Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL)

Call for proposals

AI Continent

(DIGITAL-2026-AI-09)

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
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CNECT.R - Resources and Support
CNECT.R.5 - Programme Implementation

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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0. Introduction

This is a call for proposals for EU action grants in the field of AI under the Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL).

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2024/2509 (EU Financial Regulation)[1]
- the basic act (Digital Europe Regulation 2021/694[2]).

The call is launched in accordance with the 2025-2027 Work Programme[3] and will be managed by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT).

The call covers the following topics:

- DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools
- DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity
- DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging
- DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance
- DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future
- DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-GENAI-PA - Apply AI: GenAI for the public administrations
- DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-VIRTUAL-TESTBEDS-STEP - Virtual worlds test beds

Each project application under the call must address only one of these topics. Applicants wishing to apply for more than one topic, must submit a separate proposal under each topic.

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1 Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast) ('EU Financial Regulation') (OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024).

2 Regulation (EU) 2021/694 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the Digital Europe Programme (OJ L 166, 11.5.2021, p. 1).

3 Commission Implementing Decision C(2025) 6650 of 06.10.2025 amending Implementing Decision C(2025) 1839 on the financing of the Digital Europe Programme and the adoption of the work programme for 2025-2027

We invite you to read the call documentation carefully, and in particular this Call document, the Model Grant Agreement, the EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual and the EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement.

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the Call document outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, outcomes and deliverables, KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables, targeted stakeholders, type of action and funding rate and specific topic conditions (sections 1 and 2)
  - timetable and available budget (sections 3 and 4)
  - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
  - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 7)
  - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
  - award criteria (section 9)
  - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements (section 10)
  - how to submit an application (section 11).
- the Online Manual outlines the:
  - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal')
  - recommendations for the preparation of the application.
- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant *(including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc)*.

You are also encouraged to visit the Funding and Tenders portal to consult the list of projects funded previously.

1. Background

The Specific Objective 2 of the Digital Europe Programme aims to reinforce the EU's core Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data capacities as a crucial driver for the digital transformation of the public and private sectors.

The vision is to make Europe an AI continent, thriving on the development, integration and adoption of AI. As one of the financial instruments of the upcoming Apply AI Strategy, SO2 will support the development of world class AI models in the EU and foster the integration of AI technologies into EU's most strategic sectors, including healthcare, energy and research. It will stimulate new industrial uses of AI and improve the delivery of various public services.

In this call for proposals, 7 actions are included with a focus on AI in the domain of health, healthcare, the automative sector, and the application of AI solutions and innovations.

This call includes actions aiming to enhance the European genomic data infrastructure by supporting the deployment of advanced tools for data curation and use and its alignment with the European Health Data Space (EHDS). It also contributes to boosting the capacity of Member States to sequence human genomes through scaling up dedicated secure data storage and processing environments.

In the field of medical imaging in oncology, the call includes an action aiming to accelerate the uptake and deployment of EU AI-driven solutions in healthcare settings for patient care and for research purposes which will support personalised diagnosis, predictions and treatments in cancer.

Furthermore, 2 actions focus on the reinforcement of the competitiveness and innovation leadership of the European automotive sector and accelerate its digital transformation. One action aims to support the objectives and activities of the announced European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance (ECAVA) by acting as its secretariat, and a second action aims to coordinate and steer relevant projects and initiatives in the area of software, hardware, AI and autonomous driving technologies.

To improve its competitiveness and ensure strategic autonomy, Europe needs to accelerate the uptake of generative AI in its key strategic sectors and application areas. This call includes a coordination and support action (CSA) to enhance the scalability and replication of successful European GenAI pilot solutions, through activities that foster knowledge sharing, community building, and capacity development in the area of public administration. Another action aims to support testing, experimentation and integration of state-of-the-art Virtual Worlds, immersive and extended reality technologies in specific sectors.

2. Objectives — Scope — Outcomes and deliverables — KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables — Targeted stakeholders — Type of action and funding rate — Specific topic conditions

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools

Objectives

This action aims to enhance the European genomic data infrastructure by supporting the deployment of advanced tools for data curation and use and its alignment with the European Health Data Space (EHDS). Data quality and volume are key success factors for health data infrastructures supported under the Digital Europe Programme, such as the one developed by the Genomic Data Infrastructure (GDI) project implementing the 1+ Million Genomes (1+MG) initiative of the Member States. The availability of thoroughly curated genomic data and related clinical and phenotypic information is a prerequisite for accelerating the move to the next level of multi-modal data modelling and deployment as well as health sector innovation in Europe. 1+MG and the projects implementing the initiative have worked and agreed on common data standards and ontologies, data quality criteria and thresholds, data inclusion policies and the necessary standard operational procedures. On that basis, data holders will need to quality-check and curate the datasets that they will be making available to 1+MG and EHDS (HealthData@EU) to ensure their interoperability and high value for users. Wide accessibility of the data and user-friendliness of the tools and services facilitating the access to data are critical success factors of the 1+MG data infrastructure. While such functionalities for research purposes have been already largely covered in the deployment project GDI, application in other use scenarios, in particular healthcare and public health policy, requires additional tools,

application programming interfaces (APIs) and interfaces to address the corresponding specific user needs and requirements. The citizen perspective must be also factored in to ensure, through appropriate IT tools, full compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules regarding citizens' rights on personal data protection. This action relates to the potential creation of a European Digital Infrastructure Consortium for genomic data (Genome EDIC) and supports the activities related to operating the 1+MG data infrastructure established with the support of Digital Europe under Work Programme 2021-2022 (GDI project), including its alignment with the requirements, technical specifications, and processes established by the EHDS Regulation to ensure a smooth functioning within the HealthData@EU infrastructure.

Scope

Data tools for the 1+MG data infrastructure should be based on common standards and as automated as possible, and should enable data quality check at source, benchmarking, annotation and enhancement on the data provider end and by the operator of the data infrastructure, as appropriate. This covers the whole process of data inclusion, integration and access provision, as well as compliance assessment, risk management and data security assurance on the side of data infrastructure. All steps and functionalities should be designed to support the needs and requirements of three main use scenarios, i.e. research (largely already covered by the GDI project), and clinical care and public health policymaking. They should follow and implement the standards and procedures agreed within the 1+ Million Genomes initiative (1+MG Framework) and be compliant with the EHDS Regulation. For example, data curation tools should facilitate the description of datasets using a metadata standard compatible with the one required for the EU Dataset Catalogue of the EHDS (Health DCAT-AP), including its data quality and utility label as defined in the project QUANTUM. Metadata should also cover information about legal conditions and enablers for sharing the respective dataset. Moreover, the action should leverage best practices and strategies for linking clinical and genomic data at individual level, within the framework of EHDS where appropriate, to maximise access to data while preserving the security and privacy of data subjects (e.g. sampling, anonymisation and pseudonymisation techniques, data gap filling). Data minimisation tools should support compliance with the respective GDPR rules. Moreover, this action covers piloting and the deployment of tools, APIs and interfaces to provide high quality data services to the users of the 1+MG data infrastructure for healthcare and public health policy purposes as well as addressing any remaining user needs in research not yet covered by other projects. For example, APIs and interfaces for data discovery, and federated analysis and modelling in a secure processing environment will enable users to find, access and integrate the data at the required level of data protection safeguards to serve their projects, clinical questions or policy development. Adequate data de-identification/synthetisation methods and support to multi-modal data discovery and analysis across the data infrastructures (e.g. linking up with the Cancer Image Europe and HealthData@EU infrastructures) should also be considered and implemented. The tools delivered and deployed should be user-friendly and clearly support high uptake of the data infrastructures and their services. Furthermore, the action is expected to establish a citizen portal for 1+MG enabling citizens to exercise their GDPR rights, such as obtaining information about their data inclusion / processing and their legal basis, manage the consent, requesting data access, rectification or erasure. All solutions deployed by the project should be compatible with the Simpl middleware platform, where appropriate, and ensure interoperability with the HealthData@EU infrastructure. Tools related to authentication should be eIDAS-compliant. While fully respecting the prerogative of participants within the 1+MG data infrastructure to determine who can access what data and under which conditions, suitable links to the AI Factories should be envisaged. The project should include a description of data access and usage arrangements.

Outcomes and deliverables

- Tools to perform automated data and metadata curation / inclusion / minimisation by data providers, foster data quality assurance and enable compliance checks and risk/security management developed, tested and deployed in the 1+MG data infrastructure in alignment with agreed 1+MG requirements and related standards and procedures, as well as with the legislative and technical framework of the European Health Data Space and European Digital Identity Framework.
- Tools, APIs and interfaces developed, tested and deployed in the GDI, covering well documented needs of users from research, healthcare and public health policy, in alignment with the European Health Data Space.
- Citizens' portal, allowing at least management of GDPR rights of citizens and citizens' engagement, to be established and operational at month 12 at the latest.

KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables

- Number of tools, APIs and interfaces developed, tested and deployed in the GDI, covering well documented needs of users from research
- Number of tools, APIs and interfaces developed, tested and deployed in the GDI, covering well documented needs of users from healthcare
- Number of tools, APIs and interfaces developed, tested and deployed in the GDI, covering well documented needs of users from policy.
- Citizen's portal:
    - Number of page views;
    - average monthly active users;
    - number of registered users;
    - number of citizens participating in interactive features (contact forms, requests, surveys);
    - Number of security breaches and technical incidents reported;
    - Number of security incidents solved;
    - Average wait time for incidents.

  The KPI for the citizen's portal should be measured every 12 months following the start of operations.

Additional KPIs should be proposed by applicants in the project proposal as appropriate.

Targeted stakeholders

Public and private entities such as (but not limited to): public administrations (national, regional and local level), Health Data Access Bodies, hospitals, research institutes, biobanks, research agencies, research infrastructures, European Digital Infrastructure Consortia (EDIC).

Type of action and funding rate

Simple Grants — 50% funding rate

For more information on Digital Europe types of action, *see Annex 1*.

Specific topic conditions

– For this topic, security restrictions under Article 12(6) of the Digital Europe Regulation apply *(see sections 6 and 10 and Annex 2)*

– *For this topic, restrictions for the protection of European digital infrastructures, communication and information systems, and related supply chains apply (see*

section 6, section 10 and the Appendix 4 of the Digital Europe Work Programme 2025-2027)

- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply *(see section 6)*

- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: depreciation only *(see section 10)*

- For this topic, first exploitation obligations apply *(see section 10)*
- The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:

    - extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the Union*
    - extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance*
    - extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects*

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity

Objectives

This action contributes to boosting the capacity of Member States to sequence human genomes through scaling up dedicated secure data storage and processing environments. Data volume is crucial in genomics analytics, and efficient storage and management of large data sets, such as genomics, is essential; to ensure efficient processing, genomic data storage solutions should be flexible and scale with needs. Genomic data, once curated, must not only be stored safely, but also be processed in secure processing environments, which is a particular challenge with the highly voluminous genomic data.

