



European Funding and Financing Initiatives Supporting the Green Transition

ECCP Green Transition Support



An initiative of the European Union

Strengthening the European economy through collaboration

Introduction

Funding and financing enable cluster organisations to **unlock opportunities for collaboration and drive innovation** by supporting research and development projects. These resources empower clusters to implement strategic projects that address key challenges, including those related to the green transition.

Whether you are a cluster manager, a project coordinator, or an organisation seeking funding and financing opportunities, **this slide deck serves as a practical guide** to understand the various funding and financing options available within the European Union in the 2021-2027 programming period.

Explore the content to **discover how these programmes can support your initiatives** and contribute to the growth and sustainability of your cluster. To get a look into proposed changes in the EU budget for 2028-2034, head to [the end of the slide deck](#).

For easier navigation, you can click directly on the programme titles in the overview to jump to a section, and use the "Back to Overview" button in the top right corner to return.

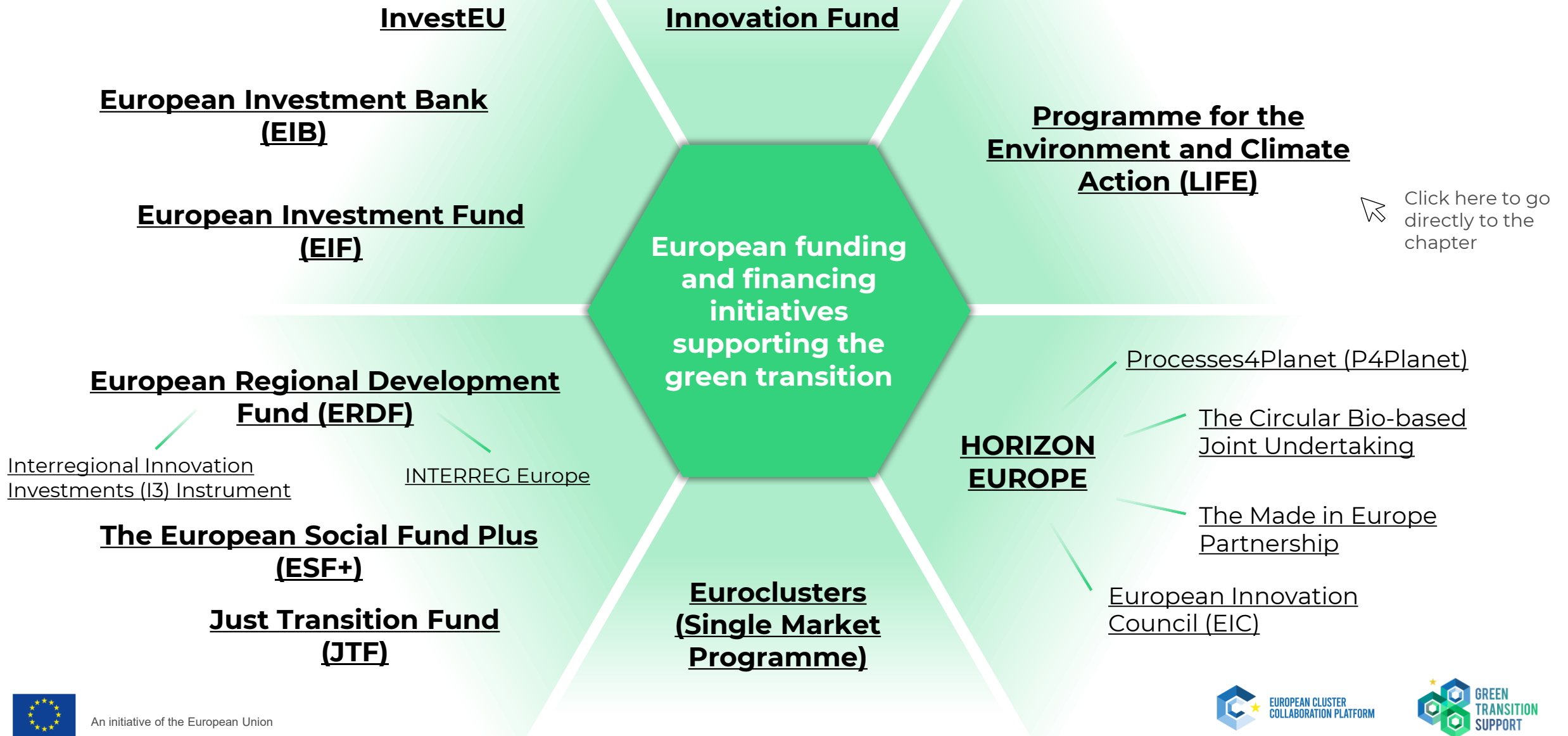


Different types of funding and financing

Funding and financing instruments can be broadly categorised into five funding categories:

-  **Grants and subsidies** are provided by governments at various levels (local, national, EU) to support projects that promote specific developments, without requiring repayment.
-  **Debt** refers to a contractual agreement between a borrower and a lender. The borrower pays back the borrowed amount by a specified date, typically with interest.
-  **Loan guarantees** are commitments in which a third party agrees to cover all or part of a borrower's debt if the borrower fails to repay it.
-  **Equity** represents a share of a company. If a company decides to offer equity to finance its initiatives, a part of the company is being sold.
-  **Alternative funding sources** include methods such as crowdfunding, lease financing, and social impact bonds.
-  Financial support for clusters usually comes from a combination of public and private sources, which may encompass grants, subsidies, co-financing arrangements, public-private partnerships, or specific cluster programmes.





Horizon Europe – Structure

Horizon Europe is the European Union's **key research and innovation programme** for the funding period of 2021-2027. The programme is structured around three main pillars that work in synergy to achieve its ambitious goals. The pillars contain many impactful funding initiatives, including those that support green transition projects.

The **first pillar, Excellent Science**, focuses on strengthening the EU's scientific and technological base by supporting frontier research through the European Research Council. The pillar also includes the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), which fund research and innovation projects to boost top researchers' careers through mobility and innovative doctoral and postdoctoral training.

