News of the Week - 31 |2025

15 dec 2025 - Research & Innovation Pre-Award Advisory Unit (DPFC)

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If you want to know more about an opportunity, call, RI, Event, and/or any other subject regarding a NoW section (already mentioned or not) please contact us at pre-award@ist-id.pt and we'll look into it for you!

Disclaimer

Non-public documents (eg WP drafts) are available only via Microsoft Teams (designated pre-award' working channel). If you don't have access, and wish to, contact us at pre-award@ist.pt

INTERNAL INFORMATION

» 2025 Meetings Plan | Pre-Award Network Meetings

Where you can still find the last meeting' minutes draft and comment!

» 2026 Meetings | This file is also set as a TAB in the Microsoft Team Rede Pre-Award / General channel

- Although we filled the table with tentative dates until July (according to the document's Framework), everyone can directly reserve their spot as host and speaker
- And why we removed Plan from the file name?

The document proved to be useful not only for planning (tentative dates, hosts and topics) but also for consolidation purposes post meeting (including links to minutes, drafts for comments and final pdfs for record)

» NEW DATE! Please disseminate to your researchers.

🤝 Webinar | Networking for Horizon Europe Collaborative Projects

🗓️ 26 January 2026 | 10:00–13:00 | Online

Looking for partners or a consortium for your next Horizon Europe Pillar 2 proposal?

Join our upcoming Networking Webinar, designed specifically for researchers looking to participate in collaborative applications.

The session will explore practical strategies and tools to identify, approach, and connect with potential partners across Europe. Participants will also have the opportunity to practice a 5-minute project pitch, helping them refine their presentation and positioning for future collaborations.

🔗 Register here

» The World Manufacturing Forum 2025 (13 and 14 November) presented the 2025 World Manufacturing Report and explored strategies for a competitive and sustainable industrial future. Panels addressed pathways to net-zero manufacturing, skills development for green and digital transitions, and the role of recycling platforms in securing critical raw materials. Experts also discussed industrial AI, multi-robot systems, and XR/industrial metaverse applications for next-generation smart factories. The event included the keynote "Factories of the Future: Challenges Ahead and Pathways to Future Opportunities."

Global leaders offered insights on how technology, sustainability and workforce development will shape the future of manufacturing.

All the reports are available HERE.

» Short-visit to Technical University of Denmark DTU (19-20 November)

Under the DIG4BIO project, Marta Candeias (DPFC) and Rute Martins (CiTUA) visited DTU to exchange best practices in policy advise, pre-award, post-award, ethics, open science and legal support. The visit was highly productive, yielding insights applicable at both central and research-unit levels.

Key learnings included DTU's strongly centralised research support model, its robust legal and tech-transfer capacity, and its strategic shift toward alignment with EU priorities.

DTU employs AI tools, consultants and policy intelligence to strengthen proposal quality, while prioritising high-value grants, coordinations and institutional impact.

Its open science ecosystem is mature, well-resourced and supported by strong digital infrastructures. DTU also maintains active influence in Brussels through alliances and regional representation. Increasing ethical and integrity requirements highlight the need for aligned structures and training. Financial and legal teams play a critical role in risk management, early screening of programs rules, agreements and compliance. Moving to a department-level retention of overheads to reinforce local responsibility and motivate investment in research support.

» Moulds Week 2025, Marinha Grande (25/11)

Moulds Event 2025 delivered a multi-day programme of conferences, technical sessions and networking focused on moulding, advanced manufacturing and industrial innovation, including Talentum Days and workshops such as ROBOTA-SUDOE on robotics and SME digitalisation.

Across 36 hours, the event brought together 890 participants, 90 speakers, and organisations from 12 countries, spanning 141 companies, 14 associations/public entities, and 32 R&D centres and universities.

Sessions highlighted emerging technologies, sustainability, workforce development and industrial transformation.

The 12 sub-events fostered strong cross-border collaboration, knowledge exchange and industry-academia engagement. Overall, Moulds Event 2025 stood out as a major international platform shaping the future of the moulds and manufacturing sectors.

