Sustaining Digital Innovations: Getting Ready for EDIH 2.0

Information meeting for EDIHs national contact persons

8-12-2025

DG CNECT, AI Office - Artificial Intelligence Innovation and Policy Coordination / A4

Online Meeting Etiquette

- **Make sure you are correctly identified**

  (Country short name – full name)
  right click on name – edit display name

- Please keep your microphone muted when not speaking
- **How to ask the floor?**

  Please use the "Raise Hand" feature to indicate a desire to speak
  Unmute your mic only when the chair invites you to take the floor.
  Do not use the Chat function to start discussions.

- *Presentations are provided after the meeting*

European Commission

Agenda Sustaining Digital Innovations: Getting Ready for EDIH 2.0

- Welcome & Objectives
- What's new for EDIHs 2.0
- Details of this Call 09: eligible EDIHs, countries, budget
- AOB
- Closing

Q/A sessions are foreseen after each topic

European Commission

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Apply AI Strategy

→ **AI First :** help businesses to consider AI as a useful solution to tackle their challenges while also considering the risks

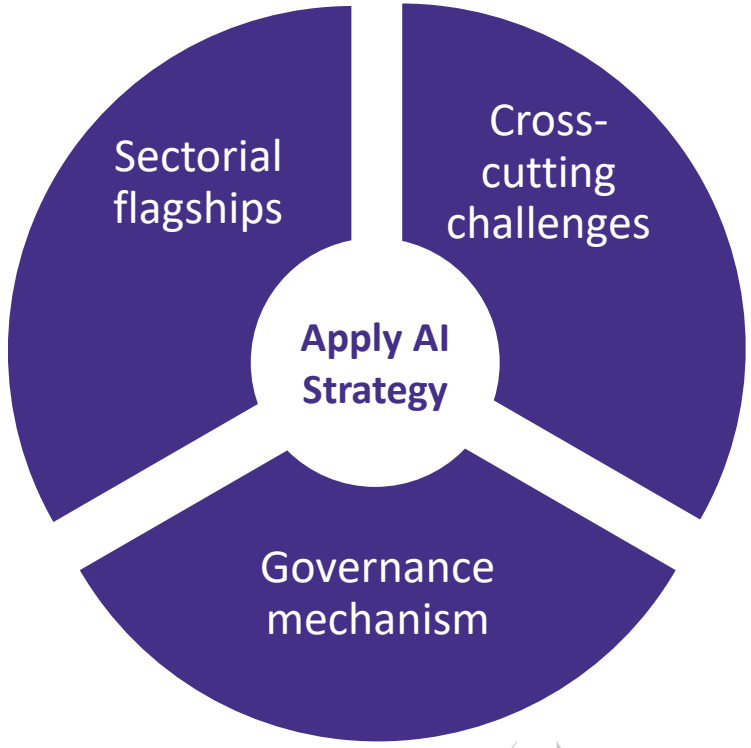
→ Support **adoption and integration of AI in 10 strategic industrial sectors** and the public sector

→ **Tailored actions to sector specific needs** to harnesses the transformative potential of AI

enhance competitiveness

further develop EU's technological sovereignty

Easy access point for European companies and SMEs via European Digital Innovation Hubs acting as AI Experience Centres



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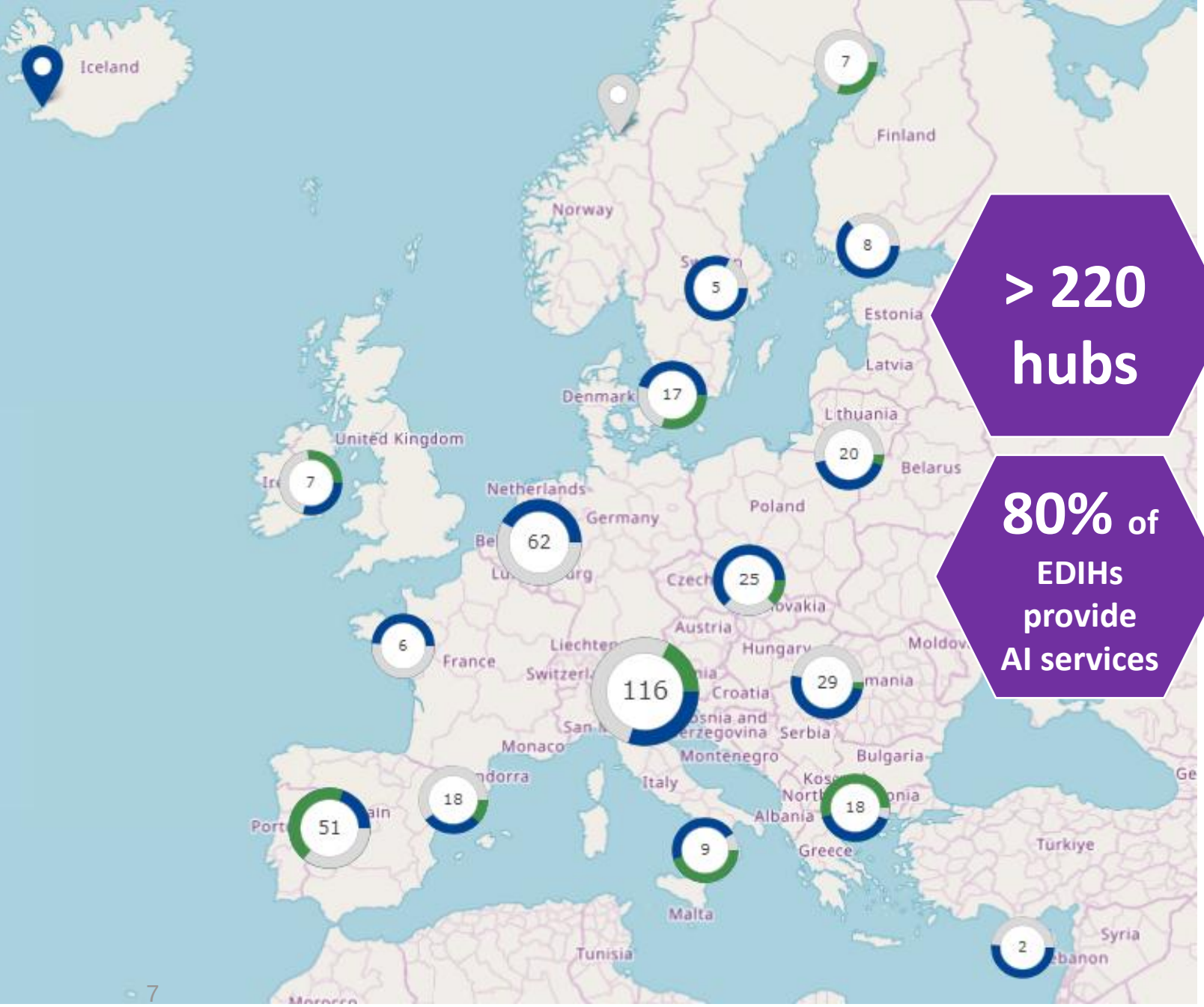

> 220 hubs

80% of EDIHs provide AI services

EDIHs v1.0 NETWORK OVERVIEW

- **169** EDIHs (co-funded by DEP)
- **76 Seals of Excellence** (funded by national authorities)
- **30 countries**: EU27 + Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein
- **7 newly associated countries** Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, Ukraine, Kosovo

36 types of tech

40 sectors

11 Thematic working groups

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AI in EDIHs 2.0: moving forward

- EDIHs are essential to **diffuse AI technologies** and **to support AI ecosystem** both for the companies building the technologies and for those making use of them
- Artificial intelligence is already a specific focus for the EDIH network
  - **9 out of 10 EDIHs already offer today services** related to these technologies
  - further prioritisation of **integrating AI technologies** into the vast majority of EDIHs' core activities
    - by delivering services that span from data acquisition and structuring to exploitation for greater competitiveness, in combination with other digital innovations
    - AI technologies will allow the EDIHs to provide more effective services, from automating routine tasks to enabling advance data analytics to monitor the Digital Maturity of their clients, which can offer deeper insights and drive better tailored services.
  - The EDIHs will also **leverage AI solutions to significantly enhance their own activities**

