



Co-funded by
the European Union

Joint Transnational Call for Proposals (2025) for

Better care closer to home: Enhancing primary and community care

(THCS Grant 101095654)

Guidelines for Applicants

Important Deadlines

Submission of pre-proposal: 30 January 2025 at 14:00 (CET)

Submission of full-proposals: 19 June 2025 at 14:00 (CEST)

For further information, please visit our website: <https://www.thcspartnership.eu/>

or contact the THCS Joint Call Secretariat (JCS)

French National Research Agency (ANR) THCS@anr.fr

Zorgonderzoek Nederland (ZonMw) thcs@zonmw.nl

Narodowe Centrum Badan i Rozwoju (NCBR) thcs@ncbr.gov.pl

1 Table of Contents

- 2 Background..... 3
- 3 Fostering multidisciplinary teams & intersectoral collaboration toward implementation..... 4
- 4 Stakeholder involvement..... 5
 - 4.1 Patient and citizen involvement 5
 - 4.2 Companies..... 5
- 5 Ecosystem approach..... 6
 - 5.1 Policymakers & health and care authorities 6
- 6 Building your proposals 6
- 7 Registration..... 8
- 8 Submissions 8
- 9 General Data protection regulation 9
- 10 Eligible annexes 10
- Annex I Excerpt draft of "Eco-systems wide approach in funded projects" 11
 - 1 What does an ecosystem-wide approach in funded projects entail? 11

2 Background

Co-funded European Partnerships are instruments implemented in Horizon Europe as Programme Co-fund Actions. These partnerships are involving EU countries, with research and innovation funders and other public authorities at the core of the consortium. The Partnership instrument is open to all EU Member States, as well as to countries associated to Horizon Europe. It is open also to non-EU countries that can participate at their own costs. In a Co-funded Partnership driven by cash contribution the core activity is the funding of Research and Innovation projects on a specific field. The European Commission is directly involved in the governance of the Partnership and contributes by co-funding 30% of all eligible costs.

The Transforming Health and Care Systems (THCS) initiative has been established as a European Partnership under Horizon Europe, co-funded by the European Commission (<https://www.thcspartnership.eu>). The aim of THCS is to coordinate and optimize research and innovation efforts in Europe and its partner countries supporting health and care systems transformation. THCS is a platform for joint programming of national and European regional research and innovation (R&I) programmes putting into action The Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda (SRIA) for transforming health and care systems¹, through dedicated research, development and innovation funding.

To align regional and national research strategies and funding activities, promote excellence, reinforce the competitiveness of European players while fostering EU cooperation – and enhance European collaboration with non-EU countries, 31 funding organisations have agreed to launch the Joint Transnational Call 2025 (JTC2025) for collaborative, innovative research projects co-funded by the European Union. The funding organisations participating in this call particularly wish to promote innovative, interdisciplinary collaboration and encourage translational research proposals.

The JTC 2025 is a joint transnational call for proposals that aims to support research and innovation projects that foster the transformation of health and care systems in Europe, with a focus on strengthening primary and community care and providing a systemic view of the outpatient care market. The call invites proposals that adopt an ecosystem approach, involving diverse stakeholders from different sectors and disciplines, and addressing the social, ethical, economic, and environmental aspects of health and care delivery. The call expects proposals to deliver concrete, actionable, and transferrable results that improve primary and community care system efficiency and effectiveness, access and equity. The call is divided into two sub-topics:

Sub-topic 1: Strengthening the primary and community health and care system

When placing individuals and populations at the centre of health and care, it is of key importance that the services and systems themselves change. Enhancement of the different settings where health and care services are being delivered is central. Through its funded projects, this call aims to enable reduced reliance on institutionalised treatment in favour of seamless care pathways and different forms of primary and community health and care.

¹ https://www.thcspartnership.eu/kdocs/2101188/sria_thcs-feb2023.pdf

Proposals may concern 1) organisational innovations or 2) operational improvements. Organisational innovations include, but not limited to, models for integrated care, composition and management of multidisciplinary teams, and shifting services from speciality to primary or community care. Operational improvements include systems and tools that enable more efficient and sustainable health and care delivery, such as administrative tools and systems. Digital health tools are within this scope.

