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ANNEX

ANNEX

to the

Commission Implementing Decision

amending Implementing Decision C(2025) 1839 on the financing of the Digital Europe Programme and the adoption of the multiannual work programme 2025-2027

ANNEX

The Annex to Implementing Decision C (2025) 1839 is amended as follows.

(1) in the Introduction, point 'Indicative budget', Table 2 is replaced by the following:

'Table 2: Budget allocation for big-ticket items in the Work Programme 2025-2027 (in EUR million)

BIG-TICKET ITEMS		
WP CHAPTER	**TOPIC**	**BUDGET ALLOCATION**
HIGH-PERFORMANCE COMPUTING FOR THE AI FACTORIES	Mainly covered by the EuroHPC Joint Undertaking. SO1 is also partly financing the Destination Earth Initiative (see The AI Continent below).	
AI CONTINENT	**Data for the AI Factories** Common European data spaces, Agri-Food MCP and Simpl	192.3
	Apply AI Strategy implementation GenAI actions, AI in health (AI solutions in medical imaging, AI-based image screening, Virtual Human Twins), Virtual worlds test beds	87.3
	Apply AI Strategy deployment European Digital Innovation Hubs (also covered from SO5 and SO4)	272.2
	Destination Earth (also covered from SO1)	120
CYBER	EU Cybersecurity Reserve and Cyber Resilience Act reporting platform	45.6
SKILLS	Digital skills academies in quantum, AI, virtual worlds, and chips, excellence in education and training and other actions on advanced digital skills	109.5
DEPLOYMENT	EU Digital Identity Wallet, Once Only Technical System, e-procurement, e-invoice, TESTA, European Electronic Health Record, European Cybersecurity Support Centre for hospitals and healthcare providers, Pan-European Investment Platform for Affordable Housing	129.6
	e-Justice and confidence in the digital transformation (also covered from SO2)	110.9
	Interoperability	77
	European Digital Infrastructure Consortia (also covered from SO2)	20.5
CHIPS	Chips Fund	61.7
HORIZONTAL	Programme support actions, including DMA	22.7

';

(2) in the Introduction, point 'Links to other programmes and co-investment +STEP' is amended as follows:

(a) in Table 4, the following lines are added:

'

Advanced Digital Skills	Digital infrastructure for schools and training institutions	100%	n/a*	n/a*	100%
Confidence in Digital transformation	Ensuring comprehensive geographical coverage of the Network of Safer Internet Centres	50%	25%, 35% for SMEs	75%, 85% for SMEs	
	Research Support Framework for Situational Awareness on information integrity	100% for the consortium, 50% for third party	n/a* for the consortium, 25% for third party, 35% for SMEs	n/a* for the consortium, 75% for third party, 85% for SMEs	
Accelerating the Best Use of Technology	Support to the implementation of Multi-Country Projects (MCPs): EDIC Support Hub	100%	n/a*	n/a*	

* 100% already coming from DIGITAL ';

(b) in Table 5, the following row is added:

'

Accelerating the Best Use of Technology	Support to the implementation of Multi-Country Projects (MCPs)

';

(3) in the Introduction, point 'Calls structure and Planning, Tables 8 and 9 are replaced by the following:

'*Third set of calls*

Table 8: List of topics in the third set of calls with a second common deadline in 2026 under this Work Programme indicatively includes:

Area	Topics in the Work Programme	Indicative budget (in EUR million)
Data for AI Factories	Digital solutions for regulatory compliance through data	8.5
Apply AI Strategy implementation	Apply AI: Piloting AI-based image screening in medical centres	9

Advanced Digital Skills	Excellence in higher education and training programmes in key digital areas and applied technologies	7.8
	Digital Skills and Jobs Platform CSA	2
	EdTech Accelerator	2.7
Deployment of Public Services	Building capacity to deploy the EEHRxF and digital health services and systems to support the rights of citizens and reuse of health data under EHDS	14.4
Confidence in digital trasformation	Ensuring comprehensive geographical coverage of the Network of Safer Internet Centres (SICs)	10
	Research Support Framework for Situational Awareness on information integrity	6
The Best Use of Technology	Support to the implementation of Multi-Country Projects: EDIC Support Hub	1
Programme Support Actions	Support to Dissemination and Exploitation	1.8
TOTAL for the third set of calls		63.2

Fourth set of calls

Table 9: List of topics in the fourth set of calls with a common deadline in 2027 under this Work Programme indicatively includes:

Area	Topics in the Work Programme	Indicative budget in million EUR
AI/Cloud-to-edge	Reference deployments of European cloud-edge services	9
Data for AI Factories	Data Space for Tourism	6.8
	Data Space for Skills	3.5
Apply AI Strategy implementation	Testing Apply AI sectorial applications at scale and under real-world conditions	16
	Virtual Human Twins and Artificial Intelligence in health: platform validation and uptake incubator	7.2
Advanced Digital Skills	Sectoral digital skills academies	9
	Excellence in higher education and training programmes in key digital areas and applied technologies	20.3
	Supporting the coordination of the Cybersecurity Skills Academy	1
	Digital Infrastructure for schools and training institutions	10
The Best Use of Technology	Support to the implementation of Multi-Country Projects	19.5
TOTAL for the fourth set of calls		102.3

’;

(4) Section 2 is amended as follows:

(a) in subsection ‘2.1.2 Reference deployments of European cloud-edge services’, point ‘Deliverables’, the Table is replaced by the following:

‘

Type of action	Lump sum grant
Indicative budget	EUR 9 million
Indicative call planning	Fourth set of calls
Indicative duration of the action	36 months
Implementation	European Commission
Type of beneficiaries	Private organisations with proven expertise in Telco Edge developments.
Eligibility and security	Call restricted on the basis of Article 12(6) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/694. Subject to participation restrictions for the protection of European digital infrastructures, communication and information systems, and related supply chains, as described in Appendix 4 of this Work Programme.

';

(b) in subsection '2.2.2.4 Digital solutions for regulatory compliance through data', point 'Deliverables', the Table is replaced by the following:

'

Type of action	Simple grant (2025) Lump sum grant (2026)
Indicative budget	EUR 8 million (2025) EUR 8.5 million (2026)
Indicative call planning / timing	First set of calls, Third set of calls
Indicative duration of the action	24 months
Implementation	European Commission
Type of beneficiaries	National and EU authorities (as data users), public and private entities, businesses, farmers, etc/providers of compliance data (data holders), data sharing organisations, universities.
Eligibility and security	Subject to participation restrictions for the protection of European digital infrastructures, communication and information systems, and related supply chains, as described in Appendix 4 of this Work Programme. Further justification for participation restriction is provided in Table 11 in Appendix 4.

';

(c) subsection '2.3.1.1 Testing GenAI4EU applications at scale and under real-world conditions' is replaced by the following:

'2.3.1.1 Testing Apply AI sectorial applications at scale and under real-world conditions

Objective

In order to support European innovators in integrating AI, including generative AI (GenAI), into key sectors identified in the Apply AI Strategy, these actions aim to expand the scope of sectorial testing and experimentation beyond the coverage offered by the 4 existing sectorial testing and experimentation facilities (TEFs) i.e. agrifood, manufacturing, health and smart cities.

The aim is to facilitate the transition of AI solutions, including GenAI, from lab environments to real-world applications, ensuring they meet sector-specific requirements, are trustworthy and contribute to European technological leadership. Given the Digital Europe Programme participation rules (Articles 12 and 18 of the Digital Europe Regulation*), objectives and purpose of the actions (Articles 4 to 8 and Annex 1) and the importance of its results and infrastructures, the use of and access to the results and critical infrastructures developed under the Digital Europe Programme is intended for eligible country entities. This restricted access to infrastructure and results is justified by the primary focus to support European innovators with validation and testing services for AI applications, including GenAI, by the Apply AI TEF. European innovators are understood as entities at least headquartered in eligible countries. **Applicants will need to include this restriction in their infrastructure access policy.**

Scope

The actions will complement the existing TEFs in the context of the Apply AI strategy. They will offer testing and experimentation capabilities to European innovators across various sectors. This is particularly relevant for the AI Regulatory Sandboxes that Member States must establish by August 2 2026 under Article 57(1) AI Act. Pursuant to Article 58(3) AI Act, prospective providers of AI systems may be directed to Testing and Experimentation Facilities. For Sandbox participants whose AI systems are not covered by currently existing TEFs, the Apply AI TEF opens up such testing opportunities.