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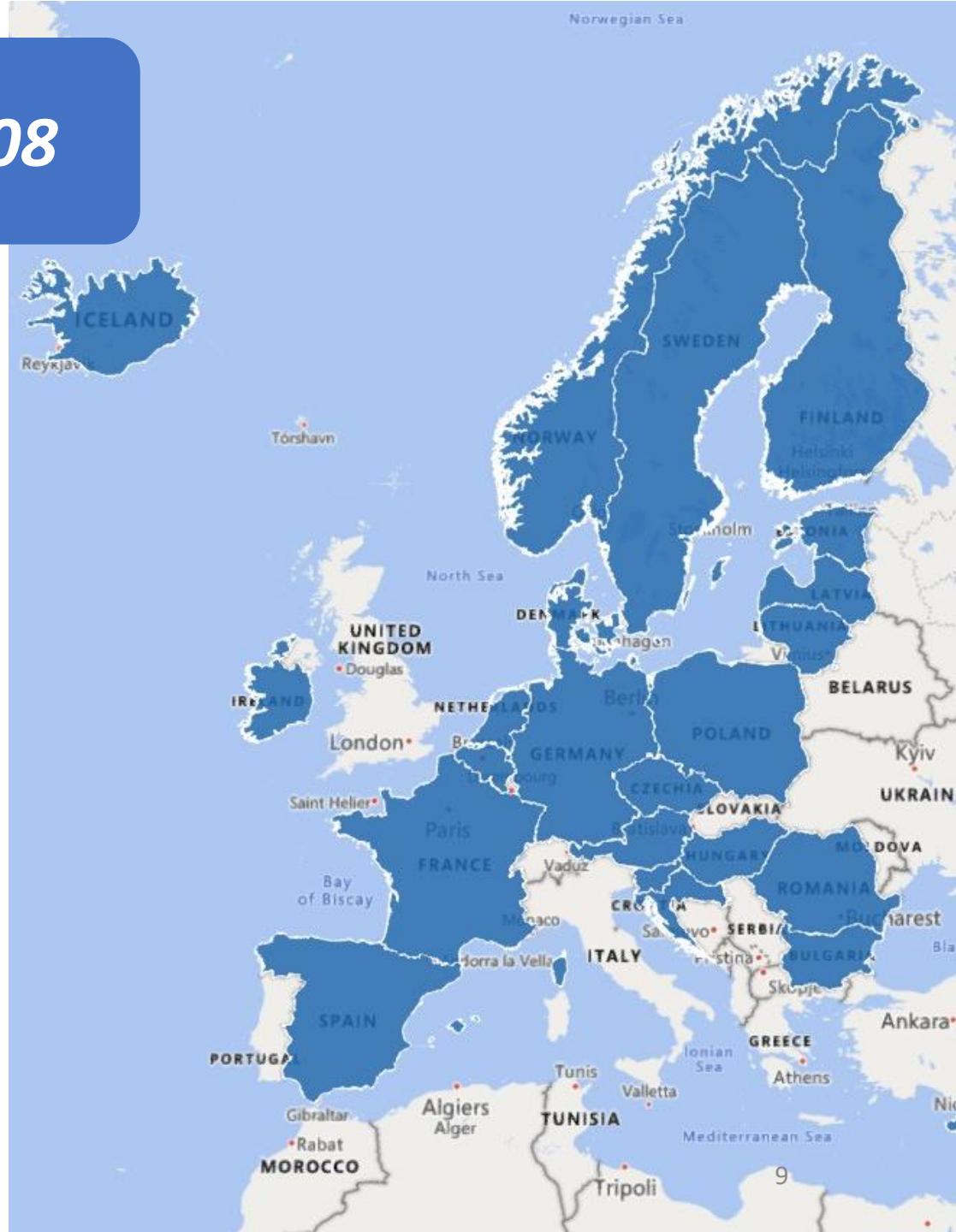
Outcome of the previous *Call 08*

a) Austria
b) Belgium
c) Bulgaria
d) Croatia
e) Cyprus
f) Czechia
g) Denmark
h) Estonia
i) Finland
j) France (regions)
k) Germany
l) Hungary
m) Ireland
n) Latvia
o) Lithuania
p) Malta
q) Netherlands
r) Poland
s) Romania
t) Slovakia
u) Slovenia
v) Spain
w) Sweden
x) Iceland
y) Norway

25 countries were eligible in **Call 08**
23 countries had EDIH submissions
⇨ **83 EDIHs** retained for funding, total €170 m
⇨ Currently in **Grant Agreement Preparation**
⇨ All above thresholds awarded the **STEP Seal**



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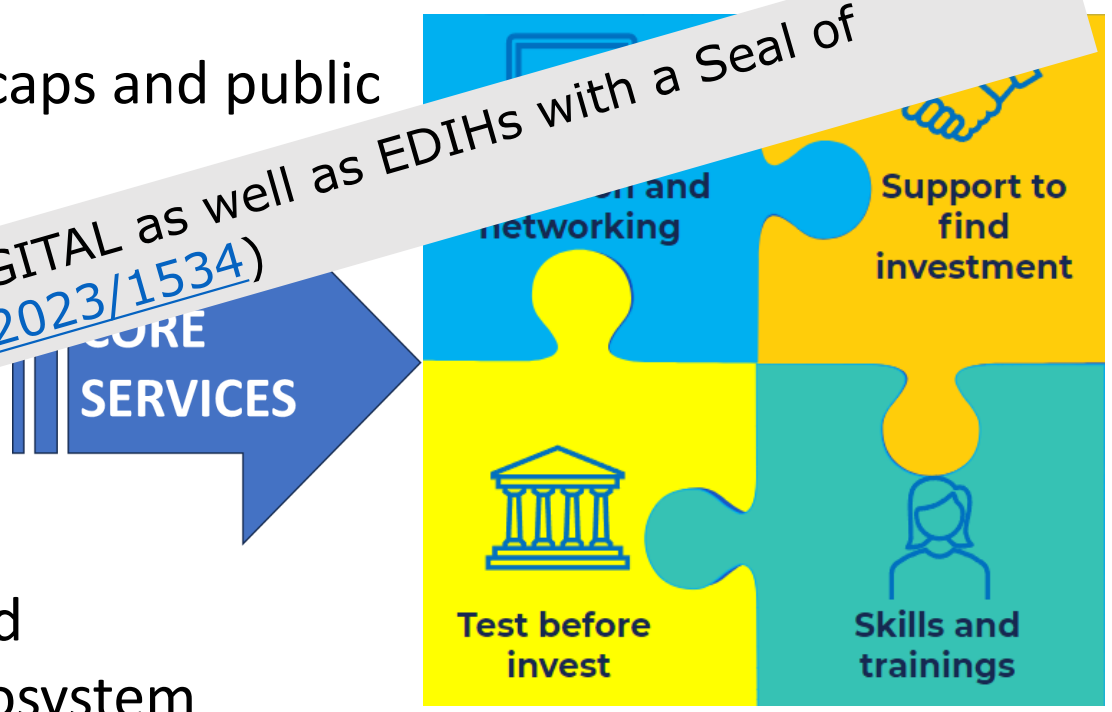
DIGITAL-2026-EDIH-EU-EEA-09 Call objective

Consolidating the EDIH network to *continue* to drive digital transformation

- based on the **needs** of Europe's SMEs, mid-caps and public services
- with a **reinforced AI focus**
  - For their clients &
  - For the[illegible]
- **Restricted Call**, open to all EDIHs funded by DIGITAL as well as EDIHs with a Seal of Excellence (Commission Implementing Decision 2023/1534)
- [illegible]**p shop** for companies looking for aid
  - Especially from the EU AI innovation ecosystem



Updated key EDIH Objectives

- Each EDIH will make available the **relevant experimentation facilities and demonstrators** related to its specialisation.
    - SMEs, mid-caps and the public sector will be able to demonstrate, prototype and test the technologies proposed, including where relevant their environmental impact, and the feasibility of applying these technologies to their business before further investing in it.
- **EDIHs complement and build synergies with existing regional and national initiatives,** bringing companies into contact with other companies of their value chain, seeking synergies with innovators and early adopters that test solutions in novel experiments and can foster the adoption of digital technologies, and notably AI, and **collaborate with the EU AI Innovation ecosystems**
- All together, **EDIHs will contribute to consolidation of a balanced network of EDIHs, ensuring the broadest coverage of regions in Europe**, addressing the needs of public and private sectors across all economic sectors, fostering cross-regional collaboration and resource sharing and offering a wide range of digitalisation services, from mainstream to specialised technologies.

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Expected outcomes

- The EDIHs will **act as a multiplier** and widely diffuse the **use of all the digital capacities** built up under the different specific objectives of the Digital Europe Programme and including the **effective use of key digital standards** *(that is, not necessarily AI)*
- To the extent possible, the EDIHs should **use the AI solutions of European start-ups and SMEs and/or those provided and stemming from EU projects, including from the AI-on-Demand Platform**
- Carry out **Digital Maturity Assessments for their clients**
  - *using the tools provided by the Commission and DTA*
  - *not all services need to be preceded by a Digital Maturity Assessment: however, EDIHs are encouraged to use it as often as practically possible*
- **Deliver services leading to greater digitalisation of their clients as well as to their adoption of AI**

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EDIH expected services

Each EDIH is expected to provide all four types of services

- **Test before invest**: providing access to technical expertise and experimentation facilities, in particular to AI-related services.
- **Training and skill development**: offering training sessions to SMEs and public services for upskilling and reskilling of the workforce, including on the adoption and use of AI technologies.
- Support to identify and facilitate **access to potential financing sources** to support digital transformation.
- Foster an **innovation ecosystem and networking opportunities**

They can however have different weights in the overall services portfolio

- The services will be provided on an open, transparent and non-discriminatory basis
- Services based on a specific focus and expertise, with particular focus on support to development, training deployment and uptake of European AI technologies
- This specialisation can be strengthened over time and should make use of existing local competencies in this area

AI focus of the EDIH Objectives

- Each EDIH will act as **an access point to the European network** of EDIHs, helping local companies and/or public actors to get support from other EDIHs (and vice-versa)
- EDIHs become **a central point for companies and public sector ensuring a flexible and seamless digital journey and referring them to the services provided by these AI innovation infrastructures where appropriate**
- The EDIHs will also offer a **first-line AI help desk** to businesses and public sector organisations:
  - providing **basic information on compliance with the AI Act** as well relevant sources of further information
  - ensuring a **broad adoption of strategic technologies** supporting the development of an **AI continent**

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Overall AI dimensions of EDIH 2.0

- **Build your own AI toolbox & competences**, to support the wide deployment and uptake of European AI algorithms, solutions and tools
- **Organise a flexible AI journey**: one-stop-shop for companies looking for aid from the **European AI innovation ecosystem**
- **Collaborate with AI Innovation Infrastructures** *such as AI factories and AI Testing and Experimentation Facilities*
- **Own use of AI** for EDIH internal work and processes

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A Landscape of AI Innovation Ecosystem*

- The EDIHs themselves!
- AI Factories
  - https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/ai-factories
- AI Testing and Experimentation Facilities (TEFs)
  - https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/testing-and-experimentation-facilities
- AI on Demand Platform, implemented through the Deploy AI Initiative
  - https://www.aiodp.ai/, https://deployaiproject.eu/
- and still to come:
  - AI Act Service Desk
  - AI Skills Academy
  - AI Regulatory sandboxes
  - …

