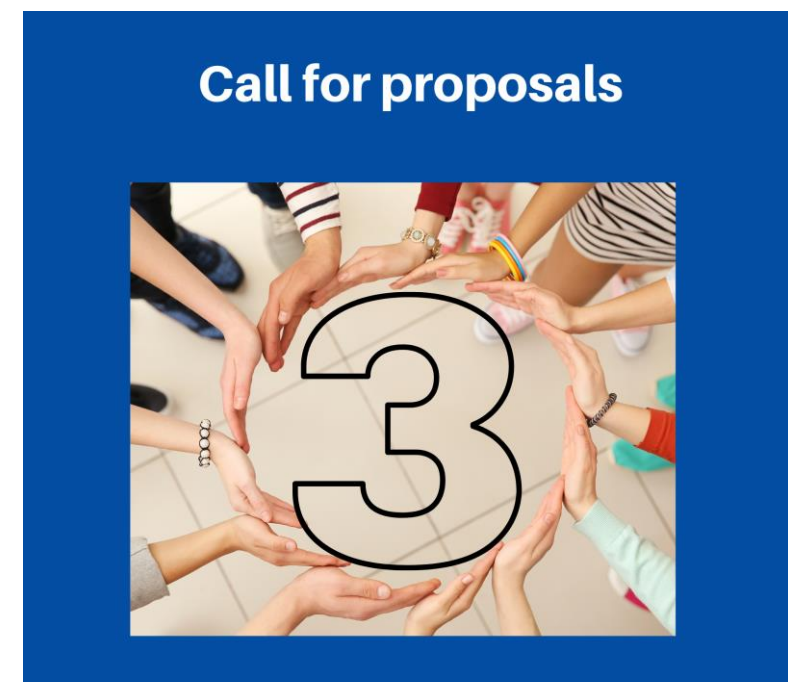


Webinar on thematic focus of Specific Objective 1.2



Overview of the main topics covered

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Problem statement**
- 3. Objectives**
- 4. Focus areas**
- 5. Budget allocation**
- 6. Partnership**
- 7. Consultations**
- 8. Timeline**

Introduction

Focus areas of SO 1.2:

1. Skill development for and of joint advancement of smart specialisation strategies and policies including a special focus on less advanced regions
2. Skills development and cross sectorial collaborations between smart industries and traditional type of industries for industrial transformation and transition towards industry 4.0, robotisation, mechatronics, digital technologies (including internet of things, artificial intelligence and creative industries)
- 3. Skills development for delivering products and services with transnational impact.**

Problem statement - background

AI Skills development for delivering products and services with transnational impact

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming industries and redefining how businesses operate globally
- There is an urgent need to equip organisations with AI-related skills to enhance competitiveness, drive innovation, and ensure sustainable economic growth.
- “Digitalisation of public services and the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the public and private sectors are levers for competitiveness.” (EC COM (2025) 163 mid-term review)

Objectives of the call:

- Develop AI-related skills that enhance the delivery of transnational products and services by supporting SMEs, startups and professionals in adopting AI-driven solutions for business growth
- Integration of existing AI solutions into transnational, digital (data-based) ecosystems that utilise technologies such as IoT (Internet of Things), blockchain, XR, digital twins and cloud solutions
- Promote ethical AI, data literacy, and responsible AI development across industries
- Strengthen cooperation between educational institutions, businesses, and policymakers to build an AI-ready workforce
- Foster AI-driven entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems in the Danube Region
- Development of a common transnational AI competence framework for the Danube Region
- Development and training of methods and tools for SMES in the Danube Region to test and securely operate AI solutions
- Build on AI-oriented existing, complimentary platforms and services, that contribute to the implementation of the Danube strategy

Focus areas of the call:

- AI ethics and governance: development and training on ethical AI use, bias detection, and regulatory compliance to ensure responsible AI deployment
- AI in entrepreneurship: support for AI startups through incubations programs, mentorship, and funding guidance
- Transnational AI collaboration: joint projects between universities, research centres, and businesses to develop transnational AI solutions such as
 - AI training and education: development of AI training programmes, workshops, and certification courses for students and professionals
 - AI for business applications: practical training on AI-powered tools for industries such as manufacturing, agriculture and healthcare
 - AI & digital transformation: programs that help organisations integrate AI into their operations to enhance productivity and efficiency
- AI for sustainability: AI-driven innovations for climate monitoring, smart cities, and sustainable resource management
- Integration of AI solutions into transnational, digital ecosystems

Budget allocation:

- **2,8 million EUR**

Partnership

Primarily:

- public institutions, innovation and development agencies
- universities, research institutes, and AI training providers, innovation labs
- business support organisations and clusters
- chambers of commerce and digital economy organisations
- NGOs working in digital skills development

Secondly:

- SMEs, startups and industry associations

Consultations

- **available offline or online**
- **shall be scheduled and agreed with the Priority Officer in advance**
- **based on a concept note sent in advance:**
 - no fixed format is necessary, but
 - objectives, planned outputs and results of the project, countries and partner organisations, estimated budget to be involved
- **continuous support is available per email throughout the entire application period**

Timeline

- **launch of the 1 step call: September 2025**
- **submission deadline: December 2025**
- **expected project start date: July 2026**

**Thank you for your
attention!**

Danube Region Programme Managing Authority/ Joint Secretariat

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