The **second pillar, Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness**, addresses key societal challenges such as climate change, health, and security, and includes thematic clusters that bring together stakeholders to develop solutions that benefit both society and the economy. In particular, 'Cluster 5: Climate, Energy and Mobility' funds projects that accelerate our understanding of the causes, risks, impacts, evolution and opportunities of climate change. Cluster 5 also supports the transformation of the energy and transport sectors to make them more climate-friendly and resilient. Additionally, pillar II encompasses the [Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking \(CBE JU\)](#), the [Made in Europe Partnership](#), and the [Processes4Planet Partnership](#), all of which are further explained in this guide.

Lastly, the **third pillar, Innovative Europe**, aims to facilitate the commercialisation of research outcomes and support innovation through initiatives such as the [European Innovation Council](#), which encourages the scaling up of startups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) while fostering collaboration with research institutions and industry.



Horizon Europe



What is Horizon Europe about?

Horizon Europe is the major EU funding programme for research and innovation led by the European Commission. It is structured around three main pillars: (1) Excellence, Global Challenges, (2) Industrial Competitiveness and (3) Innovative Europe, each of which includes specialised funding pathways.



How Horizon Europe supports the green transition:

The primary aim of Horizon Europe is to strengthen research and innovation in the areas of climate change and digitalisation, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and EU industrial leadership.

The programme funds project focussing on a variety of issues related to the green transition, with a commitment to allocate at least 35% of its budget to contributing to climate objectives.



Find out more:

- Horizon Europe [website](#)
- [Introductory presentation](#) about the Horizon Europe programme
- Horizon Europe Programme [Guide](#)
- [Information](#) and [Guidance](#) on lump sum funding in Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe



Total budget 2021-2027:

€ 93.5 billion.



Eligibility:

Private and public legal entities from the EU and associated countries are eligible to apply to Horizon Europe. For further information on eligible countries, please refer to this [list](#).



Type of funding:

Grants, prizes, equity, etc.



Who can apply?

Scientists and academics, research organisations, universities, industry, companies of all sizes, students etc.



How to apply:

Horizon Europe publishes calls for project proposals on the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#). The portal's [Online Manual](#) provides information about the different steps of the application process. If you want more information on how to use the Funding & Tenders Portal, check out [this video guide](#), provided by the European Commission.

Horizon Europe is a large programme and includes many different funding opportunities. Therefore, please refer to specific calls to check what type of funding is offered, what your application needs to include, and whether you are eligible to apply.

If you need further guidance, practical information, and assistance, you can contact your [National Contact Point \(NCPs\)](#) for the Horizon Europe Programme. The [Enterprise Europe Network](#) (EEN) also offers comprehensive support specifically to SMEs. They can aid in accessing various EU funding programmes, including Horizon Europe.

Project examples:

The '[In Transit](#)' project aims to enhance the resilience of SMEs in the textile, aerospace, advanced manufacturing and construction sectors. The Irish [IDEAM cluster](#) is part of the consortium carrying out the Horizon-funded project.

The Horizon-funded project '[Greenhood](#)' brings together 28 partners across Europe, including the Norwegian [NCE Aquatech Cluster](#) and [WoodWorks! Cluster](#). The project aims to develop a zero-pollution approach to rebalance nutrient flows and promote climate resilience and biodiversity.



Successful funding example: Horizon Europe



Cluster:

Technological Corporation of Andalusia ([CTA](#)).



Sector:

Multisectoral.



Project/Funding:

[SYMBIO project](#) under the HORIZON-CL6-2023-CIRCBIO-01 call.

How did your organisation access and utilise EU funding or financing?

CTA has an international department of 20 people dedicated to matching regional priorities with relevant EU funding opportunities. We act as a bridge between the regional government, academia, and the private sector, channeling EU funding, including cascade funding, to support R&D and innovation activities for Andalusian stakeholders.

What was your role in the application process and later during project implementation?

In most cases, CTA participates as a project partner. However, when proposals are closely linked to regional development priorities, we often take on a coordinating role. For example, in the SYMBIO project, we lead a work package on business model design and socio-economic and environmental impact, drawing on our innovation expertise and experience as a business partner.

What do you think contributed to your successful application?

Success comes from identifying the right call, aligning it with both regional priorities and CTA's strengths, and building strong consortia through our extensive network. In the case of SYMBIO, we identified a great match between a regional priority (promoting circular business models) and the call topic. We then took an active role in the proposal writing and project design phase.

How has your cluster benefited from being part of a Horizon project?

EU projects help cover staff costs and strengthen our capacity to support regional stakeholders. Although CTA is a not-for-profit organisation, EU funding plays a vital role in sustaining our services to companies, academia, and public authorities in Andalusia.

Do you have any key learnings or advice for other cluster organisations applying to a project funded by the Horizon programme?

It is crucial to build strong internal structures—proposal writing, communication, and financial management are all demanding. Many clusters struggle with the administrative workload, especially financial reporting. Investing in internal competencies, especially English proficiency and reporting skills, is key to successful participation.



The Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking (CBE JU)



What is the CBE JU about?

CBE JU is established under Horizon Europe in Pillar II – Cluster 6: Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment. The initiative is implemented as a partnership between the EU and the Bio-based Industries Consortium (BIC). In addition to funding opportunities, CBE JU also hosts a [networking platform](#) to foster greater collaboration within the industry.



How the CBE JU supports the green transition:

CBE JU aims to advance competitive circular bio-based industries. Further objectives include accelerating innovation processes, market deployment, and ensuring a high level of environmental performance for bio-based systems and solutions.



Find out more:

- CBE JU [Website](#)
- CBE JU – [Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda](#)
- European Commission – [Presentation](#) on CBE JU

CBE JU



Total budget 2021-2027:

€2 billion.



Eligibility:

Stakeholders of the bio-based industries ecosystem are eligible. Any legal private or public entity, for-profit or not-for-profit organisation in the EU and [associated countries](#) with Horizon Europe can apply.



Type of funding:

Supports various stages of research, innovation, and coordination within the bio-based sector.



Who can apply?

Companies (of all sizes), universities, associations, research and technology organisations.



How to apply:

How to apply: CBE JU holds yearly open calls, which can be found on the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#) in the section for Horizon Europe. CBE JU calls follow the [Horizon Europe](#) rules and procedures for applications. You can find more specific guidance on the CBE JU application process and funded types of actions on the [CBE JU website](#).

