Strategic Mapping of European Funding and Financing Opportunities

Purpose. This guide provides a strategic overview of European funding opportunities relevant to different target groups across the research-to-market pathway. It is intended as a positioning tool, not as a substitute for call-specific eligibility checks. The mapping reflects both:

- the **primary logic of each instrument**, and
- the types of **activities and beneficiaries** typically supported by each instrument.

Methodological note

- The matrix indicates **strategic fit**, not guaranteed eligibility.
- Access may be:
  - **Direct,** through an individual application;
  - **Consortium-based,** as coordinator or partner; or
  - **Indirect,** through financial intermediaries, national or regional programmes, networks or other implementing bodies
- The mapping does **not account for**:
  - budget size
  - success rates
  - competitiveness
  - political prioritisation

How to read this guide

Each cell uses thematic codes representing the **dominant funding logic**:

- **R** = Research
- **S** = Skills / Capacity building
- **I** = Innovation / Development
- **D** = Deployment / Adoption
- **M** = Market uptake / Scale-up
- **N** = Networking / Coordination
- **T** = Territorial / Interregional cooperation

Interpretation:

- Plain codes → primary fit

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- (Brackets) → secondary, indirect, or project-specific fit
- Blank → not a typical entry point

Structure of funding landscape

Funding and financing opportunities are grouped into six complementary families:

A. Main EU competitive programmes

These programmes and instruments represent the main European grant-based routes, although access may be direct, consortium-based or channelled through programme-specific managing structures. Their fit varies substantially by target group, with Horizon Europe and COST leaning more towards research and collaboration, Digital Europe and CEF Digital towards deployment and digital capacities, Erasmus+ towards skills, and Interreg and I3 towards place-based cooperation, interregional innovation investment, deployment and scale-up.

Target group / Programme	Horizon Europe	EIC	COST	Erasmus+	Digital Europe	CEF Digital	SMP	Creative Europe	EIT C&C	Interreg	I3
Universities / Research centres	R / I	(R / I)	N / (S)	S	D / S	(D)	(M)	(S / I/ N)	(I / S/ N)	T / I	T / I / (D)
SMEs / Startups	R /I	I / M	(N)	S	D / S	(D)	M	I / S / N	I / M	T / I	T / M / I / D
Cultural institutions / GLAM	R / I	(R / I)	N	S	D / S	(D)	(M)	S / I / N	S / I / M	T / I	T / I / D
Public authorities	R / I		(N)	S	D / S	D	(M)	S / I	(S / I)	T / I	T / I / D
Clusters / EDIHs / ecosystems	I / R	(I)	N	S	D / S	(D)	M	(I / N)	I / M / S	T / I	T / M / I / D
NGOs / associations	(R / I)		N	S	(S / D)		(M)	S / I / N	(S / I)	T / I	(T / I / D)
VET / education providers	(R)			S	S / D			S	S / M	T / S	
Large industry / industrial consortia	I / R	(R / I)			D / I	D	M		I / M	T / I	T / M / I /D

Interpretation note: Where a code appears in brackets, the route is usually project-specific, mediated through consortia, or less central than the programme's main rationale.

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EIC relevance varies by instrument. Pathfinder and Transition may involve research organisations and consortia, while Accelerator and STEP Scale Up primarily target startups, SMEs and eligible small mid-caps.

B. Other European and coordinated opportunities

These routes can be highly relevant in specific ecosystems, but they should be treated as complementary rather than equivalent to the main EU programmes above.

Target group / Opportunity	TMO Synergy Grants*	EUREKA	Vanguard Initiative & VInnovate **
Universities / Research centres	S / I / D	R / I	N / I / D / T
SMEs / Startups	I / D / S	R / I / M	I / D / M / T
Cultural institutions / GLAM	S / I / D	(I)	D / T
Public authorities	(D / T)		N / T / I / D
Clusters / ecosystems	I / S / T	I / M	N / I / D / T
NGOs / associations	S / I		(T / D)
VET / education providers	S / D		(S / T)
Large industry / industrial consortia	(D / I)	R / I / M	I / D / M / T

Interpretation note: Useful as complementary ecosystem routes.

*TMO Synergy Grants is a time-limited, project-based opportunity. Availability and eligibility depend on the specific call

**Access to Vanguard Initiative and VInnovate normally depends on participation through an eligible member region, pilot activity or regional funding mechanism.

