

# **OPEN HORIZONS**

## **Guidelines for applicants:**

## Open Call #1

Prepared by: SPLORO



Open Horizons GA no. 101193231



## OPENING: 11 of June 2025 CLOSING: 21 of August 2025 at 17:00\* CEST (Brussels time)

\*The deadline for submission is as stated in this Guidelines. Please note that the platform for submission's time depends on the user's configured zone and may or may not coincide with the correct time (this depends on the user, not the platform for submission). Any discrepancies in system time will not be grounds for deadline extension.

## Project Website: <a href="https://www.openhorizonsproject.eu/">https://www.openhorizonsproject.eu/</a>

## Apply: <u>https://bit.ly/OpenCall1Applicants</u>

#### Disclaimer

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Table 2: Open Horizons Acronyms

	ACRONYMS
EC	European Commission
FIF	Financial Identification Form
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
КРІ	Key Performance Indicators
oc	Open Call
PIC	Participant Identification Code
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
VAT	Value Added Tax
AI	Artificial Intelligence
юТ	Internet of things
DERs	Distributed Energy Resources
TSO	Transmission System Operator
DSO	Distribution System Operator
PVs	Photovoltaic Systems
IT	Information technology
ОТ	Operational Technology
EV	Electric Vehicle
ML	Machine Learning
DRM	Digital Rights Management
FMI	Functional Mock-up Interface
IP	Intellectual Property
NLP	Natural Language Processing
DC	Direct Current
AC	Alternating Current
MRP	Material Requirement Planning





## 1. Open Horizons project

Open Horizons, funded by the European Union through its Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme, connects leading corporations with high-potential, women-led digital and deep-tech startups through an open innovation process. Despite the sector's rapid growth, women entrepreneurs continue to face systemic barriers that limit their ability to scale. These challenges include restricted access to funding, scarce industrial partnerships, and difficulty validating their solutions in real-world settings. Many womenled digital and deep-tech startups struggle to secure their first corporate clients, a crucial step for establishing credibility and unlocking further investment opportunities. By facilitating direct collaboration, Open Horizons enables corporates to act as first customers, helping startups gain market traction while offering businesses early access to cutting-edge innovations.

The programme follows a structured, results-driven, two-phase approach. In the initial development phase, selected startups work on tailored solutions to corporate-defined challenges, refining their technology to align with real industry needs. This phase provides financial support, mentorship, and expert guidance to ensure feasibility and market readiness. The programme then moves into a five-month piloting phase, where startups execute the agreed-upon pilot project in collaboration with their corporate partner. Throughout this period, participants benefit from continuous mentorship, industry networking, and exposure to potential investors, strengthening their position in the market.

Open Horizons is a 26-month project which started on February 1st, 2025, and is designed to accelerate the growth of women-led deep-tech companies by facilitating collaboration and providing substantial financial backing. The project will provide €1.2 million in funding for startups.

By fostering corporate-startup collaboration, Open Horizons not only accelerates the growth of women-led businesses but also strengthens corporate open innovation

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strategies. This model allows businesses to integrate breakthrough technologies into their processes while supporting the next generation of female entrepreneurs. The initiative ultimately contributes to a more inclusive, diverse, and dynamic deep-tech ecosystem, ensuring that the talent and ingenuity of women entrepreneurs drive the future of innovation.

PEDAL, SPLORO, INNOVX, and MIGROS, together with associated corporates, will run this initiative, creating a unique framework where businesses and startups collaborate to foster open innovation, drive industry transformation, and promote gender diversity in deep-tech entrepreneurship.

## 1.1 Open Horizons Open Call 1 (OC#1) relevant dates

The purpose of Open Horizons Open Calls is to identify and select promising **women-led**, **digital and deep-tech startups in Europe**, **specifically at the early stages**, offering them a unique opportunity to participate in a tailored open innovation programme. Designed to upscale the capabilities of innovative startups, the programme provides structured pathways to access significant investment and growth opportunities. The overarching goal of Open Call #1 (OC#1) is to support the development and enhance the investment potential of these startups, helping them scale their solutions and create long-term impact within the deep-tech ecosystem.

- 1st Open Call launch: 11 June 2025
- Open Call support channel: <u>info@openhorizonsproject.eu</u>
- Deadline for submission: 21 August 2025, 17:00H\* CEST (Brussels time)
- Evaluation of proposals: August 2025
- Remote interviews: **September 2025**
- Communication of results to applicants: September 2025
- Legal validation and sub-grant agreement preparation: October 2025
- Start of the programme: October 2025





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## 1.2 Rules and Conditions

#### 1.2.1 Eligible Beneficiaries

Open Horizons focuses on supporting **women-led**, **digital and deep-tech startups in Europe, specifically in the early stages**. This section outlines specific criteria and conditions, establishing eligibility for potential beneficiaries.

Here are the key definitions that guide the selection of beneficiaries:

**1. Established country:** the applicant must be established in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country\*.

- Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.
- Horizon Europe Associated Countries: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

#### 2. Startup:

 Under Horizon Europe, a start-up is understood as a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) in the early stages of its life cycle. This includes newly established companies, particularly those created as spin-offs from university research activities, that aim to deliver innovative solutions and develop scalable business models. Such entities **must be autonomous** within the





meaning of <u>Article 3 of the Annex to Commission Recommendation</u> 2003/361/EC.

- In addition, start-ups must meet the criteria of an SME as defined in <u>Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC</u>, namely:
  - Employing fewer than 250 persons (measured in Annual Work Units AWU);
  - Having an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.

#### 3. Early-stage startup:

Early-stage refers to the phase of a startup's development, generally preceding the rapid growth phase. As an indication, the following requirements must be met:

- The legal entity must have been established at least six months before the submission of the application and must not have been established and operating for more than six years, counting backwards from the submission date of the application and;
- Startups must have raised no more than €1M in equity.

**Important clarification:** *By equity funding*, we refer specifically to capital raised in exchange for shares or ownership in the company. This excludes other types of private funding that do **not** involve giving away equity—such as grants, loans, or convertible notes that have not yet been converted. For the purpose of eligibility, we are only considering **equity–based investment**.

Instrument	Considered Equity?	Eligible?	Notes
Common/Preferred	Yes	Not	Direct equity investment
Shares		eligible if	
		over €1M	
SAFE (Simple	Not yet equity	Eligible	Acceptable if not yet
Agreement for Future			converted to equity at the
Equity)			time of application





Convertible Notes	Not yet equity	Eligible	As long as they have not
			yet converted into shares
Grants	No	Eligible	Non-dilutive public or
			private funding
Loans	No	Eligible	Includes bank loans and
			other private lending
Venture Debt	No	Eligible	Considered debt, not
			equity

**Important Note:** Foundations, associations, federations or other types of legal entities different from a private company will not be eligible.

**4. Women's leadership:** Open Horizons supports women in all their diversity. The word 'woman' equates to a cis woman or transgender woman who **is legally defined as a woman.** The founding/co-founding requirement will be made eligible if the woman is legally recognised as a founder or co-founder of the company. The founder or co-founder of the company must also currently hold a top management position (CEO, CTO, CSO or equivalent) within the same company. It will also be required that women hold at least 25% of the shares in the CAP table (capitalisation table) of the company.

**5. Deep-tech / Digital startups:** To be eligible for the Open Horizons project, startups must clearly fall into one of the following categories: Deep-tech or Digital.

#### 5. 1. Digital and deep-tech startups

A deep-tech startup is engaged in the development of advanced and disruptive technologies that are based on cutting-edge scientific advances and discoveries. These startups are at the forefront of technological innovation, constantly interacting with new ideas and results from scientific research and development. Deep-tech aims to provide concrete solutions to societal problems by deeply engaging with the most recent scientific and technological advances.

Deep-tech innovation often includes areas such as advanced computing, artificial intelligence (AI), life sciences, advanced manufacturing, energy and clean technologies, new materials, cybersecurity, robotics, and nanotechnology. Importantly, digital and





deep-tech startups focus on original scientific research and technological breakthroughs that push the boundaries of what existing technologies can achieve.

Note: If a startup simply uses existing technologies (e.g., off-the-shelf AI models for data analysis or chatbots) but does not engage in breakthrough scientific development or create novel technological advancements, it is not considered deep-tech.

#### 5.2. Digital Startups

A digital startup is a company that leverages existing digital technologies as the core of its business model. These companies offer innovative products or services based on software, online platforms, mobile applications, cloud services, data analytics, and more. Unlike digital and deep-tech startups, which focus on developing cutting-edge scientific technologies, digital startups transform processes, user experiences, and business models through the strategic use of already-established digital tools.

Digital startups play a vital role in the digital economy, driving innovation, scalability, and accessibility across sectors such as e-commerce, fintech, edtech, digital health, and digital marketing.

#### Important Note for Applicants:

Your startup must be either deep-tech or digital to apply for the Open Horizons project. If your startup falls into both categories, you can still apply, but you must select one when completing the application form.

In addition, the following conditions apply:

- The organisations applying should not have convictions regarding fraudulent behaviour, other financial irregularities, or unethical or illegal business practices.
- The participating organisations should not have been declared bankrupt or have initiated bankruptcy procedures.



- Open Horizons project beneficiaries must have the appropriate resources to implement the full set of tasks needed within the project. This means beneficiaries are not allowed to subcontract key parts of the project:
  - Examples (not restricted to) of subcontracting not desired are paying an external developer not in the company, paying a research centre or foundation to execute technical tasks, etc. Employees of a company are never considered subcontractors but part of the company itself.
  - Examples (not restricted to) of subcontracting activities that could be appropriate if needed are legal services or design services.
  - In addition, the subcontracting amount should not represent a relevant amount (>15%) of the total budget that will be dedicated to the project.