Project examples:

The [COPILLOT project](#) aims to update and expand a database of pilot and demo infrastructures for the European Bioeconomy. The Pilots4U database will be designed to support faster innovation in the sector and accelerates bioeconomy growth in the EU. The Spanish [FOOD+I Cluster](#) is involved as a partner in the project.

The [MixMatters](#) project introduces and adapts its solution for valorising mixed biological waste in three Spanish locations. This process aims to generate bio-based outputs for further use and to create a low-carbon waste management strategy with environmental benefits. The Spanish [FOOD+I Cluster](#) is involved as a partner in the project.



Horizon Europe:

The Made in Europe Partnership



What is the Made in Europe Partnership about?

Made in Europe is the manufacturing partnership of the European Factories of the Future Research Association (EFFRA) with the European Commission. It is part of the Horizon Europe Programme, specifically in Pillar II – Cluster 4: Digital, Industry, and Space.



How the Made in Europe Partnership supports the green transition:

The Made in Europe Programme aims to further develop sustainable manufacturing ecosystems in the EU, positioning them for global leadership. Given manufacturing's crucial role in the future economy, the programme also wants to attract a more diverse workforce to the sector.



Find out more:

- EFFRA Website – [Made in Europe Programme](#)
- European Commission Website – [Made in Europe Programme](#)
- Made in Europe – [Guidance Document](#)
- Strategic Research and Innovation [Agenda of Made in Europe](#)

The Made in Europe Partnership



Total budget 2021-2027:

€1.8 billion.



Eligibility:

The Made in Europe Partnership targets the broader manufacturing stakeholder community. Any legal private or public entity, for-profit or not-for-profit organisation in the EU and associated [countries](#) are eligible.



Type of funding:

Grants.



Who can apply?

Companies (of all sizes), industry-driven clusters and associations, academia and research technology organisations, experts with relevant perspectives (e.g., labour orgs, trade unions, local authorities), etc.



How to apply:

The Made in Europe Partnership publishes yearly open calls for project proposals on the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#) in the section for Horizon Europe. If you need guidance, practical information and assistance, you can contact your National Contact Point (NCPs) for Horizon Europe. Find the list of contacts [here](#).

Project examples:

The [WISE project](#) is developing a machine that will enhance manufacturing efficiency by using macro- and micro-nano-scale processing, featuring multi-scale complexity, high precision, and adaptability. Other features, such as self-healing, will aid in extending product life cycles. Project partners include stakeholders from the manufacturing industry as well as research institutions.

The [Digi4Circular project](#) targets the automotive sector. The project aims to promote circularity, particularly through promoting the use of secondary aluminium and optimised resources throughout all stages of product development. The implementing consortium includes private and public EU manufacturing stakeholders.



Processes4Planet (P4Planet)



What is P4Planet about?

P4Planet is a public-private partnership between A.SPIRE (a private entity) and the European Commission, established under the Horizon Europe programme's second pillar in Cluster 4 (Digital, Industry, and Space). The partnership aims to develop sustainable business models that recycle energy and materials, collaborating with different sectors and local communities. P4Planet has established [Hubs4Circularity](#), where actors in the European process industries join forces with their regional and local partners to create self-sustaining economic industrial ecosystems.



How P4Planet supports the green transition:

P4Planet aims to transform the European process industries towards circularity and climate neutrality by 2050 while boosting their global competitiveness. It also seeks to lead globally in eco-friendly and circular solutions, speeding up innovation and attracting investments from both public and private sources.



Find out more:

- Aspire Website - [About P4Planet](#)
- [Partnership Fiche P4Planet](#)
- [P4Planet Project Database](#)
- [P4Planet Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda](#)

Processes4Planet (P4Planet)



Total estimated budget:
€2.6 billion.



Eligibility:
P4Planet is designed for stakeholders in the processing industry. Public and private entities in the EU and countries affiliated with Horizon Europe can apply.



Type of funding:
Grants.



Who can apply?
Private companies in the processing industry, research organisations, public authorities, NGOs, etc.



How to apply:

To apply for P4Planet with your project, find a call that suits your project on the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#). For further information about the application process, consult the portal's [Online Manual](#). If you need guidance, practical information and assistance, you can also contact your National Contact Point (NCPs) for Horizon Europe. Find the list of contacts [here](#).

Project examples:

The '[tExtended](#)' project objective is to improve circularity in textile production. During the project, a master plan will be designed to optimise textile flows, and later on, the feasibility of the model will be ensured through testing. The project is implemented by stakeholders in academia and industry.

[FLEX4FACT](#) is a project designed to support small European businesses in their energy transition. To achieve this objective, the project will develop an end-to-end ecosystem that will enable flexible manufacturing and energy efficiency and transition. The consortium implementing FLEX4FACT includes research organisations, private companies and non-profits.

European Innovation Council (EIC)



What is the EIC about?

The EIC, as part of Pillar III of Horizon Europe, is tasked with identifying, developing, and scaling up innovative, breakthrough technologies and companies. The EIC was established specifically to support start-ups, SMEs, and researchers in bringing their innovations to the market. The EIC includes four distinct [funding opportunities](#), tailored to different stages of research and business development. The venture investment arm of the programme, the [EIC Fund](#), funds companies participating in the [EIC Accelerator Programme](#), providing them with patient capital to minimise risk for private investors.



How the EIC supports the green transition:

The EIC funds breakthrough and game-changing technologies, which includes innovative projects that aim to address environmental challenges and deliver the European Green Deal. Supporting the EU's future autonomy regarding critical technologies is another EIC objective. By funding sustainable innovation, the EIC seeks to accelerate the development and deployment of green technologies that are essential for achieving climate neutrality in the EU.



Find out more:

- [FAQ EIC](#)
- [EIC Website](#)
- [EIC Website – Horizon](#)
- [Key Impacts](#) of the EIC
- EIC Business [Acceleration Services](#)

European Innovation Council (EIC)



Total budget 2021-2027:

€10.1 billion.



Eligibility:

Private and public legal entities from the EU and [associated countries](#) are eligible. Eligibility criteria vary between EIC funding opportunities; please refer to the [EIC website](#).



Type of funding:

Grants, prizes, and investments (equity or quasi-equity).