The Apply AI TEF shall provide the expertise and infrastructure necessary, as well as the testing methodologies in real-world environments, for the design and implementation of AI solutions, including GenAI. The Apply AI TEF shall support European innovators** in validating in real-world environments their state-of-the art AI solutions already tested in the lab, in order to assess the suitability of the solutions to meet the needs of the sector***. Where applicable, compliance with the AI Act's requirements by the solutions validated and tested is expected. This cross-sectorial Apply AI TEF will structurally cooperate with national sandboxes and make its infrastructure available, to the extent possible, should the sandboxes themselves not possess adequate equipment.

Co-funding matching at national level is foreseen and should be indicated at the application stage. The total public funding for this action is 100% of eligible costs (50% coming from the Digital Europe Programme and up to 50% coming from the Member States). In line with Appendix 6 on State aid, Member States have to ensure that State aid is granted in line with State aid rules, such as the GBER (complying with GBER eligibility conditions including on aid intensities and notification thresholds set out in Article 4 GBER and cumulation rules set out in Article 8 GBER).

The actions should establish links and build synergies with related initiatives, such as the Alliance for Language Technologies, the open-source European foundational model for fine-tuning, the AI-on-Demand Platform, the sectoral AI & Robotics Testing and Experimentation Facilities, the coordination and supporting action CoordinaTEF, the European Digital Innovation Hubs, data spaces and relevant EuroHPC initiatives, including AI Factories and Gigafactories. Furthermore, they should work with actions implementing the AI Act, such as the EU AI regulatory sandboxes. Results from research actions under Horizon Europe on testing methodologies for generative AI should be also incorporated where possible.

AI and robotics qualify as critical technologies and dual use items under Article 2(1) of Council Regulation (EC) No 428/2009**** and as factors that may be taken into consideration by Member States or the Commission for screening foreign direct investment under EU foreign investment regulation (EU 2019/452). In particular, the TEFs' outputs, i.e., validated AI solutions, ready to be deployed, will be made available to any type of users. These include public authorities, providing public services, or private sector, including those working in security sensitive areas (mobility, some security sensitive manufacturing sectors), or areas with an impact on public order (e.g., internal security & law enforcement). Therefore, **a high level of trust and security of the TEF process and output must be ensured**. Trust is an essential feature of the TEFs: organizations running and coordinating the TEFs will have a big responsibility in validating the AI products and solutions, including their security features and protection of fundamental rights and EU values as well as human centric outcomes, before their large diffusion. They will also have access to confidential information about the solutions tested in their facilities, some of which are likely to be related to the security or safety aspects of the solutions. Therefore, they will have to be trusted by third parties, and must ensure the highest possible level of trust and security. In addition, organisations running and coordinating the TEFs will have access to sensitive public sector and private data, including from data spaces, as well as to business related data and AI algorithms, before they are eventually deployed to the market.

Deliverables

- New cross sectorial Apply AI testing and experimentation facilities for AI applications, including GenAI, in the context of Apply AI.
- Long-term business model and financial sustainability after EU and national funding stops in alignment with CoordinaTEF.
- Creating a community of EU AI developers and users and integrating it into a large AI ecosystem of excellence, comprised of initiatives as the EDIHs, AI Factories and AI Gigafactories, data spaces, AI-on-Demand platform etc.

Type of action	Simple grant
Indicative budget	EUR 16 million
Indicative call planning / timing	Fourth set of calls
Indicative duration of the action	24-36 months
Implementation	European Commission
Type of beneficiaries	Private companies, including SMEs and start-ups, research and technology organisations, higher education entities and TEFs.
Eligibility and security	Call restricted on the basis of Article 12(6) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/694. Subject to participation restrictions for the protection of European digital infrastructures, communication and information systems, and related supply chains, as described in Appendix 4 of this Work Programme. Further justification for participation restriction is provided in Table 11 in Appendix 4.

This topic will be subject to Article 12(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/694 for the following reasons: AI qualifies as critical technology and dual use item under Article 2(1) of Council Regulation (EC) No 428/2009 and as factor that may be taken into consideration by Member States or the Commission for screening foreign direct investment under EU foreign investment regulation (EU 2019/452). In particular, the TEFs outputs, validated AI solutions, ready to be deployed, will be made available to any type of users, including public authorities, providing public services, or private sector, including those working in security sensitive areas. TEFs will have access to confidential information about the solutions tested in their facilities, some of which are likely to be related to the security or safety aspects of the solutions; therefore, they will have to be trusted by third parties, and must ensure highest level of trust and security, which justifies the use of Article 12(6). In addition, organisations running and coordinating the TEFs will have access to sensitive public sector and private data, including from the sensitive data spaces subject to the application of Article 12(6), as well as to business related data and AI algorithms, before they are eventually deployed to the market.

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* Regulation (EU) 2021/694 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the Digital Europe Programme and repealing Decision (EU) 2015/2240

** European innovators are technology providers based in the EU or in countries associated to the Digital Europe Programme.

*** The tested GenAI4 applications in a TEF should be within technological readiness levels from six to eight.

**** Council Regulation (EC) No 428/2009 of 5 May 2009 setting up a Community regime for the control of exports, transfer, brokering and transit of dual-use items';

(d) subsection '2.3.3.2 Virtual Human Twins and Artificial Intelligence in health: Platform validation and uptake incubator', point 'Deliverables', the Table 'Work strand 2: Uptake incubator' is replaced by the following:

'*Work strand 2: Uptake incubator*

Type of action	Lump sum grant
Indicative budget	EUR 7.2 million
Indicative call planning / timing	Fourth set of calls
Indicative duration of the action	48 months
Implementation	European Commission
Type of beneficiaries	Public sector bodies and Member States' authorities; academia; healthcare providers; private entities such as health technology SMEs and start-ups.
Eligibility and security	Subject to participation restrictions for the protection of European digital infrastructures, communication and information systems, and related supply chains, as described in Appendix 4 of this Work Programme.

';

(5) Section 4 is amended as follows:

(a) subsection '4.2 Excellence in higher education and training programmes in key digital areas and applied technologies' is replaced by the following:

'4.2 Excellence in higher education and training programmes in key digital areas and applied technologies

Objective

The academic offer in the area of advanced digital technologies in the EU is still lagging behind other regions of the world, especially when compared to the United Kingdom or the United States*, even though the number of both bachelor's and master's programmes in the EU has increased through the years. Furthermore, apart from delivering excellent programmes in specific digital technologies, there is also a growing demand for interdisciplinary programmes to equip sector specialists with the digital skills to deploy and use advanced digital technologies.

The actions under this topic aim at tackling the lack of academic training offer in advanced digital skills in key digital areas, while triggering a new way of delivering education programmes and training, building partnerships between education and training providers, businesses and research across the EU, and supporting the digital skills necessary for the deployment of digital technologies in strategic sectors.

Scope

The objective of this topic will be carried out via two separate work strands, called for in two separate calls. The first work strand will be called in 2026 and the second in 2027:

1: Digital skills development in key strategic sectors: digital health.

Advanced Digital Skills for AI Uptake in Health

This topic aims to expand the offer of education and training in Artificial Intelligence in health jointly designed between higher education and training institutions, research organisations and industry. The content must reflect the latest policy developments, notably the Apply AI Strategy** and the European Health Data Space***. It should cover developments in and application of AI and related digital health technologies.