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* https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/support-ecosystem-ai-innovation-europe

EDIHs & the AI Innovation Infrastructures

EDIHs will **collaborate** with the EU AI Innovation ecosystem and **become a central point for companies and public sector**

- **referring** them **to the services provided by the AI innovation infrastructures** where appropriate
- ensuring a **flexible journey** for European companies to **benefit fully from these AI innovation infrastructures**

It means that EDIHs have to map out these infrastructures, establish contacts with them and help their customer benefit from the services provided by the other initiatives in a client journey perspective, with the objective of accelerating the deployment of AI technologies

*This collaboration does **NOT** mean that EDIHs need to integrate a representative of each EU AI infrastructures in their own consortium*

*It should be **avoided that there is duplication of actions** of the other AI innovation infrastructures and the EDIHs, and therefore working arrangements will be agreed among them, where the focus of the EDIHs will be on their role as multiplier and reaching out to all regions in Europe*

❒ *Checklist: description of a flexible journey through AI Innovation Infrastructures (in particular, delivery and referral of AI services)*

A specific case: the AI helpdesk

DTA coordination of legal dimension: these helpdesks by EDIHs shall further coordinate with the DTA on replies and new questions on the **AI Act**

❒ *Checklist: description of the first-line AI helpdesk functions envisioned by the EDIH*

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KPIs for EDIHs with an AI focus

Proposals should define their indicators as well as their targets per indicator

The following indicators will be used to evaluate the performance of the hub:

- **Number of entities** which have used the European Digital Innovation Hubs' **services**, **by user category** (businesses of different sizes, public sector entities, etc.), **sector, location, by technology and type of service received** (test-before-invest, training, access to finance, networking)

- Specific sub-indicators have to be proposed when the services are **related to develop and uptake AI solutions, and will include a description of which European AI Innovation Infrastructures have been used** (such as the AI-on-Demand platform) or referred to (such as the AI Factories)

- Number of entity referral to European AI Innovation Infrastructures

- For access to finance: amount of additional investments successfully triggered (e.g. through venture capital, bank loan, etc.)

- Number of collaborations foreseen with other EDIHs and stakeholders outside the region at EU level, and description of jointly shared infrastructures / joint investments with other EDIHs

Additional KPIs

A set of additional impact indicators will be collected and analysed with the support of the Digital Transformation Accelerator:

- **Increase in digital maturity** of organizations that have used the services of the EDIH network
  - Digital maturity will be defined on the basis of a questionnaire assessing the categories of digital strategy and readiness, intelligence and automation, data and connectedness, sustainable and human-centric digitalisation
  - EDIHs will administer the questionnaire at the start of the engagement with a client, and later after having delivered services, and report without delay the results to the DTA repository
  - An updated simpler questionnaire is being developed by the Joint Research Centre.
- **Increase in number of companies benefiting from the use of European AI technology**

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  - **A 2nd Call for EDIHs 2.0**
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European Commission

Why a second EDIH v2 Call?

(1) DIGITAL budget still available

In some countries, the budget from Digital Europe programme was not spent or not fully spent, so the **country coverage was not started or not complete**. **This call will allow potential EDIHs to apply.**

(2) NATIONAL budget still available

Other countries expressed the intention to **fund further hubs using national or regional budget**, on condition that they are evaluated above threshold (STEP Seal). **A STEP Seal will be awarded to the proposals that will be evaluated above threshold, even if no budget is available in Digital Europe Programme for the country.** If Member States or regions **decide to fund those entities**, once they are in operation they will also be able to use the label "European Digital Innovation Hub" and **will be full members of the network**.

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Eligible EDIHs out of Call 09 text

1st opening EDIH v2 + "coverage" proposals + "STEP Seal" proposals (total expected: ~55)

This second call complements Call 08 and is therefore only opened for:

1) Designated potential EDIH for participating countries which have not submitted proposals in the call 08

2) Designated potential EDIH for participating countries in which the coverage after call 08 was not complete

3) **Designated potential EDIH aiming at getting the "STEP seal".** These proposals will **not receive any funding of Digital Europe Programme,** but their countries have the intention to support them with national funding. With the STEP Seal they will have the possibility to become full members of the EDIH network. EDIHs which have already received a STEP Seal after call 08 do not need to reapply.

Call 08 information are still available here

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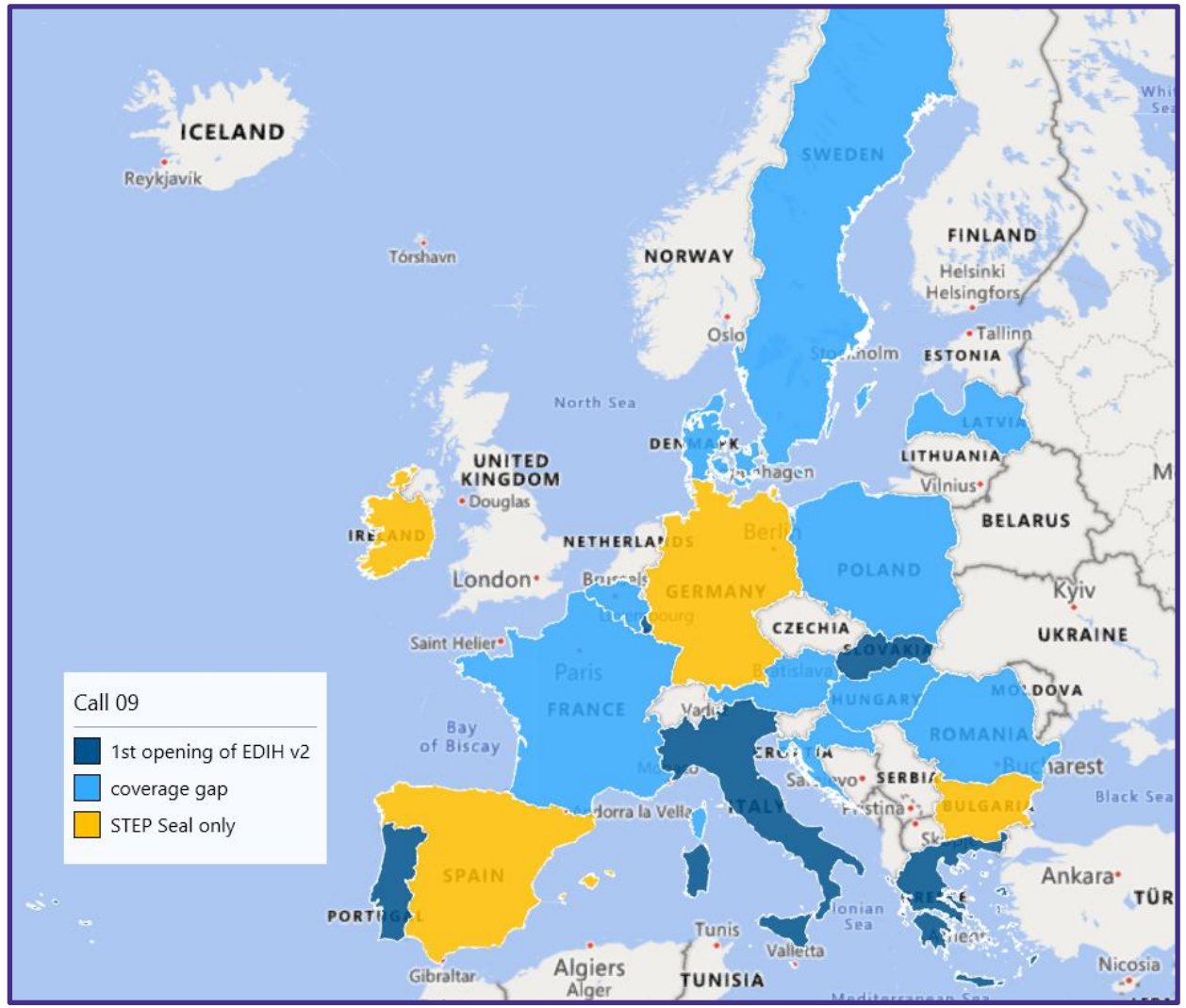
The next steps: Call 09



Opening Calls **by geography** is a feature of the EDIHs

1st submission Call 09:

a) *France* (other regions)
b) Greece
c) Italy
d) Liechtenstein
e) Luxembourg
f) Malta
g) Portugal
h) Slovakia

+ remaining gaps Call 08:

a) Austria
b) Belgium
c) Croatia
d) Denmark
e) Hungary
f) Latvia
g) Poland
h) Romania
i) Sweden

(with remaining national budget allocation)

+ Awarding the STEP Seal :

a) Bulgaria
b) Germany
c) Ireland
d) Spain

(no DIGITAL funding)

No Call 10 for EDIHs

Call funding and national budgets

DEP funding rate remains **50%**

the remaining % must be covered through other sources

(*RRF funding will not be available*)

Budget envelopes are allocated per country

The budget covers **a 3-year period**

National budgets

Fixed budget per country

MS are free to propose **more smaller EDIHs or less larger ones**

e.g. using their cofinancing as guideline

(DIGITAL grant will cover 50%)

	Projected budget from DIGITAL for 3 years (in 1 000 EUR)	Focus	Suggested number of hubs
Austria	1 082	Completion of Austrian EDIH landscape	1
Belgium	2 442	Flanders	1
Bulgaria	0	STEP Seal only	
Croatia	1 147	Country level	1
Denmark	1 939	Capital Region of Denmark & Region Zealand (AI), South Jutland (Energy sector)	1 - 2
France	15 129	Bourgogne Franche-Comte, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Occitanie, PACA, Corsica, La Reunion, Normandy, Loire Valley, Grand Est, Nouvelle Aquitaine, Paris Region	9 - 12
Germany	0	STEP Seal only	
Greece	6 740	Country level	2 - 4
Hungary	3 497	Reinforced AI (and HPC) EDIHs	1 - 2
Ireland	0	STEP Seal only	
Italy	24 393	Country level	8 - 13
Latvia	1 283	Country level	1
Liechtenstein	1 090	Country level	1
Luxembourg	1 925	Country level	1
Malta	1 925	Country level	1
Poland	2 229	Country level	1 - 2
Portugal	6 740	Country level	2 - 3
Romania	1 047	Territories insufficiently covered (notably Vest)	1
Slovakia	4 493	Country level	2 - 4
Spain	0	STEP Seal only	
Sweden	1 136	Priority sectors not covered so far	1