This action relates to the potential creation of a European Digital Infrastructure Consortium for genomic data (Genome EDIC) and supports the activities related to operating the 1+MG data infrastructure established with the support of Digital Europe under Work Programme 2021-2022 (GDI project), including its alignment with the requirements, technical specifications, and processes established by the EHDS Regulation to ensure a smooth functioning within the HealthData@EU infrastructure. As part of the 1+MG initiative implementation, this action builds on the outputs and results of the 1+MG implementing projects, and will establish a collaboration agreement with the Genome of Europe (GoE project, supported under Digital Europe Work Programme 2022-2023), to contribute ensuring safe storage and processing capacity for the European reference genome data within the 1+MG data infrastructure.

Scope

This action supports the acquisition and set-up of a secure federated data storage and processing capacity for the 1+MG data infrastructure, which is expected to be operated by the relevant EDIC. It should include "hot storage" working in synergy

with secure processing environments aligned with the EHDS requirements, such as compliance checks for secure processing environments and detached long-term storage for curated data made available to the 1+MG by the data providers, including the Genome of Europe dataset. The data storage capacity should be designed based on an agreed data storage optimisation strategy, and balancing between storage costs and data depth/breadth/versioning while considering the most appropriate data storage architecture, technology and legal aspects, and ensuring scalability.

Outcomes and deliverables

- 1+MG data storage strategy.
- Secure federated data storage and processing capacity for 1+MG data infrastructure.

KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables

- Number of new data storage facilities
- Number of petabytes of procured storage (per location and in total)
- Number of Member States hosting new storage
- Number of new SPEs and processing capacity
- Number of Member States with additional processing capacity/SPEs

Additional KPIs should be proposed by applicants in the project proposal as appropriate.

Targeted stakeholders

Public and private entities such as (but not limited to): public administrations (national, regional and local level), hospitals, research institutes, biobanks, research agencies, research infrastructures, European Digital Infrastructure Consortia (EDIC).

Type of action and funding rate

Grant for Procurement — 50% funding rate

For more information on Digital Europe types of action, *see Annex 1*.

Specific topic conditions

- For this topic, security restrictions under Article 12(6) of the Digital Europe Regulation apply *(see sections 6 and 10 and Annex 2)*
- For this topic, restrictions for the protection of European digital infrastructures, communication and information systems, and related supply chains apply *(see sections 6,10, and the Appendix 4 of the Digital Europe Work Programme 2025-2027)*
- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply *(see section 6)*
- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: full costs only *(see section 10)*
- The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:

- extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the Union*
- extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance*
- extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects*

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging

Objectives

Medical imaging is one of the most advanced and promising areas in health where Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications can truly make a difference in transforming health and care for the benefit of the patients and health care providers. AI-powered tools in medical imaging can support earlier and more accurate diagnosis, better prediction of patient outcomes, and identification of new disease characteristics. They can combine and interpret data of different types (e.g. imaging, omics, laboratory results, etc.) and from different sources, supporting more personalised diagnosis, predictions and treatments.

In oncology, the Cancer Image Europe[4] platform implemented by the EUCAIM project under the Digital Europe Programme will offer access to medical imaging data and a testing environment to maximise the uptake of AI solutions in clinical practice and medical research. The platform should support SMEs from the medtech sector which hold a great potential for innovating the European digital healthcare systems and biomedical research environment in testing and validating AI solutions.

Moreover, integration of health data of different types is crucial for advancing innovation and healthcare outcomes. Advanced technologies, methods and tools, including AI, will enable discovery of data across different data infrastructures, linking and integrating them to enable multi-modal analysis and inform patient treatment towards more personalised approaches. A pre-requisite will be to ensure a high degree of interoperability between the different health data infrastructures and with the HealthData@EU infrastructure of the European Health Data Space (EHDS) and Simpl middleware for data spaces.

Finally, the development and deployment of multi-modal AI-based tools is still hampered by data quality issues, high costs, insufficient clinical evidence and limited knowledge and training of healthcare professionals.

Therefore, the objective of this action is to:

- Accelerate the uptake of EU AI-driven solutions that are ready to be deployed in healthcare settings for patient care and for research purposes. This will facilitate the paradigm shift in the digital transformation of healthcare towards personalised medical solutions;

[4] https://cancerimage.eu/

- Facilitate the deployment of EU cutting-edge AI-driven solutions in medical imaging, combined with other health data, for increased efficiency and better patient outcomes, leveraging the Cancer Image Europe platform;

- Further develop the data, testing and validation services and user tools of Cancer Image Europe platform in alignment with the legal and technical framework of the European Health Data Space, also towards supporting the development and uptake of EU cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging (including Deep learning and Generative AI solutions) for healthcare;

- Ensure alignment and inter-operability of the Cancer Image Europe platform with the HealthData@EU infrastructure of the EHDS;

- Conduct multi-centre validation studies of promising medical imaging-based and multi-modal AI solutions for screening, early detection, diagnosis and care, generating evidence for clinical utility and cost effectiveness of tested solutions.

This action relates to the potential creation of a European Digital Infrastructure Consortium for cancer image data (Cancer Image Europe EDIC) and supports the activities related to operating the respective data infrastructure established with the support of Digital Europe under Work Programme 2021-2022 (EUCAIM project).

The support for deployment under this topic concerns in particular two areas of activities, linked to the ambition and scope of the future Cancer Image Europe EDIC:

- Delivery of multi-modal solutions (including evidence generation of clinical utility and to support regulatory approval)

- Deployment of solutions having and/or pending regulatory approval that could be piloted or trialled in healthcare settings (further evidence generation for cost-benefits or HTA)

Scope

By building on, extending and leveraging the Cancer Image Europe platform, this action is expected to facilitate the uptake of EU AI-driven solutions in medical imaging (including Machine Learning and Generative AI), towards their deployment in clinical settings. It should also include upskilling of healthcare professionals and evidence generation to evaluate the performance of the deployed AI-driven solutions and engage patients.

The AI-solutions should be associated with one or multiple imaging modalities (e.g. X-ray, CT (computed tomography), MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), ultrasound, endoscopy, etc.), and should leverage different types of health-related data (e.g. laboratory results, genomics, other omics, clinical data, other real-world data) in combination with one or more types of medical imaging. For example, the following tools or functionalities can be deployed within the action: annotation, summarization, error identification, information extraction, report generation, interpretation of data, conversion of medical image format, image reconstruction, image generation, image classification, personalised treatment plans, or patient stratification (for clinical trials, medical research, data referencing in personalised medicine). The action must cover the validation of reproducible image-based decision support models in oncology.

The action should also contribute to upgrading and enhancing the uptake of the Cancer Image Europe platform through deployment of tools, application programming interfaces (APIs) and interfaces enabling high-quality data services for the users of the Cancer Image Europe platform. The solutions should cover, at least, data quality

assessment, including security, data access and analysis, as well as services for AI developers supporting their regulatory compliance pathway, including the EHDS Regulation, if applicable. Moreover, data services will cover comprehensive data quality assessment—including security, data access, and analysis. Specifically, tools will be deployed to ensure that datasets federated in Cancer Image Europe are fully compliant with EHDS, utilizing Health DCAT-AP for metadata descriptions and adhering to the data quality and utility label standards set by the EHDS Regulation.

Moreover, the action should consider synergies and cross-fertilisation of tools with other relevant health data infrastructures: HealthData@EU, 1+Million Genomes (1+MG), Intensive Care Unit data infrastructure, the European Virtual Human Twins Initiative, and UNCAN.eu platform to further facilitate the integration and processing of different types of health data. Also, the outcomes of EU-funded projects dealing with other imaging modalities, such as digital pathology (e.g. BigPicture project), should be considered. Finally, synergies with the ongoing AI related activities of the Health Data Access Bodies (HDABs) in the EHDS, the SHAIPED project and the TEF-Health project should be leveraged.

This action should ensure that appropriate tools are deployed to support data curation at source, quality benchmarking, annotation, dataset description and enhancement on the side of data providers and the data infrastructure. This covers the whole process of data inclusion, integration and access provision, as well as compliance assessment, risk management and data security assurance on the side of Cancer Image Europe. All functionalities and services should be designed to support the needs and requirements of three main use scenarios of Cancer Image Europe, i.e. the deployment of AI solutions in healthcare settings, biomedical research and SME innovation for digital healthcare. They should follow, implement and further develop the standards and procedures agreed in the European Cancer Imaging Initiative and deploy a risk governance framework compliant with the AI Act, ensuring data security and safety of AI solutions designed to be applied on humans. Inherent risks of the new technology must be effectively mitigated and managed.

This action also supports the alignment of the Cancer Image Europe platform with the requirements, technical specifications, and processes established by the EHDS Regulation to ensure a smooth functioning within the HealthData@EU infrastructure. By leveraging the platform's advanced tools and services, the action will support and promote the secondary use of medical imaging data across various medical specialties where medical imaging plays a crucial role, and for different purposes including research, innovation, healthcare delivery and regulatory purposes. This is expected to support the integration, processing and combination of diverse types of health data, promoting holistic health data analysis.

SMEs and healthcare providers must be appropriately involved in further developing the platform so that it best supports their needs and requirements to bring innovative solutions to clinical practice, especially in view of the requirements of the EHDS Regulation, AI Act and Medical Device Regulation (MDR) (interoperability and regulatory compliance).

One project will be funded under this topic. The project should reserve appropriate budget and consider measures to collaborate with healthcare providers, medtech companies and SMEs to support clinical validation and deployment of AI-driven solutions in the field of medical imaging.

The proposal should provide detailed measures to foster effective and concrete collaborations between healthcare providing organisations and AI developers/SMEs, that will lead to the delivery of multi-modal solutions, to validation of specific solutions on local data, and/or to piloting of these solutions in healthcare settings.

The relevant medical centres are required to collaborate with the network of advanced screening centres for medical imaging-based and multi-modal AI-based screening to be established under the topic "2.3.3.3 Apply AI: Piloting AI-based image screening in medical centres". The action should reserve budget for the purpose of participating in these activities.

