Call for Expressions of Interest for the Swiss National Pre-selection of European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs)
Deadline for submission: November 28 2025
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This call intends to evaluate and select qualified candidate consortia for European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) in Switzerland as part of the Swiss participation in the Digital Europe Programme (DEP). This pre-selection will qualify Swiss candidate entities or consortia to submit proposals for the foreseen DEP call by the European Commission funding selected Swiss EDIHs (call text is expected to be published in October 2025, as part of an amended DEP work programme). A total budget of EUR 8 Million is expected to be made available by the European Commission to the positively evaluated hubs (pending approval of the amended DEP work programme). This call for expressions of interest will be conducted by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI).

1. Context and Background
Switzerland is in the process of finalizing its association to DEP, expected to be formalized with the signature of the association agreement in **November 2025**. A transitional arrangement is currently in place that enables Swiss stakeholders to fully participate as beneficiaries in activities of the main specific objectives of DEP relating to High-performance computing, artificial intelligence, advanced digital skills and Digital capacities and interoperability. One key initiative of DEP has been the funding of a network of **European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs)** across most regions of EU member states and countries associated to DEP.

2. What Are European Digital Innovation Hubs?
European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) are **one-stop shops** supporting companies—especially SMEs—and public sector organisations in their digital transformation. EDIHs operate within a **pan-European network** that enables them to specialize while benefiting from synergies and shared expertise. They play a vital role in fostering digital innovation aligned with EU and national/regional priorities. Their structure, governance, portfolio of services, and technology or sectoral focus can vary. Among their services, they should however include
- Digital maturity assessments for SMEs and public sector organisations
- Testing and validation environments,
- Training and skills development,
- Support in finding funding for deployment of digital technology solutions, and
- Facilitating connections with networks and ecosystems for innovation.
Furthermore, an EDIH is expected to deliver the following:
- Competence to run a hub, i.e. to be able to coordinate the group of organisations that, with different and complementary expertise, offer the entire range of services on a non-profit basis. This means being able to mobilise and coordinate key players, drive the development of knowledge and skills transfer, and stimulate innovation in the chosen area of specialisation.
- Digitalisation services in their chosen areas of specialisation, with one of their focus areas involving in particular AI.

- Ensure that SMEs and/or the public sector in the region are a priority target group for the hub's efforts and activities.
- Ensure networking with other EDIHs and the development of ecosystems that stimulate and implement innovation.
- Conduct outreach activities at regional level and have strong regional roots, while maintaining a national and European perspective.
- Facilitate contact with national and international initiatives and programmes and collaborate with other hubs, centres and other national initiatives.

3. Objectives and Scope of This Call

In this context, the **SERI** is launching a **Call for Expressions of Interest (CEoI)** to identify and pre-select **Swiss consortia** interested in becoming part of the **European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs)** network. This pre-selection aims to **certify the eligibility** of Swiss candidates for participation in a future **European Commission call for proposals under DEP**, anticipated to be launched in November 2025 (pending the approval of the amended DEP work programme 2025-2027, expected before the end of September 2025).

Only **pre-selected consortia** will be certified as eligible Swiss candidates for submission of proposals in the DEP call for Swiss EDIHs.

Interested Swiss entities — either individually or as part of a consortium - are invited to submit an expression of interest outlining their:
- **Mission, vision, and specialization** as a future EDIH
- **Service offerings** and regional focus
- **Contribution to national and regional digitalisation strategies**
- **Readiness, expertise, and capacity** to operate an EDIH
- **Partnership structure and cooperation model**

4. Funding
While no funding will be awarded at this stage, only successful pre-selected candidates will be eligible to apply to the expected DEP call due to open in November and close in March 2026 (pending formal European Commission approval of the amended DEP work programme in September 2025). After evaluating the proposals of the pre-selected candidates, the European Commission will fund the proposals with evaluation scores above threshold in descending order of ranking, until the budget allocated to the call is exhausted.

