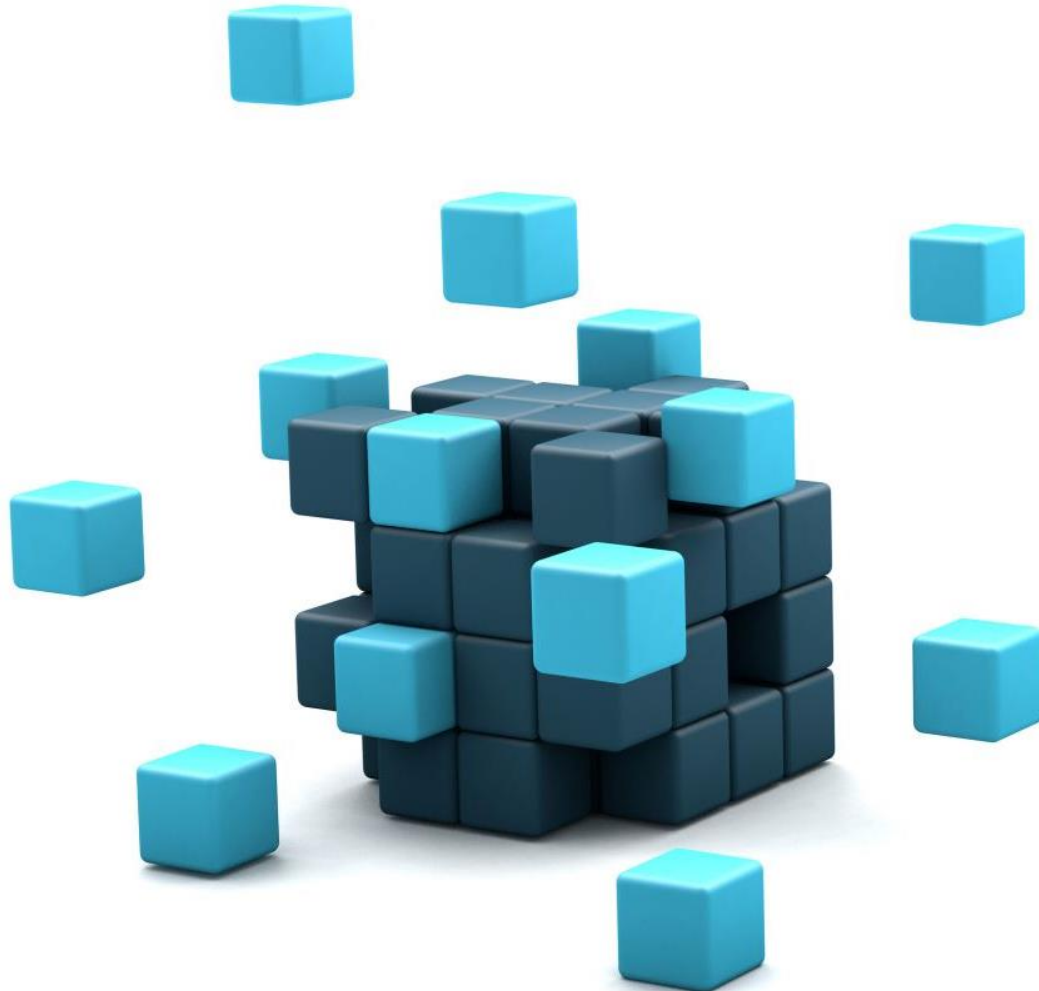


# VELES in Practice: Building and Operating a Regional Excellence Hub

Dr. Ioana Spanache, Project  
responsible

# Structure



- **Excellence Hubs**
  - The Why
  - Place-based innovation ecosystems
  - Quadruple helix actors
  - Mandatory building blocks
- **VELES project**
  - Project's focus & activities
  - UEFISCDI's role

# Excellence Hubs

The why, characteristics



Funded by  
the European Union

Call: HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-WIDENING-01: Excellence Hubs

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Excellent and sustainable **place-based R&I ecosystems** in **Widening countries and beyond** in relevant domains of cutting-edge science and innovation;
- **Long term joint R&I strategies underpinned by concrete action plans of European relevance;**
- **Common investment plans for R&I** including infrastructures leveraging national, regional and European funds as well as private capital in a synergetic manner;
- **R&I pilot projects** alongside a joint strategy and in line with regional and national strategies, notably regional innovation strategies for smart specialisation (RIS3) taking into account the new Innovation Agenda for Europe;
- **New competencies and skills for researchers**, entrepreneurs and professionals in R&I intensive domains;
- **Strengthened linkages between science and business;**
- Improved **knowledge transfer** and development of entrepreneurial skills;
- **New business opportunities especially for SMEs**, university spin-offs and start-ups, especially deep tech;
- Inclusion of emerging innovation ecosystems from rural areas, EU Outermost Regions, Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries including Ukraine by optional mentoring module.