There is a need for innovative approaches to strengthen the competitiveness of the mould sector across the entire value chain, including new business models, advanced AI and robotic tools, new materials, and a broader openness to developing research projects in collaboration with academia.

» Future of Advanced Materials Europe (FAME) Workshops, CICECO, Aveiro (26-27-28/11)

From 26–28 November 2025, the European advanced materials (AdMa) community met in Portugal for two major workshops shaping the future AdMa ecosystem. FAME focused on overcoming barriers to advanced materials uptake, as well as investment and scale-up, with outcomes feeding into the European Commission's 2026 Advanced Materials Act.

FAME-EcoSys examined the broader AdMa ecosystem, addressing cross-border funding strategies and actions to accelerate adoption, using lessons from the Iberian peninsula.

The workshops aimed to position AdMa R&D&I within Europe's strategic landscape and support the co-creation of national and regional initiatives.

The event, co-organised by the EC's Technology Council for Advanced Materials, IAM-I and InnoMatSyn, gathered stakeholders from science, industry, policy and funding to help shape Europe's advanced materials future.

If your research unit work in the area of advanced materials, the above highlighted initiatives are to be followed.

» Defense Meeting, Porto (3/12)

Produtech Cluster, organised a meeting for its associates in response to the growing interest and funding opportunities in the Defence sector, gathering around 40 companies from the metal industry, equipment manufacturing, software, robotics, automation, and several research centres. The session presented R&D and innovation opportunities in Defence, including access requirements (licensing and security clearances) and the range of EU, NATO and national

instruments available to industry, academia and technology centres. It also highlighted Portugal's defence experimentation infrastructures, such as the Navy and Army test centres, alongside initiatives supporting industry integration, internationalisation and capability development.

The role of Defence as a driver of innovation was discussed, with emphasis on global geopolitical shifts, increased defence investment and the strategic value of dual-use technologies for competitiveness and resilience. The need for alignment between Armed Forces' capability needs and industrial strengths—supported by innovation and international cooperation—was stressed.

Marta Candeias presented IST's new initiative, the Space, Aeronautics and Defence Working Group, and the appointment of a Deputy Director for these areas, reinforcing academia's relevance in the sector. Companies expressed strong interest in learning more about IST's initiative and exploring avenues for collaboration in research and innovation.

Access to the presentations HERE.

» Horizon Europe Training 2026 – Save the Date!

📅 27–30 January 2026

The bi-annual Horizon Europe Training returns in January to support researchers preparing applications or planning to submit to upcoming calls.

This hands-on programme provides practical guidance on how to structure and strengthen Pillar II Horizon Europe proposals, with sessions covering:

- Part A & Budget
- Part B – Excellence
- Part B – Impact
- Part B – Implementation

Each 3-hour module includes interactive exercises, examples, and best practices across thematic clusters.

💡 New this year: Following the training, participants will have the opportunity to book one-on-one slots with the support team to discuss specific aspects of their proposal in detail.

📣 We need your expertise!

If you'd like to contribute as a trainer, share a case study, or present examples from past applications, please contact the organising team. We already have volunteers for Part A and

Budget and for Implementation. Still missing excellence and Impact.

Together, let's strengthen Técnico's success in Horizon Europe!

» Pre-Award Network Informal Meeting - 16 January 2026 TAB

Due to an work intensive period which led to the unavailability of most of our research managers and to the strikes of last week, the Pre-Award network gathering was postponed to the 16th January 2026, between 12:00 and 14:00.

More details will follow next year. Please Save the Date!

» DPFC participation in the Scientific Council of IST-ID (15/12/2025)

Marta Candeias presented an overview of next year's European calls (2026), highlighting the main priorities, deadlines and networking events, much of which has already been shared with you. She also addressed the growing number of applications and the increasing use of AI in proposal preparation. The Scientific Council expressed concern about the potential competitiveness loss for IST-ID due to the absence of AI tools, AI training, and—most importantly—clear policy guidelines for the use of AI in research. As a result, DPFC will conduct a study on available AI tools, their services, benefits and costs, enabling the Scientific Council to prepare an informed recommendation for the IST-ID Board.