The European Commission proposes that between €0.5 million and €1 million be invested per EDIH per year through DEP. Pending formal approval (expected in September 2025), DEP provides a total budget of €8 million for EDIHs in Switzerland over a period of three years. The €8 million in DEP funding will finance up to 50% of the individual EDIH's budget. The remaining 50% of the budget must be covered by national, regional or private funding. In this regard, SERI will distribute a further €6 million in co-financing to the EDIHs selected by the DEP. The remaining budget, totaling €2 million across the selected Swiss EDIHs, will be the responsibility of the individual EDIHs to procure from among the consortium partners, or from other private or public sources.

5. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation of expressions of interest will be based on the following main criteria. Each criterion will be scored on a scale from 1 to 5. The threshold for individual criteria will be 3. The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the three individual scores, will be 10:

A. RELEVANCE (2-3 PAGES)

1. OBJECTIVES
   - What will be the mission of your EDIH?
   - How does it address the general objectives and priorities of the EDIH concept?
   - What is the focus (clients, sectors, region), and how is it aligned with local demand?
   - What digitalisation challenges does it aim to address?
   - What, if any, are its areas of technological or thematic specialization?
   - How large and sustainable is the potential impact on the real market?
   - What services will be offered (e.g., test-before-invest, training, access to finance, networking)?

2. CONTRIBUTION TO REGIONAL/NATIONAL OBJECTIVES & SYNERGIES
   - How will the EDIH contribute to existing Swiss strategies and policies (e.g., SME development, digitalisation, green economy)?
   - Alignment with specific national or cantonal programmes—please name and explain.
   - Anticipated contribution to regional/local development.
   - Potential synergies with the existing EDIH network and other national/international hubs.

B. IMPLEMENTATION (2-3 PAGES)

3.1 Maturity and Activities
   - Describe current and planned activities and services, and the technical infrastructure available.
   - Describe the maturity/readiness of the EDIH.
   - Share experience working with SMEs and/or public entities, particularly in:
     - Test-before-invest support
     - Training and skills development
     - Matchmaking with technology providers
     - Access to financing

3.2 Work Plan and Use of Resources
   - Describe how your EDIH builds on existing projects or infrastructures.
   - Outline planned organizational capabilities and provide a brief summary of the work plan.

3.3 Capacity and Consortium Composition
   - Describe the composition of your consortium, its members, and how tasks are distributed.
   - Clarify how partners complement each other in terms of expertise.
   - Explain how any missing skills/resources will be acquired (partners, subcontracting, etc.).

3.4 CO-FINANCING
   - Provide a rough budget breakdown by category: staff, equipment, subcontracting, travel, events, and types of services (including the standard EDIH service categories

of digital maturity assessments, training, testing and networking).
- Identify sources of co-financing and how sustainability will be ensured post-EU funding.

C. IMPACT (1-2 PAGES)

4.1 Deliverables and KPIs
- Expected results and services.
- Key Performance Indicators
- Methods to track and achieve KPIs.
- Anticipated long-term impacts.

4.2 Communication and Outreach
- Target audiences and how they will be reached.
- Tools and methods to attract and retain clients.
- Communication/dissemination plans and their contribution to visibility and impact.

5. Submission Process and Timeline
- Call publication date: 18 September, 2025
- Call opening date : 7 October, 2025
- Deadline for submissions: 28 November, 2025
- Format: Please submit a single PDF (max. 10 pages) responding to the evaluation criteria listed above.
- If you intend to participate in the call, you should contact the SERI scientific advisor coordinating this call for a preliminary exchange– otto.bruun@sbfi.admin.ch
- How to submit your expression of interest: Send your pdf in attachment via email to the address digital-europe@sbfi.admin.ch
- Language: English

6. Additional Information
- Only Swiss legal entities are eligible to apply.
- Pre-selected candidates will be formally certified as eligible upon entry into force of Switzerland's association to DEP.
- This call does not provide funding. It is a pre-selection step required for access to the EC call for EDIHs.
- For reference, applicants may consult the recently closed EDIH call for other associated countries on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal.

Contact for inquiries:
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