# Excellence Hubs



**Funded by  
the European Union**

# Excellence Hubs in the WIDERA landscape

How it differs from other actions

- **Not** Teaming/Twinning/ERA Chairs → focus on *research capacity*
- **Excellence Hubs focus on innovation ecosystems**, with research as *one* ingredient
- Strong **place-based logic** + **quadruple helix**

\*Networks of place-based innovation ecosystems, with a dedicated innovation component and strong business dimension.



# The place-based logic

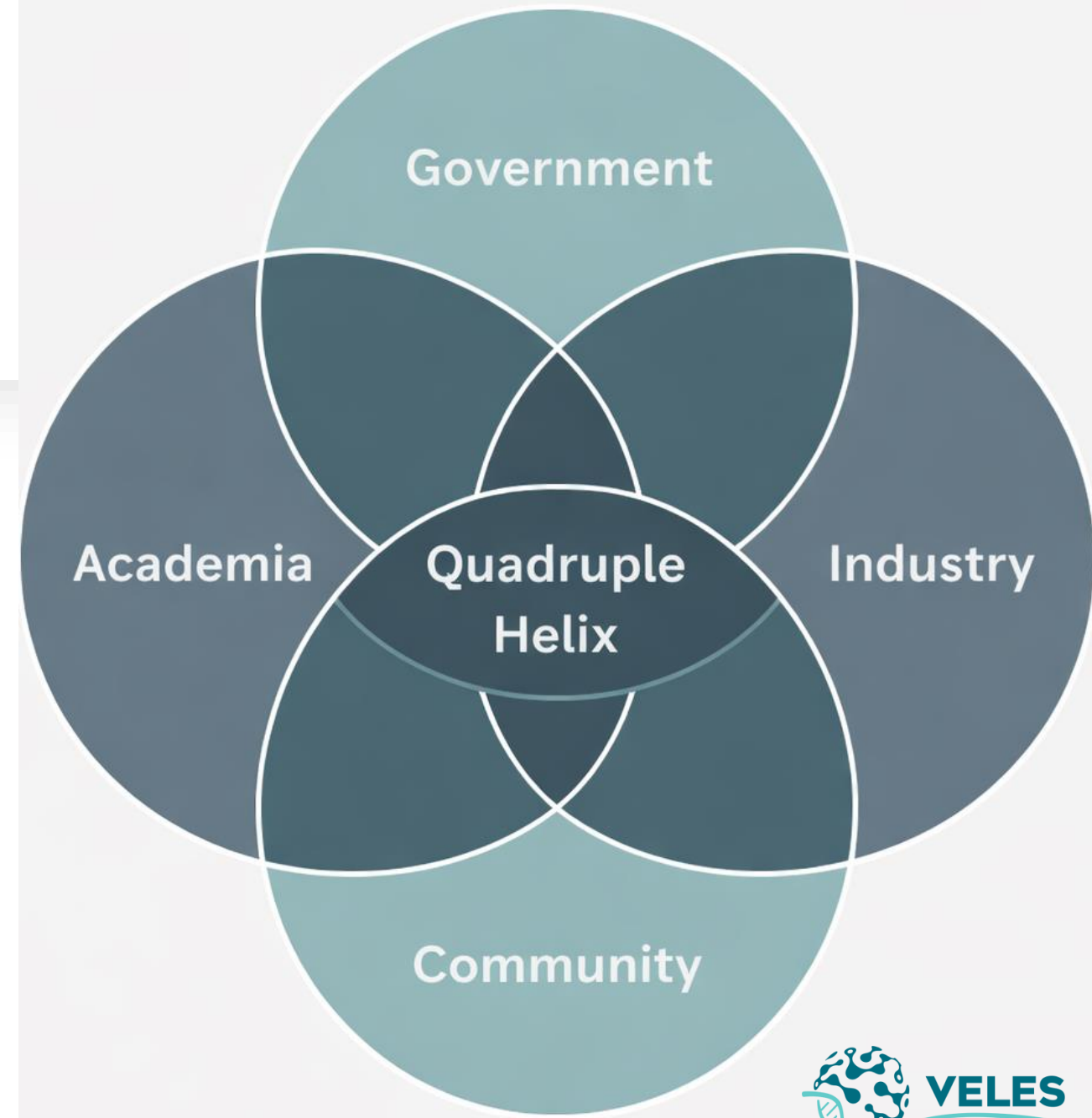
- “Place-based” ≠ only regional funding
  - Anchored in regional assets, needs, RIS3 priorities
  - Mobilising existing actors, not creating parallel structures
  - Connecting local ecosystems across borders