This will require enhancing primary and community health and care within the broader care ecosystem. Importantly, proposals will need to consider the entire value chain – idea generation, development and implementation – to take into account knock-on effects of the proposed solutions on other parts of the health and care system. Proposals are expected to involve relevant stakeholders in the development, implementation and transfer of innovative forms of health and care services targeting economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Sub-topic 2: Systemic approaches to modernising the primary and community care sector

Policy and decision makers require evidence- and practice-based knowledge to reinforce the primary and community care pathways. A major obstacle to this is a lack of systemic understanding of the needs of the primary and community health and care sector, including relevant complexities in national/regional policies, infrastructures and local and regional governance. What is needed is knowledge that is actionable and applicable, rather than a mapping of the current state of affairs and issues. Proposals should leverage multidisciplinary and transnational perspectives to provide knowledge that is transferrable and applicable across different European health and care systems. Through the funded projects, we aim to involve relevant stakeholders to support decision makers at implementing the knowledge into transformative action. This may be in the form of policy development, change management, strategic planning and so on.

3 Fostering multidisciplinary teams & intersectoral collaboration toward implementation

The rapidly changing and ageing society and the occurrence of health emergencies are urging countries to efficiently respond to increasing burdens on their health and care systems, and deliver on their common commitment to high-quality health and care services. Furthermore, health and care systems share challenges that require harmonised and coordinated solutions, devised through a process that allows all stakeholders involved to design, research and implement such solutions in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner, while keeping people at the centre of the system process.

It requires a truly cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary collaboration, including stakeholders from clinical research, public health, bioinformatics, technology, digital health, Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects (ELSA) research, implementation research, health economics research, actors from the public and private sector, and end-users (or experts that can support research on the impact for end-users). Consortia funded in this THCS call are required to be interdisciplinary and trans-sectoral. Research teams forming a consortium should include investigators from a broad range of relevant scientific

disciplines, research fields or sectors, and bring together the necessary expertise to achieve the objectives as well as expected impact of the research proposed.

4 Stakeholder involvement

In the dynamic landscape of healthcare, transformative solutions necessitate an ecosystem approach that extends beyond traditional boundaries. This call for proposals invites innovative projects that demonstrate a profound understanding of this approach, ensuring their alignment with existing policy contexts and the broader ecosystem of health and care.

Proposals must explicitly illustrate their integration within this ecosystem, showcasing effective cooperation and coordination among diverse stakeholders. This includes, but is not limited to, health and care professionals, system owners, and, crucially, the end-users. The emphasis is on transcending the confines of conventional health and care domains, fostering collaboration at local or regional levels.

4.1 Patient and citizen involvement

Patients and citizen are more than just beneficiaries of healthcare innovations; health and care systems are organised around and for them; they are key informants who provide invaluable insights into the actual needs and challenges faced in healthcare experiences. By actively engaging with this group, applicants can ensure that the projects are grounded in real-world experiences, leading to more relevant and impactful outcomes. Their involvement in e.g. dissemination activities enhances the reach and relatability of the research, while their participation in the utilisation of results ensures that the solutions developed are not only practical but also embraced by those they are meant to serve.

4.2 Companies

Enterprises, ranging from start-ups to established corporations in the health and care sectors, act as catalysts for translating research into practical, innovative solutions. Companies play a significant role in the health and care ecosystem by investing in research and development, thus driving forward the frontiers of what is possible in healthcare. Their participation in this ecosystem ensures a continuous flow of new ideas and technologies, which is essential for addressing the evolving challenges in healthcare. Likewise, their understanding of regulatory requirements and market conditions can guide researchers in shaping research agendas and policies that foster a conducive environment for health and care innovation.

Furthermore, companies can act as important disseminators of innovation. By leveraging their networks, they can facilitate the widespread adoption of new solutions, ensuring that the benefits of research and innovation reach a broader audience, including patients, healthcare professionals, and policymakers.

Companies bring the perspective of economic viability, which is crucial for the long-term success of any healthcare innovation. By integrating this perspective into the research and development process, the ecosystem approach ensures that the innovations not only address current healthcare challenges but also are sustainable and adaptable to future needs.

5 Ecosystem approach

Proposals must show how the project will be linked to the policy context and wider ecosystems. An ecosystem-wide approach in funded projects reflects on several dimensions, ranging from the project idea, the consortium composition and additional actors to the workplan and the exploitation. This includes cooperation and coordination between stakeholders, across the boundaries of traditional health and care domains, locally or regionally, involving end-users, health and care professionals, and/or other stakeholders e.g., health and care system owners, when relevant.

The embedding of the endeavour into organisational strategies will raise the transformational power of the consortium. The workplan needs to include the development of business plans and reflect the reaching out to relevant wider ecosystems.

