

Policy Brief

EU Horizon 2021-2027 – innovation momentum for Europe

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When the European Commission announced the new [Horizon](#) funding cycle worth nearly EUR 100 billion last year, Europe found itself in the middle of an unprecedented transformation. On one hand, the long-anticipated green and digital transformation gained a clear conceptual and funding pathway. On the other hand, with Britain having triggered the Article 50, and European nations struggling to manage the impacts of the epidemiological crisis, the Union clearly found itself at a crossroads in many respects.

One year on, despite some less-than-smooth negotiations regarding the structural funds and the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, Europe is recovering. Horizon Europe has officially launched its new funding period and the EU member countries are preparing to benefit. Amidst domestic pressure, the [UK Government's is fighting hard](#) to maintain access to the framework. The COVID-19 vaccination is underway throughout the continent, and the EU-leaders-agreed [Just Transition Fund](#) is another step towards what is to become a truly transformative period for the European industry and climate.

As the dust settles in the aftermath of Brexit and COVID-19, it is time to review the ample opportunities for growth and innovation made possible by [Horizon Europe](#). The 2021 – 2027 program was officially launched this past February, with a number of programs and calls currently opening for the first funding period.

The objectives are to support European science and research, innovation and job creation, in order to

address the existing and looming social and environmental challenges. A strong emphasis on the green transformation and environmental sustainability is a common denominator, underlying the 5 primary mission areas:

- [Adaptation to climate change including societal transformation](#)
- [Cancer](#)
- [Climate-neutral and smart cities](#)
- [Healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters](#)
- [Soil health and food](#)

To address these, the Horizon Europe stands on the following three pillars:

1. **Excellent science** – consisting of the European Research Council and EU-wide science funding programs such as Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and Research Infrastructures.
2. **Global challenges and the European industrial competitiveness** – programs broken down into thematic categories, such as health, social, digital agenda to energy, climate and environment.
3. **Innovative Europe.**

In the coming weeks, [EUROPEUM](#) will bring you a series of articles focusing on “Innovative Europe” – the third dimension (or the 3rd pillar) of Horizon Europe. The series will offer an overview of some of the EU wide innovation funding programs, with a special focus on capacity-building and higher education.



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* The European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) is not part of the Specific Programme

First, it will focus on the [European Institute of Innovation and Technology](#) with its established and new Knowledge and Innovation Communities. The series will cover specific funding programs and current calls in areas such as higher education, culture and creative industries, under the umbrella of EIT. Second, the recently launched [European Innovation Council](#), along with its objectives and funding opportunities, will be discussed.

The transformative momentum of Europe meets the beginning of the new Horizon funding cycle. Despite the difficult times, Europe is uniquely positioned to take advantage of the huge opportunity to address the societal and environmental challenges ahead. Not only it counts with the largest structural green and digital innovation budget in its history, but it also provides targeted development of disadvantaged regions and declining industries. With green transformation being one of the financial megatrends, Europe is joining the club of its leading global stakeholders. Meeting economic, environmental and

societal challenges requires sustained effort and funding in volumes that single European countries would hardly bring forward. With innovation as a common denominator, Horizon 2027 is set to become a significant milestone in the European project.



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About the series

This EUROPEUM series addresses the transformative momentum of Europe which is met by the beginning of the 2021-2027 Horizon funding cycle. The latter gives Europe a unique opportunity to address the societal and environmental challenges ahead.

This series of articles introduces some of the key components and programs of Horizon's innovation pillar. For this purpose, it discusses the trends, objectives and specific program calls, focusing predominantly on areas of private-public collaboration, capacity building and higher education.

[More about the series](#)

About the author

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