The target audience is healthcare professionals, as well as computer and data scientists, programmers, and software developers working in the healthcare sector. Trainings must reflect the learning needs of the target audience and will vary in depth and technical complexity to accommodate different levels of expertise and learning preferences. To this end, the proposed project(s) should design and deliver the trainings in cooperation with the Apply AI Strategy flagship "European network of AI-powered advanced screening centres"****.

The training courses should be made available to members of the "European network of AI-powered advanced screening centres" at least quarterly. The training sessions and material should be available in English and other EU languages, considering the needs of the target audience that need to be

established. The training catalogue and content should be adapted regularly, according to target audience feedback.

Whenever applicable, the projects should foster the use of the HealthData@EU infrastructure and other European health data infrastructures (Genomic Data Infrastructure, Cancer Image Europe, the European Virtual Human Twins advanced platform, ICU data space), explore synergies and build on relevant education and training activities developed and provided in the context of those initiatives, as well as in the relevant projects funded by EU4Health or Erasmus+ providing digital skills training for the health workforce*****.

2. Academic excellence in selected key digital areas:

This work strand covers key digital technology areas other than those covered by the sectoral academies (topic 4.1) or work strand 1 of this topic, such as data science and data analytics, Internet of Things, robotics, blockchain, advanced communication networks (5G/ 6G), edge and cloud computing and software engineering (including where appropriate open-source management). This work strand could also cover relevant inter-, trans- or multi-disciplinary areas, and their applications in strategic sectors, for example AI applied to media (including video games), agriculture or mobility. Multidisciplinary programmes that include aspects of the digital areas covered under topic 4.1 (digital skills academies) can be funded but have to ensure cooperation with the actions awarded under that topic.

In the above mentioned digital areas, this work strand will support the design and delivery of higher degree education programme(s) (at International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels 5 (Short-cycle tertiary education), at ISCED levels 6 (Bachelor's or equivalent level), 7 (Master's or equivalent level) or 8 (doctoral or equivalent level) – referred hereafter as "education programmes" - and to develop related self-standing modules and other training opportunities – referred hereafter as "training" - in selected key digital areas and for the acquisition of advanced and practical digital skills in specific strategic sectors. Besides the design and delivery of new educational programmes and training, the selected projects can cover activities to attract qualified teaching staff, scholarships and internships/apprenticeships for students, the purchase or leasing costs for equipment, and different activities to establish partnership between education and training providers, industry and research centres. The selected projects will bring a clear EU added-value to the proposed education and training activities (such as cross-border collaborations, networks and exchange of ideas, sharing of curricula).

The call will also support possible cooperation in the context of ongoing international cooperation related to digital topics (e.g. digital partnerships, trade and technology councils, policy dialogues), e.g. by supporting students from those countries with financial support (e.g. via scholarships, fee waivers, or others) to participate in the education programmes and training including promoting female students participation.

Deliverables

First work strand: Digital skills development in key strategic sectors

Advanced Digital Skills for AI Uptake in Health

- Initiatives implemented for the target audience to collect knowledge on learning needs in the area of AI uptake in health.

- Training programmes in the area of advanced digital skills for AI uptake in health, designed jointly by higher education institutions, VET providers, research organisations, businesses and other stakeholders in digital health, in collaboration with the network of AI-powered advanced screening centres.
- Training catalogue with detailed course planning and timetable, regularly updated.
- Final analysis of the completed training and the achievement level reached in improved skills.
- A landing page integrated into the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform, showcasing existing and forthcoming education and training initiatives and promoting training offers to the relevant audience.

Second work strand: Academic excellence in selected key digital areas:

- Designed and delivered education programmes and training in the area of advanced digital skills for developers, deployers and users of advanced digital technologies, jointly by higher education institutions, Vocational and Educational Training (VET) providers, research organisations, businesses and other relevant stakeholders, fostering collaboration and encourage the uptake of the programmes in a maximum number of Member States and associated countries.
- Initiatives implemented for teaching staff to provide them with the adequate knowledge and skills to deliver programmes and trainings, and to attract qualified teaching staff (academic and industry specialists) to offer lectures, seminars and hands on experiences.
- Initiatives implemented for students, to provide financial and other support measures (for example scholarships) for participating in the programmes, training and different hands-on experiences (for example by enabling laboratory experiences, cooperative education (co-ops), and other immersive on-the-job training opportunities or internships), including initiatives targeted at attracting female students as well as talented young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and people with disabilities. This support can take the form of Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP). Upgraded digital solutions, equipment and infrastructure of higher education institutions, VET providers, with a special focus on interoperability of IT systems, supporting the delivered education and training process.
- Established structural and sustainable partnerships between members of the consortium.

***First work strand: Skills development for the application of specific technologies in key strategic* sectors**

Type of action	Lump sum grants
Indicative budget	EUR 7.8 million
Indicative call planning / timing	Third set of calls
Indicative duration of the action	48 months
Implementation	Executive Agency HaDEA
Type of beneficiaries	Industry, higher education institutions, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), vocational training providers, national and regional governments, labour

	unions, industrial associations, education service providers

Second work strand: Academic excellence in selected key digital areas and specific sectors

Type of action	Lump sum grants
Indicative budget	EUR 20.3 million
Indicative call planning / timing	Fourth set of calls
Indicative duration of the action	48 months
Implementation	Executive Agency HaDEA
Type of beneficiaries	Higher education institutions, vocational education and training institutions, research organisations, businesses and other relevant related organisations and social partners

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* This represents an increase of 8% in the number of bachelor programmes and an increase of 14% in the number of master programmes in the area of advanced digital skills. The dataset by the Joint Research Centre on the 'Academic offer of advanced digital technologies 2022-2023' is available here.

** Apply AI Strategy

*** European Health Data Space Regulation (EHDS) - Public Health

**** Apply AI Strategy

***** BeWell – Blueprint alliance for a future health workforce strategy on digital and green skills | EU Funding & Tenders Portal';

(b) in subsection '4.5 EU Code week' , point 'Deliverables', the Table is replaced by the following:

'

Type of action	Procurement
Indicative budget	EUR 6 million
Indicative call planning / timing	2025
Indicative duration of the action	48 months
Implementation	European Commission
Type of beneficiaries	Not applicable

';

(c) in subsection '4.6 Advancing Girls and Women in Digital', point 'Deliverables', the Table is replaced by the following:

‘

Type of action	Procurement
Indicative budget	EUR 3.5 million
Indicative call planning / timing	2026
Indicative duration of the action	36 months
Implementation	European Commission
Type of beneficiaries	Not applicable

’;

(d) in subsection ‘4.7 Digital Skills and Jobs Platform’, point ‘Scope’, subpoint ‘Second work strand: the national Coalitions for Digital Skills and Jobs’ after the second paragraph and before point ‘Deliverables’, the following sentence is added:

‘The support to Nation Coalitions in a given Member State can take the form of Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP) of a maximum amount of 150.000 EUR per third party to allow sufficient funding for the implementation of their activities.’;

(e) in subsection ‘4.8 EdTech accelerator’, point ‘Deliverables’ the first bullet point is replaced as follows:

- ‘Three open calls for pilots (at least one call per year) launched and managed providing financial support to third parties to at least 20 EdTech start-ups/SMEs from across Member States and eligible countries. A minimum of 60% of the total budget should be spent on Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP) and the maximum amount per third party can amount up to 150.000 EUR to allow short pilots testing in real education or training environments; ’;

(f) the following subsections ‘4.10 Digital Infrastructure for schools and training institutions’ and ‘4.11 European Legal Gateway Office in India’ are added:

‘4.10 Digital Infrastructure for schools and training institutions

Objective

Robust and trustable digital infrastructures and tools (such as cloud-based services, high-quality student information and learning management systems, secure virtual classrooms, digital content, shared resource catalogues or advanced digital and personalised learning tools) are necessary for an efficient functioning of education and training systems and to contribute to improved learning outcomes. Furthermore, data exchange mechanisms and system integration capabilities between, for example, different software applications, hardware, and IT systems used by education institutions and

training organisations, are needed to enable privacy-preserving exchange of essential data and facilitate cross-border collaboration and interoperability across European educational institutions.