## 2. Challenges

As part of this initiative, a curated set of **real**, **market-driven challenges** provided by leading corporates was identified. These challenges represent **concrete technological problems** that require innovative, deep-tech solutions—offering startups a unique opportunity to test, validate, and potentially co-develop their technologies with real-world applications and demand.

Startups applying to this call will be invited to select **one** of the published challenges that aligns with their solution and propose how they can address it.

Note: Startups are expected to propose one or more components that contribute meaningfully to the overall solution. A complete or 'full stack' delivery is not required.

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Title:	Enhancing Infrastructure Resilience: A Data-Driven Approach for		
	Assessing Grid Disruption		
Sector:	Al, Advanced computing, IoT, Energy, Cybersecurity		
Description:	Our company seeks to develop and evaluate a data-driven methodology to assess the impact of incidents and disruptions on the electricity grid. The main purpose here is to (1) reduce the number of grid incidents and/or disruptions, (2) reduce the time required to solve them and (3) accurately predict future incidents and disruptions.		
	This challenge exists due to the increasing complexity of power networks, the rising frequency of extreme weather events, and evolving cybersecurity threats. The lack of real-time monitoring and predictive capabilities limits our ability to proactively address vulnerabilities, leading to potential service disruption and increased operational costs.		
	Types of issues that can produce a grid incident or disruption: old equipment, faulty/non-compliant equipment (the first two can produce data through which we can predict a future failure), vegetation (a tree that grows over a grid line – data is produced through which we can predict a future failure), other types of contacts, fires et		
Objectives:	<ul> <li>Develop a data-driven methodology to assess and quantify the impact of grid incidents and disruptions</li> <li>Leverage historical and real-time data (e.g., equipment age, compliance status, vegetation growth, external contacts, fires) to identify early warning signs of potential failures</li> <li>Reduce incident response time by creating automated alert systems and optimized intervention protocols</li> <li>Minimize the frequency and severity of grid disruptions through predictive maintenance strategies</li> <li>Implement a real-time monitoring framework that integrates weather environmental and grid access data</li> </ul>		





	Improve grid resilience against cybersecurity threats through
	anomaly detection models
Expected	A robust predictive analytics tool capable of forecasting grid
outcome:	incidents based on key data indicators
	Reduction in average downtime and incident resolution time
	by a measurable percentage
	<ul> <li>Improved risk detection related to external environmental</li> </ul>
	factors such as vegetation or fires
	<ul> <li>A prioritization model for equipment maintenance and</li> </ul>
	replacement, based on risk scoring
	• Deployment of a scalable digital platform for continuous
	monitoring and proactive decision-making
	• Decreased operational costs due to fewer disruptions and
	more efficient resource allocation

Title:	Intelligent Congestion Management for Electricity Distribution Networks		
Sector:	Al, Energy		
Description:	As electricity grids become increasingly complex due to the integration of renewable energy sources, electric vehicles, and distributed energy sources (DERs), managing congestion in distribution networks has become a critical challenge for Distribution Operators.		
Objectives:	<ul> <li>Develop an intelligent system for detecting, forecasting, and managing congestion in electricity distribution networks</li> <li>Integrate data from renewable energy sources, electric vehicles, and distributed energy resources (DERs) into congestion management strategies</li> <li>Design predictive models to anticipate congestion events based on grid usage patterns, weather, and consumption behaviour</li> <li>Optimize real-time grid balancing using demand-side flexibility and DER coordination</li> <li>Enhance visibility and control at the low-voltage and medium-voltage network levels</li> <li>Support decision-making for investment planning and infractructure ungrades through edvanced enelytics</li> </ul>		





Expected	A functional prototype of an intelligent congestion		
outcome:	management platform capable of real-time data integration		
	and response		
	<ul> <li>Increased grid reliability and stability through proactive</li> </ul>		
	congestion mitigation		
	<ul> <li>Improved forecasting accuracy of congestion events using</li> </ul>		
	machine learning or Al-based models		
	<ul> <li>Better utilization of distributed energy resources and</li> </ul>		
	flexibility mechanisms		
	Reduction in curtailment of renewable energy sources due to		
	grid constraints		
	• Strategic insights and tools for more efficient infrastructure		
	investment and network planning		

Title:	Unified Data Integration Platform for Prosumers' Energy Flows		
Sector:	Al, IoT, Energy		
Description:	With the rapid growth of prosumers (clients who both consume and produce energy, often via solar PVs), energy supply companies are facing increasing difficulty in obtaining standardized, real-time energy flow data. The lack of interoperability between diverse inverter models and platforms limits the visibility suppliers, DSOs, and TSOs have over distributed production and consumption patterns.		
Objectives:	<ul> <li>Design and develop a unified platform for collecting, standardizing, and integrating real-time energy flow data from prosumers</li> <li>Enable interoperability between various inverter models, smart meters, and energy management systems</li> <li>Improve visibility for suppliers, DSOs (Distribution System Operators), and TSOs (Transmission System Operators) into distributed energy flows</li> <li>Facilitate near real-time monitoring and forecasting of production and consumption at the prosumer level</li> </ul>		





	<ul> <li>Ensure data quality, accuracy, and security across all integration points</li> <li>Support scalable integration with existing grid infrastructure and market platforms</li> </ul>
Expected	<ul> <li>A centralized, vendor-agnostic platform capable of</li> </ul>
outcome:	<ul> <li>aggregating and standardizing data from heterogeneous sources (inverters, meters, etc.)</li> <li>Improved real-time visibility of distributed generation and consumption patterns for system operators and suppliers</li> <li>Increased forecasting precision for energy supply and demand at local levels</li> <li>Reduction in manual data collection and reconciliation efforts</li> <li>Enhanced ability to balance the grid through better coordination of prosumer contributions</li> </ul>

Title:	Autonomous Cyber Digital Expert for IT & OT Threat Detection and Response
Sector:	Al, Cybersecurity
Description:	As cyber threats evolve, critical infrastructure must be protected across both IT and OT environments. While existing tools like SOAR help automate basic Level 1 incident response, organizations still rely heavily on manual correlation and intervention. This challenge seeks to develop a "Cyber Digital Expert" — an intelligent, autonomous system that continuously scans for vulnerabilities, detects and correlates threats across all defence layers, and proactively responds in both IT and OT ecosystems
Objectives:	<ul> <li>Develop an autonomous cybersecurity system capable of real-time threat detection and response across IT and OT environments</li> <li>Automate multi-layer threat correlation beyond Level 1 incident response using advanced analytics and AI</li> <li>Integrate continuous vulnerability scanning and anomaly detection in both operational and information technology layers</li> </ul>



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	<ul> <li>Enable proactive threat mitigation, including isolation, containment, and response actions without human intervention</li> <li>Ensure compatibility and interoperability with existing cybersecurity tools</li> </ul>
	• Support continuous learning and threat intelligence integration to improve detection accuracy over time
Expected	• A functional prototype capable of autonomous monitoring
outcome:	and incident response across IT and OT networks
	• Significant reduction in detection and response time to
	cybersecurity threats
	Decreased reliance on manual intervention through
	automation of advanced threat correlation and mitigation
	steps
	• Enhanced protection of critical infrastructure assets with
	real-time visibility and control
	Improved cybersecurity posture through continuous system
	learning and adaptation to evolving threats
	Compliance support with cybersecurity standards and
	regulations specific to critical infrastructure

Title:	Adaptive Optimization Algorithms for Urban EV Charging Networks
Sector:	Al, Advanced computing
Description:	As electric mobility infrastructure expands in urban areas, operators face rising pressure to balance resource allocation, infrastructure deployment, and energy consumption all while maintaining cost- efficiency and high service availability. This challenge aims to develop adaptive, data-driven algorithms for optimizing EV charger usage across city zones, using synthetic or anonymized datasets to model various deployment scenarios.
Objectives:	• Develop adaptive, data-driven algorithms to optimize the usage and distribution of EV charging stations in urban areas





	Model various deployment scenarios using synthetic or
	anonymized datasets representing user behaviour, traffic
	patterns, and energy demand
	<ul> <li>Balance resource allocation between high- and low-demand</li> </ul>
	city zones to ensure equitable access and efficiency
	<ul> <li>Integrate real-time data inputs into decision-making</li> </ul>
	algorithms
	• Maximize charger availability and utilization while minimizing
	energy waste and operational costs
	<ul> <li>Support planning decisions for future infrastructure</li> </ul>
	investments and policy development
Expected	• A set of tested optimization algorithms capable of
outcome:	dynamically adjusting charging strategies based on real-time
	and forecasted data
	<ul> <li>Improved charger utilization rates and reduced user wait</li> </ul>
	times across different urban zones
	<ul> <li>Enhanced ability to simulate and evaluate deployment</li> </ul>
	strategies under varying urban conditions
	<ul> <li>Increased cost-efficiency in energy distribution and charging</li> </ul>
	infrastructure usage
	<ul> <li>Actionable insights for operators and city planners regarding</li> </ul>
	optimal charger placement and scaling
	<ul> <li>A scalable and transferable optimization framework that can</li> </ul>
	be adapted to different cities or regions

Title:	Towards Reliable and Data–Efficient Machine Learning for Engineering Simulation
Sector:	Al, Advanced computing
Description:	Machine Learning (ML) methods have gained significant attention for their potential to accelerate simulations across engineering domains. Numerous studies highlight promising results, particularly in reducing computational costs and enabling faster design iterations. However, applying ML in engineering contexts introduces a distinct set of requirements not typically encountered in consumer applications.