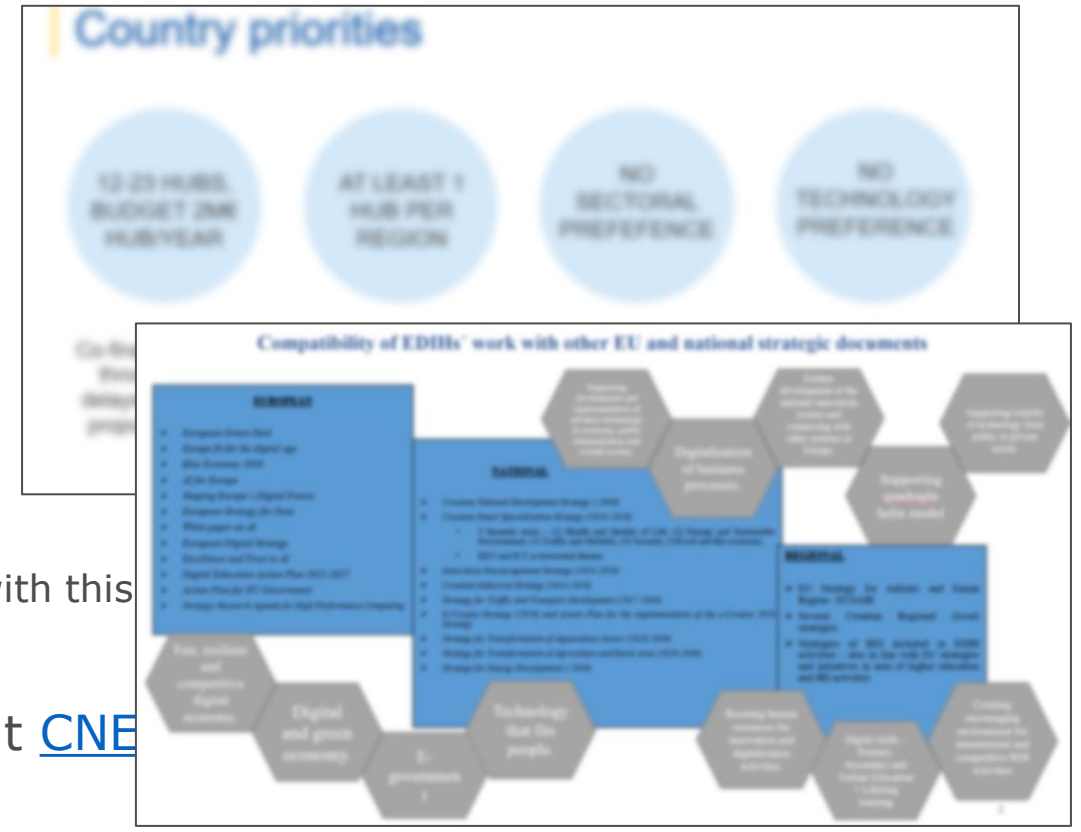
A suggestion for critical size of EDIHs, but not prescriptive

Estimated available call budget: **€79.2 million**

Please do not forget to update us with:

- **Your Digitalisation & AI strategy**
  - 3 slides (template proposed)
  - We will brief the evaluators of proposals of your country with this digitalisation & AI

Please feel free to contact us in case of questions at CNE



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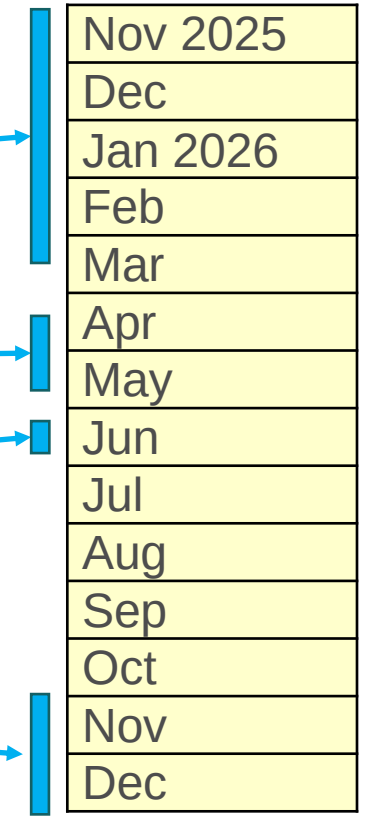
Call 09 Evaluation and Contract Timeline

- Call 2 EDIHs EU/EEA *(call 09)*
  - Open: 3 November – **3 March 2026 17:00 CET**
  - Evaluation: April-May
  - Information on evaluation results: June
  - Signature of the grant agreements: November-December



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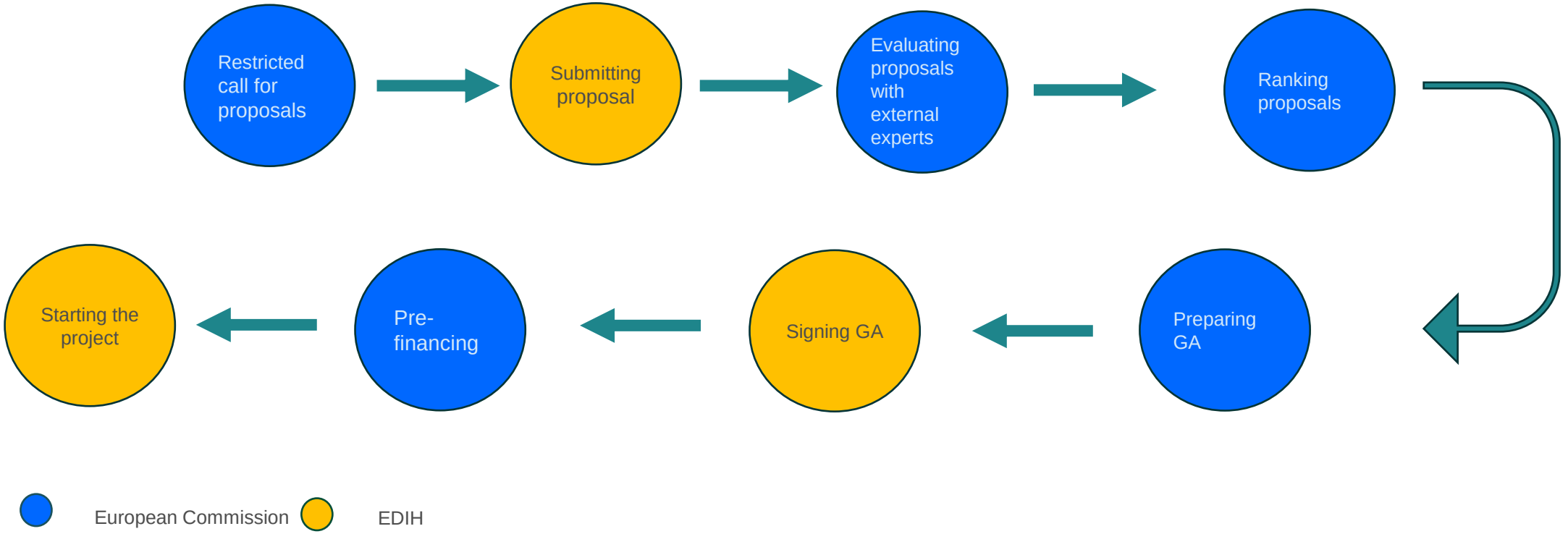
Selection process for the EDIHs



Key points

- Proposals must be submitted **before the call deadline**
- Proposals must be **submitted electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System
    - Paper submissions are NOT possible.
- Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided inside the Submission System
    - NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information
- Application must be **readable**, **accessible and printable** *(please check carefully the layout of the documents uploaded)*
    - Proposals are limited to maximum **70 pages** (Part B)
    - Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.
- EDIHs may be asked at a later stage for further documents *(for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc)*

For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects): Online Manual

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Key points (2)

- Proposals must be complete and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:
  - Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project (to be filled in directly online)
  - Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project (template to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded)
- At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants

European Commission

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Who can submit an EDIH proposal?

Call text section 6

Existing EDIHs and **Seals of Excellence** listed in the [Commission's Implementing Decision 2023/1534]

The consortium of each EDIH may be different, as the needs of businesses and public entities would have evolved

Consortium composition

If merger or split, EDIHs have to ensure a coherent set of objectives and efficient operations, convincingly described in the proposal

- A candidate EDIH **may change the composition of the original consortium, and/or the coordinating entity** of the EDIH
- In the case of several EDIHs submitting a joint proposal, the proposal will list **all the original EDIHs from which it originates**
- Two or more candidate EDIHs may be submitted from the same original EDIH consortium. However, in this case, after evaluation, **only one candidate EDIH *at most* will be retained as successor of the original EDIH**

❒ *Checklist: 2022 letter of designation by the Member State (original document demonstrating that the submitted proposal was designated by the Member State; the EC will verify the information submitted against the Commission Implementing Decision 2023/1534)*

❒ *Checklist: the candidate EDIH will indicate as previous proposal* ***the number(s) and acronym(s) of the original EDIH as listed in the Annexes of the Decision***

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Start date and duration

Starting date

- No overlap with previous Grant
- The project starting date will be fixed in the Grant Agreement
  - A retroactive starting date can be granted for duly justified reasons (continuity is a justified reason)
- Many questions have been answered: **please check the FAQ**

Project duration

- duration of **36 months**

❒ *Checklist: duration set to 36 months*

Provide the links to your previous activities

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Continuation from previous EDIHs

Continuation from previous achievements

- This Call reinforces the **continuation of EDIH services**
  - started either as an EDIH co-funded by the Programme or as an EDIH with a Seal of Excellence

- Proposals will **clearly describe how the proposal:**
  - **builds on previous achievements and**
  - **learns from past experience to ensure an efficient implementation**

⇨Description under the **Maturity** sub-criterion (Implementation criterion) and **Impact** criterion

❒ *Checklist: adding in **maturity** and **impact** sections previous achievements and how learnings help tackle past issues (if any)*

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From EDIH 1.0 consortium to EDIH 2.0

Consortium roles — When setting up your consortium, you should think of **organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems**

Several roles can also be chosen from:

- Main participants, **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**
  - **Affiliated entities** — entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves
    - affiliated entities get a part of the grant money (can submit eligible costs) and must demonstrate their affiliation link to your organisation
- Other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions
  - **Associated partners** and third parties bear their own costs, and are partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money. They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.