Outcomes and deliverables

- New data services and user tools for the Cancer Image Europe platform covering data curation / inclusion by data providers, data quality assurance and compliance checks, and risk/security management in alignment with agreed standards, procedures and requirements, including the framework of the European Health Data Space.
- Multi-centre validation of AI-driven solutions in the field of medical imaging, including also evidence generation for clinical utility and cost efficiency.
- Deployment of multi-modal, cutting-edge AI-driven solutions in the field of medical imaging in healthcare and research settings, leveraging different types of data (at least one imaging modality and one other data type e.g. genomics, other omics, laboratory results, real-world data etc.) and building on the achievements of the Cancer Image Europe platform.
- Training and upskilling of medical imaging personnel and/or healthcare professionals for the deployed technology and further use.

KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables

- Number of tools, APIs and interfaces developed, tested and deployed in the Cancer Image Europe platform, covering well documented needs of users from research, healthcare and Medtech companies and SMEs
- Number of organisations which use the Cancer Image Europe platform for working with imaging data: at least 60 organisations from at least 15 EU Member States
- Number of Medtech companies and SMEs who have used the Cancer Image Europe platform for developing, testing or validating AI solutions: at least 30 by project end
- Number of multi-modal AI models deployed in research settings for which clinical utility has been assessed in multi-centre studies
- Number of software as medical device (SaMD) solutions for which the process of regulatory approval has been initiated and where the Cancer Image Europe platform has supported the clinical validation/evidence generation
- Number of AI solutions deployed/piloted in healthcare settings/healthcare organisations

Additional KPIs should be proposed by applicants in the project proposal as appropriate.

Targeted stakeholders

Hospitals and outpatient clinics (both public and private entities are eligible), healthcare research institutions (e.g. university departments providing patient care and conducting clinical trials), relevant Member States authorities (e.g. ministries of health, regional health authorities, Health Data Access Bodies, …), AI developers e.g.

MedTech companies (especially SMEs) applying together with healthcare providers (hospitals/ outpatient clinics), European Digital Infrastructure Consortia (EDIC).

Type of action and funding rate

SME Support Actions — 50% and 75% (for SMEs) funding rate

For more information on Digital Europe types of action, *see Annex 1*.

Specific topic conditions

- For this topic, security restrictions under Article 12(6) of the Digital Europe Regulation apply *(see sections 6 and 10 and Annex 2)*
- For this topic, restrictions for the protection of European digital infrastructures, communication and information systems, and related supply chains apply *(see sections 6,10, and the Appendix 4 of the Digital Europe Work Programme 2025-2027)*
- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply *(see section 6)*
- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: depreciation only *(see section 10)*
- For this topic, first exploitation obligations apply *(see section 10)*
- The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:
  - extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the Union*
  - extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance*
  - extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects*

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance

Objectives

The action will help reinforce the competitiveness and innovation leadership of the European automotive sector and accelerate its digital transformation.

As part of the Industrial Action Plan for the European Automotive Sector[5], the action will support the objectives and activities of the announced European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance (ECAVA) by acting as its Secretariat. The purpose of the ECAVA is to provide a discussion and advisory forum to coordinate and accelerate technological developments and investments in software-defined, AI-powered, connected and autonomous vehicle technologies. It will bring together a critical mass

[5] COM(2025) 95 final

of Original Equipment Manufacturers, automotive suppliers, technology and tool providers, start-ups, academia, research and technology organisations, as well as relevant industrial associations active in the sector. The Secretariat will contribute to the success of the ECAVA by allowing it to function smoothly and effectively.

Scope

The Secretariat shall support the effective set-up, functioning and day-to-day work of the ECAVA. It should function in an agile and efficient way, with clear processes and roles and a capacity to adapt to evolving circumstances. It will work with the members and participants of the Alliance and with the European Commission. The tasks of the Secretariat will notably include:

- supporting the organisation and work of its General Assembly, working groups, Steering Committee, Alliance Forum and other meetings, including by editing the documents produced.
- Supporting the administrative processes of the ECAVA, notably by assisting the European Commission in the management of applications.
- Disseminating outcomes of the Alliance, notably through the creation and maintenance of a website, and building a dynamic ecosystem.
- Supporting the members of the Alliance in the development and update the ECAVA's yearly roadmap.
- Providing the needed expertise, for instance legal expertise on competition rules.

The Secretariat will work in close collaboration with the action on the "Collaboration Platform for the European connected and automated vehicle of the future" (see section 2.2.2.9 of the Digital Europe Work Programme). While the Secretariat will focus on facilitating the organisation and processes of the Alliance, the Collaboration Platform will focus on coordinating joint developments in the area, driving the alignment on common technology platforms, and supporting the incubation, integration and maintenance of joint developments. The Secretariat shall agree on working arrangements with the Collaboration Platform.

Outcomes and deliverables

The Secretariat of the ECAVA will support the successful operation of the ECAVA, assisting the European Commission and the ECAVA's members in making the Alliance a sustainable stakeholder platform. It will deliver on the following outcomes:

- Development and promotion of the ECAVA's Strategic roadmap.
- Organisation of the annual ECAVA General Assembly and Forum, as well as of the meetings of working group and Steering Committee, in close collaboration with the European Commission.
- Promotion of the Alliance's outcomes, including through the operation of a website and by creating and publishing relevant communication content.

KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables

- Number, size and representativeness of organisations actively involved in the ECAVA.
- Satisfaction of organisations involved in the ECAVA regarding the functioning of the Alliance.

- Reach and impact of dissemination and communication activities.

Proposals are encouraged to propose additional KPIs, or alternative performance assessment approaches (qualitative or quantitative).

Targeted stakeholders

Representatives of the automotive and motor vehicle industry (OEMs and suppliers). Associations with the capacity to act as neutral mediators on behalf of their constituency are strongly encouraged to apply. Organisation(s) with complementary expertise strong communication expertise.

Type of action and funding rate

Coordination and Support Actions — 100% funding rate

For more information on Digital Europe types of action, *see Annex 1*.

Specific topic conditions

- For this topic, security restrictions under Article 12(6) of the Digital Europe Regulation apply *(see sections 6 and 10 and Annex 2)*
- For this topic, restrictions for the protection of European digital infrastructures, communication and information systems, and related supply chains apply *(see sections 6,10, and the Appendix 4 of the Digital Europe Work Programme 2025-2027)*
- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply *(see section 6)*
- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: depreciation only *(see section 10)*
- The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:
  - extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance*
  - extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects*

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future

Objectives

The action will help reinforce the competitiveness and innovation leadership of the European automotive sector and accelerate its digital transformation. It will contribute to the implementation of the Industrial Action Plan for the European Automotive Sector. It will support the objectives of the announced European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance (ECAVA), which focuses on the following key areas:

- Developing a software platform for software-defined vehicles (SDVs);

- Developing an in-vehicle computing architecture for software-defined vehicles;
- Developing innovative AI solutions for the automotive industry;
- Creating a large-scale distributed pilot facility;
- Accelerate the transition towards autonomous driving.

The action will build on the ongoing industry-driven collaboration on a European software-defined vehicle initiative and expand into the other areas of the ECAVA, supporting concrete collaborations building on the strategic guidance and advice from the ECAVA.

The action will coordinate and steer relevant projects and initiatives in the area of software, hardware, AI and autonomous driving technologies. It will drive alignment on common standards and interfaces. It will contribute to the management of a strategic industry-driven collaboration in these areas, by incubating, orchestrating and helping maintain joint developments. It will provide a collaborative digital platform to support efficient common development and promote the broad uptake of the initiative's outcomes. It will lay the basis for a sustainable industry-driven collaboration. The collaboration platform aims at consolidating existing coordination mechanisms in an inclusive way and expanding them by supporting the role of a maintainer for emerging open-source building blocks and software stacks as well as sustainability of the ecosystem.

Scope

The action will implement the following activities:

- Support the management and coordination of joint developments under the ECAVA by:
  - Steering, coordinating and supporting research, innovation and deployments projects, including EU-funded (e.g. under the Chips JU, CCAM and 2ZERO Partnerships, potential future Joint Undertakings), national-funded and industry-driven projects and initiatives (e.g. projects under the Eclipse SDV Working Group, AUTOSAR, COVESA, ...). Consolidate or orchestrate existing coordination mechanisms under FEDERATE, Eclipse SDV, Autosar, COVESA, etc..
  - Defining and supporting key roles and responsibilities for project management, including a high-level ambassador to ensure dialogue and exchange with senior automotive decision-makers in companies; a team of chief operations officers and a team of chief architects to ensure coherence and alignment.
- Drive the alignment and consensus on common technology platforms:
  - Define and update a long-term strategic roadmap and vision across companies' initiatives for joint, largely open-source, developments.
  - Support the alignment across companies on common high-level architectures, building blocks, standards, interfaces and tools for key digital technologies in the scope of the Alliance. This shall include software, hardware, and interfaces with cloud infrastructure.

  - Help identify and define non-differentiating areas for beneficial collaborations regarding automotive AI development, including approaches for data sharing and pooling to support joint AI development.

  - Follow and contribute where relevant to standardisation activities including at international level.

- Support the incubation of joint developments, notably by:

  - Supporting the rollout of the common strategic roadmap, providing a drumbeat to ensure speedy implementation, and an efficient transfer of outcomes from relevant projects, aiming towards rapid integration in series production.

  - Setting up certification and labeling processes for the outcomes of joint developments under the initiative.

  - Disseminating outcomes and help to build a dynamic ecosystem, based on an open-source plan and leveraging existing communities.

- Support the integration and maintenance of core joint developments based on a collaborative digital platform:

  - Supporting the operation of a repository and developer platform for jointly developed building blocks, interfaces, tools, models, etc. and of a digital platform for collaboration, building as far as possible on existing mechanisms, which support Europe's strategic autonomy.

  - Supporting, where relevant, the maintenance of common stacks by relevant organisations(s), such as ECLIPSE SDV, for instance through reference implementation and pre-integrations.

The action should ensure the long-term sustainability of the initiative's outcomes by supporting the creation of a sustainable organisational structure during the project, considering the eventual transition to a dedicated legal entity. It should function in an agile and efficient way, with clear processes and roles and a capacity to adapt to evolving circumstances. It should build on and integrate existing governance mechanisms to define a lean and efficient governance structure and ensure a smooth transition towards a more integrated collaboration. The action will work in close collaboration with the action on the "Secretariat for the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance" (see section 2.2.2.8 of the Digital Europe Work Programme), which will focus on facilitating the organisation and processes of the Alliance, complementing the collaboration platform's work. The action shall agree on working arrangements with the Secretariat.