However, many education and training institutions depend on proprietary platforms and face vendor lock-in conditions that limit the way schools can shape their pedagogical choices and responsibly manage student data. It is thus paramount that education and training institutions can fully control, manage and protect data they generate and collect in a way that respects privacy and ethics, security, transparency, adaptability and regulatory requirements. In particular, digital infrastructures in European education and training institutions be independent from decisions made by third countries, ensuring the stability and continuity of education and training in the EU. This also includes ensuring the availability and re-use of open school data to enhance transparency and accountability, support evidence-based policies and improve the interoperability of European EdTech solutions.

The EU has a promising education technology ("Edtech") sector which has the potential to provide such innovative solutions ensuring, among other things, that sensitive education data* stays in Europe. However, this sector needs to be significantly strengthened, involving schools and school authorities in the process.

In view of the above, the ultimate objective of this action is to foster the European Edtech sector and the offer of the European digital infrastructures for education and training institutions. In turn, that greatly diminishes the risk that education data, services, tools would be managed, used and controlled without sufficient alignment to European values, policies and legislation.

Scope

This initiative will develop and implement a comprehensive framework for the digital sovereignty of European schools to ensure the availability and promotion of sovereign digital infrastructures and tools across the European education and training ecosystem. Specifically, the actions under this topic would support the building of European digital infrastructures for schools by identifying the educational, technical, financial and operational requirements for reducing the reliance on non-EU digital infrastructures in the educational sector.

The framework will encompass a blueprint for facilitating and promoting large scale deployment of sovereign solutions throughout the EU and a series of pilots to advance and showcase mature technologies in practical, real-world scenarios. The pilots will include active involvement from end-users, and continuously shape and improve the blueprint. In the build-up of the framework, the consortium is also expected to explore mechanisms and structures to speed up and simplify the setup and implementation of multi-country projects to support new solutions for boosting EU's digital infrastructures for schools and training institutions, such as a European Digital Infrastructure Consortium (EDIC).

Blueprint for scaling up future deployment

The blueprint will serve as clear, practical and actionable ready-to-use guidance involving industry, education institutions and policymakers in developing, supplying and deploying sovereign digital infrastructures in European schools on a broad scale.

As part of this blueprint, multilingual online training programmes for teachers, educators, school administration and policymakers will be developed to facilitate the deployment and use of sovereign digital infrastructures in the teaching and learning process, as well as raise awareness about those, including risks and opportunities.

To support the wider deployment of the successful pilots and other advanced digital tools and infrastructure in schools, a European network of infrastructure providers, edtech and relevant industry and pioneering schools that successfully leverage advanced digital technologies and those that are interested in doing so will be created.

For implementing this blueprint, under this topic the possibility of setting up an EDIC for an educational digital infrastructure will be explored. These actions would lay the groundwork for this future legal entity, the EDIC, facilitating access to funding, supporting development and scale-up, enhancing public contributions, and participating in educational digital infrastructure multi-country projects. The future EDIC could act as a one-stop shop for all relevant stakeholders such as schools, training institutions, public administrations and developers, and serve as an incubator for strategic digital infrastructure for schools and accelerate joint projects. In the long term, the EDIC could expand towards shared infrastructure, such as a collaboration cloud providing school authorities, educators and students with access to educational tools and technologies, and facilitate the continued development and use of educational data exchange layers. That could happen in collaboration with the existing and potential future data spaces in the areas of education and skills.

Piloting sovereign and interoperable digital solutions for schools

An essential element of developing the framework will be to support the development, demonstration and testing, validation and integration of state-of-the-art European multilingual digital education solutions in schools. Promising mature technological solutions will be identified and supported through funded pilot actions. Schools will be closely involved in this process, in particular, through the announced European School Alliances supported by Erasmus+**, to ensure that solutions meet existing pedagogical needs and are scalable and operable in real-world conditions. Appropriate incentives will be offered for school authorities and schools to participate and contribute to achieving this objective. Funding will be given through financial support to third parties. The pilots, which will be jointly realised by technology providers, school authorities and schools, can range from innovative learning management systems, AI tools for personalised learning and highly innovative digital content repositories*** and digital content creation applications to facilitating the availability and re-use of school-level data**** or supporting common data standards for education data elements, contributing to the objectives of the Common European Data Space for Skills.

Wherever relevant, pilots must be developed using available sovereign European clouds, such as those developed under the Cloud-to-edge Infrastructure and services work strands of the Digital Europe Programme and the Cloud Sovereignty Framework. The pilots will be aggregated, tested and made available through a common platform. The consortium must assess and validate the pilots based on well-defined KPIs to ensure a high level of trust, interoperability, safety and security of the process and output. Solutions will have to be trusted by the education community and users, therefore it is essential that the consortium demonstrates the compliance with EU legislation.

Pilots can be regional, national or span multiple Member States. They should aim to engage the highest number of schools and foster uptake long-term.

Financial support to third party can reach up to 250,000 EUR per pilot, and up to 40% of the grant amount of this topic, to allow for adequate participation of schools and sufficient impact of pilots.

Deliverables

- Blueprint for scaling up future deployment

- Multilingual online training programmes for teachers, educators, school administration and policymakers for the wider implementation of successful pilots
- Network of pioneering schools, edtech and industry
- Preparatory work towards an EDIC for educational digital infrastructure
- Pilot-lines of European multilingual digital solutions in schools

Type of action	Coordination and support action
Indicative budget	EUR 10 million
Indicative call planning / timing	Fourth set of calls
Indicative duration of the action	36 months
Implementation	Executive Agency HaDEA
Type of beneficiaries	Higher education institutions, vocational education and training institutions, other education and training providers, school authorities, industry partners, research institutes, centres of excellence, public administrations and/or governmental bodies, IT developers.

4.11 European Legal Gateway Office in India

Objective

Europe faces an advanced digital skills gap that poses a direct risk to Europe's competitiveness, resilience and technological sovereignty. While investment in domestic talent is key and should continue to increase, demographic trends and accelerating technological changes mean that European labour markets will continue to require international recruitment and structured mobility channels in the coming decade. The European Legal Gateway Office will contribute to filling the digital skills needs in the European labour market while also increasing the possibilities for Indian talent to benefit from EU training in ICT. It is aligned with the India-EU Joint Statement following the 16th India-EU Summit, including the EU Comprehensive Framework of Cooperation on Mobility ******.

Scope

In September 2025, the Joint Communication on the EU-India Strategic Agenda announced the setting up of the first pilot European Legal Gateway Office in India (the 'Gateway Office') for ICT talent. This is a strategic initiative designed to support the expansion of legal, skilled workforce mobility between the EU and India. The Gateway Office will be a one-stop hub consisting of three main components: a digital information tool, an office in India for outreach and dissemination, and an EU support office for coordination and political steer. It will improve navigation of training and legal pathways, support EU-based employers with recruiting ICT talent from India and strengthen coordination without replacing national procedures. For example, the Gateway Office will facilitate engagement of EU-based employers with Indian talent on the ground through outreach and awareness-related activities in major ICT regional clusters across the country. The digital tool will make ICT opportunities in the EU more visible and accessible to Indian students, researchers and professionals. The EU Support Office will coordinate with the EU and the designated focal points in Member States to ensure visibility of national initiatives in India and alignment with EU policies. The Gateway Office in India will constitute

a model for cooperation on digital talent that could be replicated in other partner countries in the future, in full respect of and in alignment with Member State policies and needs in terms of recruiting digital talent from third countries. Given the strategic nature of the pilot, strong coordination among all actors involved will be achieved through the establishment of the Steering Committee and annual meetings between EU and Indian stakeholders, such as EU-based employers, EU and India's higher education institutions, EU and India's trade associations in the ICT sector.