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	Engineering simulations demand a high degree of reliability,
	robustness, and – crucially – quantifiable accuracy. Predictions must
	be trustworthy, especially in safety-critical or tightly regulated
	environments. Yet, many current ML solutions fall short of meeting
	these standards. Specifically, because the required large amounts of
	high-fidelity training data are hard to obtain (high compute efforts
	and extremely large file sizes up to multiple GB). Thus, the resulting
	models tend to be narrowly scoped, typically limited to specific
	geometries or single physical phenomena. Another key limitation is
	the lack of rigorous error estimates and confidence metrics that are
	essential for engineering decision-making. Without such guarantees,
	ML models are challenging to deploy in practical simulation
	workflows, especially at an industrial scale.
	The development of data-efficient, generalizable, and verifiable ML
	methods tailored to the needs of engineering simulation remains an
	open challenge. Solutions must strike a balance between
	performance and reliability, ideally requiring less training data while
	still delivering robust predictions across diverse use cases. But if
	successfully addressed there is a plenitude of potential use cases
	across the complete lifecycle of industrial products.
Objectives:	<ul><li>across the complete lifecycle of industrial products.</li><li>Develop machine learning methods tailored to engineering</li></ul>
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Objectives: Expected	<ul> <li>across the complete lifecycle of industrial products.</li> <li>Develop machine learning methods tailored to engineering simulations that require high reliability, robustness, and interpretability</li> <li>Design data-efficient ML models capable of producing accurate predictions with limited high-fidelity training data</li> <li>Integrate uncertainty quantification and error estimation mechanisms directly into the model pipeline</li> <li>Improve generalization capabilities of ML models across different geometries, physical phenomena, and simulation scenarios</li> <li>Ensure compatibility with existing simulation workflows and industrial standards, especially in safety-critical contexts</li> <li>A set of ML models or architectures that demonstrate reliable</li> </ul>
Objectives: Expected outcome:	<ul> <li>across the complete lifecycle of industrial products.</li> <li>Develop machine learning methods tailored to engineering simulations that require high reliability, robustness, and interpretability</li> <li>Design data-efficient ML models capable of producing accurate predictions with limited high-fidelity training data</li> <li>Integrate uncertainty quantification and error estimation mechanisms directly into the model pipeline</li> <li>Improve generalization capabilities of ML models across different geometries, physical phenomena, and simulation scenarios</li> <li>Ensure compatibility with existing simulation workflows and industrial standards, especially in safety-critical contexts</li> <li>A set of ML models or architectures that demonstrate reliable performance with reduced training data requirements</li> </ul>
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• Integration prototype or plug-in that supports simulation
workflows with minimal user intervention
• Reduced computational costs for simulation tasks, enabling
faster design and iteration cycles
• A foundation for broader adoption of ML in industrial-grade
simulation environments, with traceable and explainable
outputs

Title:	Enabling Secure and Efficient Model Exchange in Simulation
	Workflows
Sector:	Blockchain, Metaverse, Cybersecurity, internet of things
<b>D</b>	
Description:	Creating effective Simulation Models remains a major bottleneck (in
	terms of effort and required expertise) in simulation-based
	engineering and system design. But at the same time, one can
	observe a repeated model development of the same/similar
	components. This inefficiency is largely driven by the limited
	exchange of models between stakeholders, which stems from
	concerns around compatibility, intellectual property protection, and
	cybersecurity.
	With the emergence of the digital economy and the growing interest
	in the industrial metaverse, new opportunities for sharing and
	monetizing models are arising. However, despite the existence of
	technical standards for model exchange - such as the Functional
	Mock-up Interface or Modelica - there is a lack of robust
	infrastructure to support safe and controlled distribution models.
	Key requirements include protection against unauthorized access,
	clear licensing frameworks, and traceability of model usage.
Objectives:	• Develop a secure and standardized framework for exchanging
	simulation models across organizations and platforms
	• Ensure intellectual property protection through encryption,
	digital rights management (DRM), and secure model
	packaging
	Paoro2016





	<ul> <li>Enable traceability and controlled access to simulation models, including usage tracking and auditability</li> <li>Support integration with existing model exchange standards such as FMI (Functional Mock-up Interface) and Modelica</li> <li>Establish licensing mechanisms and access control policies that govern model sharing and reuse</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Facilitate the creation of marketplaces or collaborative platforms for simulation model distribution and monetization</li> </ul>
Expected	• A secure infrastructure or platform that allows safe model
outcome:	<ul> <li>sharing while preserving IP rights and ensuring cyber-resilience</li> <li>Integration of access control features such as user authentication, usage logging, and role-based permissions</li> <li>Implementation of licensing templates or mechanisms (e.g., pay-per-use, subscription, academic/public domain)</li> <li>Compatibility with existing simulation tools and standards to support seamless adoption</li> <li>Reduction in redundant model development efforts through improved model reuse and discoverability</li> <li>Foundational support for simulation model economies in the context of the industrial metaverse and digital twin ecosystems</li> </ul>

Title:	Al-powered tool to revolutionize formulation development using
	secondary data sources
Sector:	Al, Advanced computing, Greentech
Description:	This challenge seeks a smart system that creates innovative, effective, and sustainable material formulations by analysing existing scientific and patent data. The tool must generate new formulations tailored to specific properties or problems, backed by explainable insights and easy-to-use interfaces.
Objectives:	• Develop an Al-powered system capable of analysing and extracting relevant formulation knowledge from secondary data sources such as patents and scientific publications





	• Enable customizable selection and filtering of data sources to
	match specific user needs and application domains
	<ul> <li>Implement natural language processing (NLP) and domain-</li> </ul>
	specific models to interpret complex chemical and material
	information
	<ul> <li>Identify and suggest potential formulation components,</li> </ul>
	interactions, and synergies based on extracted data
	<ul> <li>Allow users to define goals such as performance</li> </ul>
	enhancement, sustainability, or regulatory compliance for
	formulation generation
	<ul> <li>Design a user-friendly interface that supports requirements</li> </ul>
	input, data source management, and results exploration
	Generate novel formulations aligned with user-defined
	criteria supported by explainable Al features and source
	references
Expected	A functional Al tool that autonomously processes large
	volumes of scientific and patent literature to extract
outcome.	actionable formulation insights
	Customizable data source integration to ensure relevance
	and flowibility for different industries or material alasses
	Accurate interpretation of complex formulation date
	<ul> <li>Accurate interpretation of complex formulation data, including component competibility, properties, and</li> </ul>
	application context
	application context
	Generation of novel, targeted formulation suggestions with
	Clear rationale and traceable evidence
	Enhanced formulation development workflows through
	reduced time-to-concept and access to a broader
	knowledge base
	<ul> <li>Support for sustainability objectives by identifying</li> </ul>
	alternative, eco-triendly materials commonly available in the
	market





Title:	Innovative Automatic Forecasting Tool Leveraging Public Data
Sector:	Advance computing
Description:	An advanced automated forecasting solution focused on industries such as automotive, textiles, and leather, leveraging public data and AI to deliver accurate, real-time predictions. The platform should integrate diverse data sources (economic, social, environmental, technological), provide deep insights at sub-sector levels, feature an intuitive interface, and ensure scalability, transparency, and compliance. This is a technically demanding challenge, ideal for teams with strong expertise in industrial AI and data science.
Objectives:	<ul> <li>Develop an Al-driven forecasting tool that integrates and analyses diverse public data sources (geopolitical, economic, social, environmental, technological)</li> <li>Design scalable data pipelines capable of handling structured and unstructured datasets from multiple domains</li> <li>Implement machine learning models to identify patterns, correlations, and emerging trends across sectors</li> <li>Enable customizable forecasts tailored to specific industries (e.g., automotive, textiles, leather), regions, and sub-industrial levels</li> <li>Ensure real-time data updates and automated model retraining to maintain forecast accuracy over time</li> <li>Provide a user-friendly interface for both technical and nontechnical users, supporting forecast generation and result interpretation</li> <li>Emphasize transparency by detailing data sources, modelling techniques, and confidence levels in outputs</li> <li>Ensure data privacy, security, and regulatory compliance throughout the platform</li> </ul>
Expected outcome:	• A fully functional, modular forecasting platform capable of integrating multiple public data sources in real-time
	<ul> <li>Accurate, data-driven predictions for high-level and sub- level trends across different industries and geographies</li> <li>Clear visualization of forecasting outputs with explanations, confidence metrics, and traceability to input data</li> </ul>





• Scalable infrastructure that allows easy extension to new
industries, data domains, or geographic areas
• Empowered decision-making for users through intuitive tools,
filters, and customization features
• Competitive advantage through earlier awareness of market
shifts, risks, and opportunities across industrial ecosystems

Title:	Multidirectional energy flows: Vehicle-to-grid-to-home.
	Designing powerful inverters
Sector:	Energy
Description:	To design a bidirectional inverter that allows the battery of an electric or plug-in hybrid vehicle to be utilized as an active part of household energy consumption. The device must manage the conversion of direct current (DC) from the battery to alternating current (AC) to directly power domestic consumption, and vice versa, enabling vehicle charging from the grid.
Objectives:	<ul> <li>Design a high-efficiency bidirectional inverter capable of managing energy flow between an electric vehicle (EV), household systems, and the electrical grid</li> <li>Enable seamless conversion from DC to AC and vice versa</li> <li>Ensure the inverter supports smart energy management logic to prioritise energy flow based on demand, battery status, and grid signals</li> <li>Integrate safety mechanisms and compliance with relevant electrical standards and certifications</li> <li>Support interoperability with various EV battery types, home energy systems, and smart grid infrastructures</li> <li>Optimize for compactness, thermal management, and cost-effectiveness to encourage wide-scale adoption</li> </ul>
Expected	A functional prototype of a bidirectional inverter that allows
outcome:	vehicle-to-home and vehicle-to-grid energy exchange
	• Demonstrated ability to manage energy prioritisation based
	on configurable user or system-defined parameters