# Quadruple helix

*Who must be involved, and why.*

Practical roles of each helix

- **Academia** → knowledge, skills, R&I pilots
- **Business** → market insight, scaling, innovation uptake
- **Public sector** → policy alignment, funding synergies
- **Society/users** → relevance, trust, adoption



Science	Policy	Industry	Society	Country	Number of partners (max. 16)	RIS3 strategies	Sphere of the pilot use case (Mini Data Space, enabled by the Regional Health Data Space. Such pilot projects (mini data spaces) could be realized in the field of Alzheimer disease, Cancer treatment, Cardiovascular disease or any other
				Greece	2	Strategy identifies eight priorities: 1. Agri Food; 2. Health- Biosciences; 3. ICT; 4. Energy; 5. Environment & Sustainable Development;	Cancer treatment HDHC, is faciliti
JOIST Innovation Park <a href="https://joistpark.e">https://joistpark.e</a>							
Hellenic Digital Health Cluster <a href="http://www.hdhc.gr">http://www.hdhc.gr</a> - proposed by Mari							
SU, GATE	Ministry of electronic governance	TBS		Bulgaria	4	1. ICT; 2. Mechatronics; Health and biotechnology industries; 3. New technologies in creative industries; 4. Clean	Alzheimer
<a href="https://www.biocluster.bg">https://www.biocluster.bg</a>							
	UEFISCDI			Romania	2	The regional RIS3 identifies 7 priority sectors, including ICT (niches:Industrial modernisation, Cybersecurity, Traceability and Big Data, Smart City and Smart Village	Cerebral tumors (cancer treatment)
North East Regional Innovative Cluster for Structural and Molecular Imaging (Imago-Mol)							
	National eHealth Authority		AMEN - Archangel Michael Nursery Centre - dementia pilots can be run - we collaborate with them in other EU projects	Cyprus	5	The national RIS3 Strategy identifies seven priorities: (1) Promotion of holistic, integrated, complex and multi-parameter solutions; (2) Development of new and support further existing competitive infrastructures and centres of excellence; (3)	Dementia
CYENS							
CIT				Sweden	1		
INSOMNIA				Spain	1		
International data space association				Germany	1		