Who can apply?

Start-ups and SMEs, entrepreneurs, research organisations and universities etc.



How to apply:

Find a EIC call that suits your project on the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#). Should you require guidance, practical information or assistance, you can also contact your National Contact Point (NCP) for the Horizon Europe Programme. The list with contact information is available [here](#).

Project examples:

The [EPOCH](#) project aims to develop a novel approach of linking green hydrogen production with the direct loading of liquid organic hydrogen carriers. This will enable the generation of green hydrogen in regions where renewable energy production is already significant in the overall energy mix. EPOCH therefore offers a new path to decreasing the carbon footprint of energy-intensive industries. The project consortium consist of universities, a start-up and an SME organisation. EPOCH is an [EIC portfolio project](#) and was funded through the EIC Pathfinder challenge “Novel Routes to Green Hydrogen Production” in the 2021 EIC Work Programme.

[BeeODiversity](#) addresses rising human-caused pollution by using wild bees as scalable bioindicators. Their AI-driven platform offers environmental insights to policymakers and land managers, seeking to curb environmental pollution. BeeODiversity has secured funding from the EIC Accelerator and is jointly implemented by academic and industry partners.



Programme for Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)



What is the LIFE Programme about?

The LIFE Programme is dedicated to driving environmental and climate action forward. LIFE's budget is divided between four sub-programmes: (1) Nature and Biodiversity, (2) Circular Economy and Quality of Life, (3) Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, (4) Clean Energy Transition. To help bring green products, technology and services to the market, LIFE also encourages private companies (especially SMEs and start-ups) to apply to become a LIFE [close-to-market project](#).



How the LIFE Programme supports the green transition:

The main objective of the LIFE Programme is to help put EU environmental and climate policy into practice as well as support its further development. LIFE provides financial support to projects that contribute to creating a climate-neutral and resilient economy, protect and restore the environment, manage biodiversity loss, and improve declining ecosystems.



Find out more:

- [LIFE Programme Website](#)
- [FAQ LIFE Programme](#)
- LIFE [Project Database](#)
- LIFE [Youtube Channel](#)
- European Commission - [LIFE Newsletter](#)



The LIFE Programme



Total budget 2021-2027:
€ 5.43 billion.



Eligibility:
Any public or private organisation legally registered in the European Union or associated countries of the LIFE program can apply.



Type of funding:
Grants.



Who can apply?
Public authorities and organisations, universities and research organisations, start-ups, SMEs, etc.



How to apply:

Applications to LIFE must be submitted via the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#). If you have questions concerning your application, you can contact your LIFE [National Contact Point](#) (NCP). You can also make use of the LIFE [platform](#) for networking opportunities to connect to other potential applicants and your NCP.

This [list](#) of LIFE KPIs applicable to different calls as well as this KPI [video presentation](#) can aid you in providing information on Key Performance Indicators during your application.

Project examples:

The project ‘Agri-food Efficiency with New Energy Audit Measures’ ([AENEAM](#)) aims to accelerate the sustainable transition in the EU’s agri-food industry. During the project, companies undergo energy audits and implement suggestions made, with a focus on digital solutions. Project partners of AENEAM include the French competitiveness cluster [Innov’Alliance](#) and the [Food Cluster of Southern Wielkopolska](#).

The ‘[EENOVA](#)’ project aims to address the food chain’s heavy reliance on fossil fuels. Primary objectives are to promote energy efficiency and enhance existing solutions while reducing carbon emissions. The Romanian [AgroTransilvania Cluster](#) is a project partner in EENOVA.

The Innovation Fund



What is the Innovation Fund about?

The Innovation Fund focuses on climate policy, particularly in the areas of energy and industry. It is one of the world's largest funds for the deployment of innovative net-zero and low-carbon technologies. It funds highly innovative technologies and flagship projects, which bring about significant emission reductions.



How the Innovation Fund supports the green transition:

The Innovation Fund aims to decarbonise European industry and support it in the green transition while promoting its competitiveness in the global economy. It funds projects in the areas of innovative low-carbon technologies and processes in energy-intensive industries, carbon capture and utilisation (CCU), construction and operation of carbon capture and storage (CCS) facilities, innovative renewable energy generation, and energy storage.



Find out more:

- European Commission Website - [Innovation Fund](#)
- Programme Website - [Innovation Fund](#)
- European Commission - [What is the Innovation Fund?](#)

The Innovation Fund



Total budget 2020-2030:

Financed through revenues from the EU Emissions Trading System. The budget, therefore, depends on carbon prices.



Eligibility:

The Innovation Fund covers applicants from all EU Member States, as well as Norway, Liechtenstein, and Iceland.



Type of funding:

Projects are awarded grants through regular calls for proposals and competitive bidding procedures (auctions). For more information on the auctions, consult this website.



Who can apply?

Private companies, SMEs, etc.



How to apply:

To apply to the Innovation Fund, look out for regular calls for project proposals on the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#). The Innovation Fund supports project costs up to 60% (in case of regular grants) and up to 100% (in case of auctions). For more information on the application process and selection criteria, please consult [this website](#). You can also reach out to your [National Contact Point](#) for further guidance on applying to the Innovation Fund.

Project examples:

The [ZESTA](#) project aims to transform the steelmaking operations in Ghent, Belgium by replacing blast furnaces with low-emission alternatives. The projects wants to achieve a 76% emission reduction in its first ten years of operation. ZESTA is implemented by three companies from Belgium and Denmark.

The [GEN2HU](#) project's objectives are to implement new technologies to develop a roof-integrated solar photovoltaic module solution. The project aims to decrease unit costs and production waste as well as lower carbon emissions. GEN2HU is implemented by two Hungarian companies.

Just Transition Fund (JTF)



What is the JTF about?

The JTF is one of the key measures to support EU territories in their transition towards climate neutrality. Falling under the objectives of cohesion policy, the JTF aids in alleviating regional disparities and fostering sustainable development everywhere in the EU.



How the JTF supports the green transition:

The JTF supports investments in SMEs, research and innovation, environmental rehabilitation, clean energy, and business start-ups. It also supports the transformation of existing carbon-intensive facilities, provided these investments lead to emission reductions and job protection.