5.1 Policymakers & health and care authorities

The impact of project outcomes on policymaking and healthcare authority regulations are crucial aspects of the research process and its subsequent implementation. Although policy-makers and healthcare authorities may not be directly involved in the day-to-day aspects of the projects, the outcomes of the research have the potential to significantly influence policy decisions and regulations. It is essential for the research to be designed with an understanding of current policy and regulatory contexts and an anticipation of future needs. This alignment ensures that the findings of the research are relevant and can effectively inform policy and regulatory changes or the creation of new policies or regulations.

The research outcomes should aim to create synergies within the existing policy and regulatory framework, enhancing the efficacy and efficiency of health and care systems. By demonstrating the practical implications and benefits of the research findings, projects can support decision-makers in addressing current challenges and seizing opportunities for innovation in healthcare. The dissemination of research results could play a crucial role in that sense. By effectively communicating findings to policymakers and healthcare authorities, the research can contribute to an informed decision-making process, leading to evidence-based policy development.

In conclusion, these collaborations are essential not only for the development of the project but also for its successful implementation and sustainability. Proposals should demonstrate how they embed their objectives within the organisational strategies of these end-users, thereby amplifying the transformative potential of the consortium.

Furthermore, the workplan of the proposals must encompass the development of comprehensive sustainability strategies. These plans should reflect a clear strategy for engaging with relevant, wider ecosystems, ensuring that the project's reach and impact are maximized. This approach is anticipated to facilitate the creation of sustainable, user-centred solutions, leading to a meaningful transformation in health and care systems.

6 Building your proposals

Please take note of the references below that could be helpful:

- A partnering tool supported by THCS is available at <https://partfinder.ncbr.gov.pl/>
- Public engagement, open access, gender equality, science education, ethics and good governance should be considered. Please visit:

- the **Responsible Research and Innovation** site of the European Commission: <https://rri-tools.eu/>
- The Societal Readiness Thinking Tool – Guide for the steps of including RRI in a project: <https://thinkingtool.eu/>
- EC Guide “How to complete your ethics self-assessment”: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/how-to-complete-your-ethics-self-assessment_en.pdf
- Recommendations for patient engagement in research: <https://patient-engagement.eu/>
- Helpdesk for **Intellectual Property Rights** issues: <https://www.iprhelpdesk.eu/>
- Information about a **harmonised Data Access Agreement (hDAA)** for sharing and using controlled access data, can be found here (EU-STANDS4PM): https://www.eu-stands4pm.eu/data_access
- Support for the development of a **Data Management Plan**:

Proposals should explain how data gathered through their project would be available (findable, accessible, interoperable and re-usable) to the wider research community, even after the end of the project. In addition, THCS expects funded projects to develop data management plans (DMPs) according to international state-of-the-art standards for data security (following the **FAIR principles², the General Data Protection Regulation³ and in accordance with ethical principles⁴ for data management**). The project coordinator is responsible for sending the complete DMP no later than three months after the official start of the project to the JCS.

Compliance to the DMP must be reported in each annual scientific project progress report.

- Publication of scientific outcomes of the project are subject to **open access** and budget should be allocated for this in the proposal budget plan.

Examples for guidelines:

- Science Europe: https://www.scienceeurope.org/media/4brkxxe5/se_rdm_practical_guide_extended_final.pdf
<https://www.scienceeurope.org/media/411km040/se-rdm-template-3-researcher-guidance-for-data-management-plans.docx>
- Horizon 2020 FAIR Data Management Plan - Annex 1: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/oa_pilot/h2020-hi-oa-data-mgt_en.pdf
- The ELIXIR Research Data Management Kit (RDMkit): <https://rdmkit.elixir-europe.org/>
- **OpenAIRE How to comply with Horizon Europe mandate for Research Data Management**: <https://www.openaire.eu/how-to-comply-with-horizon-europe-mandate-for-rdm>

² http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/oa_pilot/h2020-hi-oa-data-mgt_en.pdf

³ <https://gdpr-info.eu/>

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/ethics/h2020_hi_ethics-self-assess_en.pdf,
http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/ethics/h2020_hi_ethics-data-protection_en.pdf

7 Registration

Research project consortia who intend to submit a transnational proposal should as first register at <https://proposals.etag.ee/thcs/2025> and follow the further instructions. The system will open at **12:00 CET 26 November 2024**. To register, please complete the different sections as soon as possible.