**GATE Centre of  
Excellence, Sofia  
University Bulgaria**



**JOIST**



**IMAGO-MOL**



**Telelink Business  
Services**



**Hellenic Digital Health  
Cluster (HDHC)**



**National eHealth  
Authority (NeHA)**



**UEFISCDI**



**Bio Cluster**



**3ahealth**



**AMEN**



**CYENS**



**Ministry of Electronic  
Governance Bulgaria**



**Chalmers Industriteknik**



**International Data  
Spaces Association  
(IDSA)**

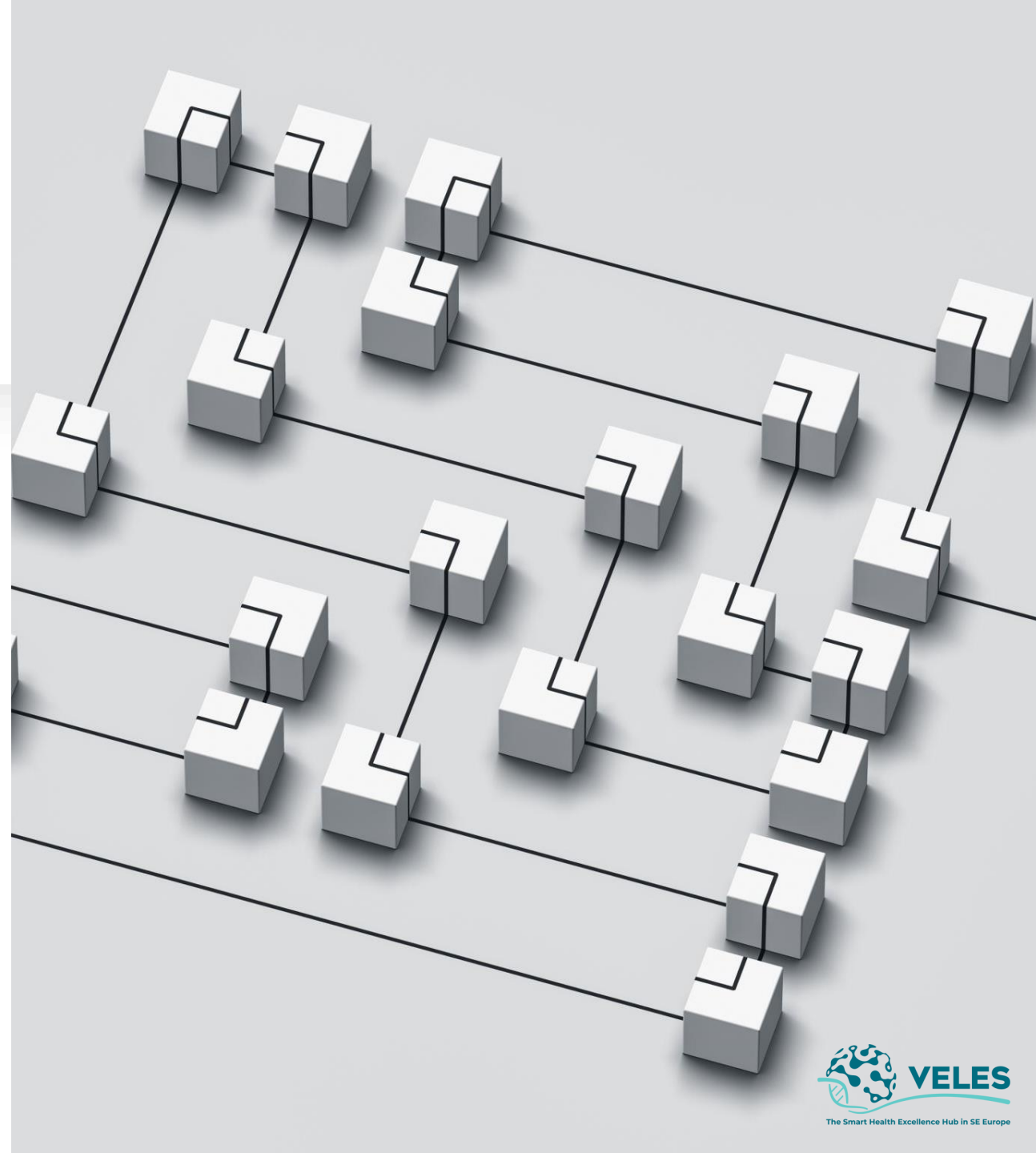


**Inneurope**

# Mandatory building blocks

## Five core components

- Joint cross-border R&I strategy
- R&I pilots supporting the strategy
- Action & investment plans
- Accompanying measures
- (Optional) mentoring of emerging ecosystems



# VELES Excellence Hub



VELES builds a **South-East Europe Smart Health Innovation Ecosystem**, enabled by a **Regional Smart Health Data Space**, aligned with national and regional strategies, and demonstrated through coordinated pilot use cases

- Excellence Hub under WIDERA
- Smart Health focus
- South-East Europe
  - Widening partners from: BG, RO, EL, CY
  - Other partners: DE, SE, ES
- Place-based, cross-border ecosystem
- Jun. 2023-May 2027

