



#HorizonEU

THE EU RESEARCH & INNOVATION PROGRAMME

2021 – 2027

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Info Day 2025

Research and
Innovation

Intervention Area Democracy & Governance

“Europe’s future in a fractured world will depend on having a strong democracy and on defending the values that give us the freedoms and rights that we cherish” (*Political Guidelines 2024-2029*)

The research funded by this call will support the ongoing efforts (European Democracy Action Plan, European Democracy Shield...) to address threats to democratic systems, arising from both internal and external sources, and to rebuild citizens’ trust in democracy, including by responding to their social and economic needs.

Expected impact (HE Strategic Plan 2025-2027):

Democratic governance is reinvigorated by improving the **accountability**, **transparency**, **effectiveness** and **trustworthiness** of **rule-of-law** based institutions and policies and through the expansion of active and inclusive **citizenship** empowered by the safeguarding of **fundamental rights**.



TO DO LIST

- ☒ Always take the **gender dimension** into account in the design of your proposal
- ☒ **Clustering** and **cooperation** with other projects encouraged



Destination Innovative Research on Social and Economic Transformations (2025)

12 topics

- 8 Research & Innovation Actions (RIA)
- 4 Coordination & Support Actions (CSA)



HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-01

Advisory support and network to counter disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference -FIMI- (CSA)

€ 3.5 million / 1 project

- Cooperation with previous or ongoing projects
- FAIR data principles

Scope

- The EU aims to counter disinformation and Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) by building on previous research and making its findings accessible to a wider audience.
- Proposals should utilize existing frameworks, such as the DISARM Framework, and collaborate with past and ongoing EU-funded projects to develop capacity-building activities and advisory support for stakeholders.
- The goal is to provide stakeholders, including public bodies, NGOs, and policymakers, with the tools and knowledge to identify and counter disinformation, and to explore the potential of new technologies, such as AI, to detect and prevent disinformation.

Expected outcomes

- EU institutions and decision-makers gain understanding and tools to prevent disinformation.
- Practitioners and organizations get access to networks, advisory support, and improved frameworks to detect and address disinformation.
- Citizens and societal actors increase awareness and capacity to identify and counter disinformation.

HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-02

Fostering the consolidation of European science diplomacy (CSA)

€ 3 million / 1 project

- International cooperation particularly encouraged
- FAIR data principles

Scope

- Against the background of a rapidly changing geopolitical and scientific-technological environment, with global competitors using science diplomacy in a much more strategic manner, there is a need to consolidate European science diplomacy (ESD) efforts and explore synergies to tackle existing vulnerabilities.
- This CSA will contribute to consolidating the ESD landscape both in research and in practice, in particular by establishing a ESD Platform as a “do tank”, supporting policy needs like (some examples): advise on the use of SD to help achieving EU’s foreign and security policy goals; identify research needs and provide expert knowledge to policymakers and diplomatic services through science advice and science communication, strengthening multilateralism and democratic governance; design methods for assessing the impact of relevant actions; explore synergies with other fields of diplomacy, tech / innovation / digital diplomacy, as well as public diplomacy and culture diplomacy...

Expected outcomes

- Taxonomy of ESD, mapping relevant players (academia, policymaking, diplomacy, civil society, private sector...), providing an overview of capacities, infrastructures, networks, training, strategies and publications, at national and EU levels
- Design and launch a ESD Platform as a community of research and practice.
- Competence frameworks and curricula for training, capacity-building, and mutual learning in European science diplomacy

HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-03

Preparing the EU for future enlargement: challenges and opportunities (RIA)

€ 10.5 million / 3 projects

Clustering and cooperation with other EU funded projects under Horizon Europe, Horizon 2020, Global Europe or the Instrument for Pre-accession is encouraged.

Scope

- This research aims at exploring the history, politics, and economies of candidate countries and potential candidates, considering the implications for a EU with over 30 Member States and drawing lessons from past enlargements.
- Proposal should examine the EU's readiness to enlarge, but also the "*enlargement fatigue*" and the rise of euroscepticism, to develop strategies to engage citizens and civil society, and promote a more inclusive enlargement process.
- The research should also investigate the role of education, societal dialogue, and digital tools in promoting EU integration and enlargement, including pilots in at least four EU Member States to test effective communication strategies.

Expected outcomes

- Provide policymakers and public administration with thematic insights on lessons learned from previous enlargements.
- Raise awareness of the implications of EU enlargement versus non-enlargement both in the EU and in (potential) candidate country(ies).
- Improve use of interactive tools to educate citizens on enlargement within the EU.
- Public involvement in enlargement is enhanced through transparent and participatory processes.

HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-04

Open strategic autonomy, economic and research security in EU foreign policy (RIA)

€ 7 million / 2 projects

- FAIR data principles

Scope

- The EU's open strategic autonomy refers to its ability to act independently in key policy areas, including energy, research, and defence.
- Recent initiatives, such as the European Economic Security Strategy and the Council's Recommendation on Enhancing Research Security, aim to strengthen the EU's autonomy and manage economic security risks.
- Proposals should contribute to clarifying key concepts, gathering evidence for policymaking, and analysing drivers and risks for open strategic autonomy and economic security in various sectors, including research and innovation.