8 Submissions

Please read carefully the call text including the relevant central eligibility criteria and the regional/national eligibility and budgetary criteria (as outlined in the annex of this document) before starting your proposal in order to check if you will fulfil the call's formal requirements.

The call is organised in a two-stage procedure with one pre-proposal and one full-proposal document. Both the pre- and full-proposal (in English) shall be prepared by the partners of a joint transnational consortium, and must be submitted by only one spokesperson, the coordinator, by uploading it on the electronic submission system: <https://proposals.etag.ee/thcs/2025>.

Submitting a proposal involves two steps at each stage. First, fill out the pre- and full-proposal form in Word, where you mainly describe the project. Second, use the electronic submission tool to enter details about each partner and their financial plans. After completing the full-proposal form, convert it into one PDF and upload it to the electronic system. Both parts should be completed jointly by all applying consortium partners and need to be submitted in due time.

Please use the pre- and full-proposals forms provided on the THCS website (<https://www.thcspartnership.eu/>). Only proposals using the official templates will be accepted. Please keep in mind that the templates provide indications for section limits. Thus, the proposal document must not be longer than the number of pages indicated in the proposal templates. In addition, the proposal, in a digitally signed PDF-Format file or with a scanned version of the original signature page, to be uploaded to the online tool, must not exceed 8 Megabytes. Proposals exceeding these limitations will be rejected by the online system.

Deadline to submit pre-proposal: 30 January 2025 (14:00, CET)

Deadline to submit full-proposals: 19 June 2025 (14:00, CEST)

After these deadlines, the electronic submission system will not accept proposals and it will not be possible to amend the proposal or to add further documents.

In case of inconsistencies between the information registered in the online submission tool and the information included in the PDF of this application form, the information registered in the submission tool shall prevail.

For applicants from some regions/countries it may be required to submit the proposal or other information, before the deadline of this call, directly to their relevant regional/national funding organisations. Therefore, applicants are strongly advised to verify the respective regional/country-specific funding organisation regulations and other specific information.

Please Note:

It is mandatory to meet the deadline and to follow the format of the proposal structure.

The Joint Call Secretariat will check the proposals submitted to ensure that they meet the call's formal criteria (e.g. date of submission; number of participating countries; eligibility of the coordinator; type of project partner; inclusion of all necessary information in English and appropriate limits on length). In parallel, the Joint Call Secretariat will forward the proposals to the relevant regional/national funding organisations that will perform a formal check of compliance with their respective eligibility criteria. Proposals not meeting the formal central or regional/national eligibility criteria will be rejected. Proposals passing both checks will be forwarded to independent international scientific experts for evaluation.

It is recommended for potential project consortium coordinators to read the THCS funding organisations' eligibility criteria when looking for potential project consortium partners.

Bearing in mind that most of the management activities take up most of the coordinator's time and given the complexity of the research projects and the number of regions/countries usually involved, project coordinators are reminded of the importance of a well-designed and feasible work plan. Those actions will require that sufficient time is allocated to the project coordinator and also involved principal investigators even before the actual project starting date, e.g. for setting up the project consortium and recruiting the necessary personnel.

Project partners are strongly advised to read the eligibility criteria of their respective funding organisations (see annex II of this document) and other requirements, and to contact their respective funding agency prior to submitting the application (see also the call text and annex I of this document "List of Regional/National Contacts").

9 General Data protection regulation

The following Data Privacy Notice applies:

By applying to the call, applicants consent to the use, processing and retention of their data, in line with the above notice and for the purposes of:

- processing and evaluating the application where processing shall be lawful - only if and to the extent that - processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller;
- administering any subsequent funding award;
- managing the funding organisation's relationship with them;
- analysing and evaluating the call;
- reporting to the European Commission/ European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA) on the call;
- providing aggregate data to regional/national and European surveys and analyses;
- complying with audits that may be initiated by the funding organisations.

The members of the THCS consortium may share an applicant's data with third parties (some of which may be based outside the European Economic Area) in relation to the above activities including evaluators, auditors and the European Commission (or its agencies).

The members of the THCS consortium may link the data that applicants provide in the application with regional/national, bibliographic or external research funding data which is available through public subscription-based databases (e.g. Scopus, Web of Science, etc.) or other regional, national or open datasets. The members of the THCS consortium may also link the data that applicants provide in their application with future data that applicants provide as part of the ongoing management and reporting.

Data on funding organisations including contact details of Call Steering Committee⁵ (CSC) members are kept for the purpose of the call communication. The information will be published with prior consent of the respective management bodies.

