Call for seed funding within and for EUTOPIA_HEALTH consortium

**Funded by
the European Union**

Introduction

The EUTOPIA_HEALTH project, funded by the European Commission's Horizon Europe Programme (European Excellence Initiative) focuses on building research capacity in three universities located in Widening countries: Romania, Slovenia, and Portugal, and aims to support health-related research by offering seed funding and mobility opportunities to researchers. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, the project enhances health-related scientific management and strengthens research and innovation (R&I) capabilities. It provides training and funding opportunities to researchers, while also fostering connections between research, society, businesses, and policymakers to create tailored solutions for societal challenges.

Seed funding to foster new research Clusters of Health within the EUTOPIA_HEALTH consortium

1   Information about the funding

Seed funding will be provided to promote joint transdisciplinary health-related research collaborations within the EUTOPIA_HEALTH consortium[1] (further on Consortium). The funding available for two years is intended to support researchers in developing their expertise, advancing their careers, and increasing their international visibility and networking.

Each research team must include researchers from at least three consortium universities, with at least one researcher from the Consortium's Widening universities[2] with a focus on developing new grant proposals during and after this period. Involving Global Partners or external research groups (outside the Consortium) is encouraged to promote collaboration. However, costs related to activities involving Global Partners or external groups cannot be covered by the EUTOPIA_HEALTH EU budget.

1.1   Who can apply?

The Seed funding is available to research teams or Clusters that include at least three partners from the Consortium. Individual applications cannot be considered. The lead researcher, in the quality of main applicant, responsible for proposal submission, must be from a Widening university within the Consortium and will serve as the **Cluster lead**, receiving the funding through its host institution.

The funded Seed grants will be implemented over a period of 24 months. The earliest possible project starting date is 1st November 2025 and the latest starting date is 1st February 2026.

- **Budget guidelines:** Seed funding will provide support for 6 transdisciplinary projects (2 per each Widening university), with a budget of 120.000 EUR (including the indirect costs) per project, granted within a single round of application. The budget will exclusively support activities carried out by partners from Widening countries, in line with the Programme's (Horizone Europe-Widening) rules. Research partners from non-Widening universities within the Consortium can participate through non-financial collaborations, enabling them to benefit from the joint project to enhance their research. The budget is expected to cover mostly personnel costs, including salaries for researchers involved in the project, in accordance with applicable legislation. Other eligible costs include logistics (e.g., materials,

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[1] For the purpose of clarity, the EUTOPIA_HEALTH Consortium consists of the following organizations: Babeș-Bolyai University (UBB), University of Ljubljana (UL), NOVA University Lisbon (NOVA), Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Pompeu Fabra University-Barcelona (UPF), CY Cergy Paris University (CY), Ca'Foscari University of Venice (UNIVE), University of Gothenburg (GU), University of Warwick (UW).

[2] The Widening universities of the consortium are: Babeș-Bolyai University (UBB), University of Ljubljana (UL), NOVA University Lisbon (NOVA).

consumables, dissemination, and APCs) and travel expenses for national and international activities. Subcontracting is not allowed. Indirect costs are set at 25% of the direct costs.

2 Eligibility criteria, application process and evaluation guidelines for the EUTOPIA_HEALTH Seed funding

2.1 Eligibility criteria for Seed funding

- **Research Areas:** Proposals must focus on Health-related research domains such as: Applied Medical Technologies, Diagnostics, Therapies; Clinical or Health Psychology; Health Economics; Life Sciences related to Health; Physical Education for Health; Public Health, and other similar fields related to Health.
- **Research challenges**: Proposals should focus on collaborative ideas that have potential for future development through further partnerships. While proposals should align with Health-related goals and be interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary, we encourage ideas that can grow into larger collaborations across scientific domains.
- **Research Cluster requirements**:
  o The Cluster must consist of at least 3 collaborators from different EUTOPIA_HEALTH consortium universities. One collaborator must be from a Widening consortium university and act as the **Cluster lead**.
  o The Cluster lead is responsible for submitting the proposal and overseeing the project.
  o It is recommended to ensure equal opportunities and gender balance for all participants, in accordance with national and European legal standards. Inclusiveness should be actively fostered at every stage of the project.
- **Cluster lead requirements**:
  o Must have a PhD degree and at least four years of post-PhD experience.
  o Experience in collaborative research projects is valued, but not mandatory.
  o Applicants are expected to demonstrate a relevant track record in their field, reflecting active engagement in research.
  o Only one proposal can be submitted per Cluster lead.
- **Research Team Composition**: In addition to the Cluster lead, the team may include senior researchers, postdocs, PhD students, or research support staff from Widening and non-Widening universities of the EHC, with focus on trans- and interdisciplinarity, balanced gender representation and inclusiveness across all roles. Engaging researchers from different domains is highly encouraged but not exclusive.
- **Additional Requirements:**
  o All applicants, including Cluster members, must be registered in the EUTOPIA_HEALTH Research Map (forms.office.com/e/syhFiG6tpC). The EUTOPIA_HEALTH Research Map (www.partneringtool.eutopia-university.eu/) supports and facilitates the identification of potential partners and collaborators within the Consortium.
  o Double funding is strictly prohibited. Proposals that are already funded or in the process of being funded from other sources, cannot be submitted.

