

Partner Search: HORIZON-CL4-2026-SPACE-03-31 call_Seeking satellite communications operators, research organisations and industrial validation partners for Earth Observation and satellite communications building blocks

Summary

Profile type

Research & Development Request Spain

Company's country

POD reference

RDRES20260703006

Profile status

PUBLISHED

Type of partnership

Research and development cooperation agreement

Targeted countries

• All countries

Contact Person

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Term of validity

3 Jul 2026**3 Jul 2027**

Last update

3 Jul 2026

General Information

Short summary

A Spanish SME specialising in satellite systems is coordinating a Horizon Europe RIA project (HORIZON-CL4-2026-SPACE-03-31) to develop sovereign and interoperable digital building blocks linking Earth Observation (EO) and satellite communications services (SatCom). The consortium seeks a satellite communications operator, a research organisation or university with EO/SatCom expertise, and an industrial partner for validation, demonstration and exploitation activities.

Full description

A Spanish technology SME is preparing a proposal under Horizon Europe Cluster 4 – Space, topic HORIZON-CL4-2026-SPACE-03-31: Digital enablers and building-blocks for Earth Observation and Satellite Telecommunication for Space solutions.

The proposal addresses the current fragmentation between European Earth Observation (EO) and satellite communications (SatCom) ecosystems. The objective is to create a set of interoperable and sovereign digital building blocks enabling the seamless integration of EO-derived information and satellite connectivity services for operational applications such as emergency management, territorial intelligence, critical infrastructure monitoring and public-sector services.

The project will develop and validate three complementary building blocks:

- An Earth Observation processing and analytics engine based on Copernicus data and designed for integration through standard interfaces.
- A satellite communications layer supporting resilient and interoperable communications over European satellite infrastructures.
- An integration component allowing coordinated use of EO services and satellite communications capabilities in operational environments.

The proposed architecture follows European principles for digital sovereignty and interoperability, taking into consideration relevant frameworks and regulations including GDPR, NIS2, Cyber Resilience Act, Gaia-X, eIDAS and INSPIRE. The project aims to reach Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 4-5 through technical validation and demonstration activities.

The consortium currently includes expertise in digital platforms, cybersecurity, data management and system integration.

Additional partners are sought to strengthen scientific validation, access to operational satellite communication environments and industrial adoption pathways.

Particularly, the following partner profiles are sought (mutually complementary, non-exclusive):

A) European satellite communications operator — preferably a member of the SpaceRISE consortium for IRIS² or equivalent. Provides the capacity to validate the building blocks over a real satellite link and a technical contribution to the EO ↔ SatCom integration component from the satellite network perspective.

B) Research institution / public research organisation / university with expertise in EO data science and/or SatCom systems, with a Horizon Europe / H2020 track record and capacity for independent scientific validation and TRL elevation.

C) Industrial partner (large European company) interested in operational validation and industrial adoption of the building blocks as a post-project early adopter. Optional profile, valued if it complements A and B. The onboarding of each profile into the consortium is subject to confirmation of eligibility under Art. 22(5) Reg. (EU) 2021/695 (Space Partnership / GCSS) and to confirmation of an EU-controlled declaration or, where applicable, the provision of GCSS-compatible safeguards.

Onboarding milestones:

- Expression of Interest deadline: 30 July 2026 / - Letter of Intent target: 1 August 2026
- Call deadline: 3 September 2026, 17:00 Brussels time / - Estimated project start: Q2 2027

Programme Information

- Programme: Horizon Europe
- Call: HORIZON-CL4-2026-SPACE-03-31
- Topic: Digital enablers and building-blocks for Earth Observation and Satellite Telecommunication for Space solutions
- Type of Action: Research and Innovation Action (RIA)
- Funding Rate: 100%
- Estimated Budget: EUR 4–5 million
- Project Duration: 36 months (156 weeks)
- EOI Deadline: 30 July 2026
- Call Deadline: 3 September 2026 (17:00 Brussels time)
- Expected Project Start: Q2 2027

Eligible partners should be established in countries eligible under the call conditions and meet applicable requirements related to the Space Partnership framework.

Advantages and innovations

The project offers several distinctive features:

- Development of digital building blocks designed around European technological sovereignty requirements.
- Vendor-neutral and interoperable architecture enabling broad adoption across multiple EO and SatCom ecosystems.
- Independent exploitation potential for each building block while maintaining integrated end-to-end functionality.
- Combination of mature platform components with innovative EO and satellite communications capabilities progressing towards TRL 4-5.
- Alignment with future European sovereign satellite communication initiatives and space-system interoperability objectives.
- Access to operational demonstration environments, scientific validation activities and European space innovation networks.

Potential impacts include improved resilience of European digital infrastructures, enhanced exploitation of Copernicus data, increased interoperability between EO and SatCom services and strengthened European strategic autonomy in space-related technologies.