<ul> <li>Compliance with grid interconnection standards and safety regulations</li> <li>Deliable operation under variable load conditions with</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Reliable operation under variable load conditions, with thermal and fault protection integrated</li> <li>Support for future smart energy ecosystems contributing to</li> </ul>
household self-consumption, peak shaving, and grid balancing

Title:	Comparative tool for renewable thermal solutions, based on
	Toury demand promes
Sector:	Energy
Description:	A digital tool that enables stakeholders (e.g., building managers, planners, engineers) to simulate, compare, and select optimal renewable thermal solutions such as heat pumps, solar thermal systems, or hybrid systems based on real-world, time-resolved energy demand data.
Objectives:	<ul> <li>Develop a comparative analysis tool for evaluating renewable thermal energy solutions (e.g., heat pumps, solar thermal, biomass) in existing buildings</li> <li>Incorporate hourly demand profiles for heating, cooling, and domestic hot water to improve accuracy and reflect real consumption patterns</li> <li>Address the Energy Performance Gap by integrating real-world consumption data and adjusting for building-specific variables</li> <li>Enable scenario analysis and benchmarking of multiple decarbonization strategies based on energy performance, emissions reduction, and cost-effectiveness</li> <li>Ensure compatibility with European and national regulatory frameworks and targets for building decarbonization</li> <li>Design a user-friendly interface for energy planners, building managers, and policy stakeholders to simulate and compare solutions</li> </ul>



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Expected	<ul> <li>A functional software tool capable of modelling and</li> </ul>
outcome:	comparing renewable thermal solutions using hourly demand
	data
	<ul> <li>Accurate representation of building energy behaviour, closing</li> </ul>
	the gap between theoretical models and actual performance
	Clear comparison outputs including energy savings, CO2
	reductions, payback time, and return on investment for
	different technologies
	<ul> <li>Integration of weather data, occupancy patterns, and system</li> </ul>
	performance metrics for more realistic simulations
	• Support for identifying the most appropriate renewable
	heating and cooling technologies for specific building types
	and use cases
	<ul> <li>Enhanced decision-making for public and private</li> </ul>
	stakeholders in planning cost-effective building retrofits
	aligned with climate goals

Title:	Improved photosynthesis of microalgae
Sector:	Energy, GreenTech, AgriTech
Description:	Microalgae cultivation is rapidly developing for applications such as food and feed, cosmetics, agricultural improvement, biofuel and biomaterial production. One of the factors limiting the scale-up and economic profitability of microalgae cultivation is the low yield of natural photosynthesis. The challenge is to improve the photosynthetic yield (biomass productivity per unit area or volume of cultivation per unit time) of microalgae species with industrial applications, through natural selection or genetic modification that is not limited by European regulation.
Objectives:	<ul> <li>Enhance the photosynthetic efficiency of microalgae species with industrial relevance</li> <li>Increase biomass productivity per unit area or volume of cultivation per unit time</li> </ul>





	<ul> <li>Identify and select high-performing microalgae strains</li> </ul>
	through natural selection or permitted genetic improvement
	techniques
	• Optimize environmental and cultivation parameters (e.g., light
	intensity, $CO_2$ concentration, nutrient availability) to boost
	photosynthetic yield
	• Ensure scalability of improved strains and methods to
	industrial level photobioreactors or open pond systems
	Maintain compliance with European regulations regarding
	genetic modification
Expected	<ul> <li>Isolation or development of microalgae strains with</li> </ul>
outcome:	significantly improved photosynthetic performance
	<ul> <li>Demonstrated increase in biomass productivity under</li> </ul>
	controlled experimental and semi-industrial conditions
	<ul> <li>Identification of key genetic, metabolic, or environmental</li> </ul>
	factors contributing to enhanced photosynthesis
	• Scalable protocols for cultivation, applicable to large-scale
	production systems
	Potential cost reduction in downstream processing due to
	higher yield and efficiency
	<ul> <li>Support for expanding microalgae use in industrial</li> </ul>
	applications with improved economic viability

Title:	Innovative solutions for a Smart(er) Home
Sector:	Al, IoT, Energy
Description:	In 2024, the world-leading smart home platform Homey began integrating with a wider range of connected appliances, accelerating the development of fully interoperable and intelligent home ecosystems. Traditional smart home technologies are evolving rapidly, enabling deeper integration and smarter interactions among devices.
	We are looking for solutions that could make the home even smarter and more convenient to use for our customers. Suitable solutions could be devices that add more value when they connect to our eco-





	system of appliances and smart home. Other matching solutions
	could be services that ease the life of our users. Develop smart
	home technologies that go beyond simple automation, enabling
	our appliances and smart devices to learn from users and make
	intelligent decisions locally, improving convenience, energy
	efficiency, and personalization.
Objectives:	• Develop innovative smart home devices or services that
	integrate seamlessly into our connected ecosystem
	(including Homey platform)
	• Create intelligent systems that learn from user behaviour to
	enable predictive and adaptive control of our appliances and
	other smart devices
	• Enhance home automation through contextual awareness
	(e.g., occupancy, time of day, weather, energy pricing)
	<ul> <li>Improve energy efficiency by optimizing appliance usage</li> </ul>
	based on real-time consumption patterns and user
	preferences
	• Enable local decision-making (edge intelligence) to increase
	the speed, privacy, and reliability of smart home functions
	<ul> <li>Design user-friendly interfaces and experiences that</li> </ul>
	promote convenience, personalization, and intuitive
	interaction
Expected	New smart devices or services that demonstrate added value
outcome:	when connected to smart home ecosystem
	Functioning prototypes or concepts showcasing personalized
	automation and intelligent decision-making based on user
	behaviour and environment
	<ul> <li>Increased home energy efficiency and user comfort through</li> </ul>
	optimized appliance operation
	• Enhanced user engagement and satisfaction through
	seamless and adaptive smart home experiences
	Scalable and secure integration framework compatible with
	Homey and smart appliances
	Contributions toward a more autonomous, sustainable, and
	user-centred smart home environment





Title:	Sound absorbing, acoustic meta-material
Sector:	Other (Advanced materials)
Description:	Low noise operation is a key customer demand for appliances that run in homes like refrigerators, dryers or dishwashers. We want to reduce the noise level of its products as much as possible to fulfil these customer expectations.
	In this challenge, we are looking for cost-effective but differentiating noise/vibration absorbing insulation material that helps us strengthen our low-noise competitiveness. The targeted solution should be a new type of acoustic meta-material that clearly differentiates in the field of noise and vibration control. It should shield acoustic or vibration energy at certain frequencies helping us to block noise patterns from appliance operation.
	Requirements: - We are targeting cost-effective materials. The quality, cost and ability to supply should match high-volume consumer products
	- The status of the solution should be in production or close to the start of production
Objectives:	<ul> <li>Develop or identify a cost-effective acoustic meta-material specifically designed to absorb and block noise and vibrations generated by household appliances Target material properties that effectively attenuate sound and vibration at specific frequency ranges relevant to appliance operation</li> <li>Ensure that the proposed solution is scalable and manufacturable at high volumes, suitable for integration into consumer electronics and white goods</li> <li>Optimize material design for easy integration into existing product architectures without significant redesign or performance trade-offs</li> </ul>





	Differentiate from conventional insulation materials through
	superior noise shielding, lightweight structure, or
	multifunctionality (e.g., thermal and acoustic)
	• Prioritize solutions that are already in production or near
	production readiness
Expected	A validated acoustic meta-material prototype or product
outcome:	with demonstrably superior sound and vibration absorption
	capabilities within appliance-relevant frequency ranges
	• Measurable reduction in noise levels of target our appliances
	when the material is applied (ideally verified through
	standardized acoustic testing)
	• Cost-performance ratio suitable for integration into high-
	volume consumer products
	<ul> <li>Technical documentation supporting manufacturability,</li> </ul>
	supply scalability, and compliance with relevant
	safety/environmental regulations
	• Differentiation from current market materials in terms of
	structure, performance, or integration flexibility
	Clear pathway for industrial application, including material
	suppliers, production methods, and integration support

Title:	Building Tomorrow – Low-Carbon & Circular Construction
	Solutions
Sector:	Greentech
Description:	The construction sector stands at a pivotal crossroads. As the climate crisis intensifies, reducing carbon emissions has become an urgent priority across all industries—but perhaps nowhere is this more critical than in the built environment. Today, buildings are responsible for nearly 40% of global carbon emissions, both from operational energy use and the embodied carbon within construction materials and processes.





