costs up to 20%
- Project duration up to 5 years
- Example of the ERA Chairs project <u>STRENTEX</u> (FTN UNS)



ERA Research Managers

2027.

- Mono-beneficiary host organisation from widening country
- ERA Research Managers excellent research managers with international experience should establish/expand a fully integrated research management team to become game changers at institutional level, implement best research management practices to significantly improve overall performance in R&I
- Improving the institution's global visibility and success in securing competitive funding, institutional and/or R&I system changes (various levels), increased research intensity (i.e., publications, IPR protection, knowledge valorisation), and improved research management in alignment with ERA priorities
- Project duration up to 5 years
- Budget: 60 mil EUR, between 1.5 and 2.5 mil EUR per project (around 30 projects expected to be funded)
- Deadline: 14 Sep 2027







STRENGTHENING THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA BY REFORMING AND ENHANCING THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION SYSTEM







Proposals under this destination should set out a credible pathway to one or several of the following expected impacts:

- Effective and sustainable structural institutional changes aligned with ERA priorities;
- Sustainable ecosystems established around ERA priorities through enhanced cooperation, coordination and alignment;
- Increased trust in science and alignment of R&I with society's needs;
- Strengthened evidence base for advancing the implementation of ERA;
- Enhanced adoption, harmonisation, and alignment of Open Science practices and FAIR management of digital research objects, both in Europe and globally;
- Increased reproducibility, trustworthiness and transparency of scientific research;
- A more open, equitable and inclusive research and innovation ecosystem;
- The research ethics and integrity ecosystem continually enhanced with robust methodologies that encourage benefit sharing and prevent ethics dumping;
- Systemic reform of research assessment through the recognition of the diverse outputs, practices, and activities which maximise the quality and impact of research;
- Improved research careers and mobility, based on the European framework for research careers, fostering knowledge flows and career interoperability across sectors and countries;
- Stronger translation of R&I results into society and economy;
- Enhanced gender equality and inclusiveness fostering the diversity and leading to more innovative, socially relevant, and economically impactful outcomes;
- Increased uptake, effectiveness and impact of environmentally sustainable research;
- More resilient and future-proof R&I policies and long-term strategies with effectively integrated strategic intelligence and strengthened foresight communities;
- Enhanced gender equality and inclusiveness fostering diversity and leading to more innovative, socially relevant, and economically impactful outcomes.



2026 and 2027 ERA calls: pillar structure

Pillar I: Institutional changes for ERA (CSA)

<u>Focus:</u> capacity building and support to foster adoption of ERA policies/practices within institutions.

Activity types: tools, resources, training, services, policy advice.

Policy areas:

- Equity in open science
- Inclusive gender equality
- Research assessment reform
- Research ethics and integrity
- Open access policies

Pillar II: Ecosystems for ERA (CSA)

Focus: building and reinforcing networks and partnerships to foster broad uptake of ERA policies/practices.

Activity types: exchange of knowledge and practice, networking and cooperative actions.

Policy areas:

- Research ethics and integrity
- Environmentally sustainable science
- Knowledge valorisation
- Open science
- Research careers

Science in ERA (CSA)

Focus: connecting R&I with citizens and other stakeholders.

Activity types: implementing and promoting participatory approaches, such as citizen engagement and citizen science.

Policy areas:

- Trust in science
- Knowledge valorisation
- Citizen and societal engagement

Pillar IV: New knowledge for ERA (RIA)

Focus: creating new knowledge that supports design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and practices.

Activity types: conducting analyses, developing and testing new methods and practices.

Policy areas:

- Open science
- Inclusive gender equality
- Research careers

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Enhancing the European R&I system 2026

- HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-01: Pillar I: Accelerating open access and research assessment reforms in ERA
 - Area 1: Supporting the transition of scholarly societies to non-profit open access publishing models
 - Area 2: Sustainable institutional reforms to improve research assessment systems
- HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-02: Pillar I: Building institutional capacities for ethical, equitable, open, and inclusive ERA
 - Area 1: Capacity booster for ethics and integrity: addressing digital transition and ensuring digital inclusion for all
 - Area 2: Mutual learning and mentoring for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of inclusive gender equality plans
 - Area 3: Address equity and inclusion in capacities for Open Science
 - Area 4: Improving quality, efficiency and equity in peer-review for scientific publishing
- HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-03: Pillar II: Strengthening ecosystems for open, ethical, and sustainable ERA
 - Area 1: Equitable, sustainable, and ethical research
 - Area 2: Global cooperation for the uptake of Open Science practices
 - Area 3: Environmentally sustainable science
- HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-04: Pillar II: Piloting innovative approaches to support academic startups and spinoffs





Enhancing the European R&I system 2026

- HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-05: Pillar III: Fostering citizen engagement for more responsible and democratic R&I in ERA
 - Area 1: Citizen science for enhancing democratic governance
 - Area 2: Guiding principles for inclusive engagement in R&I
- HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-06: Pillar III: European Citizens' Hackathon Championship
- HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-07: Pillar III: Science comes town 2028
- HORIZON-WIDERA-2026-07-ERA-08: Pillar IV: Advancing Knowledge for ERA
 - Area 1: Assessing reproducibility in research by direct replication of scientific findings
 - Area 2: Mapping and promoting the inclusive gender equality and policies in R&D intensive firms
 - Area 3: Advancing gender-responsive R&I through budgeting, expenditure tracking, and monitoring and evaluation of the integration of gender dimension in R&I content
 - Area 4: Assessing research careers in the private sector and trends of inter-sectoral research careers, along with their effects on the EU R&I ecosystem
 - Area 5: Mapping and assessing research careers and talent flows within global research networks





Enhancing the European R&I system 2027

- HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-ERA-01: Pillar I: Facilitate development of institutional open access policies through the retention of intellectual property rights
- HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-ERA-02: Pillar II: Talent ecosystems for attractive early research careers
- HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-ERA-03: Pillar III: Science comes to town 2029
- HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-ERA-04: Pillar III: Promoting public engagement in R&I and scientific literacy
 - Area 1: Youth, science and democracy
 - Area 2: Scaling-up of public engagement in science initiatives to the EU level



Thank you for your attention!