The Gateway Office will carry out the following types of activities:

i) running information campaigns in India on the need for ICT specialists in the EU and providing information sessions of the skills, qualifications and requirements needed,
ii) facilitating contacts between Indian jobseekers with the private sector in the EU,
iii) advising Indian nationals on what targeted further training could maximise employability in the EU ICT sector, including the necessary upskilling/reskilling relevant for the ICT sector,
iv) directing Indian candidates towards existing EU and Member States mobility and training pathways including through the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform, upcoming advanced digital skills academies and the Erasmus+ programme,
v) supporting Indian candidates towards fulfilment of relevant requirements and procedures, including linked to the recognition of qualifications and validation of skills, as relevant,
vi) providing direct support to Indian nationals with pre-departure activities.

The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) will implement the Gateway Office in the context of Technical Assistance and Support (TAS) action under the Migration Partnership Facility, which is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). Co-delegation to DG HOME to sign contribution agreement in Indirect Management with ICMPD. Contribution from DIGITAL will support activities linked to digital skills and ICT professionals.

Deliverables

- Establishment and operation of the European Legal Gateway Office in India

Type of action	Contribution Agreement
Indicative budget	EUR 2 million
Indicative call planning / timing	2027
Indicative duration of the action	22-26 months
Implementation	Indirect Management with ICMPD

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* Such as personal data of students and teachers, academic and behavioural records, payroll data, performance reviews, etc.

** Commission Work Programme 2026

*** Offering Open Educational Resources

**** Such as school budgets, student enrolment, teacher numbers and qualifications, conditions of school facilities, availability of textbooks, student test results, etc.';

****** India-EU Joint Statement on the State Visit of H.E. Mr. Antonio Costa, President of the European Council, and H.E. Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, to India, and the 16th India-EU Summit (25–27 January 2026

(6) Section 5 is amended as follows:

(a) subsection '5.1.6 Building capacity to deploy the EEHRxF and digital health services and systems to support the rights of citizens and reuse of health data under EHDS' is replaced by the following:

'5.1.6 Building capacity to deploy the EEHRxF and digital health services and systems to support the rights of citizens and reuse of health data under EHDS

Objective

Regulation (EU) 2025/327 of the European Parliament and of the Council ('The European Health Data Space (EHDS) Regulation')* reinforces the rights for citizens to access and control their personal electronic health data and supports their freedom of movement by improving the cross-border exchange of such data to ensure continuity of healthcare. These rights include the right of natural persons or their representatives to access their personal electronic health data through electronic health data access services, the right to insert information in their own electronic health record (EHR), the right to rectification, the right to portability and the right to restrict access to their electronic health data. The rights also contribute to the achievement of the target of 100% of Union citizens having access to their electronic health records by 2030, as set in the Digital Decade policy programme.

For primary use, implementing these rights under the EHDS Regulation requires concrete action, capacity-building and training, to support the digital health community, particularly public authorities, healthcare providers, and service providers, particularly Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), in the deployment of digital health services and systems that support these rights (across all the priority data categories) and that adopt the EEHRxF (European Electronic Health Record Exchange Format), taking into account the specific circumstances of different categories of stakeholders involved.

For secondary use, the EHDS Regulation requires health data holders, including public authorities and healthcare providers, to create and maintain a dataset description, following a health extension of the DCAT Application Profile** (currently under development), and, where applicable, a dedicated labelling for data quality and utility (also under development. These datasets descriptions and labels will need to be made available in the datasets catalogue of health data access bodies (HDABs).

The action is divided in **three objectives**, each to be achieved through a separate work strand:

a) to build capacity of public authorities, healthcare providers to deploy services and systems that support the rights of natural persons under Chapter II of the European Health Data Space (EHDS) Regulation (primary use);
b) to build capacity of health data holders to improve quality of data, create the datasets description and label for electronic health data they hold and that is within the scope of the EHDS for secondary use;
c) to train service providers, particularly Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), to support public authorities, healthcare providers and data holders in the implementation of the requirements set by the EHDS.

These objectives will be implemented through three work strands of a single project that will provide cascading funding to the third parties through a single call.

This action will foster a more efficient and interconnected healthcare ecosystem, supporting early adopters including at least public authorities, healthcare providers, health data holders and service providers to advance the implementation of the primary and secondary use requirements in the EHDS.

Scope

The selected project will manage a portfolio of individual grants across the three work strands by cascading funding mechanism, through financial support to third parties with the maximum amount of up to 120.000 euro per third party. The project consortium will be responsible for selecting, coordinating and monitoring the portfolio of cascaded grants across the three work strands and will ensure their coherent execution in line with the objectives, scope and deliverables defined in the Digital Europe Work Programme 2025-2027 without prejudice to the roles and responsibilities assigned to Health Data Access Bodies under the EHDS Regulation. Therefore, the consortium must demonstrate the ability to develop and execute this type of funding mechanism by involving participants with profound previous experience in this field.

The work of these projects will be implemented through three main work strands:

a) **Work strand 1:** The consortium will provide guidance for public authorities and healthcare providers to deploy, upgrade and operate digital health services and systems that support the rights of citizens for primary use of their electronic health data and fulfil their obligations under the EHDS. The consortium will support, through the cascading funding mechanism, activities of public authorities and healthcare providers (e.g. hospitals, clinics, healthcare providers) to deploy digital health services and systems that support the rights of citizens included in the EHDS and the adoption of the EEHRxF, as well as to convert electronic health data into the EEHRxF. As part of the deployment, capacity building activities such as training for staff or reengineering processes can be included.

b) **Work strand 2:** The consortium will develop a toolbox to support data holders in preparing electronic health data for secondary use in accordance with the EHDS. Through the cascading funding mechanism, it will support data holders to create and maintain dataset descriptions and, where applicable, data quality and utility labels for electronic health data falling within the scope of the EHDS. This strand will support data holders in publishing dataset descriptions and labels in the dataset catalogues operated by Health Data Access Bodies, thereby enabling data discoverability and access for secondary use. It will also support data holders in putting in place the necessary organisational and technical arrangements to make data available for secondary use under the EHDS, in line with applicable safeguards. Activities under this strand may include, where relevant, supporting data management practices, tooling and workflows, targeted IT deployment, staff training and process reengineering, insofar as these activities facilitate dataset description, cataloguing and secondary use readiness.

c) **Work strand 3:** It will develop a training framework and conduct trainings for service providers, in particular Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), to prepare them to support public authorities and healthcare providers to deploy digital health services and systems that support the rights of citizens included in the EHDS. It will also prepare them to convert health data held by public authorities and healthcare providers from various formats to the EEHRxF and vice-versa, and to deploy processes and services to enable such conversions, and to create and maintain dataset descriptions and the corresponding labelling for data quality and utility as foreseen in the EHDS for secondary uses of data.

This action is aimed at providing the necessary support, tools, and incentives in complementarity with other associated projects under Digital Europe Programme, EU4Health and Horizon Europe, such as i2X, MyHealth@MyHands, Xt-EHR, TEHDAS2, x-Share, SHAIPED. It should cover a large number of Member States) and be deployed supporting all the priority data categories under EHDS. The action contributes to the eHealth Target of the Digital Decade Policy programme established by Decision (EU) 2022/2481 of the European Parliament and of the Council (the 'DDPP Decision')*** through the

implementation of EHR systems and digital health services and systems enabling access of citizens to their EHRs as well as contributing to the implementation of the European Data Union Strategy by increasing data discoverability and improved data quality.

Deliverables

Expected outcomes and deliverables of these three working strands are:

a) Work strand 1:

(i) Guidance for public authorities and healthcare providers to deploy, upgrade and operate digital health services and systems that support the rights of citizens and fulfil their obligations under the EHDS.

(ii) Maintenance and expansion of a community of public authorities and healthcare providers based on common guidance for services and systems aligned with the objectives of the EHDS. The community should build upon one or more existing communities.

