



HEROES4REGIONS

Joint Practice-Oriented Scientific Research Hub

T5.4. Select and pilot small-scale cooperation projects

Frequently Asked Questions (March 2026)



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Frequently Asked Questions

This document provides an overview of frequently asked questions related to the 1st Call for Small-Scale Cooperation Projects of the Joint Practice-Oriented Scientific Research Hub. This is a living document that will be updated regularly.

I am not familiar with the research expertise of the HEROES partners. Where can I find this information?

Within the HEROES Alliance, the following resources are available:

- An overview of research infrastructure and facilities
- The research management structures overview (D5.1)
- The thematic research pods and their facilitators (agriculture & food; care & well-being; circular economy; digital transformation; education, learning & inclusion; regional development).

You may also contact your institutional coordinator for this call (see Appendix A in the manual). They can guide you towards relevant expertise and connect you with suitable researchers or research support staff across the Alliance. You are also free to directly approach researchers or research groups within other HEROES institutions.

Can other involved partners receive funding?

Only the 9 HEROES main beneficiaries can receive funding under this call. Associated partners or third parties cannot receive funding.

What happens if there are not enough applications or if the quality is insufficient?

If there are insufficient eligible or high-quality applications, or the available budget is not fully allocated, the remaining funds will be carried over to a subsequent call. The timing of future calls will follow a similar structure to the current call, unless otherwise decided by the WP5 Working Group.

Are mobility costs eligible? Who should finance them?

It is recommended to use additional funding sources for travel and accommodation costs, unless otherwise agreed within the small-scale partnership consortium. Partners may make internal agreements on how to cover mobility costs. It is possible to use complementary funding sources, for example: Erasmus+ KA131 funds or other internationalisation budgets or funding sources.

How much co-funding is required?

Co-funding in the form of staff time (personnel costs) is needed. This call provides seed funding (purchase costs) to test new cooperation formats, strengthen cross-institutional collaboration, create leverage towards future (external) funding, and foster sustainable, long-term impact. Each applicant consortium determines the level of co-funding required to achieve the objectives of the small-scale cooperation, with a view to ensuring sustainable impact and potential expansion afterwards.



Are there guidelines regarding the duration of the cooperation?

For Call 1 (2026): Projects start from 1 September 2026. Projects must be completed within a maximum of 9 months after the start date. Final report submission is required upon completion (no later than 30 June 2027)

An initiative may focus on a short, clearly defined activity (e.g. workshop series, hackathon, co-creation lab), or extend over several months (e.g. network-building and joint capacity development trajectory). Activities must be realistic, feasible, and proportionate to the available budget. “Value for money” is one of the evaluation criteria.

Can I organise a scientific research conference within this call?

No. Scientific research conferences are explicitly listed as ineligible activities under this call. However, you may align or connect your small-scale cooperation project with other initiatives that are funded through different sources. If linking your activities to a scientific conference or another initiative helps create strategic leverage, strengthen collaboration, or enhance long-term impact, this is certainly possible, provided that the scientific research conference itself is not financed through this call.

The key principle remains that this call supports capacity-building, interinstitutional cooperation, and seed (learning & training) activities, not the organisation of scientific conferences as such.

Can I organise an activity in the Global South with partners there to set up a capacity-building initiative?

Activities funded under this call must take place within HEROES partner or associated higher education institutions’ partner countries. This means that organising and financing activities physically taking place in the Global South is not eligible under this call. However, you may involve partners from the Global South in your initiative (e.g. online participation, knowledge exchange, exploratory discussions).

What are typical examples of small-scale cooperation projects?

The following examples focus on capacity-building, cooperation, and leverage potential, rather than conducting research activities as such:

- 3 or 4 HEROES partners organise workshops with SMEs and/or public authorities around a Smart Regional Resilience challenge. Output: roadmap for future joint projects or external funding applications.
- Partners jointly develop a shared applied research methodology or toolkit that fosters collaboration at the Alliance level. Output: practical toolbox and training materials for future cooperation.
- Hackathon or challenge-based lab: Researchers, students and regional stakeholders collaborate in a short innovation sprint addressing a regional challenge. Output: Solution concepts, strengthened network, and follow-up collaboration plan.
- Capacity-building for research support staff: Research management teams exchange practices and align procedures for knowledge transfer and valorisation. Output: Shared guidelines and improved interinstitutional collaboration processes.



Who follows up the project once approved?

The main applicant coordinates the activities and consortium. The institutional coordinator responsible for this call monitors compliance with the call conditions in consultation with the Task Lead (TM). The main applicant of the small-scale cooperation manages invoices and keeps supporting documentation in line with institutional financial rules. The institutional coordinator approves the final report before the lump sum is internally allocated.

Can a main applicant request less than €9,000?

Yes. The maximum lump sum per project is €9,000, but applicants are free to request a lower amount if this is sufficient to implement the proposed activities. Proposals should always demonstrate proportionality and value for money in relation to the planned activities.

It will be the responsibility of the institutional coordinators of this call to keep track of the remaining budget at institutional level and ensure proper allocation within the available envelope.

Is joint grant proposal writing allowed as a small-scale cooperation?

No. Activities focused on writing external funding proposals are not eligible. However, the small-scale cooperation may include preparatory activities that lay the groundwork for future funding applications, such as joint brainstorming sessions, stakeholder consultations, development of a collaboration concept, in-depth mapping expertise and complementarities.

Can project costs be shared between partners (multi-beneficiary budget)?

No. Small-Scale Cooperation projects do not allow a multi-beneficiary budget. Only the main applicant can incur and cover project costs, including costs for activities involving other partners. Projects should therefore be designed around this model, ensuring meaningful involvement of partners while costs remain with the main applicant. This will also be taken into account during the evaluation.

