Excellence Hubs within the Widening programme

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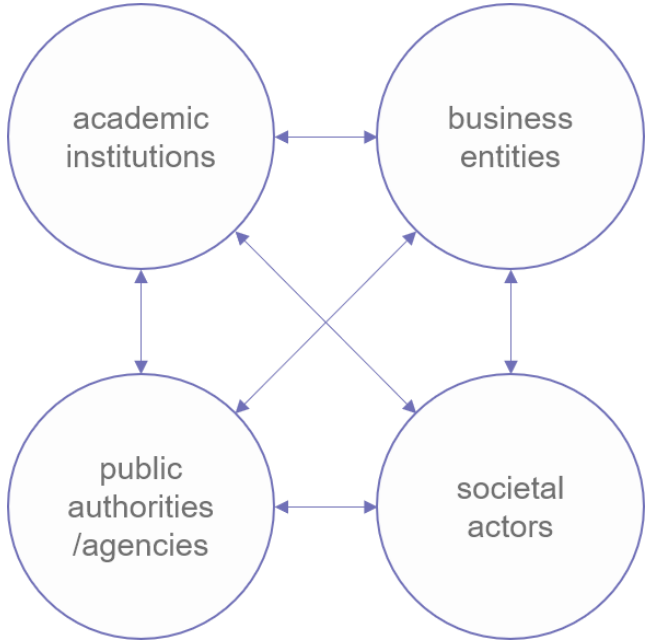
International Excellence Hubs Week, 23 October 2026

European Commission

Excellence Hubs – definition and scope

- EH are networks of innovation ecosystems involving larger communities based on the quadruple helix principle.

- Strengthening regional innovation excellence in **Widening countries** and beyond by **teaming up of innovation ecosystems** and creating better linkages between academia, business, government and society.



Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026-2027 - 11. Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area

Excellence Hubs 2027 call

Call	HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-WIDENING-01
Opening / closing	02 September 2026 / **04 March 2027**
Type of action	CSA
Budget	EUR 100 million
EU contribution per project	EUR 1.5-4.5 million
Indicative number of projects	30
Legal and financial set-up of GA	Funding rate: 70% of eligible costs Financial support to third parties (FSTP) in the form of grants: SMEs/start-ups; max. 60.000 EUR/third party
Applicants informed	July 2027
GA signature	November 2027
Duration	Up to 5 years

Funding rate

- Total amount of eligible costs has to be reported in order to qualify for a 70% reimbursement;
- Applicable to all beneficiaries;
- The proposal has to include a clear explanation on how the remaining 30% will be secured and shared among the beneficiaries; no formal proof of financial commitment is required.

Comparison of Excellence Hubs Calls 2021-2027

HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ACCESS-04-01	HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-07-01	HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-WIDENING-01
50 million EUR	60 million EUR	100 million EUR
3-5 million EUR Union contribution/project	2-6 million EUR Union contribution/project	1,5-4,5 million EUR Union contribution/project
Project duration up to 4 years	Project duration up to 4 years	Project duration up to 5 years
	Optional component: mentoring	Funding rate 70% of eligible costs

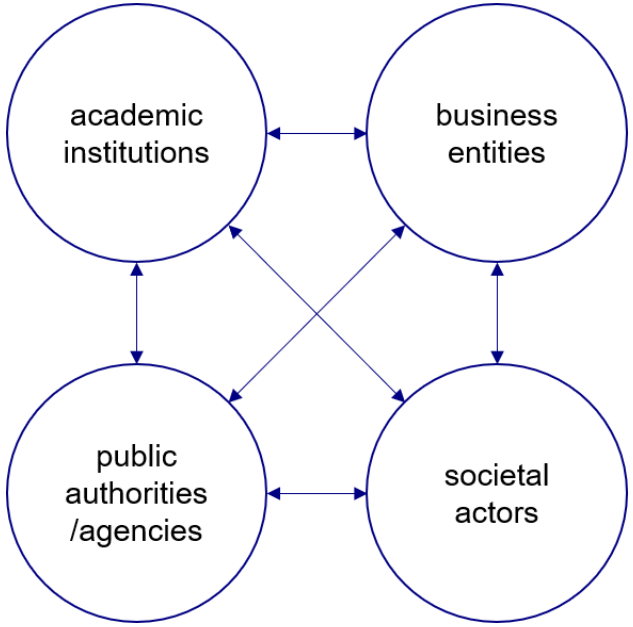
EH 2027: Eligibility

- **Coordinators**: legal entities established in Widening countries
- Participation of legal entities from non-Widening countries – if necessary to achieve expected impact.

- **At least two R&I ecosystems from two different Widening countries**

  - ➞ Each entirely based in a single Widening country

  - ➞ Each comprising four different categories of actors* (either as „umbrella” organisation(s) or individual legal entities)



EH 2027: Activities

Well-balanced package covering at least:

- Design and implementation of cross-border joint R&I strategy;
- R&I collaboration strengthening academia-business linkages (R&I component in a distinct work package; including long-term vision);
- Development of investment plans to implement the strategy, including business models;
- If applicable, conceptual design and pre-planning for pilots and demonstrators in line with the strategy (financed by other sources);
- Complementary activities.

EH 2027: Outcomes

- Excellent and sustainable regional R&I ecosystems in Widening countries and beyond;
- Long-term joint R&I strategies underpinned by concrete action plans of European relevance;
- Common investment plans for R&I, leveraging other funding in a synergetic manner;
- R&I pilot projects alongside a joint strategy, in line with regional and national strategies;
- New competences and skills for researchers, entrepreneurs and professionals in R&I intensive domains;
- Strengthened linkages in the quadruple helix;
- New business opportunities, especially in deep-tech areas.

Excellence Hubs Financed Projects



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