	In response, we are committed to driving a transformation toward						
	low-carbon construction practices. Our goal is clear: to drastically						
	reduce the carbon footprint of buildings—from design and material						
	selection to construction and end-of-life strategies. To achieve this,						
	we are actively seeking collaboration with innovative companies that						
	are pioneering new materials, technologies, and methodologies that						
	align with circular economy principles. Disruptive technologies and						
	materials that can significantly reduce the carbon footprint of						
	buildings across their entire lifecycle from design and material						
	production to construction, use, and end-of-life. Solutions should						
	integrate circular economy principles and enable a measurable						
	shift toward climate-neutral construction						
Objectives:	<ul> <li>Identify and develop innovative low-carbon materials and</li> </ul>						
	technologies for use across the entire building lifecycle						
	(design, construction, operation, and end-of-life)						
	Enable significant reduction of embodied and operational						
	carbon emissions in buildings						
	• Integrate circular economy principles such as material reuse,						
	recyclability, and design for disassembly						
	• Support scalable solutions that are compatible with existing						
	construction practices and supply chains						
	<ul> <li>Foster digital or automated tools that facilitate carbon</li> </ul>						
	footprint assessment, material traceability, and circularity in						
	construction workflows						
	<ul> <li>Promote design methodologies that enable modularity,</li> </ul>						
	durability, and resource efficiency						
Expected	• Demonstrated reduction in carbon footprint of construction						
outcome:	projects through innovative materials (e.g., low-carbon						
	concrete, alternative binders, recycled aggregates, bio-based						
	materials) or construction techniques						
	• Solutions that incorporate circularity (e.g., reuse of demolition						
	waste, closed-loop material systems, design-for-reuse						
	models)						
	<ul> <li>Measurable environmental impact data supporting the</li> </ul>						
	reduction of embodied and/or operational carbon						
	• Scalable production or deployment models suited to large-						
	scale infrastructure and building projects						
	<ul> <li>Measurable environmental impact data supporting the reduction of embodied and/or operational carbon</li> <li>Scalable production or deployment models suited to large-scale infrastructure and building projects</li> </ul>						





<ul> <li>Regulatory-compliant materials and systems with proven</li> </ul>
durability, performance, and safety
<ul> <li>Clear pathway for integration into our portfolio and broader</li> </ul>
industry adoption to accelerate climate-neutral construction

Title:	Prediction of Fabric Physical Properties and Suitable Yarn-							
	Density Combinations Based on MRP Data							
Sector:	Artificial Intelligence, Advanced Computing							
Description:	Currently, the selection of yarn types and density combinations to							
	achieve specific fabric physical properties (such as weight, strength,							
	or elasticity) is based on experience and trial-and-error methods.							
	While MRP data holds valuable information such as yarn types,							
	counts, and previous production outputs, there is no systematic							
	approach to analyse this data and generate predictive insights.							
	The absence of a data-driven decision support system results in							
	inconsistent outcomes and inefficient sampling processes. Without							
	predictive tools, a significant amount of time and material is spent on							
	prototyping and testing to achieve desired fabric characteristics.							
	This slows down the development cycle and increases production							
	costs. Additionally, inconsistencies in fabric quality may affect							
	customer satisfaction and delay order fulfilment. Depending only on							
	manual expertise makes it difficult to scale operations and transfer							
	knowledge effectively within the organization.							
Objectives:	• To implement AI and ML tools that analyse MRP data to							
	recommend optimal yarn-density combinations and							
	streamline prototyping.							
Expected	• A predictive platform capable of delivering real-time							
outcome:	recommendations for yarn and density selections that result							
	in desired fabric properties, reducing prototyping costs, and							
	enabling data-informed design cycles.							
	Preferred Technology Areas:							
	- Machine Learning models (e.g., regression, decision trees)							





trained on historical MRP and quality data
- Data preprocessing and analytics tools (e.g., Python, R,
Power BI)
- Integration with MRP database and technical
documentation systems
- User-friendly interface for team members to input target
properties and receive recommendations

Title:	Automatic Machine Assignment and Optimization of Weaving and					
	Dyehouse Production Processes Based on Yarn and Fabric					
	Parameters					
Sector:	Artificial Intelligence, Advanced Computing					
Description:	Currently, the assignment of weaving looms and dyeing machines is					
	done manually by production planners, based on experience and					
	general process knowledge. However, with increasing diversity in					
	yarn types, fabric constructions, and order requirements, manual					
	planning is no longer efficient or scalable. There is no automated					
	system to calculate or predict appropriate loom setups (e.g., warp					
	beam preparation) based on fabric construction parameters like					
	yarn count, density, or weave type. Similarly, in jet dyeing, machine					
	assignments are not optimized based on yarn type, fabric weight					
	(gsm), and construction, nor is there an automated estimation of the					
	maximum batch length each machine can handle.					
	Manual planning often results in machine mismatches, inefficient					
	loading, production delays, and higher operational costs. For					
	example, incorrect loom assignments may lead to defective weaving,					
	while suboptimal jet machine loading can waste energy, chemicals,					
	and water. The lack of predictive planning also causes inconsistent					
	quality and prolonged lead times, affecting both productivity and					
	customer satisfaction.					
Objectives:	• To build an intelligent system for real-time optimization of					
	machine allocation and setup, minimizing waste and					
	improving throughput.					





Expected	•	A smart	system	that	automatically	assigns	machines,
outcome:		configures setups, and predicts capacity using AI, boosting					
		efficiency	',	qualit	ty, and	l	scalability.
		i.e.	A	L	syster	n	that:
	<ul> <li>Automatically assigns appropriate weaving looms based or</li> </ul>						s based on
	fabric quality (related to yarn type, weave structure, yarn						
	count, and density).						
	- Calculates and predicts required warp beam setups					am setups	
	automatically for each order.						
	- Recommends the most suitable jet dyeing machines						
	based on yarn type, fabric weight (gsm), and construction.						
	Predicts the optimal batch lengths each dyeing machine car					achine can	
	handle using machine learning, to maximize efficiency without					icy without	
		exceeding	g machine	e limits			





## 1. Financial Support

Open Horizons' first call offers a total budget of €335,000. In this OC#1, Open Horizons is offering equity-free funding to empower up to 11 womenled startups, 5 of which will go on to the piloting stage. Each company can receive up to €55,000, which is disbursed depending on and based on the achievement of KPIs, participation in the programme's activities, and performance on the final demo day.

## 2.1 Criteria for payment financial support

For the sake of simplicity and transparency, the Financial Support in the Open Horizons project will be disbursed upon the achievement of specific milestones or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Thus, we have established a clear set of criteria for each stage to calculate the exact amount of financial support.

## 3. Programme

The Open Horizons programme is structured into two main stages with a total duration of 6 months: the **Inception Stage (1 month)** and the **Piloting Stage (5 months)**. A total of €335,000, and **up to €55,000 per selected startup** will be disbursed in the form of equity-free grants across both phases, based on performance and engagement with the assigned corporate partner. Only 5 of the selected startups (11) will advance from the Inception Stage to the Piloting Stage.

## 3.1 Inception Stage (1-month)

Following the evaluation of the first Open Call, **11 women-led digital or digital and deeptech startups** will be selected to enter the Inception Stage. Each selected startup will be eligible to receive a grant of up to €10,000, contingent on the successful completion of project activities and deliverables.





- Mandatory activities:
  - Virtual kick-off session with the Open Horizons consortium and corporate partners.
  - **Training workshop** on the Business Model Canvas (BMC).
  - **1:1 onboarding meeting** with the assigned corporate partner.
  - **Evaluation interview** with the programme team and corporate representative.
- Deliverables to be submitted:
  - D1.1: Business Model Canvas, tailored to the selected corporate use case.
  - D1.2: Pilot Planning Document (5-month roadmap), outlining:
    - Key activities and milestones.
    - KPIs to be tracked during the pilot (e.g., user/customer acquisition, integration with corporate systems, feedback from users/corporate staff, technical feasibility, number of issues encountered/resolved, etc.).

Only startups that **fully participate in all required activities** and submit both deliverables in line with the minimum quality standards will be awarded the full €10,000 **grant**. Failure to comply will result in ineligibility for funding and the termination of participation in the programme.

## 3.2 Piloting Stage (5 months)

Out of the 11 startups, **5 will be selected** to advance to the Piloting Stage. This stage consists of a **five-month collaboration** with a matched corporate partner to implement the pilot solution outlined in the planning phase.

- Mandatory activities:
  - Follow up €KPIs monitoring, including:
    - User/customer acquisition rates within the corporate context





- Successful technical and/or operational integration into corporate systems or workflows
- Qualitative feedback from corporate staff and end-users
- Number and nature of issues encountered and resolved during the pilot implementation
- Participation in a final Demo Day to present results and achievements.
   This event is required to unlock the final €5,000 equity-free grant.
- **Project implementation**, active implementation of the pilot project in the corporate environment.
- Deliverables to be submitted:
  - D2.1: Mid-term progress Report. This report will assess the initial progress of the pilot based on the predefined KPIs and milestones and will serve as the basis for the first disbursement of €20,000.
  - D2.2: Final Review progress Report. A comprehensive summary of the pilot's implementation, documenting outcomes achieved against the KPIs and milestones (e.g., user acquisition, system integration success, feedback gathered, issues addressed), challenges encountered, and the overall impact of the solution within the corporate environment. The second disbursement of €20,000 will be granted upon successful achievement of the established objectives.

#### Funding breakdown:

- €10,000 granted upon submitted both deliverables in line with the minimum quality standards
- €20,000 disbursed after a successful mid-term review (M4) assessing progress against initial KPIs.

Guidelines for applicants Open Horizons Open Call #1





- €20,000 granted upon successful **completion of the pilot project (M6)** and validation from the corporate partner.
- €5,000 awarded upon active participation in the Final Demo Day (M6), where startups will showcase their results to corporates, investors, and innovation stakeholders.

The total grant available during the programme is up to €55,000 per startup.