Outcomes and deliverables

The action will deliver the following outcomes and deliverables:

- Strategic roadmap for digital technology developments for automotive, including software, hardware, AI models and solutions and autonomous driving technologies, across different projects and initiatives;

- Definition of agreement on high-level architectures and interfaces for software, hardware, AI models and solutions and autonomous driving technologies;

- Nurturing of a dynamic ecosystem of contributors and participants adopting the initiative's outcomes;

- Operational digital platform(s) supporting joint developments under the initiative;
- Definition and implementation of processes, agreements and roles ensuring a clear pipeline for building blocks from relevant projects funded at EU and national level towards integration by companies in series production, leveraging organisations like ECLIPSE SDV, COVESA, or alike.
- Establishment of a sustainable organisational and governance structure.

KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables

- Number, size and representativeness of organisations actively involved in the ECAVA and in related joint technology developments.
- Number, size and representativeness of organisations and participants involved in the collaborative ecosystem of the initiative.
- Integration and uptake of building blocks and other outcomes developed by the initiative into series production vehicles put on the market. Estimated efficiency gains enabled by the initiative for the automotive industry (e.g. saving on redundant non-differentiating software developments).

Proposals are encouraged to propose additional KPIs, or alternative performance assessment approaches (qualitative or quantitative).

Targeted stakeholders

- A representative set of members of the automotive and motor vehicle industry (OEMs and suppliers) with leading digital innovation initiatives across the European Union and Associated Countries. In addition, associations who lead discussions on joint digital collaboration and with the capacity to act as neutral mediators on behalf of their constituency are strongly encouraged to apply.
- Organisations and partnerships supporting collaboration in the industry (e.g. ECLIPSE SDV, AUTOSAR; COVESA) to contribute to the initiative's management and support the alignment on a common framework.
- Organisations with the capacity to act as multipliers or with relevant specific expertise (e.g. testing, simulation).

Type of action and funding rate

Simple Grants — 50% funding rate

For more information on Digital Europe types of action, *see Annex 1*.

Specific topic conditions

- For this topic, security restrictions under Article 12(6) of the Digital Europe Regulation apply *(see sections 6 and 10 and Annex 2)*
- For this topic, restrictions for the protection of European digital infrastructures, communication and information systems, and related supply chains apply (see sections 6,10, and the Appendix 4 of the Digital Europe Work Programme 2025-2027)
- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply *(see section 6)*

- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: depreciation only *(see section 10)*
- The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:
  - extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance*

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-GENAI-PA - Apply AI: GenAI for the public administrations

Objectives

Broadly speaking, the objective of this action is to coordinate and support the pilot projects delivering Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) solutions fully integrated into the operational workflows and IT systems of participating public administrations.[6]

First, this action should prioritise to enhance the scalability and replication of successful GenAI pilot solutions. This includes the projects' capabilities to be duplicated by other public administrations and to adjust efficiently to a growing number of users, public administrations, or application areas.

Second, it will identify common needs from public administrations for GenAI solutions "Made in Europe", facilitating the pooling of demand at EU level for European start-ups.

As a result of these efforts, the action will deepen collaboration among public administrations across Member States, laying the foundation of a sustainable GenAI community. Through the dissemination of knowledge, tools, and mutual learning experiences, this community will help accelerate adoption and reinforce trust in European GenAI solutions.

Scope

The selected consortium will be responsible for enhancing the scalability and replication of successful European GenAI pilot solutions, through activities that foster knowledge sharing, community building, and capacity development. Such activities could consist, for example, in implementing software documentation best practices, facilitating peer-to-peer knowledge sharing and experience exchange, deploying targeted training and support programs, and establishing a community of practice. A helpdesk can be set up to support pilot projects and other interested public administrations on technical, organisational and legal – such as procurement – matters.

For instance, to support replication and scalability, the CSA may develop practical tools such as starter kits to guide new adopters with implementation steps and preconditions (data, infrastructure, skills, etc.), end/or host and maintain a publicly accessible repository of replicability assessments (across languages, admin levels, IT environment) of adopted solutions. These tools can be made available, if possible, on the AI-on-Demand platform7 as the central repository for the European AI ecosystem.

[6] DIGITAL-2025-AI-SUPPLY-08 -Apply AI: GenAI for the public administrations

7 AI-on-Demand Platform

These activities will ensure that the implementation strategies of successful pilot projects can be readily replicated and scaled, enabling seamless adoption across different public administrations and Member States, EEA-EFTA countries and countries associated to the Digital Europe Programme.

Importantly, the CSA will seek to identify common needs with the overarching goal of pooling demand from public administrations for GenAI solutions "Made in Europe". Towards that end, the CSA will define benchmarks and minimum requirements at the technical level. It will work closely with and contribute to the innovation procurement hubs initiative8, in particular to public procurement of innovation (PPI) and pre-commercial public procurement work strands. Furthermore, the CSA will raise awareness among European start-ups for its demand-pooling exercise through outreach activities targeted to start-up communities in Europe, conducting where relevant matchmaking exercises between public administrations and European start-ups.

Through this combined efforts, this CSA will contribute to the creation of a GenAI4EU community of public administrations in Europe and its integration into the large European AI ecosystem of excellence.

Participants in this action should in particular, cooperate closely with the European Digital Innovation Hubs and the AI-on-Demand-Platform, leveraging their expertise and building on their efforts targeted to the public administrations.

The CSA will play an important role in ensuring the pilot projects have a European dimension. This will be done by supporting the pilot projects with scalability and replicability. They will complement their planned actions with additional measures to maximise the reach and impact. Moreover, the European dimension will also be ensured by reporting on the pilot project's activities, aggregating their KPIs and relevant figures to provide an overview on the use of GenAI by public administrations in Europe.

The CSA should engage with all levels of public administrations (local, regional, national) without focusing on one specific level. The CSA will closely collaborate with the consortia implementing the pilot projects but will bring complementary expertise to maximise the impact of their planned actions.

The action should establish links and build synergies with related initiatives, such as the GenAI4EU initiative[9] and in particular the GenAI4EU Central Hub[10], the Alliance for Language Technologies[11], the action on open-source European foundational model fine-tuning[12], the sectoral AI & Robotics Testing and Experimentation Facilities[13], data

8 Call for tenders EISMEA/2024/OP/0008

9 GenAI4EU: Funding opportunities to boost Generative AI "made in Europe" | Shaping Europe's digital future

10 EU Funding & Tenders Portal

11 https://language-data-space.ec.europa.eu/related-initiatives/alt-edic_en

12 https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/digital-2024-ai-06-finetune

13 https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/testing-and-experimentation-facilities

spaces[14] and relevant EuroHPC initiatives[15], in particular the the AI Factories[16]. Furthermore, it should work with actions implementing the AI Act[17], such as the regulatory sandboxes. Strong links should also be built with the future Multi-Country Project on Innovative and Connected Public Administrations.

The CSA should also seek alignment with existing Commission-led initiatives that support AI adoption in the public sector. These may include, for instance, the Public Sector Tech Watch observatory[18], which gathers use cases and best practices on AI in public services across Europe; the GovTech Incubator[19], fostering collaboration between public administrations and European start-ups; and the Interoperable Europe Academy[20], offering training programmes for public sector professionals on digital and AI topics.

The CSA should cooperate with the GenAI4EU Central Hub[21]. In this cooperation, the CSA would focus on GenAI for Public Administration and the Central Hub would be in charge of more general GenAI topics. The Central Hub will not interfere and work on matters on GenAI for Public Administration, unless with an explicit agreement from this action. It must be clear that there is no overlap of activities between the two actions, but synergies should be developed when added value is demonstrated.

Outcomes and deliverables

- Contribution to the replication and scalability of piloted GenAI solutions across public administrations and Member States, demonstrated through the ability to adapt them to new users, administrative levels or service areas. This contribution will be supported through concrete tools such as starter kits, a repository of replicability assessments as well as tailored guidance, documentation and outreach.
- Targeted support to national procurement processes, where relevant, possibly by a helpdesk.
- Pooling of demand for European GenAI solutions by public administrations in the form of among others technical benchmarks.
- Bringing together public administration and start-ups based on common needs and capabilities as defined in technical benchmarks etc.

[14] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/data-spaces

[15] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/high-performance-computing-joint-undertaking

[16] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/ai-factories

[17] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/regulatory-framework-ai

[18] https://interoperable-europe.ec.europa.eu/collection/public-sector-tech-watch

[19] https://interoperable-europe.ec.europa.eu/collection/govtechconnect/govtech4all

[20] https://interoperable-europe.ec.europa.eu/collection/digital-skills-public-sector/solution/interoperable-europe-academy

[21] EU Funding & Tenders Portal

- To complement the outreach strategy of the pilot projects, support to outreach and awareness-raising activities by public administrations, including communication materials.

- Strengthened integration of public administrations into the broader European AI ecosystem, through synergies with the AI-on-Demand Platform, EDIHs, the AI Factories and other relevant initiatives as well as ensured synergies with Commission-led initiatives that support AI adoption in public sector.

Yearly reports on the results of the pilot projects in aggregated form and of the CSA in implementing GenAI solutions in public administration processes.

KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables

CSA project KPIs:

- Number of practical tools for replicability and scalability and initiatives for knowledge-sharing such as starter-kits, replication assessments and Q&As
    - Number of times the CSA's assets (tools & initiatives) are used by public administrations which result in pilots replicated and/or scaled
- Number of technical benchmarks for European AI solutions needed by public administrations
- Number of matchmaking interactions between European start-ups and public administrations initiated through CSA activities
    - Percentage of those interactions leading to concrete follow-up or collaboration
- Number of attendants at events organised to promote results of pilot projects for replicability and scalability purposes
    - of which a certain percentage were held for countries different than where the pilot project took place (cross-border replicability and scalability)
        - of which a certain percentage were held for countries different than the countries where all the pilot projects took place
- Collection of satisfaction score from survey of participants of pilot projects

Targeted stakeholders

Higher education institutions, research and technology organisations, civil-society organisations, non-governmental organisations, and other interested stakeholders.

Type of action and funding rate

Coordination and Support Actions — 100% funding

For more information on Digital Europe types of action, *see Annex 1*.

Specific topic conditions

- For this topic, restrictions for the protection of European digital infrastructures, communication and information systems, and related supply chains apply *(see*

sections 6,10, and the Appendix 4 of the Digital Europe Work Programme 2025-2027).

- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply *(see section 6)*
- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: depreciation only *(see section 10)*
- For this topic, first exploitation obligations don't apply *(see section 10)*
- For this topic, access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations apply *(see section 10)*
- The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:
  - extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance*
  - extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects*

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-VIRTUAL-TESTBEDS-STEP - Virtual worlds test beds

Objectives

The main objective is to increase productivity and innovation capacity through state-of-the-art virtual worlds technologies. The Virtual worlds test beds will support testing, experimentation and integration of Virtual Worlds, immersive and extended reality technologies in specific sectors, targeting both industrial and societal applications.

The virtual worlds test beds will focus on testing and integrating mature technologies and solutions that have already been tested in the labs with the objective to be validated in real-world environments. They will also cover the aspects of interoperability and transferability between Virtual Worlds.

The Virtual worlds testbeds will seek to maximise the uptake of virtual worlds solutions in industrial and societal applications and boost competitiveness of the sectors they are applied.

Scope

For this action, support to two world-class sectorial testbeds through two projects is envisaged: one for industrial applications (such as manufacturing, construction or industrial design) and one for societal applications (such as education and training, cultural heritage and other cultural experiences, public administration or healthcare). Each testbed should create a network of facilities with critical mass across at least three different Member States or associated countries.

Proposals are expected to focus on either industrial or societal applications. The area should be clearly identified within the proposal.

The test beds will provide all necessary expertise and infrastructure for the design and implementation of the testing methodologies, combining physical world and virtual worlds facilities.

This combination of physical and virtual facilities shall be used by technology providers and key stakeholders in real world environments and conditions. These, depending on the selected sectors may include for instance, manufacturing sites, hospitals, construction sites.

Activities supported by this action will cover the demonstration, testing and validation in real-life application environment, solving issues and providing improvements. Each test bed will pay a special attention to closely involve end-users in their activities for customisation of technologies to work environments, and for ensuring human-centric outcomes.

The test beds will facilitate full integration of the relevant virtual worlds underlying technologies (extended reality and immersive technologies coupled to, for example, AI, IoT, edge and cloud computing, digital twins, sensors, microelectronics, photonics and optics). In addition, the test beds will offer additional services that are necessary to access the facilities such as access to hardware (for example helmets and glasses, XR devices, haptics equipment), computing power, operating systems, software and SDK, testing of new services and devices, involvement of potential end-users as well as on-demand technical advice and expertise.

The test beds will develop use cases and demonstrators and will also focus on legal and ethical issues such as ethics, data protection, cybersecurity, privacy, aspects of intellectual property, certification and pay special attention to standardisation and interoperability. The testbeds shall provide support on those.

Within their area of competence, the virtual worlds test beds will also explore the possibility to support the creation of regulatory sandboxes around their facilities. These regulatory sandboxes shall promote innovative solutions, facilitate compliance with regulatory framework and enhance regulatory learning. Regulatory sandboxes should be supervised by competent authorities and enable testing and experimentation for innovative virtual worlds solutions in controlled environments.

The test bed infrastructure established within this activity will set-up or build on physical and digital resources. These resources will be available to the users of the facilities for testing and experimentation of their hardware and software related to Virtual Worlds.

The facilities will link to relevant Digital Europe Programme projects such as Testing and Experimentation Facilities, EDIHs and data spaces. Facilities are also encouraged to establish links to relevant projects funded by Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe, whenever feasible and meaningful. The two test beds are also expected to establish strong links, exchange good practices and exploit synergies. The selected projects are also expected to establish strong links, exchange good practices and exploit synergies with each other.

Outcomes and deliverables

The virtual worlds test beds will support the process of bringing innovative technologies from the lab to the market. To do so the projects will engage with all necessary stakeholders from developers to users. The two test beds will be developed and made operational by the end of the projects: one for industrial applications (such as manufacturing, construction or industrial design) and one for societal applications (such as education and training, cultural heritage and other cultural experiences, public administration or healthcare). The proposals shall clearly identify the application area(s) of focus.

Expected outcomes contributing to virtual worlds innovation:

- Contributing to European digital sovereignty and open strategic autonomy in the domain of virtual worlds;
- Contributing to development of innovative and interoperable virtual worlds solutions;
- Contributing to the creation and promotion of EU regulatory sandboxes for virtual worlds.

The test beds will facilitate increased and faster integration of virtual worlds solutions in the selected areas taking into consideration aspects of environmental sustainability. Practically, the testbeds will include technological validation in real-world environments and conditions, testing and experimentation support and bringing solutions to a higher technology readiness level leading to an increased competitiveness of European developers and providers of virtual worlds solutions, in particular SMEs.

Deliverables

The test beds will include use case demonstrators, and a catalogue of relevant issues identified and corresponding offered services. The selected projects will develop and, if necessary, adapt over time, a long-term plan (over 48 months) to 1) build up or upgrade facilities with resources and services, 2) offer and extend the use of facilities to promising Virtual Worlds providers, and 3) achieve long-term financial sustainability after EU funding stops.

Contribution to virtual worlds innovation:

- Validation of virtual worlds technologies in real conditions and environments related to the selected sectoral areas.
- Boosting competitiveness of the European industry, including SMEs in virtual worlds technologies.
- Contributing to boost European intellectual property and products based on innovative virtual worlds technologies.
- World-class testbed facilities in Europe, offering comprehensive support and meeting the needs of European innovators.
- Contributing to European technology sovereignty and open strategics autonomy in virtual worlds.
- Facilitating compliance with regulatory frameworks and enhanced regulatory learning.

KPIs to measure outcomes and deliverables

Progress should be demonstrated by qualitative and quantitative KPIs, demonstrators, benchmarking and progress monitoring. The proposals should define a set of methodologies and kits of specific quantitative and qualitative KPIs to enable appropriate control of the implementation progress of the pilot.

The consortia should also propose relevant indicators (including industry and service relevant KPIs) for measuring the final usage and impact of the test beds. These indicators should be accompanied by target values. The following KPIs shall be considered:

- Absolute number of physical and digital (virtual) facilities, resources and professional services in the project's catalogue.

- Number of demonstrators.
- User satisfaction of the testbeds facilities and services.
- Number of shared best practices.
- Number of end users engaged.
- Efficiency gains, cost reductions and other benefits from the deployment of innovative technologies supported by the project.
- Number of testbeds users throughout the period of the project, including percentages of SMEs and cross-border participations.
- Number of virtual worlds solutions brought to the market-readiness (TRL 8), including number of certified solutions and registered patents of users.
- Market adoption of virtual worlds technologies and solutions after their participation in the testbeds, including number of SMEs adopting the solutions.
- Number of new businesses created.
- Evolution of the share of the European industry in the global market of virtual worlds.
- Number of technologies and solutions making use of the regulatory sandboxes.

Targeted stakeholders

The proposals should include partners with demonstrated experience of delivering on the areas mentioned above and provide a broad representation of constituencies relevant to virtual worlds. The partners should credibly cover the sectoral areas identified as targeted by the proposals and demonstrate capacity to reach out and effectively engage with relevant sectoral stakeholders across Europe (i.e. providers, users, governments, financial community, local community). The proposals should explain how the network will include end-users of virtual worlds technologies, and the necessary stakeholders to ensure co-creation (i.e. to define testing scenarios, protocols and metrics relevant to the selected sectors).

The consortia may include partners including public or private entities, technology providers and users, NRENs, industrial associations, etc.

Beneficiaries should contribute to reinforce European Digital sovereignty and provide adequate EU coverage for the initial role out of the pilot. Beneficiaries should ensure links with other initiatives such as the Virtual Worlds Partnership and the VRAR industrial coalition, where relevant.

Type of action and funding rate

Simple Grants — 50% funding rate

For more information on Digital Europe types of action, *see Annex 1*.

Specific topic conditions

- For this topic, restrictions for the protection of European digital infrastructures, communication and information systems, and related supply chains apply *(see sections 6,10, and the Appendix 4 of the Digital Europe Work Programme 2025-2027)*

- For this topic, multi-beneficiary applications are mandatory and specific conditions for the consortium composition apply (see section 6)
- For this topic, following reimbursement option for equipment costs applies: depreciation (see section 10)
- For this topic, access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations apply (see section 10)
- For this topic, additional dissemination obligations apply (see section 10)
- The following parts of the award criteria in section 9 are exceptionally NOT applicable for this topic:
  - extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the Union*
  - extent to which the proposal can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance*
  - extent to which the proposal addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects*
- For this topic, the following exception to the 'Evaluation and award procedure' applies: Proposals are expected to focus on either industrial or societal applications. The area should be clearly identified within the proposal. To ensure a balanced portfolio covering the two sectorial test beds described (one for industrial applications and one for societal applications), grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to one proposal that is the highest ranked within each of the two sectors described, provided that the applications attain all thresholds (see section 8).

3. Available budget

The estimated available call budget is EUR 60 200 000

Specific budget information per topic can be found in the table below:

Topic	Topic budget
DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools	EUR 5 000 000
DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity	EUR 17 500 000

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging	EUR 14 400 000
DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance	EUR 1 000 000
DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future	EUR 3 500 000
DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-GENAI-PA Apply AI: GenAI for the public administrations	EUR 1 800 000
DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-VIRTUAL-TESTBEDS-STEP Virtual worlds test beds	EUR 17 000 000

We reserve the right not to award all available funds or to redistribute them between the call priorities, depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.

4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines (indicative)	
Call opening:	4 November 2025
Deadline for submission:	3 March 2026 – 17:00:00 CET (Brussels)
Evaluation:	March-April 2026
Information on evaluation results:	June 2026
GA signature:	September 2026

5. Admissibility and documents

Proposals must be submitted before the call deadline *(see timetable section 4)*.

Proposals must be submitted electronically via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the Calls for proposals section. Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠ NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

Proposals must be complete and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participants (future coordinator, beneficiaries and affiliated entities) and the summarised budget for the project *(to be filled in directly online)*
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the project *(template to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded)*
- mandatory annexes and supporting documents *(templates to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded)*:
  - detailed budget table/calculator: not applicable
  - CVs of core project team: not applicable
  - activity reports of last year: not applicable
  - list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) *(template available in Part B)* for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future
  - ownership control declarations (including for associated partners and subcontractors) for topics:
    - DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools
    - DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity
    - DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging
    - DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance

- DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the mandate to act for all applicants. Moreover, you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that all participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding *(especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc)*. Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be readable, accessible and printable (please check carefully the layout of the documents uploaded).

Proposals are limited to maximum 70 pages except for Coordination and support Actions where the maximum is 50 pages (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents *(for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc)*.

For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the Online Manual.