Expected outcomes

- EU institutions and decision-makers have a solid evidence base for policymaking on open strategic autonomy and economic security.
- They understand the benefits and impacts of these policies on the EU, its members, and partner countries.
- They receive policy recommendations to enhance autonomy and security without harming economic and societal actors or the EU's geopolitical influence.

HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-05

Countering and preventing radicalisation, extremism, hate speech and polarisation (RIA)

€ 10.5 million / 3 projects

- Clustering & cooperation
- FAIR data principles

Scope

- Radicalisation, extremism, and hate speech are growing threats to democracy and social cohesion, amplified by social media and algorithm-driven personalisation.
- Online interactions and media outlets can distort public discourse, fostering misinformation and disinformation, and proposals should consider both online and offline social networks.
- Research activities should involve a wide range of stakeholders, including public bodies, media organisations, and social media platforms, to test and implement research results and provide access to necessary data.

Expected outcomes

- EU decision-makers and researchers gain a comprehensive understanding of radicalisation, extremism, and hate speech to deliver effective prevention measures.
- Improved understanding of hate ecosystems, disinformation, and hate speech, and their links to radicalisation and extremism.
- Enhanced understanding of media consumption, polarisation, and the role of traditional and social media in spreading hate and disinformation.
- New tools and methods to assess source reliability, improve journalistic practices, and provide training for educators to counter hate and extremism

HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-06

Towards a European research hub on contemporary antisemitism and Jewish life and culture (CSA)

€ 3.5 million / 1 project

- International cooperation encouraged
- Invitation to consider the data offered by European Research Infrastructures in the SSH domain
- 3 years minimum duration

Scope

- Establish a network of researchers on contemporary antisemitism and Jewish life in Europe
- The network will need to work on its mid- and long-term sustainability and the proposals should demonstrate the capacity of the consortium to secure funding beyond the project's lifetime.
- The network should be anchored within an appropriate existing research community, and provide opportunities for members to meet in person (conferences, seminars, events etc)

Expected outcomes

- Network of practitioners, including researchers in the field of contemporary antisemitism and research on Jewish life
- Discussion and formulation of methodological standards in the field are facilitated
- Strategic planning for the field on a Europe-wide level, including a concrete and credible action plan to render this network sustainable over time
- Deepened links between research and policymaking within and for Jewish communities as part of the wider process of nurturing Jewish life in Europe

HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-07

The autocratic appeal: nature, drivers and strategies (RIA)

€ 10.5 million / 3 projects

- International cooperation encouraged
- Multidisciplinary and actor-based approach
- Engage citizens and civil society organisations
- Clustering with projects funded under the topic and collaboration with previous/ongoing projects

Scope

- Instead of the announced triumph of the liberal democratic order, authoritarianism seems to have gained appeal while the democratisation wave rolls back.
- Social and psychological aspects, as well as philosophical and historical dimensions, to be considered for the analysis of growing acceptance of autocratic approaches in well-functioning democracies.
- The resistance playbook against autocratisation requires further investigation: the actors resisting autocratisation and their strategies, the modalities and patterns of resistance, including in the digital realm as reaction to digital authoritarianism.
- **Expected outcomes**
 - Updated and exploitable scientific knowledge and understanding of the increasing autocratic tendencies is available for policymakers, public authorities and citizens.
 - Methods and tools capable of a) early warning and characterisation of autocratic tendencies, their drivers and strategies; and b) identifying tactics for resisting and combating them.
 - Relevant actors (democratic governments, media, civil society organisations) are enabled to take more informed decisions when engaging and dealing with autocracies

HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-08

Economic inequalities and their impact on democracy (RIA)

€ 10.5 million / 3 projects

- Proposals should consider at least three additional intersecting dimensions of inequalities alongside economic ones, such as sex, gender, disability, social class, religion or belief, age, and racial or ethnic origins.

Scope

- Economic inequalities (income, wealth, and access to resources) threaten democratic legitimacy by fueling polarisation, eroding trust, and undermining inclusion and representation.
- Projects should explore how actual inequalities and citizens' perceptions of inequality affect attitudes toward democracy, trust in institutions, participation, and support for rights, while considering the roles of media, mobility, and intergenerational transfers.
- Proposals are encouraged to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of public policies in addressing inequalities, involve diverse disciplines, and build on existing EU-funded research and networks as listed in the topic.
- **Expected outcomes**
 - Better understanding of the interplay between economic inequalities and democratic attitudes across diverse populations
 - Effective use of existing data and exploration of new data avenues to capture inequality perceptions and their societal impacts.
 - Evidence-based policy recommendations bridging research and practice to strengthen democratic resilience.
 - Innovative, intersectional approaches to enhance participation among economically vulnerable and marginalised populations.

HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-09

Balancing the fight against disinformation and the right to freedom of expression (RIA)

€ 10.5 million / 3 projects

- FAIR data principles

Scope

- Misinformation and disinformation can hinder responses to challenges like climate change and public health, and solutions must be based on evidence.
- Proposals should investigate how media systems favour disinformation, including market incentives and regulations that balance freedom of expression with countering disinformation.
- Research should develop a healthy online media sphere, including trust indicators and fact-checking, and involve media organisations and practitioners to counter disinformation and astroturfing, and understand the role of mediators and media dissemination hubs.