## 3.3 Follow-on (3 months, 1 session/month)

Following the completion of the pilot, startups enter a crucial phase focused on scaling their solutions and unlocking further commercial and investment opportunities. This stage is designed to strengthen the startup's visibility and position within the market:

- Corporate Venture Capital Engagement: Startups will benefit from structured introductions to Corporate Venture Capital (CVC) arms of the collaborating corporates. The aim is to facilitate follow-on funding or the formation of strategic partnerships, with a particular focus on aligning startup innovations with the corporations' investment strategies and sustainability objectives.
- Commercial Opportunity Exploration: Startups will have access to meetings with
  potential customers within and beyond the initial corporate teams, led by INNOVX
  and MIGROS. This includes facilitated introductions to new industry contacts,
  enabling the exploration of additional use cases and entry into new markets.
- Joint Ventures Approach: Where applicable, INNOVX will support the initiation of joint venture discussions between corporates and startups, aiming to scale the solution and amplify its impact in the market through shared value creation and long-term collaboration.





Proposed activities, led by INNOVX (with support from MIGROS):

#### Investor & Partner Activation

#### INNOVX and MIGROS will facilitate high-level introductions to:

- Corporate Venture Capital (CVC) units of partner corporations
- Strategic investors and venture funds
- Decision-makers from corporates outside the initial pilot These meetings aim to explore co-investment opportunities, spinoffs, licensing deals, and potential M&A interest.

#### **Commercialization Support**

Startups will receive tailored support to:

- Transition from pilot to commercial contract
- Negotiate long-term collaboration frameworks (e.g., framework agreements, licensing terms)
- Map additional use cases for their technology within the corporate ecosystem

#### **Strategic Scaling Pathways**

INNOVX & MIGROS will mentor selected startups on:

- Entering new markets based on initial pilot traction
- Building long-term joint ventures with corporate partners
- Preparing for international fundraising or procurement opportunities

#### Visibility & Outreach

Participation in curated demo showcases, investor briefings, and speaking opportunities across the Open Horizons ecosystem to maximize exposure.

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## 3.4 Open Science

Open Horizons promotes Open Science in line with European Commission principles encouraging all beneficiaries to share results and publications early through preprint servers or public repositories make use of open platforms such as OpenAIRE to disseminate research outputs and when appropriate publish deliverables and materials under Creative Commons licenses to ensure broad access and reuse enhancing transparency collaboration and impact across the innovation ecosystem

## 4. Proposal submission process

## 4.1 Overall process

Submissions will be done ONLY via the <u>Sploro Platform</u>, and it will be the unique entry point for all applications. Applications submitted by any other means will not be considered or evaluated. ONLY the documentation included in the submission will be considered by evaluators.

A full list of applicants will be drafted containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity (which will also be shared with the EC for transparency). The application reception will close on **21.08.2025**, **at 17:00H\* CEST (Brussels time)**. There will not be any deadline for extension unless there is a Force Majeure situation, caused by the Open Horizons consortium and not by the applicants, which renders the system unavailable.

\*The deadline for submission is as stated in this Guidelines. Please note that the platform for submission's time depends on the user's configured zone and may or may not coincide with the correct time (this depends on the user, not the platform for submission). Any discrepancies in system time will not be grounds for deadline extension.





## 4.2 Helpdesk

For any questions or support needs, applicants may contact the Open Horizons team via the dedicated helpdesk at <u>info@openhorizonsproject.eu</u>. The team aims to respond within two working days. To ensure timely assistance, applicants are advised to plan their submissions carefully and reach out well in advance of the deadline, at least two working days prior, if they expect a response.

Please be aware that messages sent outside this official support channel will not be processed. All queries related to the submission system, or the call must be directed exclusively to the above email. Requests received less than two working days before the call deadline will not be reviewed or answered. Failure to receive a reply in time will not be considered valid grounds for deadline extensions or proposal re-evaluation.

#### 4.2.1 Technical issues

Applicants should be aware that it is best practice to submit at least two days before the deadline, to avoid any technical issues that can occur when there is a very high volume of activity on the online platform.

If you do experience technical issues preventing your submission in some way, this must be reported to the Helpdesk team **BEFORE** the official deadline. Anything received AFTER the deadline, even if just a minute later, will not be considered nor investigated.

At the event that you encounter technical issues, please contact the Helpdesk clearly explaining what you are experiencing, including any error messages or unexpected behaviour. Specify the steps leading up to the problem, so that it can be replicated it. Include a timestamp screenshot of your entire screen or the specific part where the issue is visible. Ensure that the screenshot includes the system clock or another form of a timestamp. If applicable, provide any other relevant details such as the device, operating system, and browser you are using.



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Even if you have a timestamped screenshot showing the error taking place beforehand, if the message with the screenshot does NOT reach the Helpdesk before the deadline, it will not be considered nor investigated. The time log of when the initial report reaches the Helpdesk email is the only factor that will be considered. If an applicant provides a screenshot showing that, on their end, an email was sent before the deadline, but this time does not match with the time log on the end of Helpdesk, it is always the Helpdesk's time log that will be considered.

Do not wait until the last moment to report technical issues to our Helpdesk. It is recommended that you attempt to submit your work at least 48 hours before the official deadline to avoid any unforeseen problems.

Any communication stating technical issues received after the call deadline will not be considered nor taken into account.

4.2.2 Amendment of submitted applications

The call deadline is final. No exceptions of any kind will be made, regardless of any personal circumstance that may have affected you on the day of the deadline. The Open Horizons team and the Helpdesk will not re-open or amend your application, nor consider any extra information or documentation sent to it after the deadline.

If an applicant discovers an error in a submitted application or aims to improve the application, the applicant may submit a new version provided the call deadline has not passed. In order to facilitate this step, the applicant must get in touch with the Helpdesk requesting to reopen the application. Applicants will be able to modify all answers of the application form as many times as needed until the deadline. Please be aware that once opened, the applicants should submit the completed form again before the set deadline or it will not be evaluated. Once resubmitted, only the last version received before the call deadline will be considered for evaluation. Failure to resubmit will result in the proposal not being evaluated.





Resubmission requests will be answered up to two days before the call deadline (subject to limitations described below). It is imperative that you title your email's subject with the words "REOPENING OF SUBMITTED APPLICATION" so that our team can quickly see it and action it. The helpdesk cannot guarantee a timely response during the last two days of the open call. Consider this when writing your proposals. Failure to follow the above instructions would not be grounds for an extension or re-evaluation of a proposal

## 4.3 Application format and submission

The application form is structured into several sections designed to evaluate the alignment with the objectives of the Open Horizons programme, and assess the proposal's **excellence**, **impact**, and **implementation capacity**.

The online application form is divided into the following sections:

#### 1. Legal and Contact Information

This section gathers essential information about the applicant and the organisation:

- Applicant details: Name, position, email, and phone number.
- Organisation information: Legal name, registration country, TAX registration number, address, website.
- Eligibility self-declaration: Applicants must confirm that their organization:
  - Application form properly completed and in English
  - o Is a legally established entity in an eligible country.
  - o It is a digital and/or deep-tech startup
  - $\circ$   $\;$  Is founded or co-founded by women.
  - A woman founder or co-founder currently holds a key management position (e.g. CEO, CTO)
  - $\circ$   $\,$  Has at least 25% of its shares owned by women.





- $\circ$   $\,$  Is between 6 months and 6 years old at the time of submission
- Meets the definition of a startups according to the Horizon Europe criteria and qualifies as a SME as defined by the European Comission.
- Startups must have raised no more than €1M in equity before the submission date
- o Is free from any conflict of interest with consortium partners
- The proposal has not been previously funded, fully or partially, by any other initiative.

#### 3. Project Description

Applicants must provide a brief overview of the proposed project in response to one of the published corporate challenges:

- Selected challenge addressed.
- Summary of the proposed innovation and value proposition.

#### 4. Technical Excellence

This section evaluates the project's scientific and technological strength:

- Clear definition of objectives.
- Explanation of how the proposed solution addresses the selected challenge.
- Description of the innovation's uniqueness and advancement over existing solutions.

#### 5. Impact

Here, applicants must demonstrate the potential of their innovation in terms of:

- Business plan and market strategy.
- Expected socio-economic and environmental impact.

#### 6. Implementation

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This section assesses the capacity of the team to successfully carry out the project:

- Role and involvement of implementation team
- Team's experience, motivation, and complementary skills.
- Activity plan. Quality and feasibility of the work plan and timeline.
- Gantt Chart
- Risk assessment and mitigation strategy

#### 7. Privacy Policy

Applicants must acknowledge the data privacy terms under the Open Horizons programme, in accordance with the EU GDPR.

#### 8. Ethics assessment

- The applicant confirms that the project will comply with fundamental ethical principles and all applicable EU legislation.
- No activities involving unethical practices (e.g. discrimination, exploitation, or misuse of technology) will be carried out within the proposed project.

#### 9. Declaration of Honour

Applicants must confirm and certify that:

- All information provided is accurate and truthful.
- They commit to participate if selected, with stable funding and sufficient resources.
- They are not subject to any exclusion situations (e.g. administrative sanctions, conflicts of interest).
- They have not received previous funding under the same initiative.

In addition, applicants must submit the CVs of the relevant team members. These must be uploaded in <u>PDF format</u> through the SPLORO platform.





## 4.4 Application preparation

To ensure your proposal is successfully submitted to the Open Horizons first open call, it is strongly recommended that the following step be followed:

- 1. Review eligibility and the call documentation: Begin by consulting these guidelines for applicants and verifying your organisation's eligibility.
- Complete the online application thoroughly: Applications must be submitted via the online platform, with all sections completed accurately. Ensure that all required documents listed in the call are uploaded. Incomplete submissions, whether due to missing answers or missing documents, will not be considered.
- Prepare the required documentation in advance: Certain documents needed in the signature of the sub-grant agreement may take time to obtain. Applicants are encouraged to consult Section 4.4 and account for the time needed to gather these materials in advance.
- 4. Be clear and concise: Provide precise and to-the-point responses. Open questions have character limits, so structure your answers accordingly.