2.2 Application process

All applications must be submitted by the Cluster lead from the Widening university. Applications should be sent via email: health.eutopia@ubbcluj.ro, eutopia.health@uni-lj.si, or nova.research@unl.pt, with the subject line: "EUTOPIA_HEALTH Seed Funding Application – [Name of the Applicant]". The template of the application (**Annex 1**) provides detailed guidelines for submission, being available with the call announcement. The application form must be completed in English and must be attached to the email submission as one PDF document.

Application deadline: all applications must be submitted by **30 April 2025**.

2.3 Seed grants evaluation process

Proposals will be submitted and evaluated in a single-step process. Each eligible proposal will be reviewed by a panel formed by up to three independent experts (**Annex 3**) from EUTOPIA_HEALTH Consortium (preferably from non-Widening universities of the Consortium), ensuring impartiality and avoiding conflicts of interest. Evaluators will follow international peer review standards, with each proposal receiving at least two independent reviews. At the end of the evaluation step, the proposals will be ranked by the panel on the basis of the scores (1-100 points) they have received and the panels' overall appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses. When two or more grant applications receive equal scores, priority is given to projects that actively promote gender equality through balanced team representation or gender-focused objectives. Preference is also given to projects that foster inclusivity by involving underrepresented groups. Projects that commit to open science practices, such as open-access publication and data sharing, are also prioritized for their contribution to transparency and knowledge dissemination. Trans- and interdisciplinarity is encouraged and highly valued.

Evaluation criteria

The evaluation criteria (detailed in **Annex 2**) used to determine the scientific quality of the proposals include (not listed in the order of priority):

- track record and expertise of the researchers (Cluster lead, Partners)
- scientific relevance and transdisciplinary nature of the application
- originality of the aims and objectives
- capacity of the participants and of the Research cluster
- work methodology and feasibility of the project
- impact and dissemination strategy, including commitment to building the foundation for sustainable collaborative partnerships, and creating opportunities for joint European funding.

2.4. Outcome of evaluation and appeal procedure

The evaluation results will be communicated to the Cluster lead by 30 September 2025, by e-mail. The applicant has the right to submit appeal related to potential errors occurring within the evaluation procedures.

2.5. Calendar of the call for Seed Funding within and for EUTOPIA_HEALTH consortium

Action	Timeline
Pre-Launching of the call	15 December 2024
Start for applications submission	01.01.2025
Deadline for submission of applications	30 April 2025
Evaluation process	1 May-20 September 2025
Publication of final results	30 September 2025
Start of the project	1 November 2025 -1 February 2026

3   Contracting

The contracting procedure will follow the corresponding national regulatory standards of each Widening-member of the Consortium, ensuring transparency, fairness, and accountability throughout the grant implementation.

> *If the project's domain requires specific approvals or accreditations, the Cluster Lead must ensure these are secured prior to the project's contracting (e.g., See Annex 1 -Application form –section Ethics).*

4   Reporting

The Cluster lead will submit an annual scientific and financial report (end of year 1 and 2), providing the description of the progress made towards the proposed objectives, ensuring alignment with the project's goals and budgetary allocations. The final report should highlight the progress achieved, emphasizing how the collaborative work enhanced the global visibility and competitiveness of the consortium, and paved the way for future joint funding opportunities (e.g. common application for further funding). One scientific publication should be submitted by the research team, into an ISI-indexed peer-reviewed journal, by the end of the project, with the specific acknowledge of the funding source.

5   Contact details

The local contacts for Seed funding, responsible for managing the application process and addressing practical questions about the program, are:

Babes-Bolyai University (Romania) - health.eutopia@ubbcluj.ro

University of Ljubljana (Slovenia) - eutopia.health@uni-lj.si

NOVA University Lisbon (Portugal) - nova.research@unl.pt