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Co-funding

You can use any of the possible co-funding sources, and including mix several sources

- DEP – 50% funding rate
- ERDF - operational programmes
- National/regional budget
- Private: EDIH own funding, client payments

SYNERGY GRANT

RRF - national R&R plans (not for 2025-27)

BUT ensure fairness of treatment – no arbitrary discrimination depending on the type of clients (e.g. do not give service for free to some while asking others to pay for the same service, *all other things being equal*)

EDIH Funding & Sustainability

- The total public funding for this action may be up to 100% of eligible costs
  - 50% coming from the Digital Europe Programme,
  - 50% coming from the mix of sources of funding
    - Member States/regions, sponsorship, fee by clients, …
  - Overall: the EDIH may not generate a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by the Commission at the end of the project.
- Proposals will describe **their co-funding sources** (e.g. public funding and remaining amounts to be paid by customers) and how they will achieve economic sustainability for their operations

❒ *Checklist: clear description of the "other" 50% (e.g. the expected cofunding)*

❒ *Checklist: budget table is an integral part of the evaluation*

❒ *Checklist: additional deliverable on the economic sustainability of the EDIH, to be submitted 18 months after the start*

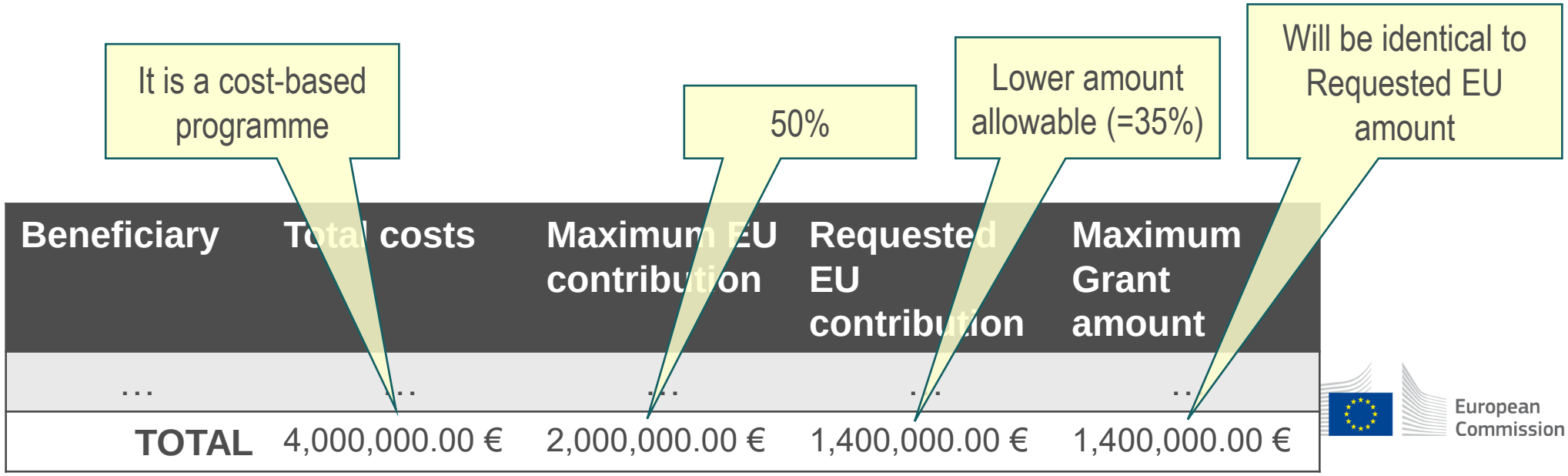
Type of action and funding rate

Simple Grants

With a **fixed 50% funding rate**

⇨ **Proposals may indicate a lower *EU grant requested amount* than the maximum amount possible under the 50% funding rate**

Example:



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  - **Cost eligibility, sustainability, list of services**
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Costs & Eligibility

- The grant will be a **budget-based mixed actual cost grant** (actual costs, with unit cost and flat-rate elements)
  - This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (**eligible costs**) and **costs that were *actually* incurred for your project** (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs and flat-rates, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement *(see Grant art 6)*
- The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement
  - EDIHs can ask for a requested amount lower than 50%
- Grants cover the costs of execution but may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs)
  - Profit or not is assessed at the final cost claims
  - However, asking businesses to contribute financially and cover part of your cost share is admitted

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Price List: a requirement in your proposal

Proposals have to **include a list of the services** to be provided to SMEs and public sector, and make available online

- The list will **enumerate the services by category**, indicating:
  - target clients, the nominal service price, the amount of State aid passed on by the EDIHs and the remaining amount that the clients have to pay, if applicable
  - A first list is a requirement in the proposal

This list is necessary to comply with the State aid regulations, even when the services will be offered for free or at a discount

In case the price list will be modified in terms of e.g., new services, updated prices or discount conditions, the new price list will be made public online and will be included in the periodic report

Member States have to ensure that State Aid is granted in line with the applicable State aid rules, such as *de minimis* or GBER conditions

❒ *Checklist: inclusion of a price list by category, with indications as applicable*

Expected deliverables

The following **deliverables will be mandatory** for all EDIHs:

- **additional deliverable on dissemination and exploitation**
  - to be submitted in the first six months of the project
  - In exploitation, the proposal will describe how the EDIH ensures sustainability of its operations

  (as in Calls 2022-2023)
- **additional deliverable on the economic sustainability** of the EDIH
  - to be submitted 18 months after the start (new)

❒ *Checklist: additional deliverables:*

- ❒ *latest M6: dissemination and exploitation*
- ❒ *M18: economic sustainability*

European Commission

Supporting the EDIHs with a DTA

The EDIH network will be supported by a strengthened **Digital Transformation Accelerator**

- **New procurement for a future DTA**, taking up the legacy of the ongoing DTA
- **The DTA** will provide services such as community building, training, networking, impact assessment, coordination, communication and connection to relevant initiatives
- DTA will **organize events and activities for the network of EDIH, to share information and experiences, build cohesion, matchmaking, training and capacity building events**
  - **EDIHs must actively participe in those events and activities**
- DTA in cooperation with the Commission will also **host tools, such as the Digital Maturity Assessment Tool, and have the role to centralise overall Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of the network**
  - each EDIH will report the necessary information to the DTA and are encouraged to make use of the digital tools provided but are also free to use their own tools. Interoperability with the EDIH network tools is a requirement, so that users of the EDIHs will have a seamless experience

❒ *Checklist: inclusion of a task for DTA activities and collaboration*

Ethics review and AI systems

- Proposals may have to undergo an ethics review
  - may be made subject to **specific ethics rules** (…Agreement in the form of ethics deliverables, *e.g. ethics committee…tions required under national or EU law*)
  - For proposals inv…**eployment, use or distribution of AI systems:** the ethics review will in par…with the principles of human agency and oversight, diversity/fairness, transparency and …impact, while the experts performing the technical evaluation will assess the robustness of t…tems (i.e. their reliability not to cause unintentional harm)
    - EDIHs developing/distributing AI systems: to be detailed
    - EDIHs recommending AI systems from other developers/distributors: describe why it is not applicable

Reflect properly how you will ensure the robustness of the AI systems that you will deploy (to know more – please refer to the ethics self-assessment guidance)

❒ *Checklist: fill the ethics form and justify how you will deal with AI systems*

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment_en.pdf

IPR – why it matters

- Please address here how you will tackle IPR issues
    - if you support a client, who will pay for the software licence? Who will own the mock-up code or integration software that you developed for this client?)

❒ *Checklist: do I have a paragraph addressing how IPR will be dealt with?*

European Commission

Security Assessment

*Projects involving **EU classified information** must undergo security scrutiny to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific security rules*

EDIHs do normally not deal with EU classified information

❒ *Checklist: as a rule, EDIH deliverables are public or sensitive ONLY*

Operational capacity

- Applicants must have the **know-how, qualifications and resources**
- This capacity will be **assessed together with the 'Implementation' award criterion**, on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts
- Applicants will have to **show their capacity via the following information**:
  - general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of staff responsible for managing and implementing the EDIH
  - description of the consortium participants
  - list of previous EDIH operations, for the last 2 years
  - Additional supporting documents may be requested, if needed to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant

❒ *Checklist: demonstration of previous EDIH operations*

European Commission

Financial capacity

- Applicants must have **stable and sufficient resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share
- The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the Participant Register during grant preparation
  - *profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc*
- The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years
- The check will normally be done for all beneficiaries, except:
  - public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations
  - if the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000
- For more information, *see Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment*.