She also provided an update on the discussions around FP10 and the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), stressing the need for IST-ID to prepare and position itself early in the evolving European funding landscape for research and innovation. The pre-award action plan for 2026 was presented to collect feedback. The website, researcher-tailored mailing lists and the newsletter were warmly welcomed, particularly by Research Units without a dedicated research manager. In addition, as emphasised by the IST-ID Vice-President, harmonising and centralising institutional information required for applications was considered a key priority.

Finally, the latest statistics on participation in European programmes—previously shared with you —were also presented.

You can find the presentation HERE.

POLICY NEWS

» Experts at the **Human Values and Grand Challenges conference** outlined how to ensure human values are embedded into the EU's social, green and digital transitions - (source: Science Business)

At the Copenhagen conference on Human Values and Grand Challenges, European leaders and researchers reaffirmed that innovation must be rooted in dignity, freedom, equality and democracy—the very values shaping Europe's identity. They argued that true progress depends on bringing social sciences, arts and humanities into the heart of research rather than treating them as afterthoughts. Voices from universities and EU institutions called for a unified vision of science, one where disciplines collaborate from the outset to solve shared problems.

Mission-driven research emerged as a powerful model already reshaping how some universities work.

Educators stressed that students must be trained for this blended future, even if it means re-educating today's teachers.

Speakers urged Europe to redefine competitiveness in terms of wellbeing and long-term prosperity, not just economics.

They also called on scientists to step more boldly into policymaking, helping overwhelmed decision-makers access the knowledge they need.

The conference will ultimately feed into policy recommendations aimed at steering Europe toward a truly human-centric research and innovation agenda.

» ERA-LEARN European Partnership Stakeholder Forum 2025

The ERA-LEARN European Partnership Stakeholder Forum 2025 took place on 3 December, focusing on "Re-Imagining Partnerships: the road to FP10." Stakeholders discussed the future of collaboration under FP10, emphasising the need for more strategic, transparent and performance-driven partnerships. Panels and workshops highlighted priorities such as stronger co-investment, clearer rules, better results, and enhanced impact assessment and synergies.

Partnerships were framed as major drivers of EU competitiveness and resilience, central to shaping the next EU R&I Framework. The forum marked a key step in building a shared, forward-looking vision for a coherent FP10 partnership landscape.

The current landscape of Partnerships under Pilar 2 of Horizon Europe is the following.

» Negotiation status for the next Horizon Europe programme (2028-34) (source: Science Business)

EU governments have advanced negotiations on the next Horizon Europe programme (2028–34), especially regarding fundamental research, while unresolved issues remain around links to the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), governance and priority setting. Member states seek clarity on how defence-related research will be funded, including the role of the EIC and possible funding through the ECF.

There is broad support for safeguarding the independence of the ERC and MSCA, reversing proposed changes such as shorter leadership mandates. Governments also want stronger involvement in selecting public–private partnerships and a reinforced "society" pillar to address geopolitical, environmental, technological and democratic transitions.

Negotiations with the European Parliament are expected to be difficult on overarching issues such as governance, association of non-EU countries and the programme's overall budget, with MEPs calling for higher investment.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES & UPCOMING CALLS

DPFC Compilation work tools

» HE 2026 Calls Deadline | TAB

» HE All Topics 2026 for Expression of Interest | TAB

» Horizon Europe Work Programmes 2026–2027 are officially published HERE

The European Commission has published its 2026–27 Horizon Europe funding plans after a more open drafting process. Thirteen work programmes and two guidance documents outline upcoming calls, with a focus on simpler management. Call topics are now less prescriptive, cutting programme length by 33% and favouring fewer, larger projects. Lump-sum funding will apply to half of all calls to reduce administrative burden. A record 41 calls will use a two-stage, partly anonymised application process to reduce workload and bias.

