

SMART ERA 2nd Open Call: Seeking a community partner to co-develop autonomous drone solutions for high-value crops

Summary

Profile type

Research & Development Request Spain

Company's country

POD reference

RDRES20260722006

Profile status

PUBLISHED

Type of partnership

Research and development cooperation agreement

Targeted countries

- **Switzerland**
- **France**
- **Germany**
- **Liechtenstein**
- **Austria**
- **San Marino**
- **Lithuania**
- **Albania**
- **North Macedonia**
- **Serbia**
- **Poland**
- **Sweden**
- **Italy**
- **Latvia**
- **Estonia**
- **Montenegro**
- **Greece**
- **Denmark**
- **Norway**
- **Czechia**
- **Hungary**
- **Moldova**
- **Ukraine**
- **Slovakia**

Contact Person

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Term of validity

22 Jul 2026**22 Jul 2027**

Last update

22 Jul 2026

General Information

Short summary

A Spanish agri-tech SME seeks a grower cooperative, farmers' association, Local Action Group, municipality or university to co-develop an innovation project for large-scale, high-value crops such as vineyards, olive groves, pistachio or almond orchards. The partner will engage local stakeholders and help design and validate an autonomous drone-in-a-box solution for continuous crop monitoring, supporting more resilient, sustainable and knowledge-driven farming.

Full description

A Spanish agri-tech SME is looking for a Community Activator to join a consortium applying to the SMART ERA 2nd Open Call. The project will implement the SMART ERA community-led innovation methodology in one of the programme's Follower Regions*, supporting rural areas where large-scale, high-value crops (such as vineyards, olive groves, pistachio or almond orchards) face common challenges including ageing farmers, labour shortages, depopulation, climate change and the gradual loss of agricultural know-how.

The project will co-design, pilot and validate a Smart Innovation Package (SIP) that combines an autonomous drone-in-a-box platform with AI-assisted analysis to provide continuous, high-resolution crop monitoring. Rather than serving individual farms, the system will operate as a shared community resource, generating objective information on crop conditions to help farmers and advisors identify priority areas for field inspection, improve decision-making, optimise input use and strengthen the resilience and sustainability of local farming systems.

As Pilot Orchestrator, the Spanish SME will provide and adapt the technology, increase its maturity from TRL 5 to TRL 7, integrate monitoring data following the SMART ERA interoperability framework (NGSI-LD, FIWARE and Smart Data Models), ensure GDPR-compliant and FAIR data management, and provide technical support throughout the project.

The partner sought will act as Community Activator. Suitable organisations include growers' cooperatives or associations, Local Action Groups (LEADER/LAGs), municipalities, rural development organisations, agricultural universities or research centres with strong links to farming communities in an eligible SMART ERA Follower Region. The partner will engage local stakeholders, identify regional needs, organise participatory co-design activities, contribute to the Smartness Assessment and support the validation of the solution under real conditions. Technical expertise in drone technologies is not required; strong local networks, stakeholder engagement capacity and commitment to rural innovation are the key assets sought.

*SMART ERA Follower Regions are: EUSALP (Alpine Region), EUSBSR (Baltic Sea Region), EUSAIR (Adriatic-Ionian Region), EUSDR (Danube Region).

Advantages and innovations

Rather than offering another farm-level precision agriculture tool, the project introduces a community-based approach to digital farming. An autonomous drone-in-a-box platform will provide continuous monitoring of large-scale, high-value crops (e.g. vineyards, olive groves, pistachio and almond orchards) as a shared service for local farming communities, making advanced technologies accessible to growers who could not deploy them individually.

The Smart Innovation Package combines technological and non-technological innovation by integrating AI-supported crop monitoring with participatory co-design, community data governance, knowledge transfer between generations of farmers and a sustainable governance and business model that can continue beyond the project. The approach strengthens local decision-making, improves resource efficiency and creates a replicable model for rural regions facing demographic and climate-related challenges.

Technical specification or expertise sought

The Spanish SME is looking for a Community Activator established in an eligible SMART ERA Follower Region within an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country.

Suitable partners include growers' cooperatives or associations, Local Action Groups (LEADER/LAGs), municipalities, rural development organisations, agricultural universities or research centres with strong links to farming communities managing large-scale, high-value crops such as vineyards, olive groves, pistachio or almond orchards.

The ideal partner should have proven experience in stakeholder engagement, community mobilisation and participatory innovation processes. Experience in rural development, agriculture, regional policy or sustainability projects is an asset. Technical expertise in drones or AI is not required.

Stage of development

Available for demonstration

Sustainable Development goals

- **Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**
- **Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production**
- **Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**
- **Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**

IPR Status

Secret know-how

IPR Notes

Partner Sought

Expected role of the partner

The selected organisation will join the consortium as Community Activator in the SMART ERA 2nd Open Call, receiving funding of up to EUR 30,000 (total consortium funding: up to EUR 90,000) to participate in the 12-month Support Programme (expected to start in January 2027).

Working closely with the Spanish Pilot Orchestrator, the partner will:

- engage growers, local authorities and other key stakeholders, building a representative local innovation community;
- identify regional needs and help define the pilot use case and implementation plan;
- organise participatory co-design activities and lead the SMART ERA Smartness Assessment in the selected region;
- facilitate the deployment and validation of the Smart Innovation Package under real farming conditions;
- contribute to defining the governance, sustainability and exploitation model to ensure the solution remains valuable beyond the project's lifetime.

The partner will provide access to the local farming ecosystem, promote stakeholder participation and ensure that the proposed solution responds to genuine community needs. Experience in community engagement and rural innovation is more important than technical expertise, which will be provided by the Spanish SME. Attention to gender balance in the joint team is welcomed, as it is positively scored and used as a tie-breaker in the evaluation.

Type of partnership

Research and development cooperation agreement

Type and size of the partner

- **R&D Institution**
- **University**
- **Other**

Call Details

Framework program

Horizon Europe

Call title and identifier

SMART ERA 2nd Open Call for Followers Micro-Pilots

Submission and evaluation scheme

Cascade funding (FSTP). Consortium of Community Activator + Pilot Orchestrator; lump sum up to EUR 90,000. Stages: eligibility check, automated pre-scoring, 3 expert evaluations, pitching days, final selection (approx. 1 project per macro-region).

Anticipated project budget

90000

Coordinator required

No

Deadline for EoI

7 Sep 2026

Deadline of the call

15 Sep 2026

Project duration in weeks

52

Web link to the call

<https://smartera-project.eu/open-calls/>

Project title and acronym

Dissemination

Technology keywords

- **01001001 - Automation, Robotics Control Systems**
- **07001001 - Agriculture Machinery / Technology**
- **01003021 - Remote Control**
- **01004006 - Environment Management Systems**
- **01003003 - Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

Market keywords

- **08002002 - Industrial measurement and sensing equipment**
- **09005 - Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Animal Husbandry & Related Products**
- **08002003 - Process control equipment and systems**
- **09003001 - Engineering services**

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- North Macedonia
- Serbia
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- Estonia
- Montenegro
- Greece
- Denmark
- Norway
- Czechia
- Hungary
- Moldova
- Ukraine
- Slovakia

Sector groups involved

- Digital
- Agri-Food