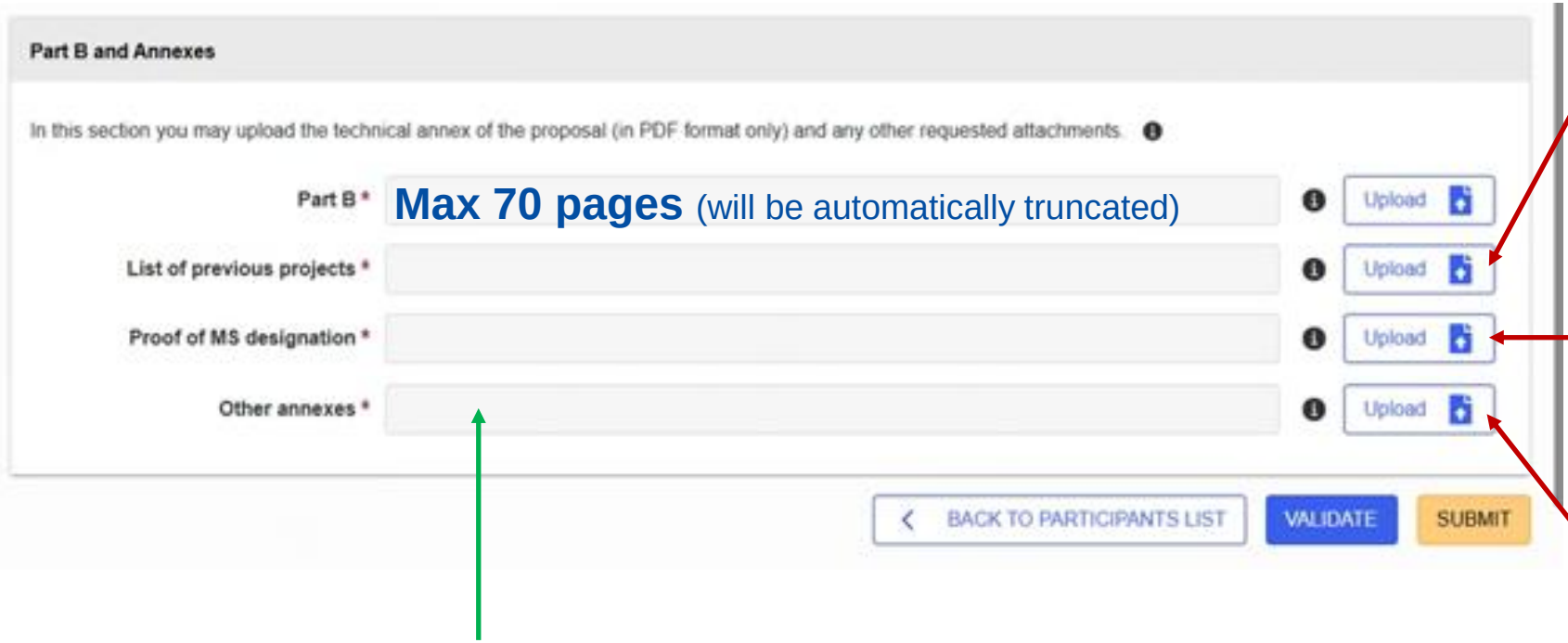
Some restrictions (reminder)

- EU conditionality measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092
  - Such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc). **Currently such measures are in place for Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain (see Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506, as of 16 December 2022).**

- For more information, *see Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment*.

The pieces of the puzzle

How can I upload several annexes when the system only allows 1 document? *(real question)*
Merge your different documents into 1 PDF: make 1 document and insert scanned version of each document & save as PDF, use PDF merge, …



Describe your previous EDIH(s)

Can be in any format, reuse the designation letters of 2022-2023

Memorandum of Understanding, …

Do not annex your consortium agreement!

In the other annexes, we will also ask you to add 2 annexes: 1) service list (and price), 2) summary of KPI and targets (which present together your KPIs and targets described in your part B)

European Commission

Let's look at these 'other annexes'

The 'Other Annexes'

- ☐ **List of services and prices**
- ☐ **Summary of your KPIs and targets**
- ☐ your support letter(s) *(optional)*
- ☐ Memorandum of Understanding with other EDIHs or European AI innovation infrastructures *(optional)*
- ☐ …

Do not present details here if not presented first in Part B
These annexes are to propose a summary and consolidated view of elements already presented and justified in Part B

Do not communicate your consortium agreement

- you must have one at Grant Signature, but do not communicate it to the Commission

*- it may also **not** be a deliverable*

European Commission

Proposed templates

☐ **List of services and prices**

Service title & description	Service category [TBI, …]	Target Client [SME, …]	Type of services [event, individual, collective, class, …]	Nominal price [fixed €, min-max €, …]	State aid amount in €	Unit of measure [€, €/day, €/hour, …]	Planned duration *(optional)*	Price remaining to be paid by client

☐ **Summary of your KPIs & targets**

KPI title & description	Type of KPI [output KPI, outcome KPI, impact KPI]	Reference to description in Part B (page or section)	Category [TBI, …] & related service	Targeted clients (SME, PSOs, …)	Type of services [event, individual, collective]	Target Year 1	Target Year 2	Target Year 3	Total Target

For example: an "Access to investment" service could have the following 3 KPIs:

- ***Output KPI:*** *Number of SMEs receiving the service*
- ***Outcome KPI:*** *Number of SMEs who apply for investment after getting the service*
- ***Impact KPI:*** *the Total amount of Investment raised*

Not all KPIs tell the same story…

Agenda Sustaining Digital Innovations: Getting Ready for EDIH 2.0

- Welcome & Objectives
- What's new for EDIHs 2.0
- Details of this Call 09: eligible EDIHs, countries, budget
- AOB
  - **Evaluation, ranking of proposals and the STEP Seal**
- Closing

Q/A sessions are foreseen after each topic

European Commission

Evaluation of individual proposals

Eligible proposals will be individually evaluated by (at least) three experts on the operational capacity and award criteria

A **candidate ranked list for each country** will be established based on the scores

“Ex aequo” prioritisation by ‘Relevance’ and then ‘Impact’

European Commission

Ranking of proposals

The EC will establish a candidate ranked list by country, taking into account the additional criteria and objectives for the EDIH Network set out in the Digital Europe Regulation and the budget allocated to each country to ensure proper coverage of territories, technologies and economic sectors, namely :

- **at the country level:**
  - the existence of at least **one proposal per country with focus on Artificial Intelligence**;
  - the **geographical, technological and sectoral coverage** of proposals within each country, with the objective to guarantee a coverage as broad as possible;
- **at the level of the entire European network:**
  - the possibility to fund **cross-border transnational hubs** by all countries involved;
  - the coverage of **specific technologies and sectors which are not sufficiently covered** by the entire network;
  - the coverage of the **public sector, with the objective of reaching a coverage of at least 10%** of the hubs providing services to the public sector.
  - In case the geographical, technological and sectoral coverage of a country is incomplete, **proposals which have a significant overlap in scope with higher ranking proposals may not be ranked** in the candidate ranked list

European Commission

STEP Seal

- This call supports the **strengthening of deployment of critical technologies such as AI**, as a Strategic Technology* for the Union's economic security and further fostering deep tech innovations with significant economic potential
- **A STEP* Seal will be awarded to applicants that passed all evaluation thresholds**
  - the highest-ranked will receive DEP funding of up to 50%, with the remainder to be covered by national, regional or private funding
  - EDIHs that remain unfunded due to budget limitations receive a STEP Seal and may** receive funding by Member States or regions without additional evaluation
    - if operational, will be recognised as **European Digital Innovation Hub** in their own right and will be integrated as full members of the EDIH network

** Regulation (EU) 2024/795 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 February 2024, establishing the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP), and its guidance note C(2024)3148*

*** It is a possibility, not an obligation…*

European Commission

STEP
In a nutshell

- **Not a new fund:** pooling funding from 11 EU existing programmes towards critical technologies in strategic sectors for EU competitiveness
- **Efficient:** use of existing networks/processes
- **Articulation** direct/indirect/shared managed funds
- **Regulation** entered into force on 1 March 2024
- **A pilot for a new Competitiveness Fund** as announced by Commission President

STEP

How does the STEP Seal work?

1 Award under 2 conditions:

STEP-specific calls for proposals

- Innovation Fund
- Horizon Europe
- Digital Europe Programme
- EU4Health
- European Defence Fund

+

Excellence of the project

Project complying with the minimum quality requirements of the call for proposals

=

2 Publication on STEP Portal

Award of STEP Seal

Valid throughout duration of project

Unless:

- Project has not started within 5 years of award
- Project relocated outside EU

3 Benefits per programme

Cohesion policy funds (ERDF, ESF+)	Managing Authorities can directly award support to projects, provided they align to the scope of ERDF or ESF+ and contribute to the programmers' objectives
Modernisation Fund	Project may be considered as a priority for funding
InvestEU	To be taken into account by EIB and Implementing Partners during the policy check process
Other Union funds or programmes	Project could be granted (combined) support

European Commission

Reprogramming cohesion towards STEP

Reprogramming voluntary!