Find out more:

- Information on Inforegio - [Just Transition Fund](#)
- European Commission Website - [Just Transition Fund](#)
- European Commission - [Just Transition funding sources](#)



Just Transition Fund (JTF)



Total budget 2021-2027:

€19.7 billion.



Eligibility:

Member States, in coordination with the EU Commission, identify eligible territories and sectors for the JTF, focusing on those facing economic and social challenges due to the transition to climate neutrality. You can find more guidance on the [JTF Platform](#).



Type of funding:

Grants and other financial instruments.



Who can apply?

SMEs, private companies, universities and research organisations, etc.



How to apply:

The JTF is financed under shared responsibility between the European Commission and EU Member States. National and regional authorities in the Member States decide which projects are funded. To access JTF funding, you must therefore apply to the Managing Authority of your regional programme. You can find the operation programme for your region and its selection criteria [here](#) and the contact information of your Managing Authority [here](#). Application procedures can vary depending on your regional programme.

Project example:

The '[Ce:FIRe](#)' project focuses on combining circular business practices with the concept of 'frugal innovation'. Ce:FIRe aims at helping companies in three German regions to develop competitive business strategies that also take social and environmental factors into account. The project consortium is led by the German cluster organisation [InnoZent OWL](#).



Euroclusters (Single Market Programme)



What are Euroclusters about?

The Joint Cluster Initiatives (Euroclusters) are part of the EU's Single Market Programme (SMP) and a funding opportunity specifically aimed at cluster organisations. Having been newly introduced in the 2021-2027 EU funding period, Euroclusters are one of the flagship initiatives under the SMP. By fostering partnerships and connecting stakeholders, Euroclusters seek to strengthen the capacities of clusters and their contributions to the EU's economic resilience and digital transformation.



How Euroclusters supports the green transition:

Euroclusters calls aim to build resilience and accelerate the transition to the green and digital economy. They are designed to contribute to long-term and strategic partnerships between cluster organisations across the EU, with a particular focus on supporting and benefitting SMEs. An objective of the 2024 call was to support the implementation of the Green Deal Industrial Plan for the Net-Zero Age.



Find out more:

- [ECCP Website - Euroclusters](#)
- [EISMEA Info Session Presentation on Euroclusters](#)
- [European Commission Website – Single Market Programme](#)



Euroclusters



Total budget 2021-2027:

~ €84 million.



Eligibility:

Public or private bodies from EU Member States or countries associated with the EU Single Market Programme. Typically, applicants must be cluster organisations, networks, or other entities supporting the green and digital transitions.



Type of funding:

Grants.



Who can apply?

Cluster organisations or networks, research and technology organisations, etc.



How to apply:

Applications to Eurocluster calls must be submitted via the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#) in the SMP section. Two Eurocluster calls were published in 2021 and 2024. Currently, no new call is scheduled. Eurocluster consortia must include at least three cluster organisations from different EU Member States, along with one partner from a less developed region to promote balanced participation and regional innovation.

Project examples:

The [SUSTAIN Eurocluster](#) addresses current challenges in the building construction sector, especially for European SMEs. The project wants to support the sector in its green and digital transition, addressing its strategic dependencies and building industry networks. The project consortium is formed by five European cluster organisations from Spain, Greece and Latvia.

The [Eurocluster INGENIOUS](#) focusses on the green and digital transition of energy-intensive industries with a special focus on SME support. INGENIOUS provides financial support, aids companies in resilience preparedness and organises networking and trainings. Project partners are cluster organisations from Spain, Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic.



Successful funding example: Euroclusters



Cluster:

Efficient Energy Cluster of Catalonia (CEEC).



Sector:

Energy efficiency.



Project/Funding:

SUSTAIN project under the SMP-COSME-2021-CLUSTER-01 call.

How did your organisation utilise EU funding or financing?

The funding has been instrumental in supporting a wide range of activities aimed at boosting innovation and enhancing resilience in the smart building construction sector.

What was your role in the application process and later during project implementation?

CEEC played a proactive role from the early proposal development stages, contributing to defining the technical objectives, the strategy to support SMEs, and the dissemination roadmap. During implementation, we are leading two key work packages: WP2, focused on identifying innovations and facilitating SMEs' transition to a greener and more digital economy, and WP7, which handles communication and dissemination activities at the European level.

What do you think contributed to your successful application?

- A strong cross-sectoral consortium with complementary expertise.
- A well-defined focus on smart, zero-energy buildings—highly aligned with EU green transition priorities.
- A clear and actionable roadmap for SME support, including open calls, mentoring, digital tools, and training.
- The cluster's existing ecosystem of more than 200 members (mostly SMEs) helped demonstrate implementation capacity and market relevance.

How has your cluster benefited from being part of a Euroclusters project?

Being part of the project increased CEECs European visibility significantly, and enabled us to forge new collaborations with clusters and innovation hubs across the EU. Our SMEs are now better connected to international markets, and we have established new innovation clubs, matchmaking events, and pilot schemes with concrete benefits for members in areas such as BIM, BMS, and SRI-based tools.

Do you have any key learnings or advice for other cluster organisations applying to a project funded by the Euroclusters programme?

- Start early and co-design the proposal with active input from all partners.
- Clearly demonstrate your value chain ecosystem and SME engagement strategy.
- Invest time in building an impact narrative that aligns with EU strategic goals.
- Involve your communication team early – it is not just about dissemination, but also storytelling and ecosystem engagement.



European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)



What is the ERDF about:

The ERDF is one of the funds supporting the implementation of the EU's Cohesion Policy. It is designed to reduce socio-economic disparities between EU regions. ERDF funds are allocated by sorting regions into three [categories](#) that signify their development level.



How the ERDF supports the green transition:

While the ERDF supports all five [objectives](#) of EU cohesion policy, Objective 1: "Smarter Europe" and Objective 2: "Greener Europe" are its main priorities. This includes funding projects furthering the green transition and allocating a minimum of 30% of its budget to climate action.



Find out more:

- [ERDF – EU Commission Overview](#)
- [ERDF Fund Website](#)
- European Commission - [Information on accessing regional funds](#)

ERDF



Total budget 2021-2027:

€226.05 billion.