(iii) Large-scale deployment of and/or capacity building for digital health services and systems that support the EEHRxF and the rights of citizens included in the EHDS.

b) Work strand 2:

i) A toolbox for data holders to support dataset description, data quality and utility labelling, and secondary use readiness in alignment with the EHDS.

ii) Establishment or expansion of existing community of data holders with the objective of supporting peer exchange, reuse of good practices and alignment of approaches for the creation and maintenance of dataset descriptions and data quality and utility labels for secondary use under the EHDS.

iii) Creation of dataset descriptions and data quality and utility labelling by data holders, such as public authorities and healthcare providers.

iv) Integration of datasets descriptions in the datasets catalogues of health data access bodies.

v) Support to data holders in putting in place the organisational and technical arrangements required to make electronic health data available for secondary use under the EHDS, in line with applicable safeguards

c) Work strand 3:

(i) A training framework and training sessions to prepare service providers to support public authorities, healthcare providers and data holders in the implementation of the EHDS as described above, complementing and aligning with the work of the EEHRxF Support Centre, i2X Capacity Building for Secondary Use****, and QUANTUM*****.

(ii) A business model, including the uptake strategy, for service providers that can support the adoption of the EEHRxF, the uptake of services and systems compatible with the EHDS and the creation and maintenance of dataset descriptions and data quality and utility labels.

(iii) A community of trained service providers trained to support public authorities, healthcare providers and data holders in fulfilling requirements of the EHDS.

Type of action	Grant for financial support to third parties
Indicative budget	EUR 14.4 million Within the open call for cascading grants, the selected project should ensure that at least 85% of the budget is allocated to the cascading funding. At

	least 40% should be allocated to cascading funding in Work strand 1; and at least 25% to Work strand 2.
Indicative call planning / timing	Third set of calls
Indicative duration of the action	48 months
Type of beneficiaries	The consortium can include public and private entities such as (but not limited to): public administrations and Member State authorities (e.g. national contact points for eHealth, ministries of health digital health authorities); hospitals, medical centres and other healthcare providers; industry (e.g. developers of EHR systems, IT consulting firms) and SMEs; research institutions and academia; end-users and not-for-profit organisations (such as patients and healthcare professionals organisations). The consortium must include at least one organisation that can demonstrate profound previous experience of managing financial support to third parties.
Implementation	Executive agency HaDEA

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* Regulation (EU) 2025/327 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 February 2025 on the European Health Data Space and amending Directive 2011/24/EU and Regulation (EU) 2024/2847

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*** Decision (EU) 2022/2481 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 establishing the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030

**** Capacity building for secondary uses of health data for the European Health Data Space

***** QUANTUM – The health data quality label';

(b) subsection '5.2.1.2 Better Internet for Kids (BIK) platform – EU coordination' the table with indicative budget is amended as follows:

'

Type of action	Procurement
Indicative budget	EUR 4.05 million
Indicative call planning / timing	2026
Indicative duration of the action	24 months
Implementation	European Commission
Type of beneficiaries	Not applicable

';

(c) the following subsections '5.2.1.4 Online safety application' and '5.2.1.5 Ensuring comprehensive geographical coverage of the Network of Safer Internet Centres (SICs)' are added:

‘5.2.1.4 Online safety application

Objective

In line with the EU action plan against cyberbullying, the objective of this topic is to provide means to support victims of cyberbullying by helping them to report cyberbullying incidents easily and quickly, and receive relevant follow-up and support by ensuring that cases are directed to the appropriate national authorities and support services. In this spirit, the topic will enable the EU-wide availability of a secure, user-friendly online safety application that allows victims to report cyberbullying to a competent national body (e.g. a helpline), safely store and transmit evidence, and receive tailored assistance through coordinated referrals to providers of online platforms and competent authorities such as law enforcement, education, and child protection services.

Scope

The action will procure an app and provide support to interested Member States to customise, roll out and promote the app to make it fit for the national context. Support will more specifically consist in assisting Member States and associated countries, where needed and relevant, to (i) adapt the app to the national context and needs (e.g. translation, branding, connection to relevant national services for support and platforms for reporting) and ensure features such as secure reporting, evidence preservation and guaranteed confidentiality; (ii) ensuring interoperability with existing infrastructures and support systems and (iii) support the promotion of the uptake of the app among Member States, users and online platforms.

Deliverables

- Availability of a customised, user-friendly and privacy-preserving online safety app in EU Member States.
- Availability of the app to providers of online platforms in order to be integrated in their reporting and user support tools, including through Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), and to be promoted on their service.
- National implementation strategies to promote the availability and use of the app among the target audiences.

Type of action	Procurement
Indicative budget	EUR 1.35 million
Indicative call planning / timing	2026
Indicative duration of the action	Up to 24 months
Implementation	European Commission
Type of beneficiaries	Not applicable

5.2.1.5 Ensuring comprehensive geographical coverage of the Network of Safer Internet Centres (SICs)

Objective

The objective of the topic is to contribute to protection and empowerment of children online, a key EU priority, through comprehensive geographical coverage of national Safer Internet Centres (SICs) network in the EU. Notably: It seeks to enhance geographical coverage by engaging Safer Internet Centres that have not received EU funding under the previous call DIGITAL-2025-BESTUSE-08-

NETWORKSICs. Only one Safer Internet Centre will be co-funded per country. SICs may be composed of one or more NGOs, government bodies/agencies, and/or private sector organisations and they provide online safety information, educational resources, public awareness tools and counselling and reporting services (through dedicated helplines and hotlines) for young people, teachers/educators, and parents/carers. The activities performed by the SICs help minors tackle online risks and become media-literate, resilient, digital citizens. The hotline work strand allows the public to anonymously report suspected online child sexual abuse material (CSAM) for assessment and takedown. The Safer Internet Centres also address the needs of children with specific or special needs, including those with disabilities and those hailing from disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds, to ensure no child is left behind.

Considering the new role for the Commission as an enforcement body for the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Services Coordinators (DSCs), the Safer Internet Centres will strategically assist the Commission and cooperate with the DSCs in this role, in particular through data collection in the EU member states.

Scope

The funding will ensure the continuation of the well-established European network of national SICs, by enabling the awarded consortia to provide at least:

- A centre for raising awareness among children, parents/carers, teachers and educators as well as other relevant professionals working with children about online opportunities and risks for the under 18s. The focus will be to identify and address:
    - specific and general known risks (e.g. harmful and illegal content, cyberbullying, age-inappropriate content; sexual extortion, addictive design and manipulation, disinformation);
    - specific and general emerging risks (e.g. new apps, games, online challenges and trends; AI and generative AI, including AI generated pornographic and violent content such as CSAM; virtual, augmented and extended reality; the internet of things and other technological changes raising new social and ethical challenges that impact children);
    - issues such as mental and physical health risks related to the use of technologies (e.g. self-harm, cyberbullying, risky online challenges, promotion of eating disorders, screen addiction, social isolation, exposure to age-inappropriate content online, including pornographic and violent content, and sexual extortion);
    - risks facing children as young consumers (e.g. nudges to spend money, aggressive marketing strategies, lootboxes).
- A helpline to give advice and support to children and adults around them on issues related to children's use of digital technologies and services; to provide assistance on mental health issues relating to the exposure to age-inappropriate content online, including pornographic and violent content; to strengthen support to victims of cyberbullying, close cooperation with the national Child Helpline 116111 service is required.
- A hotline for tackling the spread of online CSAM (i.e., receiving, analysing, and processing reports of such material). Closer cooperation with law enforcement and the private sector should be further explored in the context of the EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse, proposed Regulation to prevent and combat child sexual abuse and recast of the Directive 2011/93/EU on child sexual abuse.
- A youth panel to engage directly with children from different demographic groups, including the organisation of regular youth participation activities, allowing them to express their views

and pool their knowledge and experience of using online technologies. Adequate turnover, geographic balance and an open selection of participants is required.

SICs shall strengthen their support to children in vulnerable situations (such as children with disabilities, children from a minority, racial or ethnic background, refugee children, children in care, LGBTQI+ children, as well as children from a disadvantaged socio-economic background, who all may face additional challenges in the digital environment). For example, to address the digital divide, they should offer non-formal education and training to these groups and communities.