Technical specification or expertise sought

1. Satellite Communications Operator

Type: Operator or service provider.

Expected role:

- Provide access to operational satellite communication infrastructure.
- Support validation of project results through real communication links.
- Contribute to design and validation of EO–SatCom integration mechanisms.
- Participate in demonstration and exploitation activities.

2. Research Organisation / University

Type: University, research institute or research and technology organisation.

Expected expertise:

- Earth Observation data science.
- Artificial intelligence for EO applications.
- Satellite communications systems.
- Interoperability standards and space-data integration.

Expected role:

- Lead or co-lead scientific validation activities.
- Support TRL progression and performance evaluation.
- Define testing methodologies and validation protocols.
- Contribute to dissemination and scientific publications.

3. Industrial Validation Partner

Type: Large company or industrial end-user.

Expected role:

- Provide operational use cases.
- Validate industrial applicability of project outcomes.
- Support exploitation planning and market uptake.
- Act as prospective early adopter of developed solutions.

Targeted countries: EU Member States (27) + Iceland + Norway + Canada + New Zealand + United Kingdom + Switzerland. Restriction under Art. 22(5) Reg. (EU) 2021/695 — Space Partnership eligibility. Entities from other countries cannot participate.

Stage of development

Under development

Sustainable Development goals

- **Goal 15: Life on Land**
- **Goal 13: Climate Action**
- **Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal**
- **Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**
- **Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**

IPR Status

Secret know-how

IPR Notes

Partner Sought

Expected role of the partner

Each partner joining the consortium does so as a full beneficiary with funded participation (RIA funding rate of 100% , no co-financing required).

The exact distribution of Work Packages and workload will be determined according to the confirmed profiles and complementarities. The coordinator , technically leads the three building blocks and proposes the following indicative breakdown of contributions per profile:

SATCOM OPERATOR

- Co-leadership of the "Cross-domain EO ↔ SatCom integration" Work Package from the satellite network perspective.
- Provision of a real satellite link for TRL 5 validation of the integrated demonstrator.
- Technical contribution to the integration component from the communications side.
- Possible post-project early-adopter role for the EO building-block services in its catalogue.

RESEARCH INSTITUTION / PRO

- Co-leadership of the "Scientific Validation and TRL Elevation" Work Package.
- Independent verification of algorithms, models and protocols.
- Definition of experimental protocols and statistical evaluation methods.
- TRL progression gate review at M12 and M24 against predefined KPIs.
- Peer review and co-authorship of scientific publications.

- Connection with Copernicus and ESA ecosystems.

INDUSTRIAL PARTNER (if joining)

- Complementary operational validation use case.
- Contribution to industrial dissemination activities.
- Post-project commercial adoption roadmap.

COMMITMENTS COMMON TO ALL PARTNERS

- Confirmation of eligibility under Art. 22(5) Reg. (EU) 2021/695 (EU-controlled declaration or GCSS-compatible safeguards).
- Compliance with the call's multi-actor requirement (industry + SME + research + academia).
- Participation in consortium governance (Steering Committee, Technical Board).
- Letter of Intent signed prior to submission.

WHAT NO PARTNER WILL BE ASKED TO DO

- Develop space-segment hardware.
- Share proprietary background IP. The consortium operates under the standard Horizon Europe IP rules, with the Consortium Agreement defining foreground IP allocation.

Type of partnership

Research and development cooperation agreement

Type and size of the partner

- **SME 50 - 249**
- **Other**
- **SME 11-49**
- **University**
- **R&D Institution**

Call Details

Framework program

Horizon Europe

Call title and identifier

Digital enablers and building-blocks for Earth Observation and Satellite Telecommunication for Space solutions

Submission and evaluation scheme

Research and Innovation Action (RIA) – Single Stage

Anticipated project budget

Coordinator required

EUR 4–5 million**No**

Deadline for EoI

30 Jul 2026

Deadline of the call

3 Sep 2026

Project duration in weeks

156

Web link to the call

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-cl4-2026-space-03-31>

Project title and acronym

To be defined with the consortium

Dissemination

Technology keywords

- **01006008 - Satellite Technology/Positioning/Communication in GPS**
- **01003024 - Cloud Technologies**
- **01003003 - Artificial Intelligence (AI)**
- **01004003 - Applications for Transport and Logistics**
- **01004004 - ASP Application Service Providing**

Targeted countries

- **All countries**

Market keywords

- **01006001 - Defence communications**
- **01006005 - Other communications (not elsewhere classified)**
- **01005001 - Satellite services/carriers/operators**
- **07006 - Other Consumer Related (not elsewhere classified)**
- **01004008 - Other data communications**

Sector groups involved

- **Aerospace and Defence**