Eligibility:

Public and private entities in all EU countries. Projects must be implemented within the EU regions and align with the ERDF's objectives.



Type of funding:

Grants and other financial instruments.



Who can apply?

Public authorities and administrations, NGOs, associations and foundations, mid-caps and SMEs, private companies, etc.



How to apply:

The ERDF is financed under shared responsibility between the European Commission and the Member States. National and regional authorities of the Member States decide which projects are funded. To access ERDF funding, you must therefore apply to the Managing Authority of your regional programme. You can find the operational programme for your region and its selection criteria [here](#). Application procedures can vary depending on your Managing Authority.

Project examples:

The '[ARCA](#)' project aims to develop a self-diagnosis tool for companies in the agri-food sector to identify and manage their climate-related risks. A Spanish cluster organisation is a partner in the project.

The inter-cluster project 'DIGIROAD GREEN' targets improving the sustainability and energy efficiency of the asphalt agglomerate manufacturing process, while also enhancing road safety through intelligent transport management. DIGIROAD GREEN is coordinated by the Spanish [AEICE Efficient Habitat Cluster](#).



Successful funding example: ERDF/JTF



Cluster:
[InnoZent OWL e.V.](#)



Sector:
Cross-sectoral.



Project/Funding:
[CE:FIRE project](#) under the EFRE/JTF-
Programms NRW 2021-2027.

How did your organisation access and utilise EU funding or financing?

InnoZent OWL e.V. is a cross-sectoral technology network with around 70 members, mainly small enterprises. About 80% of our activities are publicly funded, with ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) playing a key role. Familiarity with funding frameworks and calls enables us to apply proactively. Regional projects, in particular, align well with our goals.

What was your role in the application process and later during project implementation?

We typically act either as lead partner or consortium partner, contributing significant experience and internal capacity. ERDF applications require substantial effort, especially regional analysis and strategic alignment. During implementation, our responsibilities include coordination, strategic guidance, goal tracking, and progress monitoring.

What do you think contributed to your successful application?

- Choosing the right funding instrument—ERDF offers higher success rates (30–45%) compared to highly competitive programs like Horizon Europe.
- Clear formulation of objectives, identifying thematic gaps, and assembling an interesting consortium are key.

How has your cluster benefited from being part of an ERDF/JTF project?

Participation is only pursued if a project offers strategic value and allows us to deepen key topics relevant to our cluster. Benefits include expanded networks, access to new companies, and thematic development. ERDF projects allow for creative design and strategic impact due to fewer top-down requirements.

Do you have any key learnings or advice for other cluster organisations applying to a project funded by the ERDF/JTF?

Clusters should be aware of their strategic fit within a project. Furthermore, it is critical to understand the formal criteria early on: number and type of partners, funding rates, project duration, and whether clusters are eligible participants. Many EU programmes, like LIFE, are challenging to navigate and time-consuming to explore—AI tools could help filter opportunities by criteria such as minimum partnership, co-funding rates, and geographic scope.



Interreg Europe



What is Interreg Europe about?

Interreg Europe is a series of interregional cooperation programmes, mostly funded through the ERDF. The goal of Interreg is to bring together local, regional and national actors across Europe to work together on a shared regional development issue, exchange experience and transfer good practices. Interreg currently operates in [36 countries](#).



How Interreg Europe supports the green transition:

Interreg Europe contributes to the cohesion policy objective "Greener Europe" by funding projects that promote green technologies, reduce carbon emissions, preserve natural resources, and foster sustainable economic growth. By encouraging the exchange of successful approaches to sustainability, Interreg Europe helps regions to accelerate their green transition and contribute to the broader objectives of the European Green Deal.



Find out more:

- [Interreg Europe Website](#)
- Interreg – [Open Calls](#)
- Interreg Europe – [Podcast](#)
- Interreg National Point of Contact - [List](#)
- Interreg Europe - [Self-Assessment Tool](#)

Interreg Europe



Total budget 2021-2027:

€394 million.



Eligibility:

Public and private sector organisation located inside the [programme areas](#), namely the EU and associated countries.



Type of funding:

Grants.



Who can apply?

Public authorities, business support organisations (incl. clusters), environmental organisations, education and research organisations, regional development agencies, etc



How to apply:

There are four different [types](#) of Interreg programmes that support different scales of regional cooperation, from cross-border cooperation within the EU to involving neighbouring countries and EU outermost regions. This [map](#) can give you guidance on which programme might be relevant for your project. Interreg programmes frequently announce calls for project proposals. Although each programme has its own application guidelines, they share similarities. You can find more information on the funding process and currently open calls [here](#). Please note that co-funding rates can vary between different programmes. Generally, Interreg covers up to 80% of project costs, with applicants contributing the remaining funding.

Project examples:

The four-year Interreg project '[Accelerate GDT](#)' aims to promote the green transition by supporting and enhancing regional and national cluster policies. Workshops, case studies, stakeholder meetings and seminars encourage knowledge sharing and help companies adopt more sustainable practices. [The Catalan Packaging Cluster](#) is involved in the initiative, especially with regard to strengthening its sustainability efforts.

[RE-INCITE](#) is dedicated to the challenge of establishing and implementing the circular economy and circular value creation in the Alpine region. RE-INCITE aims to create a cross-sector and cross-border governance network for networking clusters and municipalities and supports regional authorities in the implementation of circular economy strategies. An Austrian Cleantech-Cluster Organisation is part of the project consortium.



Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument



What is I3 about?

The I3 Instrument, which is partly ERDF-funded, aids interregional innovation projects in scaling up and commercialisation. It promotes smart specialisation and interregional collaboration to enhance regional ecosystems, foster sustainable investments, and accelerate the market adoption of research findings. The instrument includes two main strands. Strand 1 supports consortia from regions with similar smart specialisation priorities, and strand 2 focuses on developing value chains in less developed regions and strengthening regional innovation ecosystems.



How I3 supports the green transition:

The I3 Instrument aligns with the EU's twin transition agenda, focusing on both green and digital transitions. It is ensured that funded projects contribute to broader European goals of sustainability and innovation. Therefore, the I3 Instrument allocates substantial funding to projects that aim to enhance environmental sustainability. This includes initiatives in areas such as clean energy, pollution reduction, circular economy models, and sustainable construction.