A major novelty is the introduction of horizontal activities with calls addressing cross-cutting challenges. These include:

- €540M for the Clean Industrial Deal to support clean-tech deployment in heavy industry;
- €90M will fund trustworthy AI applications in science across materials, agriculture and health;
- New fast-track calls aim to attract newcomers, especially small companies, and speed up technology maturation;
- A €51.25M Choose Europe call in 2027—plus new ERC "super-grants"—will boost researcher recruitment and global talent attraction

» Hop - on Facility - Last chance to apply! Deadline: 24/09/2026

The updated list of projects potentially eligible for the 2026 Hop-On Call has been released.

The Hop-On mechanism supports Widening countries, including Portugal, by allowing their institutions to join already approved Horizon Europe projects that currently lack Widening

partners. Approval rates are high (over 90%), with Portugal achieving more than 20% return and IST showing a 71% success rate.

The 2026 call will be the final Hop-On opportunity under the current Horizon Europe programme. Only RIA projects from Pillar II thematic clusters and EIC Pathfinder, with less than 12 months of implementation at call closure (24 Sept 2026), are eligible.

An Info Day on 22 January will cover Hop-On under WIDERA.

For questions or support, applicants may contact national NCPs or hopon@ani.pt.

» EUROSTARS

Eurostars will open a new funding call on 16 January, with a deadline on 19 March and a webinar for applicants on 22 January. The programme supports SMEs, large companies, research organisations and universities collaborating on international R&D projects in any technological field. It includes 37 participating countries and has already funded 851 projects.87% of Eurostars SMEs have successfully achieved their project goals. Applicants are encouraged to join the webinar and explore the programme details on the Eurostars website.

Register to our **webinar for applicants** 🔗
Website 🔗

» The MSCA COFUND and MSCA Staff Exchanges calls are open (deadlines: 8 and 16 April)

Updated RADIANCE handbooks will be released in early February ahead of the April deadlines. Applicants are encouraged to begin preparing their proposals early.

A matchmaking platform is available to help find partners.

More details.

NETWORKING & PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

» Horizon Europe 2026 Brookerage Events

» Crowdhelix Platform

Instituto Superior Técnico researchers have actively used the Crowdhelix platform, including 104 uses of ReviewIQ and strong engagement across posts, messages and events.

In 2025 the network expanded to 830 members and 20,000 users, with over 600 experts participating in matchmaking activities that identified €1.55B in funding opportunities.

New 2025 platform features include ReviewIQ, improved search, a training Video Library, and multi-factor authentication.

Upcoming upgrades will enhance AI-driven recommendations, collaboration tools and guided post creation.

UPCOMING EVENTS & SAVE THE DATE

DPFC Compilation work tools

» Horizon Europe 2026 Info Days

» Events Calendar redesigned

Following some feedback from RM, we are redesigning the events calendar so that it will be more user friendly. Some changes include:

- Organized by month
- filter availability
- Past months events allow access to materials (recordings and presentations), now posted in Resources and in the Events Calendar
- New entries (upcoming events and/or materials) will have a sign NEW

RESOURCES

» Publication of the new application forms

Following the publication of the new work programme, the new application form are now also available online.

👉 They can be found on the Funding and Tender Portal.

The KIT for Pilar 2 Programmes will be updated soon.

Main changes:

- Adapted according to WP 2026-2027 simplifications.
- Simplified section 2.1, 3.1
- Tags removed
- Page limit reduced (40 pages) except to lump-sum proposals (45 pages).

» Following the article in last NoW#30 regarding the **Online Info Day - EIC Work Programme 2026**, we bring you the most relevant resources #incaseyoumissedit

- EIC Work Programme 2026
- 13 November 2025: Watch the Online Info Day and Download the Presentation
- 17 November 2025: Watch the online Advanced Innovation Challenges and Download the Presentation

» Following the event "**Battery Innovation Days 2025**" here you can find:

- Agenda
- Presentations