In addition, SICs will:

- support the monitoring of the impact of the digital transformation on children's well-being in cooperation with the BIK platform;
- support the implementation of relevant EU strategies and legislation;
- promote the distribution of relevant online training modules (MOOCs) for teachers;
- expand the role of BIK Youth Ambassadors and BIK Youth Panels to support peer-to-peer activities at national, regional and local level;
- provide trustworthy resources for and carry out campaigns targeting children, parents, carers and teachers, educators and other relevant contacts working with children (e.g. sports coaches, club leaders). Training on children's rights online should also be included in these initiatives to create a stronger awareness that children's rights online are the same as offline, as stipulated by UN General Comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment (CRC/C/GC/25), and as protected under the DSA, as well as awareness of help and reporting resources and pathways;
- act as a one-stop-shop for reliable and age-appropriate information;
- provide digital literacy training in formal and informal education settings (e.g., youth participation activities, workshops, classroom visits, competitions, peer to peer activities).
- support parents, carers, teachers, educators and other professionals working with children to better understand the risks and opportunities of children accessing digital content and services (e.g., information sessions, train the trainers programmes, and online and offline material);
- identify emerging risks through the helpline service, and communicate this promptly to local, national, and European actors;
- support access to resources and services by public authorities, including law enforcement agencies, and exchanges with hotline analysts to develop better preventive measures and to remove online child sexual abuse material (CSAM);
- cooperate with popular platforms and digital services to assist the public, in particular children, when confronted with harmful and illegal content. This will include, but not be limited to, SICs formally recognised as "trusted flaggers" under the DSA.

Deliverables

Provision of the four key elements required of a Safer Internet Centre, namely:

- A **centre for raising awareness** among children, parents/carers, teachers and educators as well as other relevant professionals working with children about online opportunities and risks for the under 18s, producing and promoting localised age-appropriate resources to address current and emerging risks and opportunities.
- A **helpline** to give advice and support to parents and children on issues related to children's use of digital technologies and services; to provide assistance on mental health issues relating to the exposure to age-inappropriate content online, including pornographic and violent

content; to strengthen support to victims of cyberbullying, close cooperation with the national Child Helpline 116111 service is required.

- A **hotline** for tackling the spread of online CSAM (i.e., receiving, analysing, and processing reports of such material). Closer cooperation with law enforcement and the private sector should be further explored in the context of the EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse and the proposed Regulation to prevent and combat child sexual abuse and recast of the Directive 2011/93/EU on child sexual abuse.
- A **youth panel** to engage directly with children from different demographic groups, including the organisation of regular youth participation activities, allowing them to express their views and pool their knowledge and experience of using online technologies. Adequate turnover, geographic balance and an open selection of participants is required.

Type of action	Simple grant
Indicative budget	EUR 10 million Maximum requested EU contribution is limited as follows*: • Large countries (population >20 mio people): EUR 1,175,000 • Medium-sized countries (population 6-20 mio people): EUR 750,000 • Small countries (population <6 mio people): EUR 450,000
Indicative call planning / timing	Third set of calls
Indicative duration of the action	Up to 18 months
Implementation	Executive Agency HaDEA
Type of beneficiaries	Consortia consisting of NGOs, government bodies/agencies, and/or private sector organisations, from eligible countries previously not funded under the Call DIGITAL-2025-BESTUSE-08-NETWORKSICs

* Based on Eurostat data, population as of 1 January 2025';

(d) subsection '5.2.3 Situational Awareness and Operational Centre (SAOC)' is replaced by the following:

'5.2.3 Research Support Framework for Situational Awareness on information integrity

Objective

This topic will finance the first steps for the set-up and the activities of the common research support framework on information integrity as announced in the European Democracy Shield*. This research framework will contribute, together with the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) and the European Network of Fact-Checkers' project, to an ecosystem that will help get situational awareness

insight and analyse the integrity of the information space in Europe. This framework will feed into the work of the European Centre for Democratic Resilience.

Scope

The common research support framework will support access to data and advanced technology for researchers and civil society, pooling and supercharging the independent capacities of European organisations to analyse information integrity in Europe.

It will help deepen the understanding of how information manipulation campaigns spread online and how they impact the integrity of the information space. Funded activities will support, at first, the deployment, and when necessary the development, of tools to facilitate the detection of sophisticated information manipulation techniques including multimodal AI-generated content used to misrepresent facts, create and spread disinformation narratives. Together with the technological infrastructure, such as access to necessary computational power, the framework will support actions to monitor the information ecosystem to detect sophisticated information manipulation activities, including new forms of coordinated inauthentic behaviour, cross-platform coordination, the use of bots, or algorithmic amplification etc.

To achieve the intended scope funded activities could include:

- deployment and, when necessary, development of a technological infrastructure equipped with:
    - the necessary computing power for the monitoring of the integrity of the online information space
    - tools for the detection and analysis of malicious information manipulation activities, such as coordinated manipulative behavior including also campaigns based on AI-generated or manipulated content and AI based amplification techniques; and in the context of wider malicious information operations, e.g. cyberattacks by hostile third country actors;
    - tools to securely and effectively access, share and analyse large data sets;
    - tools enabling the technical integration and synthesis of a diverse range of signals, inputs and monitoring products in the field of disinformation and information manipulation, including new forms of coordinated inauthentic behaviour, including by cross-platform coordination;
- Provide access to the technological infrastructure to the research community and relevant civil society at large
- Support monitoring, investigative and analytical activities of a multi-stakeholder community to contribute to situational awareness and deepen the understanding of information manipulation campaigns dynamics online and their impact on the integrity of the information space.

This framework will also rely, among others, on the privileged access to data under the Digital Services Act (DSA)** and the Regulation on Political Advertising***. The framework will inform and be informed by various initiatives, instruments under the Digital Services Act and the Regulation on the Transparency of Political Advertising, the Code of Conduct on Disinformation, EDMO, the EEAS Rapid Alert System and FIMI ISAC, and Horizon Europe research on disinformation.

Activities may also cover candidate and accession countries associated to the Programme, in view of their specific vulnerabilities to disinformation and foreign interference campaigns.

The consortium will distribute a majority of the funding via Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP). This financial support will be issued and the maximum amount per third party can amount up to

300.000 EUR to support third parties in conducting advanced research through the use of the tools developed by the common research framework.

Deliverables

Deliverables will entail a detailed needs assessment, followed by the deployment, testing, and maintenance of a suite of tools to meet the objectives of the action. Moreover, deliverables will include the results of the investigative and research results carried out by the funded activities as well as a set of recommendations concerning the future needs of a long-term common research framework.

Type of action	Grant for financial support
Indicative budget	EUR 6 million
Indicative call planning / timing	Third set of calls
Indicative duration of the action	24 – 30 months
Implementation	European Commission
Type of beneficiaries	Research Organisations, Civil Society Organisations, Fact-Checking Organisations, Technology Companies and other relevant entities

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* Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions, European Democracy Shield: Empowering Strong and Resilient Democracies

** Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act)

*** Regulation (EU) 2024/900 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 March 2024 on the transparency and targeting of political advertising';

(e) subsection '5.3 Support to the implementation of Multi-Country Projects (MCPs)' is replaced by the following:

'5.3 Support to the implementation of Multi-Country Projects (MCPs)

Objective

Multi-Country Projects (MCPs) are large scale projects facilitating the achievement of the targets for digital transformation of the Union and industrial recovery. They involve at least three Member States (to be understood as EU Members States or EEA EFTA countries) and typically include the Union's and Member States' financing. The topic is continued from WP23-24, and it is divided into two work strands.

Under the first **work strand,** it aims to facilitate the implementation of MCPs including where the European Digital Infrastructure Consortia (EDICs)* have been chosen as implementation mechanism. The selected projects should be implemented either by an EDIC or through another mechanism listed in the DDPP Decision, including a consortium which includes at least three Member States**.