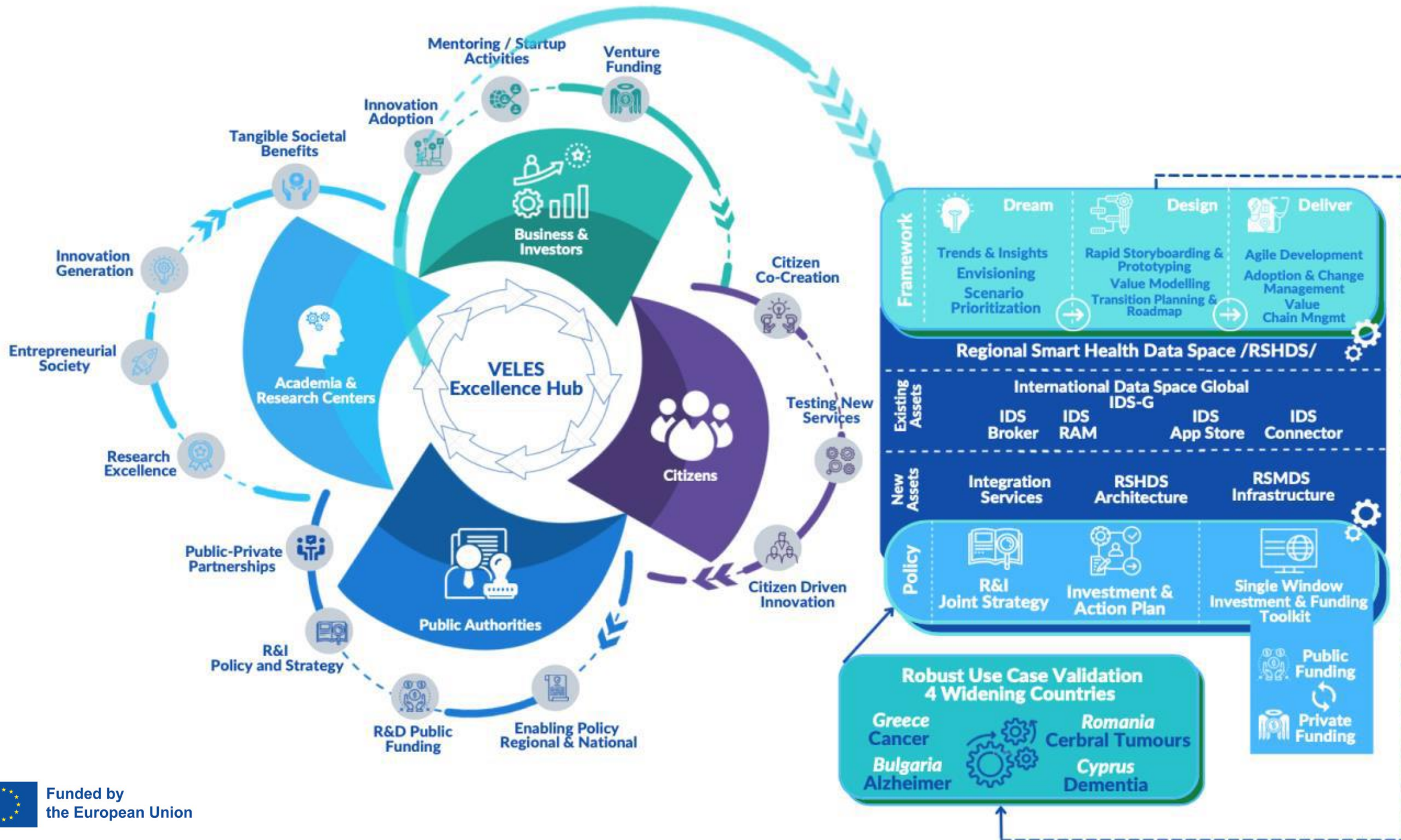
Aligned with:

- RIS3
- European Health Data Space priorities



Funded by  
the European Union





Funded by  
the European Union

# R&I pilots in VELES



Greece

## Cancer Treatment Pilot

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



Bulgaria

## Alzheimer Pilot

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



Romania

## Cerebral Tumours Pilot

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



Cyprus

## Dementia Pilot

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



Funded by  
the European Union



# UEFISCDI's role

## The role of a funding agency

- System-level perspective
- Policy–practice bridge
- Sustainability thinking

## UEFISCDI contributes:

- expertise on R&I systems
- understanding of funding and governance
- links to national policy and instruments

## Coordinator of

- T3.1 Regional Smart Health Data Spaces Enablement and Ecosystem's Stakeholder Engagement - [https://veleshub.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/D3.1-VELES\\_Regional-Smart-Health-Data-Space-ecosystem\\_VF.pdf](https://veleshub.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/D3.1-VELES_Regional-Smart-Health-Data-Space-ecosystem_VF.pdf)
- T6.3 Long-term common R&I and investment strategic agenda and action plan – 1<sup>st</sup> Pilot Workshop report - <https://zenodo.org/records/17990962>

# Visioning & Backcasting

Desired future for HDS



Present

Time

*What needs to happen to reach the desired HDS in the future?*



Funded by  
the European Union



## Welcome to the Health Data Community in BrainMap

Connect, learn, and collaborate with a global community shaping the future of health data





# Thank you!

---

Ioana Spanache, PhD

---

Project Responsible – VELES  
Excellence Hub UEFISCDI

---

[Ioana.Spanache@uefiscdi.ro](mailto:Ioana.Spanache@uefiscdi.ro)