Find out more:

- I3 Instrument [Website](#)
- EISMEA - [I3 Instrument Info Days](#)
- EISMEA - [Communication Toolkit](#)
- EU Funding & Tenders Portal - [I3-funded projects](#)



Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) Instrument



Total budget 2021-2027:
over €570 million.



Eligibility:
Public and private bodies established in the EU and eligible countries associated with the I3 instrument.



Type of funding:
Grants.



Who can apply?
SMEs, research institutions, clusters & public authorities from EU regions etc.



How to apply:

You can apply to calls from the I3 Instrument through the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#). Applying consortia for both I3 strands will need to demonstrate a balanced participation from regions with varying levels of development and innovation performance. More specific requirements for participation will be defined in the calls for proposals. For more guidance and support regarding building consortia, sharing knowledge and aligning with EU regional priorities, you can get support from the [I3 Instrument Support Facility](#).

Project examples:

[RegioGreenTex](#) is a Quadruple-Helix partnership aiming to advance circular economy within the EU textile industry. It tackles implementation challenges by mapping regional disparities, unifying the sustainable textile market via a digital platform, and enhancing knowledge transfer among consortium partners. Involved parties include the French cluster [Techtera](#).

[I3-4-BLUE-GROWTH](#) is an initiative designed to boost interregional collaboration in the blue economy sector by leveraging expertise from advanced and transitional regions. The project aims to enhance innovative ecosystems around sustainable fisheries, aquaculture, renewable marine energy, and maritime decarbonisation. Participants, including the Italian [Clust-ER Agroalimentare Emilia-Romagna](#), help drive sustainable growth through interconnected regional efforts.



European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)



What is ESF+ about?

The ESF+ is the EU's main instrument for investing in people, contributing to the EU's employment, social, education, and skills policies. The ESF+ supports the EU's green, digital and resilient recovery from crisis by driving investment in jobs, skills and services.



How ESF+ supports the green transition:

Amongst other objectives, the ESF+ invests almost €10 billion to achieve a greener, low-carbon Europe by adapting training systems to meet the growing demand for new skills and qualifications. This includes exploring new ways of skill acquisition through individual learning accounts, voucher schemes, and training in critical soft skills for adapting to a changing work environment.



Find out more:

- [Website - European Social Fund Plus](#)
- European Commission – [Information on how to access funding from the ESF+](#)
- [EU-Guide](#) to scaling up social innovation by using ESF+ funding

European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)



Total budget 2021-2027:

€142,7 billion.



Eligibility:

Eligible to apply are public bodies, private sector entities (especially small businesses), universities, associations (e.g., NGOs and voluntary organisations), and foreign firms with a base in the relevant programme area.



Type of funding:

Grants.



Who can apply?

Workers organisations, employers, NGOs and charities, public authorities, companies and associations, EU citizens etc.



How to apply:

Most of ESF+ Funding is under [shared management](#) and therefore distributed by Member States. You can find out more about the ESF+ priorities in your country through its ESF+ [website](#). If you wish to submit a project proposal, learn about different ESF+ [programmes](#) and their funding priorities and consult your national or regional Managing Authority. You can find their contact information [here](#).

Project example:

[GESEK](#) is a Danish business lighthouse focusing on the green transition and partly funded under the ESF+. The project brings together companies, public authorities, and other organisations. One of GESEK's [objectives](#) is to make the energy sector an attractive career path by bolstering vocational education and training, upskilling the current workforce, and attracting international talent.



InvestEU



What is InvestEU about:

InvestEU is a European Union programme designed to stimulate investment across the EU. It aims to provide long-term funding by leveraging substantial private and public funds to support a sustainable recovery and boost innovation and job creation. In addition to its fund, the InvestEU programme also includes an [AdvisoryHub](#) and the [InvestEU Portal](#). InvestEU unites the European Fund for Strategic Investments with 13 other EU financial instruments.



How InvestEU supports the green transition:

InvestEU helps mobilise private investments to support the EU's policy priorities, such as the green and digital transitions. It aims to support sustainable investment, innovation, and job creation in the EU. The policy areas supported by InvestEU include, among others, energy transition, sustainability and the environment, research and innovation, digitalisation, and SMEs.



Find out more:

- European Union - [InvestEU Programme](#)
- European Union - [FAQ InvestEU](#)
- European Union – InvestEU: [How to get financing](#)

InvestEU



Total budget 2021-2027:

The EU budget guarantee of €26.2 billion supports investment projects by the EIB Group and other financial partners.



Eligibility:

Natural or legal persons in an EU country or an eligible third country. The policy areas eligible for financing and investment operations are presented in Annex II to the [InvestEU Regulation](#).



Type of funding:

Guarantees, equity, and loans, primarily managed by the EIB Group. National promotional banks and international financial institutions can also access the EU guarantee.



Who can apply?

Private entities, such as special-purpose vehicles (SPVs), companies of different sizes, public sector entities (territorial or not), public-sector type entities, mixed entities (such as public-private partnerships (PPPs) and private companies with a public purpose), non-profit organisations, etc.



How to apply:

If you wish to apply for InvestEU funding for your project, contact the implementing partners directly to explore suitable financing solutions. These solutions are based on financial products supported by the EU guarantee. You can find the complete list of partners [here](#). You can also find these partners and their financing options through the [EU Access to Finance portal](#) (Select your country and use the keyword search „InvestEU“). The opportunities will vary in their investment focus and application process.

Project examples:

InvestEU provided finance to a German and Dutch company, which will support the promoter's research, development and innovation activities. In particular, the [project](#) will focus on the development of efficient manufacturing and construction technologies for sustainable, multi-storey apartment blocks.

InvestEU is supporting the innovative Dutch [start-up](#) in bringing a first-of-its-kind electrolyser stack of cells to market, to be deployed within dedicated installations at customer industrial sites for producing green hydrogen.



European Investment Bank (EIB)



What is the EIB?

The EIB is the lending arm of the EU and works closely with EU institutions to further European integration and promote development. However, the EIB is an independent institution that operates outside of the EU budget and makes its own borrowing and lending decisions.