In addition to this horizontal topic, this Work Programme includes funding for specific MCPs:

- Topic 2.2.1.7 Multi-Country Project in Agri-Food
- Topic 4.9 Support for the coordination of the Cybersecurity Skills Academy

- Topic 5.1.2.2.2 MCP on Innovative and Connected Public Administrations

The projects selected for funding under this topic are expected to:

- address one of the key areas in which the Digital Europe Programme supports critical EU capacity building through large scale deployments;
- represent a high level of engagement from various Member States and a long-term sustainability for the project implemented;
- pool EU, national and/or private resources to achieve progress that no Member State could do on its own;
- reduce digital divides within and between Member States;
- prove a clear EU added value through their impact that no single entity nor Member State could achieve on its own;
- contribute to bridge the gap between large scale piloting and full deployment;
- support the consolidation of an interconnected, interoperable, and secure Single Market, considering to the extent possible the interests of public and private sectors.
- to the extent possible, support interoperability of data and digital infrastructure amongst the MCPs. Digital infrastructure might include data, high-performance computing, quantum computing, AI and connectivity;
- where relevant, support common operating models that promote fair data economy, cross-border services, digital public services, new business models, trust-based ecosystems, digital identity and a high level of personal data protection.

Under the second **work strand**, the objective of the action is to establish an EDIC Support Hub in order to:

- Ensure that EDICs have the access to comprehensive legal, operational, coordination and support.
- Contribute to the consolidation and long-term sustainability of EDICs.
- Enhance transparency, outreach and access to consolidated information on EDICs, strengthen links with society, the economy and European competitiveness.
- Support the Commission and Member States in creating a steady pipeline of new EDIC initiatives, including preparatory work for the potential extension of EDICs beyond MCPs as currently identified in the DDPP Decision.
- Generate evidence to support the analysis informing the future strategic development of a coherent and resilient EDIC ecosystem aligned with EU digital policy objectives.

Scope

For the first work strand, the awarded proposals are expected to ensure that:

- they contribute to the achievement/pursue one of the operational objectives outlined in the Regulation (EU) 2021/694 (Articles 4-8);
- they have a high potential to contribute to digital priorities of the Union provided for in the Digital Decade Policy Programme. Projects that involve higher number of Member States, either as members of an EDIC, or another MCP implementation mechanism, shall be considered as an indication of higher impact in this regard;

- the level of maturity of the project proposed is ready for deployment, as demonstrated by solid implementation strategies. Projects may include research and innovation activities, provided that they are necessary to the achievement of deployment objectives of the DDPP Decision;
- consolidate available capacities at EU and Member State level by building on existing initiatives and developing widely agreed frameworks and/or tools;
- coordinate between participating partners existing and future initiatives relevant for the project;
- coordinate with other relevant projects funded through Digital Europe Programme (e.g. Data Spaces Support Centre);
- have in place a long-term sustainability plan, which may include the setting up of an EDIC;
- address interoperability concerns that could hamper an EU wide deployment.

The funding can cover the following categories of activities:

- Deployment and use of common EU digital infrastructures, including the underlying technologies, blueprint architecture, standards, tools and applications;
- Deployment and use of advanced EU wide services targeting their large-scale adoption including through industry and/or SMEs, and/or public administrations;
- Use of computing and processing capacities;
- Data generation, collection, aggregation and sharing;
- Creation, optimization of large data models;
- Normalisation and certification of services, digital infrastructures and/or data models;
- Deployment of trustworthy AI capacities and resources;
- Dissemination and exploitation of project results;
- Stakeholder engagement;
- Capacity building, including on legal and competitiveness matters.

Priority will be given to projects that present a broader Member States support, and a higher level of maturity.

For the second work strand, the EDIC Support Hub should provide support to the EDICs, the Member States and the European Commission in their work towards further consolidation, strengthening and long term sustainability of the EDIC ecosystem, in particular by:

- Providing comprehensive legal, operational, coordination support to the EDICs, and strategic support to the European Commission.
- Strengthening governance and compliance of EDICs with the Digital Decade Policy Programme (DDPP) Decision and other relevant EU and national legislation, and improving coordination among EDICs and with key stakeholders.
- Improving accessibility of consolidated information on EDICs, strengthening links with society, the economy and European competitiveness.

- Working with the Commission and Member States on identification and mobilisation of new EDIC initiatives, including preparatory work for the potential extension of EDICs beyond MCPs as currently identified in the DDPP Decision.
- Processing the data gathered, aiming to generate evidence to inform the future strategic development of a coherent and resilient EDIC ecosystem aligned with EU digital policy objectives.

Deliverables

First work strand

Deployment of a few MCPs delivering fully functional digital infrastructure(s) or operational service(s) with a clear a long-term sustainability plan. The projects are expected to prove a clear EU added value through their impact that no single entity or Member State could achieve on its own. The projects shall contribute to the targets of the DDPP Decision.

Second work strand

1. Comprehensive support to EDICs, the Commission and Member States by:
   - the provision of legal and operational advice, including on the compliance with the DDPP Decision, other EU legislation and where applicable national legislation; and maintaining a repository of thereof;
   - creating and maintaining updated and consolidated data and information repository on EDICs, including best practices; accessible to relevant stakeholders, reporting (including the quantification of EDIC results);
   - liaising and coordination between EDICs as well as between EDICs and other relevant stakeholders,
   - support the Commission and Member States in identifying and mobilising new EDIC initiatives, pursuing outreach activities, including actions in preparation of the potential extension of the use of EDICs beyond MCPs as defined in the DDPP Decision,
   - based on the collected data, propose milestones or avenues for future strategic development of EDIC ecosystem aligned with EU digital policy objectives,
   - other support activities as defined in the call for proposals.

2. The set up of an EDIC's community of practice including knowledge-sharing activities, collaborative projects, reaching out events, and knowledge management to build expertise and shared understanding.

First work strand

Type of action	Lump sum grant
Indicative budget	EUR 19.5 million
Indicative call planning	Fourth set of calls
Indicative duration of the action	36 months
Implementation	European Commission
Type of beneficiaries	Public and private entities such as (but not limited to): public administrations (national, regional and

	local level), EDICs, economic actors (SMEs, large organisations), as well as other relevant private and public organisations contributing to the implementation of Multi-Country projects.

Second work strand

Type of action	Coordination and Support Action Grant
Indicative budget	EUR 1 million
Indicative call planning	Third set of calls
Indicative duration of the action	36 months
Implementation	European Commission
Type of beneficiaries	Public and private entities such as (but not limited to): public administrations (national, regional and local level), EDICs, economic actors (SMEs, large organisations), as well as other relevant private and public organisations contributing to the implementation of Multi-Country projects.

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* In accordance with Decision (EU) 2022/2481, EDICs are a new instrument for the deployment and operation of MCPs that should allow for large-scale intervention in key areas necessary for the achievement of the objectives and digital targets set out in Digital Decade Policy Programme (DDPP) decision, such as developing secure, resilient, performant and sustainable digital infrastructures. They shall also aim to achieve one or more specific goals outlined in the DDPP, including increasing the availability, and promoting the best use, of safe digital solutions in areas of public interest and the private sector. The EDICs are meant to facilitate the deployment of such large-scale projects and facilitate the digital transformation of the Union. The EDICs should involve several Member States to achieve the necessary scale and have a long-term perspective to provide for sustainability of the projects.

** Any Member State may be represented by one or more public entities, including regions or private entities with a public service mission.';

(7) in Section 6, subsection '6.3 Other support actions', point 3 'Other', the following bullet point is added:

- 'Support for the establishment and operation of the Data Act Legal Helpdesk.';

(8) in Section 9, subsection '9.4. Appendix 4', Table 11 is amended as follows:

(a) the following line is added:

'

2.3.1.1	Testing Apply AI sectorial applications at scale and under real-world conditions	Provided in chapter 2.3.1.1, in the context of the application of Article 12(6) restrictions

’;

(b) row 5.1.6 ‘Building capacity to deploy the EEHRxF and digital health services and systems to support the rights of citizens and reuse of health data under EHDS’ is deleted.