EXCELLENCE HUBS INFO DAY · HORIZON EUROPE WIDERA

Research and Innovation ecosystems:

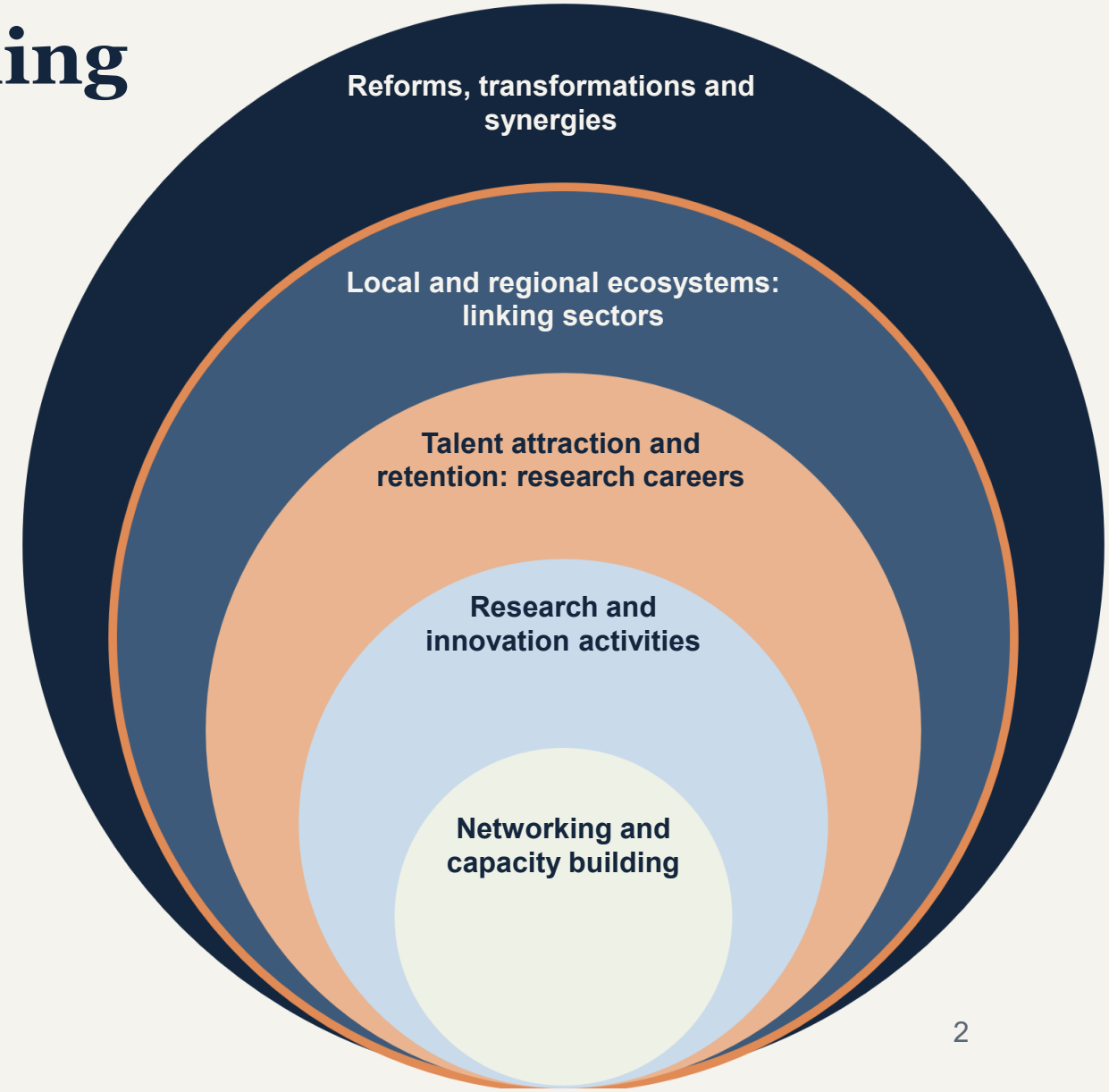
the quadruple helix in Excellence Hubs 2027

Rui Munhá · FCT· 23 October 2026

THE WIDENING PORTFOLIO

Excellence Hubs in Widening

- Teaming
- Pathways to Synergies
- **Excellence Hubs**
- European Excellence Initiative
- EIC Pre-accelerator – Widening
- ERA Research Managers
- ERA Chairs
- ERA Fellowships
- Hop-On Facility
- Twinning
- ERA Talents
- COST



WHAT CHANGED FROM THE PREVIOUS CALL

More hubs, smaller grants, shared financial commitments

	2023 call	2027 call
Indicative budget	€60 M	€100 M
Projects expected	~12	~30
EU contribution per project	€2–5 M (€6 M with mentoring)	€1.5–4.5 M
Duration	Up to 4 years	Up to 5 years
Funding rate	**100%**	**70% (30% secured by beneficiaries)**
Mentoring scheme	Optional	Not foreseen

Sources: Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026–2027, Part 11 (HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-WIDENING-01); Work Programme 2023–2025 (HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-07-01)

POLICY ANCHORING

Linking science to business, from 2021 to 2027

ERA COMMUNICATION 2020

Priority 3: translate R&I results into the economy

Cited explicitly in the 2027 call as the priority the action supports.