Denmark – *EUR 52m*

1 national JTF programme

Netherlands – *EUR 16m*

1 regional ERDF and 1 national JTF* programme

Germany – *EUR 891m*

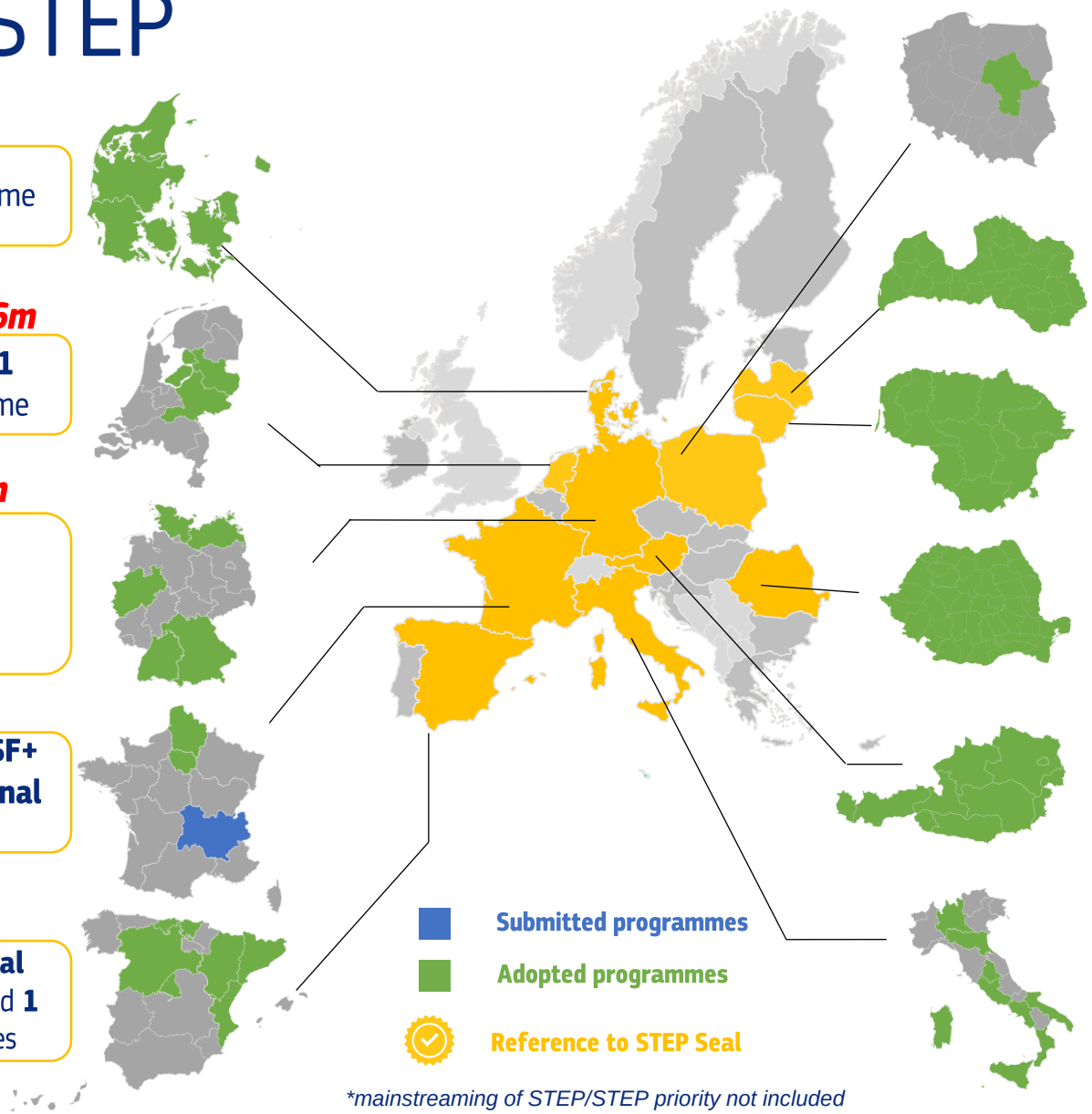
5 regional ERDF, 1 regional JTF and **1 regional ESF+** programmes

France – *EUR 93m*

2 regional ERDF and ESF+ programmes and **1 regional JTF*** programme

Spain – *EUR 640m*

7 regional and 1 national ERDF, **2 regional ESF+** and **1 national JTF** programmes



Poland – *EUR 25m*

1 regional ERDF programme

Latvia – *EUR 57m*

1 national ERDF programme

Lithuania – *EUR 59m*

1 national ERDF programme

Romania – *EUR 1.57bn*

1 national ESF+, 2 national ERDF and 1 national JTF programmes

Austria – *EUR 17.7m*

1 national JTF programme*

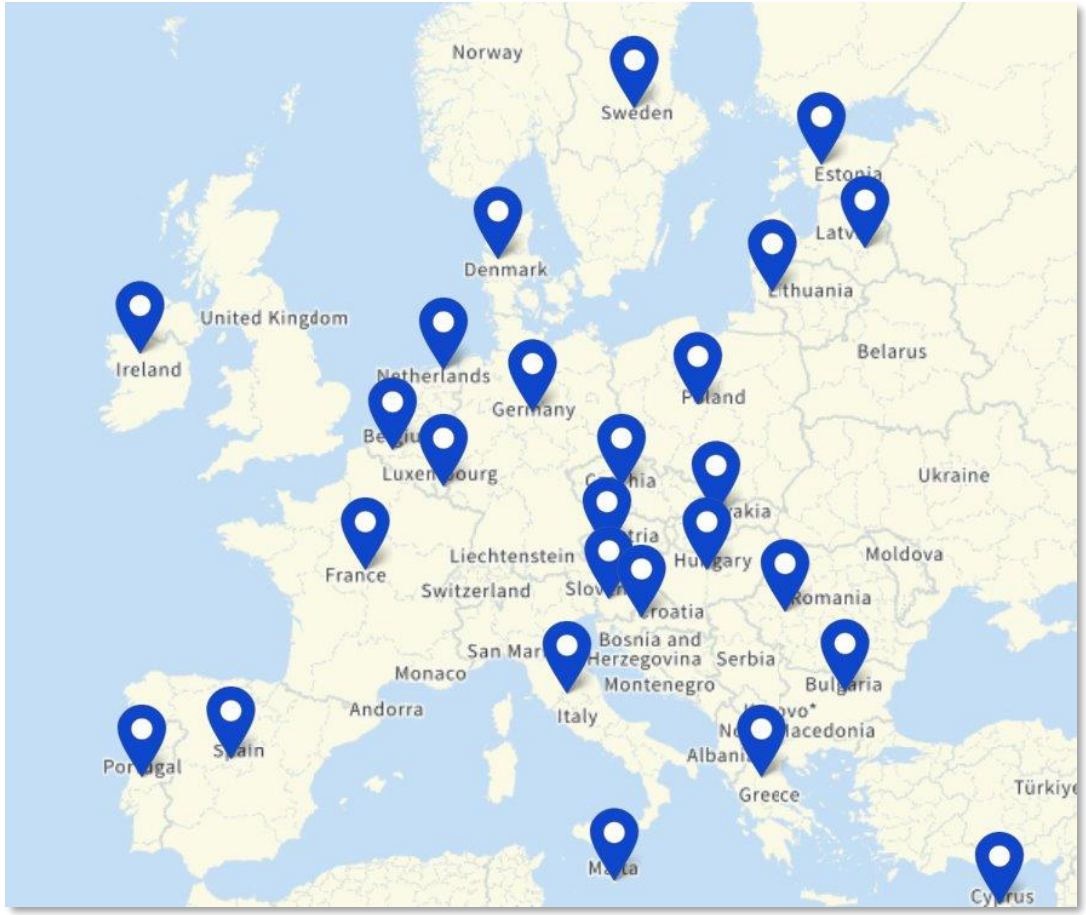
Italy – *EUR 2.98bn*

9 regional and 1 national ERDF programme

**mainstreaming of STEP/STEP priority not included*

STEP in Member States

National Contact Points are there to support you



The **STEP NCPs** are officials designated by EU Member States to **oversee and support the implementation of STEP at national level**

NCPs can advise you on additional funding possibilities. Contact them!

Contact details of **National Contact Points** available on the **STEP Portal**
strategic-technologies.europa.eu

European Commission

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European Commission

Is the EDIH 2.0 only exclusively about AI?
No, EDIHs are asked to improve their toolbox & competences with AI, but the logic of intervention is to start from client needs. If the solution is AI, the increased competences and collaboration with AI innovation ecosystems will help the EDIH to provide better services

Can I use font XXXXX?
Whatever you want, but MAKE YOUR PROPOSAL READABLE

Where should I write ZZZ?
Follow the template. If you cannot find it, is ZZZ really needed?

Do I need formal MoU for planned collaborations?
No, but you must DESCRIBE THE COLLABORATION and explain why it is useful

Must I include *(some internal information about the consortium, e.g. consortium agreement, mandate letters, MoU)*?
No

European Commission

And do not forget to check the FAQ

If I include ZZZZ, the proposal becomes too long
Include only RELEVANT INFORMATION (your complete list of publications is not relevant)

Can you please confirm YYYY?
No, you have to READ THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS
Do not forget that there will be a Topic FAQ on the participant portal

There is an inconsistency in KKKK
Yes, there are inconsistencies and mistakes. Use your common sense and write what is useful for the experts to evaluate your proposal

What is a public sector organisation?
Check our FAQ

What is a "small mid-cap"?
Check our FAQ

European Commission

EDIH Mergers and Acquisitions

In the case two existing EDIHs would like to join forces and merge, what shall be the best scenario - submission as a new entity, or to keep one of the existing name to ensure that there is some historical track record?

The best scenario is when merged EDIHs demonstrate the coherence of their objectives and reinforcement of their impacts.

In order to trace back the merged EDIHs to their EDIHs 1.0, the proposal will have to indicate clearly the EDIHs it is merging, and their specific track records.

Also: the designation letters of the original EDIH 1.0 to be added as Annex.

European Commission

Geographical coverage of EDIHs

Is it correct that the EDIH 2.0 will not be REGIONAL but NATIONAL?

EDIHs can continue being regional.

At the initiative of ministries, there might be discussions in some countries, to elevate regional EDIHs to the national level, but this is not true for all countries.

Co-funding requirements?

Is it mandatory to secure additional funding beyond the 50% provided by the DEP? Do we need a proof of relevant co-funding?

The 50% matching contribution may come from a mix of multiple sources (regional, national, own, SME contributions, ...).