It is recommended to carefully review all official open call documentation and participate in at least one of the dedicated online "Info Days". These sessions will take place on:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Info Day: 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2025, 14:00 CEST (Brussels)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Info Day: 16<sup>th</sup> of July 2025, 10:00 CEST (Brussels)

The sessions will be recorded and made available on the website later on.

## **5. Proposal Evaluation and Selection Process**

#### 5.1 Evaluation process

The evaluation of Open Horizons proposals is based on a five-step approach:

1. Eligibility check,

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- 2. Automatic red flags,
- 3. Remote evaluation,
- 4. Normalisation of results and
- 5. Interview

The evaluation process is shown in the following figure.



#### Step 1: Eligibility criteria for startups

An automatic filtering process will be carried out to discard non-eligible proposals based on the following criteria:

- All documents and application forms must be properly completed in **English**, and all necessary documents must be uploaded.
- The startup operates within the digital and/or 'deep-tech' sector and is clearly linked to the strategic digital technologies and deep-tech domains listed in the call.
- The startup is **founded or co-founded by women** holding a top management position (CEO, CTO or equivalent) in the company at the time of submission.
- Women should own at least 25% of the shares of the company at the time of submission.
- The startup exists as a legal entity.

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- The company is established in an eligible country or region.
- At the time of submission, the company must have been registered for a minimum of 6 months and have been in operation for less than 6 years.
  - Under Horizon Europe, a *start-up* is understood as a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) in the early stages of its life cycle. This includes newly established companies, particularly those created as spin-offs from university research activities, that aim to deliver innovative solutions and develop scalable business models. Such entities **must be autonomous** within the meaning of <u>Article 3 of the Annex to Commission</u> <u>Recommendation 2003/361/EC.</u>
  - o In addition, start-ups must meet the criteria of an SME as defined in <u>Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC</u>, namely:
    - Employing fewer than 250 persons (measured in Annual Work Units – AWU);
    - Having an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.
- The company must not have raised over 1M EUR in equity by the submission date.
- The proposal is unique and has not already been partially or fully funded by any other initiative (to avoid double funding).
- Startups must not have any conflict of interest with any of the <u>consortium</u> <u>partners</u>.

Proposals failing to meet **<u>any</u>** of the eligibility criteria will be automatically rejected, and applicants will receive a rejection letter with the reasons for ineligibility.

#### Step 2: Automatic red flags check

This step involves an automated filtering process to assess whether startups align with the programme's objectives. Four key indicators, or "red flags," will be evaluated:

1. Whether the startup has the capacity to survive without grants.



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- 2. Whether the company demonstrates a strong orientation towards growth.
- 3. Whether the startup has an interest in scaling and attracting investors.
- 4. Whether the startup is genuinely deep-tech-focused.

Only those applications that pass this automatic filtering will proceed to the next phase. The number of filtered applications will be limited to a maximum of 50 to ensure a manageable evaluation process.

#### Step 3. Remote evaluation

A panel of external evaluators with expertise in entrepreneurship, R&D, technology, and business development will assess the remaining applications. Each proposal will be reviewed by two independent evaluators and scored based on:

1) Excellence: *Excellence* is evaluated according to the following criteria:

a) Alignment with the challenge proposed by the corporate partner and chosen by the startup.

b) Degree of innovation (i.e., going beyond the state-of-the-art, chances to succeed, and its feasibility).

c) Feasibility, technical approach and expected impact

d) Implementation of Open Science practice during the project.

2) Implementation: The Implementation is evaluated according to the following criteria:

a) Team composition and expertise – The evaluators will assess the qualifications, motivation, and commitment of the team members involved in the project. Particular attention will be paid to the relevance of their experience and skills in relation to the project objectives, as well as their roles and responsibilities in the implementation process.





b) Clarity and coherence of the work plan – The proposed activities must be clearly defined, logically structured, and appropriate to the project's current development stage. The evaluation will consider how well these activities contribute to achieving the project's goals, the presence of interdependencies or critical paths, and the mechanisms for monitoring progress.

c) Project timeline and structure – The quality of the Gantt chart will be evaluated in terms of completeness, timing, allocation of responsibilities, and alignment with the proposed activities and milestones over the 6-month period.

d) Risk management – Applicants must demonstrate awareness of potential technical, operational, and external risks and present appropriate mitigation strategies. Evaluation will focus on the realism of the identified risks and the robustness of the proposed responses.

e) Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) – Consideration will be given to how the applicant plans to manage intellectual property related to the innovation, including existing protections (e.g., patents, copyrights), open-source strategies, or plans for future registrations (e.g., utility models). The alignment of the IPR approach with the overall business and dissemination strategy will be assessed.

3) Impact: The *Impact* is evaluated according to the following criteria:

a) Relevance and innovation potential of the proposed solution in addressing a clearly identified deep-tech challenge, including its capacity to drive transformation within its target market or sector. The evaluators will assess how well the solution responds to an existing need and its potential for meaningful, scalable, and sustainable impact.

b) Implementation readiness and market entry potential, considering how effectively the proposed innovation bridges the gap between research and real-





world application. This includes its technical feasibility, compatibility with current systems or environments, and readiness for deployment in relevant use cases.

c) Contribution to strategic transitions, such as the green, digital, and social transitions, will be positively considered where relevant. Solutions aligned with broader EU priorities and capable of reinforcing sustainable and inclusive development are encouraged.

Proposals will be evaluated **by two independent evaluators** (technical and business profile), who will receive evaluation guidelines, templates, and information on process timing and conflict of interest rules. Evaluation documents will follow the consortium's expertise and the European Commission's standards. Evaluators and experts will sign a declaration of impartiality and confidentiality.

Each evaluator will score proposals on a scale of 0 to 5 (half points permitted), based on the previous three criteria. The score definitions range from 0 (fails to address the criterion) to 5 (successfully addresses all aspects). A proposal must score at least 3 in each criterion and 10 overall to be considered for funding.

SCORE	DEFINITION
0	The proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to
	missing or incomplete information.
1	<b>Poor</b> – criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent
	weaknesses.
2	Fair – The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant
	weaknesses.
3	Good - The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of
	shortcomings are present.
4	<b>Very good</b> – proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number
	of shortcomings are present.





5	The proposal <b>successfully addresses</b> all relevant aspects of the criterion.
	Any shortcomings are minor.

#### Table 2. Criteria score

The final score will be an average of the individual assessments, adjusted for bias. The external evaluation will produce a shortlist of applicants, twice the number of projects to be funded in each open call.

At the end of this step, a shortlist of applicants will be created, ensuring at least **two eligible startups per challenge** category and maintaining a number of shortlisted applicants that is **twice the number of projects** to be funded in each open call.

#### Step 4: Normalisation

Given that each proposal will be evaluated independently by two different experts, it is natural for scoring variations to occur due to differences in perspectives, criteria interpretation, or personal judgment. These variations can sometimes lead to discrepancies that might unfairly advantage or disadvantage certain proposals.

To ensure fairness and consistency in the evaluation process, a **mathematical normalisation process** will be applied. This method adjusts the scores given by different evaluators to create a balanced and standardised ranking system. By applying this approach, it can prevent situations where one evaluator's stricter or more lenient scoring significantly impacts the overall ranking of a proposal.

The normalisation criterion will be applied by following the steps below:

1) Calculate the Total Average Score: This is the overall average of all scores given by all evaluators across the proposals.

2) Calculate the Average Score per Evaluator: This is the average score awarded by each evaluator.



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3) Determine the Evaluation Deviation Factor: Compare each evaluator's average score with the Total Average Score to calculate their personalised Evaluation Deviation Factor. This indicates whether an evaluator is generally more positive or negative than average.

4) Adjust the individual scores: Add 1 to the evaluator's Deviation Factor, then multiply it by each of their original scores. This produces normalised scores that correct for individual evaluator bias.

5) Calculate the final score for each proposal: Take the average of the normalised scores provided by all evaluators.

The normalisation process minimises potential biases and ensures that all startups are assessed on a level playing field. This leads to a more objective and equitable selection process, allowing the most promising and high-potential startups to advance to the final stages of evaluation.

#### Step 5: Interview Stage

The **22 highest-ranked startups** from the remote evaluation will be invited to an online interview. The objective of this stage is to gain a deeper understanding of:

- The company's business concept.
- The startup's suitability to solve the selected challenge
- The team's skills and competence.
- The startup's growth potential and scalability.
- The strategic fit of the company with the programme.

These interviews will be conducted by corporate members and, if needed, by external experts.

At the end of the evaluation process, the final ranking of proposals will determine the selected startups for the acceleration programme.





## 5.2 Final Selection

At the end of the evaluation process, all proposals will be ranked on their scores, and the best proposals will be invited to sign the sub-grantee agreement and participate in the programme.

The list of accepted proposals after the interview will be communicated (around 10/10/2025), as well as the information about the non-eligible proposals. All applicants will be informed of the evaluation results, receiving an evaluation summary report (ESR) via the Sploro platform. No information about the evaluation process will be disclosed before.

The criteria for the ranking of the proposals at the interview will be published, as well as the information about the non-eligible proposals.