ERA POLICY AGENDA 2022–2024

Action 15: improve EU-wide access to excellence

Excellence Hubs named as a contributing instrument.

ERA POLICY AGENDA 2025–2027

Four structural policies

- Research careers and intersectoral talent flows
- Knowledge valorisation and intermediaries
- Stronger, connected regional R&I systems
- Access to excellence and cohesion–FP synergies

Sources: COM(2020) 628; ERA Policy Agenda 2022–2024; ERA Policy Agenda 2025–2027 (OJ C/2025/3593)

PLACE-BASED RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CULTURE

Place-based, revisited: three tests

Rooted

Each ecosystem anchored in one territory and its smart specialisation strategy, entirely within a single Widening country.

Connected

Each ecosystem contributes to what the others lack, along a European value chain. The network of ecosystems (the Hub) demonstrates its added-value.

Co-invested

The own actors carry part of the cost and own the investment that follows the project. Other funding sources may be mobilised.

These represent the easiest narratives. Other models and approaches may apply.

RESARCH AND INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

An ecosystem is defined by what circulates

Knowledge

Joint projects, shared resources and facilities

People

Secondments, staff exchanges, careers across sectors

Funding Sources

Private investment, regional and cohesion programmes

Rules and demand

Standards, user needs

IN THE PROPOSAL

- Mapping the actors
- Mapping the links per ecosystem
- Mapping the links within the Hub
- Explain the added-value of the Hub
- Demonstrate competitiveness in partnerships, institutional change and R&I intensity

QUADRUPLE HELIX

Four categories per ecosystem, one role each

Academia

Role · Knowledge, talent, research capacity

Evidence ·(Joint) track record; (valorisation structures)

Business

Role · Demand, route to market, co-investment

Evidence · Established firm: 2 consecutive years of proven turnover. (Joint) track record

One ecosystem
in one Widening country

Public authority

Role · RIS3 ownership, regional programmes, continuity

Evidence · Regional or local level; link to the investment plan

Society

Role · Users, adoption, co-design

Evidence · Neither commercial nor public administration; defined tasks

REIMBURSEMENT RATE

30%: commitment and sustainability test

70/30

“An explanation should be provided in the proposal on how the remaining 30% will be secured and shared among the beneficiaries.”

- **Who pays?**
- **From which source?**
- **How certain?**

Source: Work Programme 2026–2027

SYNERGIES

Positioning the hub in different directions

UPSTREAM · BUILDS ON

- Teaming centres
- Twinning projects
- ERA Chairs
- COST Actions
- Earlier Excellence Hubs

ALONGSIDE · ALIGN, NO OVERLAP

- European Innovation Ecosystems
- EIC Pathfinder
- EIT KICs and EIT Community Hubs
- JRC Partnerships for Regional Innovation
- Widening Dissemination and Exploitation Facility

DOWNSTREAM · FEEDS

- Pilots and demonstrators, funded by other sources
- Regional and cohesion programmes
- National instruments
- Private capital

RESEARCH COMPONENT

Research as the evidence engine of the strategy

Conditions

- A distinct work package
- Joint research projects closing knowledge gaps, with market potential
- A long-term vision beyond the state of the art
- In balance with the other activities, never the dominant part
- Evidence for the strategy and the investment plans

Pitfalls

- (Hub) as a collaborative research project in disguise
- Research disconnected from strategy and investment
- Research confined to one ecosystem
- *Grey area* between CSA eligible costs and pilots and demoonstratators

COMMON WEAKNESSES

Patterns evaluators recognise

01

The isolated clubs

Ecosystems side by side, with no shared value chain

02

The checklist helix in ecosystems

All categories present, roles absent

03

The *for-show* strategy

Delivered in year one, never used again

04

wish list *vs.* sustainability

An investment plan with needs and no sources

05

The unallocated 30%

Co-funding asserted, never distributed

SUSTAINABILITY

Life beyond the project

Governance

Keeping a structure

Pipeline

Funding of the knowledge value chain, pilots under way

People

Careers that cross academia and business

Positioning

Competitive advantage towards FP10

Obrigado

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