6. Eligibility

Eligible participants (eligible countries)

In order to be eligible, the applicants (beneficiaries and affiliated entities) must:

- be legal entities (public or private bodies)
- be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:
  - EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
  - non-EU countries (except for topics with restrictions; *see below*):
    - listed EEA countries and countries associated to the Digital Europe Programme (list of participating countries)

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must register in the Participant Register — before submitting the proposal — and will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, they will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

Other entities may participate in other consortium roles, such as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions, etc *(see section 13)*.

Please note however that some topics are subject to restrictions due to security reasons:

- for topics:

  - DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools

- DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity

- DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging

- DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance

- DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future

only the following countries are eligible: EU Member States, EEA countries and Switzerland[22]. Entities must not be directly or indirectly controlled from a country that is not an eligible country unless the granting authority agrees to allow for exceptional participation on the basis of a guarantee (ownership control restriction).

For restrictions limiting participation to specific eligible countries:

The condition must in principle be fulfilled already at proposal submission stage (call deadline); you cannot change status during GAP — unless agreed by the granting authority.

The following participants (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners and subcontractors) will be checked by the EU. Other participants must be checked by the consortium.

For the EU checks, the participants must register in the Participant Register (i.e. have at least a draft PIC). For beneficiaries and affiliated entities, the checks will be done on the basis of the validated PIC data. For other participants, the checks will be done on the basis of publicly available information.

For ownership control restrictions:

'Control' means the possibility to exercise decisive influence on the participant, directly or indirectly, through one or more intermediate entities, 'de jure' or 'de facto'. This includes not only ownership of more than 50% (shareholding), but also any other elements and/or rights that can amount to control.

The condition must in principle be fulfilled already at proposal submission stage (call deadline); you cannot change status during GAP — unless agreed by the granting authority.

[22] Transitional arrangements apply: grant agreements with beneficiaries established in Switzerland on the basis of the association agreement can only be signed if the association has started producing legal effects, i.e. the association agreement started to apply.

The following participants (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners and subcontractors) will be checked by the EU. Other participants must be checked by the consortium.

For the EU checks, the participants must register in the Participant Register (i.e. have at least a draft PIC). They will be required to fill in and submit an ownership control declaration* as part of the proposal (and later on be requested to submit supporting documents). Where guarantees are allowed, ineligible entities will be requested to fill in the guarantee template*, have it approved by the competent authority of their country of establishment, and submit it to the granting authority which will assess their validity.

For more information, *see Annex 2*.

Please note that the call is also subject to restrictions for the protection of European digital infrastructures, communication and information systems, and related supply chains.

Entities that are assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment (and any entities they own or control) are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any). Please see Appendix 4 of the Digital Europe Work Programme 2025-2027[23] for details and the assessment criteria.

Specific cases and definitions

Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible (with the exception of self-employed persons, i.e. sole traders, where the company does not have legal personality separate from that of the natural person)

International organisations — International organisations are NOT eligible, unless they are International organisations of European Interest within the meaning of Article 2 of the Digital Europe Regulation (i.e. international organisations the majority of whose members are Member States or whose headquarters are in a Member State).

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons[24].

EU bodies — EU bodies (with the exception of the European Commission Joint Research Centre) can NOT be part of the consortium.

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'[25]. ⚠ Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

Countries currently negotiating association agreements — Beneficiaries from countries with ongoing negotiations for participating in the programme *(see list of participating countries above)* may participate in the call and can sign grants if the negotiations are

[23] Commission Implementing Decision C(2025) 6650 of 06.10.2025 amending Implementing Decision C(2025) 1839 on the financing of the Digital Europe Programme and the adoption of the work programme for 2025-2027

[24] See Article 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

[25] For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

concluded before grant signature and if the association covers the call (i.e. is retroactive and covers both the part of the programme and the year when the call was launched).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)[26]. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

EU conditionality measures — Special rules apply for entities subject to measures adopted on the basis of EU Regulation 2020/2092[27]. Such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc). Currently such measures are in place for Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain (see Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506, as of 16 December 2022).

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

Consortium composition

Proposals must be submitted by:

for topics:

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOLS - Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools

and

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE - Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity

- minimum 5 independent applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from 5 different eligible countries

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging

- minimum 7 independent applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from 7 different eligible countries.

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance

- minimum 3 independent applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities).

[26] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map.

[27] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget (OJ L 325, 20.12.2022, p. 94).

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future

- minimum 3 independent applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from 3 different eligible countries .

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-GENAI-PA - Apply AI: GenAI for the public administrations

- minimum 3 independent applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from 3 different eligible countries.

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-VIRTUAL-TESTBEDS-STEP - Virtual worlds test beds

- minimum 4 independent applicants (beneficiaries; not affiliated entities) from 3 different eligible countries, out of which:
  - minimum 1 research organisation (i.e. universiry, RTO)
  - minimum 1 private company applicant per sector identified as targeted in the proposal

Eligible activities

Applications will only be considered eligible if their content corresponds wholly (or at least in part) to the topic description for which they are submitted.

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above.

Projects should take into account the results of projects supported by other EU funding programmes. The complementarities must be described in the project proposals (Part B of the Application Form).

Projects must comply with EU policy interests and priorities *(such as environment, social, security, industrial and trade policy, etc)*. Projects must also respect EU values and European Commission policy regarding reputational matters (*e.g. activities involving capacity building, policy support, awareness raising, communication, dissemination, etc*).

Financial support to third parties is not allowed.

Geographic location (target countries)

Due to restrictions due to security:

- for topics:

  DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools

  DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity

  DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance

DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future

the proposals must relate to activities taking place in the eligible countries *(see above)*.

Ethics

Projects must comply with:

- highest ethical standards and
- applicable EU, international and national law (including the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679).

Proposals under this call will have to undergo an ethics review to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific ethics rules (which become part of the Grant Agreement in the form of ethics deliverables, *e.g. ethics committee opinions/notifications/authorisations required under national or EU law*).

For proposals involving development, testing, deployment, use or distribution of AI systems, the ethics review will in particular check compliance with the principles of human agency and oversight, diversity/fairness, transparency and responsible social impact, while the experts performing the technical evaluation will assess the robustness of the AI systems (i.e. their reliability not to cause unintentional harm).

Security

Projects involving EU classified information must undergo security scrutiny to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific security rules (detailed in a security aspects letter (SAL) which is annexed to the Grant Agreement).

These rules (governed by Decision 2015/444[28] and its implementing rules and/or national rules) provide for instance that:

- projects involving information classified TRES SECRET UE/EU TOP SECRET (or equivalent) can NOT be funded
- classified information must be marked in accordance with the applicable security instructions in the SAL
- information with classification levels CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL or above (and RESTREINT UE/ EU RESTRICTED, if required by national rules) may be:
  - created or accessed only on premises with facility security clearance (FSC) from the competent national security authority (NSA), in accordance with the national rules
  - handled only in a secured area accredited by the competent NSA
  - accessed and handled only by persons with valid personnel security clearance (PSC) and a need-to-know

[28] See Commission Decision 2015/444/EU, Euratom of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53).

- at the end of the grant, the classified information must either be returned or continue to be protected in accordance with the applicable rules
- action tasks involving EU classified information (EUCI) may be subcontracted only with prior written approval from the granting authority and only to entities established in an EU Member State or in a non-EU country with a security of information agreement with the EU (or an administrative arrangement with the Commission)
- disclosure of EUCI to third parties is subject to prior written approval from the granting authority.

Please note that, depending on the type of activity, facility security clearance may have to be provided before grant signature. The granting authority will assess the need for clearance in each case and will establish their delivery date during grant preparation. Please note that in no circumstances can we sign any grant agreement until at least one of the beneficiaries in a consortium has facility security clearance.

Further security recommendations may be added to the Grant Agreement in the form of security deliverables *(e.g. create security advisory group, limit level of detail, use fake scenario, exclude use of classified information, etc)*.

Beneficiaries must ensure that their projects are not subject to national/third-country security requirements that could affect implementation or put into question the award of the grant *(e.g. technology restrictions, national security classification, etc)*. The granting authority must be notified immediately of any potential security issues.

7. Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

Financial capacity

Applicants must have stable and sufficient resources to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all projects.

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the Participant Register during grant preparation *(e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc)*. The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally be done for all beneficiaries, except:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations
- if the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000.

If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

If we consider that your financial capacity is not satisfactory, we may require:

- further information
- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities *(see below, section 10)*
- prefinancing paid in instalments

– (one or more) prefinancing guarantees *(see below, section 10)*

or

– propose no prefinancing

– request that you are replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

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

Operational capacity

Applicants must have the know-how, qualifications and resources to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share (including sufficient experience in projects of comparable size and nature).

This capacity will be assessed together with the 'Implementation' award criterion, on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time the task implementation starts.

If the evaluation of the award criterion is positive, the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Applicants will have to show their capacity via the following information:

– general profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project

– description of the consortium participants

– list of previous projects (key projects for the last 4 years) for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future *(template available in Part B)*.

Additional supporting documents may be requested, if needed to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant.

Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an EU exclusion decision or in one of the following exclusion situations that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate[29]:

– bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)

– in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)

– guilty of grave professional misconduct[30] (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

[29] See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

[30] 'Professional misconduct' includes, in particular, the following: violation of ethical standards of the profession; wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility; breach of generally accepted professional ethical standards; false declarations/misrepresentation of information; participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition; violation of IPR; attempting to influence decision-making processes by taking advantage, through misrepresentation, of a conflict of interests, or to

- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant*)*
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant*)*
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation 2988/95 (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)
- intentionally and without proper justification resisted[31] an investigation, check or audit carried out by an EU authorising officer (or their representative or auditor), OLAF, the EPPO, or the European Court of Auditors.

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that[32]:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

8. Evaluation and award procedure

The proposals will have to follow the standard submission and evaluation procedure (one-stage submission + one-step evaluation).

An evaluation committee (composed or assisted by independent outside experts) will assess all applications. Proposals will first be checked for formal requirements (admissibility, and eligibility, *see sections 5 and 6*). Proposals found admissible and eligible will be evaluated (for each topic) against the operational capacity and award criteria *(see sections 7 and 9)* and then ranked according to their scores.

For proposals with the same score (within a topic or budget envelope) a priority order will be determined according to the following approach:

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obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain an advantage; incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence or similar activities contrary to the EU values where negatively affecting or risking to affect the performance of a legal commitment.

31 'Resisting an investigation, check or audit' means carrying out actions with the goal or effect of preventing, hindering or delaying the conduct of any of the activities needed to perform the investigation, check or audit, such as refusing to grant the necessary access to its premises or any other areas used for business purposes, concealing or refusing to disclose information or providing false information.