## 5.3 Appealing procedure

The Open Horizons consortium recognises the importance of a fair and transparent evaluation process. Therefore, applicants who believe that a mistake or procedural error may have occurred during the assessment of their proposal, particularly one that could affect the outcome of the funding decision or eligibility status, may initiate an appeal under the following procedure:

- Appeals must be submitted within five calendar days of receiving the evaluation results. The request must include clear justification and any supporting evidence (e.g., screenshots, relevant documentation) that substantiates the claim.
- Upon receipt of a complete appeal, the Open Horizons team will review the matter to determine whether a reassessment is warranted. A formal response will be issued within twenty calendar days, provided all necessary information has been submitted. In the event of a delay, the applicant will be notified and given a revised timeline.





• If the review concludes that a re-evaluation is justified, the updated assessment will supersede the original outcome, without any further adjustments. This ensures swift resolution while maintaining procedural integrity.

Please note that **only one appeal per proposal** will be considered. The outcome of this process is final and will not be subject to further discussion.

## 5.4 Validation of the legal entity

Before finalising the list of accepted applicants, a thorough validation of the legal entities will be conducted. This process involves submitting various documents to ensure compliance with the Open Horizons programme's requirements.

To speed up the validation process it is highly recommended that the applicants validate their legal entity via the Funding & Tenders portal. To get validated you should refer to the official guide <u>HERE</u>.

The required documents for validation include:

- To validate the identity and the power of attorney of the person who will sign the sub-grantee, Open Horizons will ask for the ID number and an ID scanned copy of the signatory. On the scanned copy, personal information included on the ID card could be covered if not relevant for the contract signature, such as religion, ethnicity and/or personal address. The picture, expiry date, name, surname, gender, number of the document and nationality should be visible without exception. Open Horizons will also ask for the power of attorney of the person who will sign the Sub-grantee agreement.
- SME declaration (see <u>Annex 2</u>): a form based on the standard templates by the EC in which Open Horizons can verify the ownership structure and financial figures to verify the size of the company.
- **Balance Sheet and P&L accounts** for the last two closed years (if applicable) and the most recent CAP table (shareholding distribution). In companies with linked or





associated entities, additional information (accounts for mother companies, group trees, etc.) could be requested.

- For entities that are already validated by the European Commission's Funding and Tenders Portal that have a registered and validated PIC Number, it will be requested:
  - The PIC Number and a screenshot of the Funding and Tender portal, in which it's evidenced that the type of organisation which has been selected as beneficiary is required.
- For entities without a validated PIC number or a validated status (like self-declared SMEs), we will request:
  - Legal entity form. The Legal Entity form for private companies and public law bodies is necessary for the awarding of EU funding. Company Register, Official Journal and so forth, showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and public law bodies necessary for the awarding of EU funding. Company Register, Official Journal and so forth, showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number, and
- VAT Number registration (if applicable), a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent)

## A legal entity that does not provide the requested data and documents in due time will not be awarded.

At the same time, the Financial Identification Form (FIF) and back account validation documents will be requested:

- **Financial Identification Form (FIF)**: Form identifying the account to which the funds will be transferred, signed by the legal representative of the organisation.
- Bank Statement (not older than 6 months) showing the ownership of the account.

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#### 5.5 Sub-grantee agreement

Once the legal entity validation is completed, a formal sub-grantee agreement will be signed with the selected applicants. All legal aspects will be comprehensively addressed in the sub-grant agreement. This contract will include specific provisions arising from the Horizon Europe framework for cascading grants, details of the payment schedule and conditions (such as milestone achievements), and standard legal clauses outlining the rights and obligations of both the Open Horizons consortium and each sub-grantee, including matters related to intellectual property rights (IPR).

Only upon signing this agreement will beneficiaries gain full access to the Open Horizons programme services.

## 5.6 Ethical committees

The Open Horizons project itself does not directly develop or deploy deep-tech solutions, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), but plays a pivotal role in supporting startups that do. Recognizing the profound impact that AI can have on various stakeholders and the importance of ethical governance in its deployment, Open Horizons is committed to establishing ethical committees. These committees will provide crucial support and guidance to ensure that the AI technologies used by affiliated startups adhere to the highest standards of technical and social robustness. The ethical committees will be tasked with overseeing the development and implementation of AI systems to ensure they are accurate, reproducible, and capable of effectively managing failures inaccuracies. or Participation in the ethical committees' processes will be required for startups that are selected for support under the Open Horizons project. Startups developing or deploying AI-based solutions will be expected to cooperate by providing relevant



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documentation and engaging in periodic ethical reviews. This will ensure alignment with the project's standards on ethical AI deployment and enable tailored guidance for responsible innovation.

This oversight helps mitigate risks associated with AI deployment, ensuring that these technologies are reliable and function as intended while minimizing potential harm.

## 6. Rules and Conditions

#### 6.1 Language

**English is the only official language for the Open Horizons project**. Submissions done in any other language will not be eligible and will not be evaluated. All communication and materials will be in English, and deliverables will only be accepted if they are in English.

#### 6.2 Documents format

Unless otherwise stated in a specific question of the application form, any document requested in any phase of the selection process must be submitted electronically in **PDF format** without restrictions for printing.

#### 6.3 Absence of conflict of interest

Applicants must ensure the absence of any actual or potential conflict of interest throughout both the Open Horizons selection procedure and the full duration of the project. A conflict of interest may arise in any situation where the impartiality of individuals involved in either the evaluation or project implementation could be compromised. Such situations may stem from financial stakes, personal ties, or any other circumstance that might impair objective judgment.



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Each identified or suspected conflict of interest will be reviewed individually by the Open Horizons evaluation panel and relevant consortium members. Should an applicant be determined to have a conflict of interest, their application may be rejected.

Additionally, it should be emphasised that members of the Open Horizons consortium, including their affiliated organisations, staff, and long-term collaborators, are not eligible to apply or receive financial support via the open call, in accordance with the rules established by the European Commission.

#### 6.4 Data Protection

To process and evaluate applications, Open Horizons requires access to both personal and organisational data. SPLORO, acting as the open call coordinator, will serve as the Data Controller for all information submitted via the SPLORO platform in relation to this call.

The platform is fully compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR), ensuring a high standard of data protection and security. Consequently, all applicants must accept the SPLORO Platform terms to guarantee appropriate data handling and regulatory compliance.

For further details about SPLORO's data protection practices and implemented security measures, please consult their website: <u>https://sploro.eu</u>.

## 7. Beneficiaries' responsibilities

The selected Open Project organisations are indirectly beneficiaries of European Commission funding. As such, they are responsible for the proper use of the funding and ensure that the recipients comply with obligations under Horizon Europe's specific requirements. The obligations that apply to the recipients include:



## 7.1 Data protection and confidentiality

Throughout the implementation of the sub-project and for a period of 5 years following its conclusion, all parties are required to maintain strict confidentiality regarding any data, documentation, or other materials (in any format) designated as confidential at the time of signing the sub-grant agreement. This obligation only applies to such information explicitly marked as "confidential".

## 7.2 Promotion of the action and EU Funding visibility

The beneficiary is required to actively communicate and promote their involvement in the Open Horizons project. Outreach should be strategically tailored to various audiences, including the public and media, and must highlight the support received from the European Union. The Open Horizons Communication Team will provide guidance, materials, and assistance to ensure these communication efforts are effective.

Unless otherwise agreed by the European Commission or the Open Horizons coordinator, or unless impossible under specific circumstances, any communication or publicity activity related to the project, whether through digital channels, social media, events, printed or audiovisual materials, must:

- Include the EU emblem,
- Include the Open Horizons logo.

The EU emblem should be prominently displayed when used alongside other logos. Its use does not grant any exclusive rights and remains subject to general rules on third-party usage, meaning it must not be misappropriated or registered as a trademark. No prior authorisation from the Commission is required under these conditions. More details on the correct use of the emblem can be found on the Europa website.



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All communications made by the beneficiary must clearly state that the content reflects only the author's views and that neither the European Commission nor the Open Horizons consortium can be held responsible for any subsequent use of the information provided.

The European Commission and the Open Horizons consortium may publish, by any means and format, the following information:

- The name of the beneficiary;
- A general overview of the project;
- The amount of financial support planned and, after project completion, the final amount received;
- The geographical location of the project's activities;
- Records of dissemination activities and outputs;
- Publishable reports submitted by the beneficiary;
- Any multimedia content (photos, videos, web materials) provided during the project.

The beneficiary must ensure that all necessary rights and permissions are secured for such publications and that no third-party rights are infringed. In exceptional cases, and subject to approval from the Commission, the Open Horizons consortium may agree to withhold publication of specific information if its disclosure would jeopardise the beneficiary's security, academic or commercial interests.

#### 7.3 Financial audits and control

The European Commission (EC) retains the right to oversee beneficiaries' adherence to the financial support. This oversight may include financial audits, which can be carried out either by EC departments or by external auditors acting on their behalf, including bodies such as the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).





Beneficiaries are required to provide full access to all relevant records, data, and documentation requested for the purpose of such audits. Furthermore, all deliverables and supporting documents related to the sub-project must be retained by the beneficiary for a period of five years following the project's completion.

#### 7.4 Internal communication

Every chosen Open Call project is required to designate a primary contact who will serve as the coordinator throughout the OC project's execution:

- Provide any notice in writing to the Open Horizon's coordinator.
- Notify immediately of any change of persons or contact details to the Open Horizons' coordinator.

## 7.5 External communication and open data

All organisations selected for funding under Open Horizons will be publicly listed through the project's communication channels, including its website, social media platforms, and any other relevant outlets identified by the consortium. Additionally, details of the financial support provided to each beneficiary will be published in a publicly accessible dataset, which will be uploaded to an open-access repository, such as Zenodo.



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