C. Financial and investment instruments

These instruments are generally more relevant for **deployment**, **scale-up**, guarantees, loans, or blended finance than for early-stage research collaboration.

Target group / Instrument	InvestEU	EIB	EIF	EIC Fund
Universities / Research centres	(D / I)	(D / I)		
SMEs / Startups	(M / I)	(M / D)	(M / I)	M / I
Cultural institutions / GLAM	(D / I)	(D / I)	(M)	

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Target group / Instrument	InvestEU	EIB	EIF	EIC Fund
Public authorities	D / I	D / I		
Clusters / ecosystems	(I / D)	(D)	(M / I)	
Large industry / industrial consortia	D / M	D / M		

Interpretation note: This block should be read together with grant-based routes, especially when a project needs blended finance or scale-up support.

For SMEs and smaller organisations, access to InvestEU, EIB and EIF financing is generally indirect through banks, funds, guarantee providers or other financial intermediaries

D. Cohesion and territorial funds

These funds are often **implemented through national or regional programmes**. Strategic fit may therefore be strong even when access is indirect and depends on territorial priorities or managing authorities.

Target group / Fund	ERDF / FEDER	Cohesion Fund	ESF+	JTF
Universities / Research centres	R / I / D		S	(I / S)
SMEs / Startups	I / D / M		(S)	(I / M / S)
Cultural institutions / GLAM	I / D / S		(S)	(S / I)
Public authorities	I / D / T	D / T	S	(S / T / I)
Clusters / ecosystems	I / D / M		(S)	(I / S)
NGOs / associations	(I / S / T)		S	(S / T)
VET / education providers	(S / I)		S	(S / T)
Large industry / industrial consortia	I / D / M			(I / M / S)

E. Private investment and strategic capital

Target group / Instrument	Business Angels	Family Offices	Venture Capital	Corporate Venture / Strategic Funds	Impact Investors
Universities / Research centres		(I)		(I / D)	(I)
SMEs / Startups	I / M	I / M	M / I	I / M / D	I / M

Target group / Instrument	Business Angels	Family Offices	Venture Capital	Corporate Venture / Strategic Funds	Impact Investors
Cultural institutions / GLAM		(I / D)		(I / D)	I / D
Public authorities					(I / D)
Clusters / ecosystems	(I)	(I)	(M / N)	(I / M)	(I / M)
NGOs / associations		(I)		(I / D)	I / D
Large industry / industrial consortia		(I / M)		I / D / M	I / M

Interpretation note: These routes generally require a viable business model, scalability, expected financial or strategic return, and an investable legal vehicle. They are not substitutes for grants and are usually unsuitable for activities without a credible revenue, growth or return pathway.

For universities, clusters, public bodies and cultural institutions, private investment generally requires a spin-off, company, special-purpose vehicle or other investable legal structure.

F. Philanthropic and alternative financing

Target group / Instrument	Philanthropic Foundations	Corporate Philanthropy / CSR	Patronage / Sponsorship	Reward / Donation Crowdfunding	Equity Crowdfunding
Universities / Research centres	R / S / I	S / I	N / (S)	(I / S)	
SMEs / Startups	(I)	(I / D)	(M / N)	I / M	I / M
Cultural institutions / GLAM	S / I / D	S / I / D	D / N	I / D / (S)	
Public authorities	(S / I)	(S / D)	(D / N)	(S / D)	
Clusters / ecosystems	S / I / N	S / I / N	N / M	I / N / (S)	
NGOs / associations	S / I / D	S / I / D	D / N	I / D / (S)	
VET / education providers	S / I	S	N / (S)	S / I	
Large industry / industrial consortia			N / M		

Equity crowdfunding requires an eligible investable company and is subject to the applicable financial and crowdfunding regulation.

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How to use this mapping

- Identify your target group
  Select the row corresponding to your organisation.

- Identify your funding need
  Choose the code that best reflects the activity to be funded: research, skills, innovation, deployment, market uptake, networking or territorial cooperation.

- Identify potential funding routes
  Read across the row to find programmes or instruments matching your organisation and funding need. A blank cell does not necessarily mean that participation is legally impossible; it indicates that the instrument is not normally a relevant or practical entry route for that target group.

- Consult the corresponding fiche in the MetaHeritage Funding Guide
  Refer to the relevant programme or instrument fiche on the **FUNDING GUIDE** for further information on its objectives, beneficiaries, geographical scope, funding mechanism and access conditions

- Verify the specific call conditions
  Always check the official call documentation before applying

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