32 See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

Successively for every group of *ex aequo* proposals, starting with the highest scored group, and continuing in descending order:

1) Proposals focusing on a theme that is not otherwise covered by higher ranked proposals will be considered to have the highest priority.

2) The ex aequo proposals within the same topic will be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for the award criterion 'Relevance'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Impact'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on their scores for the criterion 'Implementation'.

3) If this does not allow to determine the priority, a further prioritisation can be done by considering the overall proposal portfolio and the creation of positive synergies between proposals, or other factors related to the objectives of the call. These factors will be documented in the panel report.

4) After that, the remainder of the available call budget will be used to fund projects across the different topics in order to ensure a balanced spread of the geographical and thematic coverage and while respecting to the maximum possible extent the order of merit based on the evaluation of the award criteria.

For topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-VIRTUAL-TESTBEDS-STEP - Virtual worlds test beds - to ensure a balanced portfolio covering the two sectorial test beds described (one for industrial applications and one for societal applications), grants will be awarded to applications not only in order of ranking but at least also to one proposal that is the highest ranked within each of the two sectors described, provided that the applications attain all thresholds.

All proposals will be informed about the evaluation result (evaluation result letter). Successful proposals will be invited for grant preparation; the other ones will be put on the reserve list or rejected.

All proposals in the topics DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging and DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-VIRTUAL-TESTBEDS-STEP - Virtual worlds test beds that are eligible and exceed the evaluation thresholds will be awarded a STEP Seal and will be listed on the STEP portal[33]. The STEP Seal[34] is a recognition given to projects that contribute to STEP objectives and meet the minimum quality criteria set by this call for proposals. The Seal is a quality label and a facilitator for accessing EU funds, making it easier for projects to receive alternative, combined cumulative funding from various EU budgetary instruments.

⚠ No commitment for funding — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding. We will still need to make various legal checks before grant award: *legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, etc*.

Grant preparation will involve a dialogue in order to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information from your side. It may also include adjustments to the proposal to address recommendations of the evaluation committee or other concerns. Full compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant.

[33] https://strategic-technologies.europa.eu/index_en
[34] https://strategic-technologies.europa.eu/about/step-seal_en

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a complaint (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending will be considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access *(see also Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions)*. Please also be aware that for complaints submitted electronically, there may be character limitations.

9. Award criteria

The award criteria for this call are as follows:

1. Relevance

- Alignment with the objectives and activities as described in section 2
- Contribution to long-term policy objectives, relevant policies and strategies, and synergies with activities at European and national level
- Extent to which the project would reinforce and secure the digital technology supply chain in the EU*
- Extent to which the project can overcome financial obstacles such as the lack of market finance*

2. Implementation

- Maturity of the project
- Soundness of the implementation plan and efficient use of resources
- Capacity of the applicants, and when applicable the consortium as a whole, to carry out the proposed work

3. Impact

- Extent to which the project will achieve the expected outcomes and deliverables referred to in the call for proposals and, where relevant, the plans to disseminate and communicate project achievements
- Extent to which the project will strengthen competitiveness and bring important benefits for society
- Extent to which the project addresses environmental sustainability and the European Green Deal goals, in terms of direct effects and/or in awareness of environmental effects *.

**May not be applicable to all topics (see specific topic conditions in section 2).*

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Relevance	3	5
Implementation	3	5
Impact	3	5
Overall (pass) scores	10	15

Maximum points: 15 points.

Individual thresholds per criterion: 3/5, 3/5 and 3/5 points.

Overall threshold: 10 points.

Proposals that pass the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding — within the limits of the available budget (i.e. up to the budget ceiling). Other proposals will be rejected.

10. Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements

If you pass evaluation, your project will be invited for grant preparation, where you will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the EU Project Officer.

This Grant Agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on Portal Reference Documents.

Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 1)*. Normally the starting date will be after grant signature. A retroactive starting date can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.

Project duration:

- for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools – 48 months

- For topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity – 48 months

  for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging – 48 months
- for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance – 36 months

- for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future – 36 months

- for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-GENAI-PA - Apply AI: GenAI for the public administrations – 36 months

- for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-VIRTUAL-TESTBEDS-STEP - Virtual worlds test beds – between 48 and 60 months

Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment.

Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

The following deliverables will be mandatory for all projects:

- additional deliverable on dissemination and exploitation, to be submitted in the first six months of the project

Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters *(maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc)* will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 3 and art 5)*.

Project budget (requested grant amount):

- for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools – EUR 5 000 000 per project

- For topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity – EUR 17 500 000 per project

- for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging – EUR 14 400 000 per projects

- for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance – EUR 1 000 000 per projects

- for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future – EUR 3 500 000 per project

- for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-GENAI-PA - Apply AI: GenAI for the public administrations – EUR 1 800 000 per projects

- for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-VIRTUAL-TESTBEDS-STEP - Virtual worlds test beds – between EUR 8 000 000 and EUR 9 000 000 per project. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The grant will be a budget-based mixed actual cost grant (actual costs, with unit cost and flat-rate elements). This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and costs that were *actually* incurred for your project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs and flat-rates, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement *(see art 6 and Annex 2 and 2a)*.

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement. This rate depends on the type of action which applies to the topic *(see section 2)*.

Grants may NOT produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). For-profit organisations must declare their revenues and, if there is a profit, we will deduct it from the final grant amount *(see art 22.3)*.

Moreover, please be aware that the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the Grant Agreement *(e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc)*.

Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 3 and art 6)*.

Budget categories for this call:

- A. Personnel costs
  - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
  - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
  - C.1 Travel and subsistence
  - C.2 Equipment
  - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- D. Other cost categories
  - D.2 Internally invoiced goods and services
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this call:

- personnel costs:
  - average personnel costs (unit cost according to usual cost accounting practices)[35]: Yes
  - SME owner/natural person unit cost[36]: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit costs[37]: No (only actual costs)
- equipment costs:
  - depreciation (for topics DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data

35 Decision of 29 June 2021 authorising the use of unit costs based on usual cost accounting practices for actions under the Digital Europe Programme.

36 Commission Decision of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7115).

37 Commission Decision of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).

tools; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-GENAI-PA - Apply AI: GenAI for the public administrations; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-VIRTUAL-TESTBEDS-STEP - Virtual worlds test beds)

  - full cost (for topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity)

- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties: not allowed
  - internally invoiced goods and services (unit cost according to usual cost accounting practices)[38]: Yes
- indirect cost flat-rate: 7% of the eligible direct costs (categories A-D, except volunteers costs and exempted specific cost categories, if any).
- VAT: non-deductible/non-refundable VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:
  - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
  - kick-off meeting: costs for kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket to Brussels and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
  - project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are not eligible
  - restrictions due to security:
    - country restrictions for subcontracting costs: Yes, subcontracted work must be performed in the eligible countries (for topics DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration

[38] Decision of 29 June 2021 authorising the use of unit costs based on usual cost accounting practices for actions under the Digital Europe Programme.

platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future)

  - eligible cost country restrictions: Yes, only costs for activities carried out in eligible countries are eligible (for topics DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future)

- equipment and other goods, works and/or services related to 5G/6G mobile network communication equipment, and other technologies linked to the evolution of European communication networks must fulfil the conditions set out in the work programme to be eligible.

  - other ineligible costs: No.

Reporting and payment arrangements

The reporting and payment arrangements are fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 4 and art 21 and 22)*.

After grant signature, you will normally receive a prefinancing to start working on the project (float of normally 80 % of the maximum grant amount; exceptionally less or no prefinancing). The prefinancing will be paid 30 days from entry into force/10 days before starting date/financial guarantee (if required) – whichever is the latest.

There will be one or more interim payments (with cost reporting through the use of resources report). There will be one or more additional prefinancing payments linked to a prefinancing report for topic: DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity.

Payment of the balance: At the end of the project, we will calculate your final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, we will ask you (your coordinator) to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

⚠ Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if you or one of your consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset by us — in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement *(see art 22)*.

Please also note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done and the costs declared.

Prefinancing guarantees

If a prefinancing guarantee is required, it will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 4)*. The amount will be set during grant preparation and it will normally be equal or lower than the prefinancing for your grant.

The guarantee should be in euro and issued by an approved bank/financial institution established in an EU Member State. If you are established in a non-EU country and would like to provide a guarantee from a bank/financial institution in your country, please contact us (this may be exceptionally accepted, if it offers equivalent security).

Amounts blocked in bank accounts will NOT be accepted as financial guarantees.

Prefinancing guarantees are normally requested from the coordinator, for the consortium. They must be provided during grant preparation, in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a guarantee from a third party.

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement *(art 23)*.

Certificates

Depending on the type of action, size of grant amount and type of beneficiaries, you may be requested to submit different certificates. The types, schedules and thresholds for each certificate are fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 4 and art 24)*.

Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 4.4 and art 22).*

For beneficiaries, it is one of the following:

- limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary up* to their maximum grant amount
- unconditional joint and several liability — *each beneficiary up to the maximum grant amount for the action*

or

- individual financial responsibility — *each beneficiary only for their own debts*.

In addition, the granting authority may require joint and several liability of affiliated entities (with their beneficiary).

Provisions concerning the project implementation

Security rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 13 and Annex 5)*

Ethics rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 14 and Annex 5)*

IPR rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 16 and Annex 5):*

- background and list of background: Yes
- protection of results: Yes

- exploitation of results: Yes
- rights of use on results: Yes
- access to results for policy purposes: Yes
- access to results in case of a public emergency: Yes
- access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations: No
- special IPR obligations linked to restrictions due to security:
  - exploitation in eligible countries: Yes (for topics DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future)
  - first exploitation obligation in eligible countries: Yes (for topics DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging;
  - limitations to transfers and licensing: Yes (for topics DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future)

Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 17 and Annex 5):*

- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- dissemination of results: Yes
- additional dissemination obligations: No

- additional communication activities: Yes
- special logo: No

Specific rules for carrying out the action: *see Model Grant Agreement (art 18 and Annex 5):*

- specific rules for PAC Grants for Procurement: No
- specific rules for Grants for Financial Support: Yes for the topic DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity
- specific rules for blending operations: No
- special obligations linked to restrictions due to security
    - implementation in case of restrictions due to security or EU strategic autonomy: Yes for topics DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-TOOL – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data tools; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-SOLUTIONS-CANCER-STEP - Deployment of cutting-edge multi-modal AI-based solutions in medical imaging; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-ECAVA - Secretariat of the European Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Alliance; DIGITAL-2026-AI-09-AUTOMOTIVE - Collaboration platform for the European connected and autonomous vehicle of the future.