Expected outcomes

- EU institutions and decision-makers are better equipped to prevent disinformation while protecting freedom of expression.
- They understand how digital media shapes public opinion and can regulate it without compromising citizens' rights.
- Projects aim to increase knowledge and tools to counter disinformation, including understanding astroturfing and promoting media literacy. [OPTIONAL]

HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-10

The role of civic and citizenship education for strengthening civic and democratic participation and support for common European values (RIA)

€ 10.5 million / 3 projects

Consortia must include at least one secondary or higher education establishment, or public body with the capacity to roll out curricula, or public body in charge of teacher education and training; and at least one civil society organisation.

Scope

- Formal education, can also cover non-formal education; Age range of 15 to 29 years old
- Develop young people's critical thinking, willingness to participate.
- Assess effectiveness of teaching methods.
- Test innovative methodologies.

Expected outcomes

Policymakers, education and training institutions, and educators have a better understanding of :

- how citizenship education is best learned, taught, and assessed.
- what the impact of citizenship education is on young people's civic and democratic engagement
- what are effective collaborative mechanisms between different actors in formal and/or non-formal education sectors in delivering effective citizenship education

Policymakers, education and training institutions, and educators can roll out transformational and action-oriented pedagogical approaches to citizenship education

HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-11

Independence of the judiciary as an aspect of rule of law compliance (RIA)

€ 10.5 million / 3 projects

Proposals are encouraged to network with and build on EU-funded projects under the Horizon Europe or the Citizen, Equality, Rights and Values, and the Internal Security Fund.

Scope

- The EU already has tools, such as the annual EU Justice Scoreboard and the annual European Rule of Law Mechanism, which provide valuable insights into the functioning of justice systems across the EU.
- This research aims to increase understanding of international and EU standards' implementation and impact on judicial independence, and to build knowledge on national legal practices and frameworks.
- It should consider the complexities of national justice systems and ongoing reform efforts and explore how these factors impact the functioning of safeguards for judicial independence in different Member States.

Expected outcomes

- EU authorities and public authorities will have access to comparative research information on the independence, impartiality, and integrity of judicial institutions across the EU.
- Policymakers and judicial authorities will have a better understanding of the functioning of the safeguards for judicial independence in each other's justice systems, strengthening judicial cooperation between the Member States.
- Policymakers and public administrations in Member States are provided with research on the implementation at national level of international and EU rules and standards to better assess their impact on judicial independence.
- The EU's capacity to proactively promote the rule of law, fundamental human rights, and democracy will be strengthened with a better understanding of the functioning of the safeguards for judicial independence in the Member States

HORIZON-CL2-2025-DEMOCRACY-12

Community of democracy practitioners and researchers (CSA)

€ 3.5 million / 1 project

- Consortia must include, as beneficiaries or affiliated entities, **at least one public body** with a policy-making role, and **at least one civil society organisation**.

Scope

- Establish an innovative successor to the Nets4Dem network of democracy research organisations and practitioners of democratic innovation, which will produce policy recommendations, help policymakers design civic participation strategies, organise retreats for policymakers to learn and exchange from experts and peers on democratic strengthening and renewal, design capacity building activities on participatory and deliberative democracy, organise conference(s) on democratic innovation.

Expected outcomes

- Better networking of research and innovation communities in the fields of democracy, civic participation, and citizenship education
- Useful “how-tos” and trainings for policymakers, public authorities, and governments, networking events, advice and capacity building, accessible platforms, databases, knowledge repositories for better access to research results, innovative methodologies, and tools in the field of democracy and civic deliberation and participation and citizenship education
- Proposals for future research agendas in the field of democracy

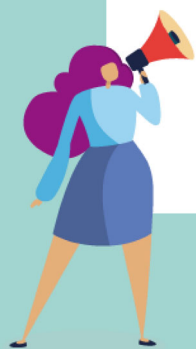
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DEADLINE TO APPLY
!!! 16 September 2025 !!!
17:00 Brussels time



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Tips



Read the **call text**, the **general introduction** and the **general annexes** very carefully !



Start **early** & submit **before** the deadline



Do **not** draft online (use Word doc)



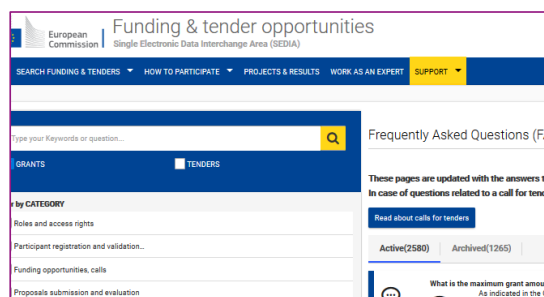
Connect to the **live webinar on 15 May** to ask questions & use the **Slido**

Need help?



Recorded webinars

« How to prepare a successful proposal » etc



FAQ: research enquiry service



National Contact Points



Good luck!

HorizonEU

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