

A List of Partners Is Not a Consortium



Start with the right programme — not with the call title

Not every project belongs in Horizon Europe.

Examples:

Horizon Europe

Research, innovation, collaborative R&D, pilots, demonstration and EU policy impact.

Digital Europe

Deployment of digital capacities: AI, cybersecurity, data, advanced digital skills, EDIHs and digital transformation.

LIFE

Environment, climate action, nature, circular economy and clean energy transition.

Innovation Fund

Industrial clean-tech deployment and greenhouse gas reduction.

CEF

Transport, energy and digital infrastructure.

EIC Accelerator

Startups and SMEs with breakthrough innovations and scale-up potential.

EDF

Collaborative defence research and development.

Official links:

Horizon Europe — https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

Digital Europe — <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/digital-programme>

LIFE — https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en

Innovation Fund — https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/eu-funding-climate-action/innovation-fund_en

EIC Accelerator — https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/eic-accelerator_en

European Defence Fund — https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf-official-webpage-european-commission_en

Example 1: Digital Europe is not "another Horizon Europe"

Digital Europe is focused on bringing digital technology to businesses, citizens and public administrations. It supports strategic capacity areas such as:

AI

Cybersecurity

Supercomputing

Advanced digital skills

Digital transformation

European Digital Innovation Hubs

Semiconductors through the Chips for Europe Initiative

Important distinction:

Horizon Europe asks:

Are we creating new knowledge or innovation?

Digital Europe asks:

Are we deploying digital capacity at scale?

Official link:

Digital Europe Programme – <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/digital-programme>

Example 2: Clean-tech project — Horizon Europe or Innovation Fund?

Use Horizon Europe when the project still needs:

- R&I
- Collaborative development
- Pilots
- Validation
- Demonstration
- Scientific or technical progress

Use Innovation Fund when the project is closer to:

- Industrial deployment
- Clean-tech scale-up
- Greenhouse gas reduction
- Commercial implementation
- Investment readiness

Saveable questions before choosing:

- What is the TRL?
- Is there a real industrial site?
- Can greenhouse gas reduction be quantified?
- Is the business case realistic?
- Can the project reach financial close?
- Is the innovation strong at EU level?

Official links:

Innovation Fund — https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/eu-funding-climate-action/innovation-fund_en

Horizon Europe — https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

Example 3: EU Missions need ecosystems, not only research partners

EU Missions focus on concrete goals by 2030.

Mission areas include:

- Climate adaptation
- Cancer
- Climate-neutral and smart cities
- Soil health
- Ocean and waters

A mission consortium often needs:

Research partners

Technology providers

Regions or cities

Hospitals or health actors

Soil, agriculture or environmental actors

Citizens and communities

Industry partners

Policy actors

End users

Replication partners

Saveable question: Who will use, test, adopt or scale the result after the project?

Official link:

EU Missions in Horizon Europe – https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe_en

Example 4: AI proposals need compliance thinking from day one

AI is no longer enough as a buzzword. AI-related proposals should clarify:

- **What data will be used?**
- **Who owns the data?**
- **Is the AI system high-risk?**
- **How is bias managed?**
- **How is human oversight ensured?**
- **How is transparency addressed?**
- **What cybersecurity risks exist?**
- **How will the system be validated?**
- **What happens after deployment?**

The EU AI Act applies progressively, with key implementation stages from 2025 to 2027.

Official links:

EU AI Act implementation timeline – <https://ai-act-service-desk.ec.europa.eu/en/ai-act/timeline/timeline-implementation-eu-ai-act>

AI Act official overview – <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/regulatory-framework-ai>

Example 5: Civilian technology can become dual-use

Dual-use potential is becoming more important in Europe.

Civilian technologies may become relevant for security and defence if they involve:



But defence funding is not normal Horizon Europe.

Before entering this area, check:

- Eligibility
- Consortium rules
- Security restrictions
- IP conditions
- End-user involvement
- National requirements
- Ethical and legal constraints

Official links:

European Defence Fund – https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf-official-webpage-european-commission_en

EIC defence and dual-use update – https://eic.ec.europa.eu/news/european-innovation-council-opens-defence-and-dual-use-technologies-2026-06-17_en

Partner search vs. consortium strategy

Partner search asks:

Who can join?

Consortium strategy asks:

Who makes the proposal fundable?

A strong consortium should answer:

- Who develops the solution?
- Who validates it?
- Who brings end users?
- Who has access to real data or pilots?
- Who connects stakeholders?
- Who owns exploitation?
- Who creates long-term impact?

Example: A soil project may need a university, technology provider, farmer network, municipality, testing site, policy actor and dissemination partner – not only "partners from 3 countries".

Useful official link:

Funding & Tenders Portal Partner Search – <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/partner-search>

What makes a consortium credible?

A strong consortium is not the biggest one. It is the one where every partner has a clear reason to be there.

Checklist:

Clear coordinator

No decorative partners

Each work package has a logical owner

Budget matches tasks

Pilots are realistic

End users are involved

Impact pathway is credible

Exploitation is planned early

Compliance risks are visible

Communication supports uptake

Submission timeline is realistic

Useful official links:

Funding & Tenders Online Manual – <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/manuals>

Horizon Europe reference documents – <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/reference-documents>

We are opening selected proposal discussions

Nexuswelt is preparing new EU funding directions for upcoming calls.

We will share selected topics around:

Programme fit

Autumn EU calls

Consortium strategy

EU Missions

AI compliance

Dual-use innovation

Clean-tech

Digital Europe

Interested in future proposal discussions or strategic partner roles?

Join our closed Nexuswelt group:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/24940004/>

Or send me a direct message.