How the EIB supports the green transition:

The EIB is one of the largest providers of climate finance and considers climate objectives in all its activities. You can find out more about the EIBs efforts for the green transition [here](#). The [core strategic objectives](#) of the EIB include accelerating the green and digital transformations, boosting technological innovation and bolstering security and defense.



Find out more:

- [European Investment Bank - Homepage](#)
- EU Commission - [European Investment Bank](#)
- The EIB Group 2024-2027 [Strategic Roadmap](#)
- EIB - [EIB at a glance](#)
- EIB - [Frequently Asked Questions](#)



European Investment Bank (EIB)



Signature target for 2025:
€95 billion.



Eligibility:

Public and private sector entities. Have a look on [this website](#) to check if the topic of your projects is eligible for EIB financing. There you can also find a detailed account of excluded activities from EIB lending.



Type of funding:

Loans, equity, guarantees.



Who can apply?

SMEs, mid-caps, private companies, public sector organisations etc.



How to apply:

The EIB group offers a wide range of financial products and support services. If your project contributes to the EIBs objectives and has a sound business plan, you may be eligible for a loan. The EIB makes loans above €25 million directly. For smaller loans, the EIB opens credit lines for financial institutions which then lend funds to creditors.

If you wish to apply for financing from the EIB, visit [this website](#) to learn more about their product range and find one that is suitable for your project. If you are in need of further information, you can contact the [EIB Helpdesk](#) or write them an [email](#). You can also find an [EIB office](#) near you and contact them directly.

Project examples:

The EIB supported a German [dairy company](#) with a loan to replace obsolete equipment. The objective of the loan is to promote the company's diversification in plant-based milk products, which will also achieve energy savings.

The EIB helped finance the design, construction and operation of an [integrated facility](#) comprising a biomass cogeneration plant, carbon capture, green hydrogen production and a green e-methanol plant in Spain.

You can find more examples of EIB financed projects [here](#).



European Investment Fund (EIF)



What is the EIF about?

The EIF is a specialist provider of risk finance to benefit SMEs. Its shareholders are the EIB, the European Union, represented by the European Commission, and a wide range of public and private [banks and financial institutions](#). Currently, the EIF is also one of the largest InvestEU implementing partners.



How the EIF supports the green transition:

The central mission of the EIF is to support Europe's SMEs by helping them to access finance in cooperation with financial intermediaries. The primary goals of the EIF are to further EU objectives, e.g., in the areas of entrepreneurship, growth and regional development, as well as generating return for shareholders, through a commercial pricing policy and a balance of fee and risk-based income. As part of InvestEU and the EIB Group, the EIF plays a big part in financing the green transition and mobilising sustainable and climate-friendly investments.



Find out more:

- [EIF Website](#)
- EIF - [SME Initiative](#)



European Investment Fund (EIF)



Signature target for 2025:
€15 billion.



Eligibility:

The EIF carries out activities in the EU Member States, Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries and in the European Free Trade Association Countries.



Type of funding:

Equity and debt products, microfinance, loan guarantees and other financial products



Who can apply?

SMEs, mid-caps, climate and infrastructure funds, social impact investors etc.

How to apply:

The EIF offers a wide range of investment opportunities for SMEs and small mid-caps. If you wish to apply for EIF financing, visit the EIF [website](#) to learn more about the product range and find out what is suitable for your needs. There you can also find specific information and contact points for their [equity](#) and [debt](#) products as well as their [inclusive finance](#) options. Please note that the EIF does not provide funding or guarantees to individuals or companies directly, but through financial intermediaries. The final funding approval lies solely with them.

Project example:

The EIF pledged €25 million to a Norwegian private equity fund. The support from the EIF aims to [bolster Scandinavian SMEs](#) and their investment in digital advances, industrial decarbonisation and environmental sustainability.



A Glimpse Ahead: The 2028-2034 EU Budget

On 16 July 2025, the European Commission presented its proposal for an ambitious and dynamic [Multiannual Financial Framework \("MFF"\)](#) amounting to almost €2 trillion. Key features of the new MFF include **more flexibility across the budget** as well as **simpler, more streamlined and harmonised EU financial programmes**, which enable citizens and companies to find and access funding opportunities easily. The budget is tailored to local needs and ensures a faster and more flexible support for more economic, social and territorial cohesion. The new budget aims to provide **a competitiveness boost and to secure supply chains for Europe, scale-up innovation and lead in the global development for clean and smart technology.**

This new budget will also continue the EU's objectives to reach its proposed 2040 climate target and achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

A **35% climate and environment spending target**, mobilising over € 700 billion of the overall budget will, amongst other things, support:

- climate and environmental objectives, climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience,
- sustainable growth, innovation and strategic independence,
- the improved alignment of climate resilience and environmental measures.



A Glimpse Ahead: The 2028-2034 EU Budget

During the new budget period, EU funding programmes will be aligned with objectives of driving the clean transition forward. The proposed adjustments and new developments in regard to funding include:

- The **European Competitiveness Fund** will be introduced to strengthen the EU's economy through investments, which will also focus on decarbonisation. The fund is expected to accelerate the development of clean technologies and the circular economy, propel sustainable transport and the energy transition, while safeguarding the climate and the natural environment. The **Industrial Decarbonisation Bank**, announced in the Clean Industrial Deal, will be placed within the governance of the Competitiveness Fund. The **Innovation Fund** will further reinforce the European Competitiveness Fund, boosting support to industrial decarbonisation and innovation of clean technologies.
- **Horizon Europe**, together with the **10th Framework Programme for Research and Innovation**, will work with both the European Competitiveness Fund and Innovation Fund to provide research applications and innovation supporting decarbonisation efforts.
- **National and regional partnership plans** will link reforms with clean investments. This will support the EU 2040 climate and energy targets and help local communities and businesses in the clean transition.
- The **Connecting Europe Facility** will increase investment in key cross-border infrastructure projects in the energy and transport sectors. These projects are crucial to the completion of the Energy Union and the trans-European transport network.
- The **Global Europe Instrument** will empower partner countries to establish partnerships and alliances, thereby increasing financial support for the clean transition.
- Several other funds will also contribute to climate action through their investments, including **ERASMUS+**, **Creative Europe**, and the **Union Civil Protection Mechanism**.

Find out more about how the new MMF will support the clean transition in this [factsheet](#).



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