If regional funding is planned, a **commitment letter** specifying the amount and percentage is **not required**.

Please however be clear on the financial plan. If you have a letter of intent, please attach it to add credibility to your proposal, but it is also not compulsory.

Given the project duration (3 years), changes may occur: the proposal must reassure evaluators of the consortium's ability to sustain co-financing throughout, and that it has got a credible funding plan

Role of Member States in the evaluation

In the evaluation phase, after the assessment by external experts, are the Member States involved in the panels evaluating the distribution of the EDIH network for each country?

While the Commission takes utmost account of the country strategies, the national authorities do not have decision power on the evaluation results.

This also guarantees that EU funding is not requalified as State aid.

European Commission

A journey with AI Innovation Ecosystems

Should the proposal already indicate clearly the AI Factories, the AI TEF or AI Demand platform with which we will collaborate or can we remain more generic and do this more in-depth analysis during the project?

Not all details need to be known at proposal time, but you need to give credible description that you have seriously considered this collaboration.

Do not remain only vaguely intentional. Give concrete examples.

European Commission

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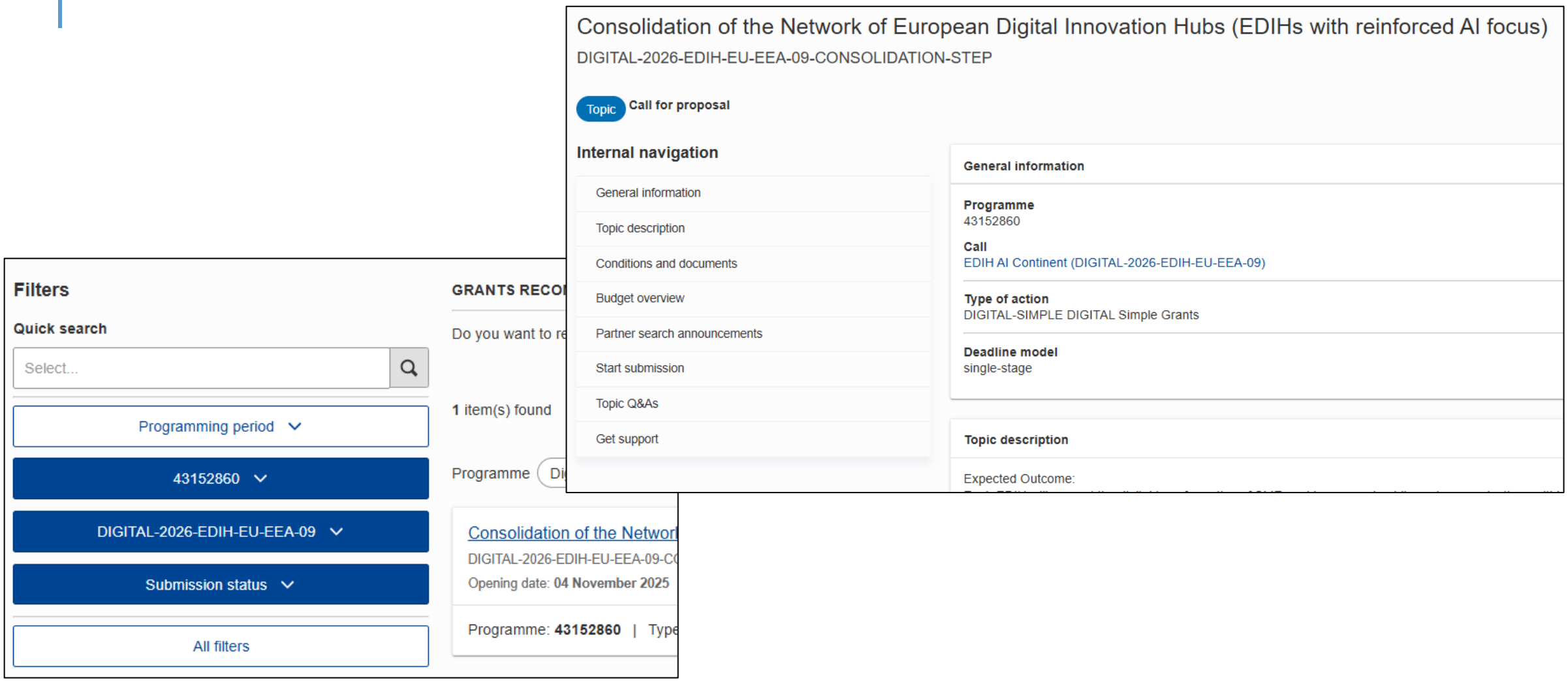
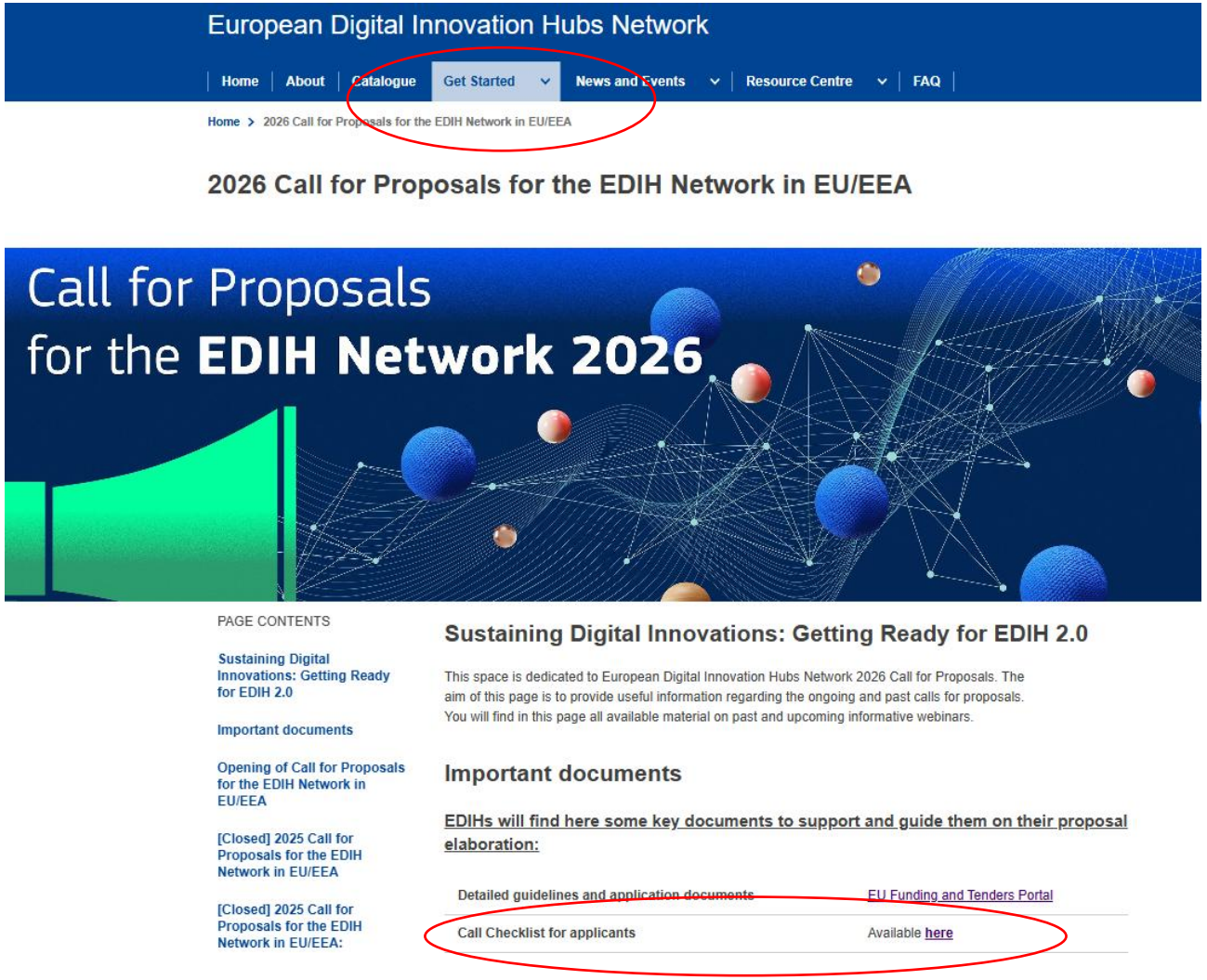
Publication of the Call text for EDIHs EU/EEA



https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/DIGITAL-2026-EDIH-EU-EEA-09-CONSOLIDATION-STEP

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/digital/wp-call/2026/call-fiche_digital-2026-edih-eu-eaa-09_en.pdf

Check the EDIH Call web page on the EDIH website



https://european-digital-innovation-hubs.ec.europa.eu/2026-call-proposals-edih-network-eueea

Helpful Links and Information

About DEP

Digital Europe Programme – WP2025 - **Official Call text EDIHs EU/EEA**

FAQ

Financial Regulation: 2021/694 EUR-Lex | Synergies between shared and direct management funds – Commission notice

About EDIHs

Knowledge Hub | European Digital Innovation Hubs Network

(working with EEN, services best practices, …)

Frequently Asked Questions: EDIH – DMA – DTA - KPI

Success Stories and Good Practices: Guidelines for EDIHs

Previous webinars on EDIH 2.0 Call

A one-stop shop for the Call EDIH2.0 EU/EEA, including:

- Webinar 20/02/2025 - Slides
- Webinar 21/03/2025 - Slides
- **FAQ on EDIH 2.0 Call**
- Know your national contact persons

Submit a proposal

Proposal roles and access rights

Submit a proposal - IT Guide

Submit a proposal — Electronic Submission System - Online Manual

DEP Model Grant Agreement & **Annotated Grant Agreement**

Online Manual for Funding and Tenders Portal

European AI Innovations Ecosystem

Web site - Leaflet

CONTACT

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European Commission