Other specificities

Consortium agreement: Yes

Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (chapter 5) provides for the measures we may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).

For more information, *see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement*.

11. How to submit an application

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

Submission is a 2-step process:

a) create a user account and register your organisation

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to create an EU Login user account.

Once you have an EULogin account, you can register your organisation in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

b) submit the proposal

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the Calls for proposals section (or, for calls sent by invitation to submit a proposal, through the link provided in the invitation letter).

Submit your proposal in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Annexes (*see section 5*). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The proposal must keep to the page limits *(see section 5)*; excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the right category in the Submission System, otherwise the proposal may be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted before the call deadline (*see section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, you will receive a confirmation e-mail (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your proposal has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the IT Helpdesk webform, explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the Online Manual. The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

12. Help

As far as possible, *please try to find the answers you need yourself*, in this and the other documentation (we have limited resources for handling direct enquiries):

- Online Manual
- Topic Q&A on the Topic page (for call-specific questions in open calls; not applicable for actions by invitation)
- Portal FAQ (for general questions).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates. (For invitations, we will contact you directly in case of a call update).

Contact

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the IT Helpdesk.

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: here

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (see cover page).

13. Important

Don't wait until the end — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute technical problems. Problems due to last minute submissions *(e.g. congestion, etc)* will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.

- Consult the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System — By submitting the application, all participants accept to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the Portal Terms & Conditions.
- Registration — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the Participant Register. The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- Consortium roles — When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

  The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as beneficiaries or affiliated entities; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. Associated partners and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). Subcontracting should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application (except for topic: DIGITAL-2025-AI-09-DS-HEALTH-STORAGE – Health: Data ingestion capacities and data services for the European Genomic Data Infrastructure in the European Health Data Space: data storage and processing capacity).
- Coordinator — In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- Affiliated entities — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any). If affiliated entities participate in your project, please do not forget to provide documents demonstrating their affiliation link to your organisation as part of your application.
- Associated partners — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- Consortium agreement — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.

- Balanced project budget — Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully *(e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc)*. You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).

- Completed/ongoing projects — Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).

- No-profit rule — Grants may NOT give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs). This will be checked by us at the end of the project.

- No cumulation of funding/no double funding — It is strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions'). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants; projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).

- Combination with EU operating grants — Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice *(see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E)*.

- Multiple proposals — Applicants may submit more than one proposal for *different* projects under the same call (and be awarded funding for them).

  Organisations may participate in several proposals.

  BUT: if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw the others (or they will be rejected).

- Resubmission — Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.

- Rejection — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be rejected. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.

- Cancellation — There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.

- Language — You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, *see section 12*).

- Transparency — In accordance with Article 38 of the EU Financial Regulation, information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the Europa website.

  This includes:

  - beneficiary names
  - beneficiary addresses
  - the purpose for which the grant was awarded
  - the maximum amount awarded.

  The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- Data protection — The submission of a proposal under this call involves the collection, use and processing of personal data. This data will be processed in accordance with the applicable legal framework. It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your proposal, subsequent management of your grant and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication. Details are explained in the Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement.

Annex 1

Digital Europe types of action

The Digital Europe Programme uses the following actions to implement grants:

Simple Grants

Description: Simple Grants (SIMPLE) are a flexible type of action used by a large variety of topics and can cover most activities. The consortium will mostly use personnel costs to implement action tasks, activities with third parties (subcontracting, financial support, purchase) are possible but should be limited.

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

SME Support Actions

Description: SME Support Actions (SME) are a type of action primarily consisting of activities directly aiming to support SMEs involved in building up and the deployment of the digital capacities. This type of action can also be used if SMEs need to be in the consortium and make investments to access the digital capacities.

Funding rate: 50% except for SMEs where a rate of 75% applies

Payment model: Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs)

Description: Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs) are a small type of action (a typical amount of 1-2 Mio) with the primary goal to support EU policies. Activities can include coordination between different actors for accompanying measures such as standardisation, dissemination, awareness-raising and communication, networking, coordination or support services, policy dialogues and mutual learning exercises and studies, including design studies for new infrastructure and may also include complementary activities of strategic planning, networking and coordination between programmes in different countries.

Funding rate: 100%

Payment model: Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

Grants for Procurement

Description: Grants for Procurement (GP) are a special type of action where the main goal of the action (and thus the majority of the costs) consist of buying goods or services and/or subcontracting tasks. Contrary to the PAC Grants for Procurement *(see below)* there are no specific procurement rules (i.e. usual rules for purchase apply), nor is there a limit to 'contracting authorities/entities'. Personnel costs should be limited in this type of action; they are in general used to manage the grant, coordination between the beneficiaries, preparation of the procurements.

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: Prefinancing - second prefinancing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance the procurements) – payment of the balance

PAC Grants for Procurement

Description: PAC Grants for Procurement (PACGP) are a specific type of action for procurement in grant agreements by 'contracting authorities/entities' as defined in the EU Public Procurement Directives (Directives 2014/24/EU , 2014/25/EU and 2009/81/EC) aiming at innovative digital goods and services (i.e. novel technologies on the way to commercialisation but not yet broadly available).

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: Prefinancing - second prefinancing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance the procurements) – payment of the balance

Grants for Financial Support

Description: Grants for Financial Support (GfS) have a particular focus on cascading grants. The majority of the grant will be distributed via financial support to third parties with special provisions in the grant agreement, maximum amounts to third parties, multiple pre-financing and reporting obligations.

Annex 5 of the model grant agreements foresees specific rules for this type of action regarding conflict of interest, the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and sound financial management as well as the selection procedure and criteria.

In order to assure the co-financing obligation in the programme, the support to third parties should only cover 50% of third party costs.

Funding rate: 100% for the consortium, co-financing of 50% by the supported third party

Payment model: Prefinancing - second prefinancing (to provide the necessary cash-flow to finance sub-grants) – payment of the balance

Lump Sum Grants

Description: Lump Sum Grants (LS) reimburse a general lump sum for the entire project and the consortium as a whole. The lump sum is fixed ex-ante (at the latest at grant signature). on the basis of a methodology defined by the granting authority (either on the basis of a detailed project budget or other pre-defined parameters). The lump sum will cover all the beneficiaries' direct and indirect costs for the project. The beneficiaries do not need to report actual costs, they just need to claim the lump sum once the work is done. If the action is not properly implemented only part of the lump sum will be paid.

Funding rate: 100%/50%/50% and 75% (for SMEs)

Payment model: Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s)– final payment

Framework Partnerships (FPAs) and Specific Grants (SGAs)

FPAs

Description: FPAs establish a long-term cooperation mechanism between the granting authority and the beneficiaries of grants. The FPA specifies the common objectives (action plan) and the procedure for awarding specific grants. The specific grants are awarded via identified beneficiary actions (with or without competition).

Funding rate: no funding for FPA

SGAs

Description: The SGAs are linked to an FPA and implement the action plan (or part of it). They are awarded via an invitation to submit a proposal (identified beneficiary action). The consortium composition should in principle match (meaning that only entities that are part of the FPA can participate in an SGA), but otherwise the implementation is rather flexible. FPAs and SGAs can have different coordinators ; other partners of the FPA are free to participate in an SGA or not. There is no limit to the amount of SGAs signed under one FPA.

Funding rate: 50%

Payment model: Prefinancing – (x) interim payment(s) – final payment

Annex 2

Eligibility restrictions under Articles 12(5) and (6) and 18(4) of the Digital Europe Regulation

Security restrictions Article 12(5) and (6)

If indicated in the Digital Europe Work Programme, and if justified for security reasons, topics can exclude the participation of legal entities *established* in a third country or DEP associated country, or established in the EU territory but *controlled* by a third country or third country legal entities (including DEP associated countries)[39].

This restriction is applicable for SO1 (High Performance Computing), SO2 (Artificial Intelligence) and SO3 (Cybersecurity), but at different levels.

- In the case of SO3, the provision is implemented in the strictest way. When activated, only entities established in the EU AND controlled from the EU will be able to participate; entities from associated countries (which are normally eligible) can NOT participate — unless otherwise provided in the Work Programme.

- In SO1 and SO2, entities established in associated countries and entities controlled from non-EU countries may participate, if they comply with the conditions set out in the Work Programme (usually:

  - for the associated countries: be formally associated to Digital Europe Programme and receive a positive assessment by the Commission on the replies to their associated country security questionnaire. Currently the following associated countries have a positive assessment: Switzerland.

  - for the participants: submission of a guarantee demonstrating that they have taken measures to ensure that their participation does not contravene security or EU strategic autonomy interests).

  EEA countries (and participants from EEA countries) are exempted from these restrictions (and additional requirements) because EEA countries benefit from a status equivalent to the Member States.

In order to determine the ownership and control status, participants[40] will be required to fill in and submit an ownership control declaration* as part of the proposal (and later on be requested to submit supporting documents) *(see Guidance on participation in EU restricted calls with ownership and control restrictions*)*.

In addition, where a guarantee is required, the participants will also have to fill in the guarantee template*, approved by the competent authorities of their country of establishment, and submit it to the granting authority which will assess its validity.

The activation of these restrictions will also make a number of specific provisions in the Grant Agreement applicable, such as country restrictions for eligible costs, country restrictions for subcontracting, and special rules for implementation, exploitation of results and transfers and exclusive licensing of results.

Thus:

[39] See Article 12(5) and (6) of the Digital Europe Regulation 2021/694.

[40] Beneficiaries and affiliated entities, associated partners and subcontractors — except for entities that are validated as public bodies by the Central Validation Service.

- participation in any capacity (as beneficiary, affiliated entity, associated partner, subcontractor or recipient of financial support to third parties) is also limited to entities established in and controlled from eligible countries
- project activities (included subcontracted work) must take place in eligible countries
- the Grant Agreement provides for specific IPR restrictions.

Strategic autonomy restrictions Article 18(4)

If indicated in the Digital Europe Work Programme, calls can limit the participation to entities *established* in the EU, and/or entities established in third countries associated to the programme for EU strategic autonomy reasons[41].

The activation of these restrictions will make a number of specific provisions in the Grant Agreement applicable, such as country restrictions for eligible costs, country restrictions for subcontracting, and special rules for implementation, exploitation of results and transfers and exclusive licensing of results.

For more information, *see* *Guidance on participation in EU restricted calls with ownership and control restrictions**.

[41] See Article 18(4) of the Digital Europe Regulation 2021/694.