10 Eligible annexes

There will be the possibility to add the following annexes (it is indicated in brackets at which stage the documents have to be provided):

- Annex 1 – Ethical self-assessment (**Mandatory**) template is provided as annex to the proposal form;
- Annex 2 – Letter of commitment for a project partner participating on own funds (mandatory in the full-proposal stage), to be uploaded as separate file in the submission tool;
- Annex 3 – Supporting letters or endorsement letters in free format (if any), to be uploaded as separate file in the submission tool.

⁵ Call Steering Committee: comprises a single representative from each country's/region's funding organisation

Annex I Excerpt draft of "Eco-systems wide approach in funded projects"

The following is a draft of the THCS WP9 Input Document "Eco-systems wide approach in funded projects". This is included as a guide to applicants to what is meant by an eco-systems wide approach in context of THCS.

1 What does an ecosystem-wide approach in funded projects entail?

Transformation of health and care systems is dependent on the ability of numerous actors to align their goals and actions so that they are complementary – in short, on ecosystems to be active. In the THCS Partnership, we define the term ecosystem at a basic level as a broad concept of health and care stakeholders and other related entities, from regulators to end-users, from funders to service providers, from governing bodies to health and care professions, and from NGOs to companies and innovators.

An ecosystem-wide approach in funded projects reflects on several dimensions, ranging from the project idea, the consortium composition and additional actors to the workplan and the exploitation. In detail it entails:

Project idea

- Make sure that the project idea or approach is relevant to the key actors, including the policy level.
- In the complex health and care systems, where many stakeholders are involved, all aspects have to be addressed in an ecosystem-wide approach.
- Processes of transformation usually necessitate the development of new and/or different organisational models as well as new business models to be put in place. In parallel, changes in the mindset and in the behaviour of the involved actors and users support the uptake of new approaches.
- Embed the objectives of your transformative project idea within the organisational strategies of the consortium partners, including end-users.
- In designing a project idea, focus on supporting the THCS aim to lead to meaningful and sustainable transformation of health and care systems.
- To guarantee relevance of the project, anticipation of future needs back to back with the relevant policy and regulatory contexts is an important part. This is based on the engagement, in cooperation and coordination between and with stakeholders, across the boundaries of traditional health and care domains.
- Take into consideration other relevant activities or change processes that are planned, on the way, or have been implemented. In doing so, pay attention to the local or regional levels.

Consortium

- Compose the consortium of at least end-users (health/social care providing organisations; citizens), industry/enterprises and academia. Even better is a quadruple helix composition:

government/policy level, end-users (health/social care providing organisations; citizens), industry/enterprises and academia.

- Collaborate with partners that have a transformative potential. Ideally, the transformative outcome of your project fits their organisational strategies so that they carry on after the project ended.
- The embedding of the endeavour into organisational strategies will raise the transformational power of the consortium.
- Assemble your consortium with partners that have a vital interest in the project idea and the implementation of its results.
- Seek complementarity in terms of expertise, taking into consideration the ecosystem perspective.
- Build your consortium with all the essential partners of your solution value chain to ensure an economic and societal impact.

Additional actors


- Endeavour throughout the project duration in establishing sustainable collaboration with partners outside the consortium that share your aims so that you work together towards reaching them by aligning your activities.
- Endeavour throughout the project duration in establishing contacts with policy makers and other stakeholder that have a crucial role in supporting of and decision taking for the implementation of the outcomes of your project in terms of new approach or solution.

Workplan

- Dedicate sufficient resources to the development of new/different organisational and/or business models
- Plan for enough resources to establish meaningful collaboration with the ecosystem-wide actors, including iterative loops in co-design, efforts to increase understanding and agreeing on synergetic activities.
- Take into consideration the need of behavioural changes in order to overcome the testing phase and make adoption of new approaches including technological ones easier.
- Establish links to the wider eco-systems, including the policy level ensuring that the project's reach and impact are maximised.
- Install a strong strategic advisory board including decision takers, policy developers, early adopters, etc. to facilitate the uptake of your solution.
- Involve end-users, health and care professionals, and/or other stakeholders e.g. health and care system owners so that the creation of sustainable, user-centred solutions is guaranteed.

Exploitation

- Embed the endeavours into the organizational strategies of the consortium partners.

- 
- Develop a business plan for the solution in terms of outcome of the project. This might encompass developing several business plans according to the specific contribution of the consortium partners and beyond to the new solution or approach.
 - Develop the organizational models necessary to guarantee sustainability of the new solution or approach.