



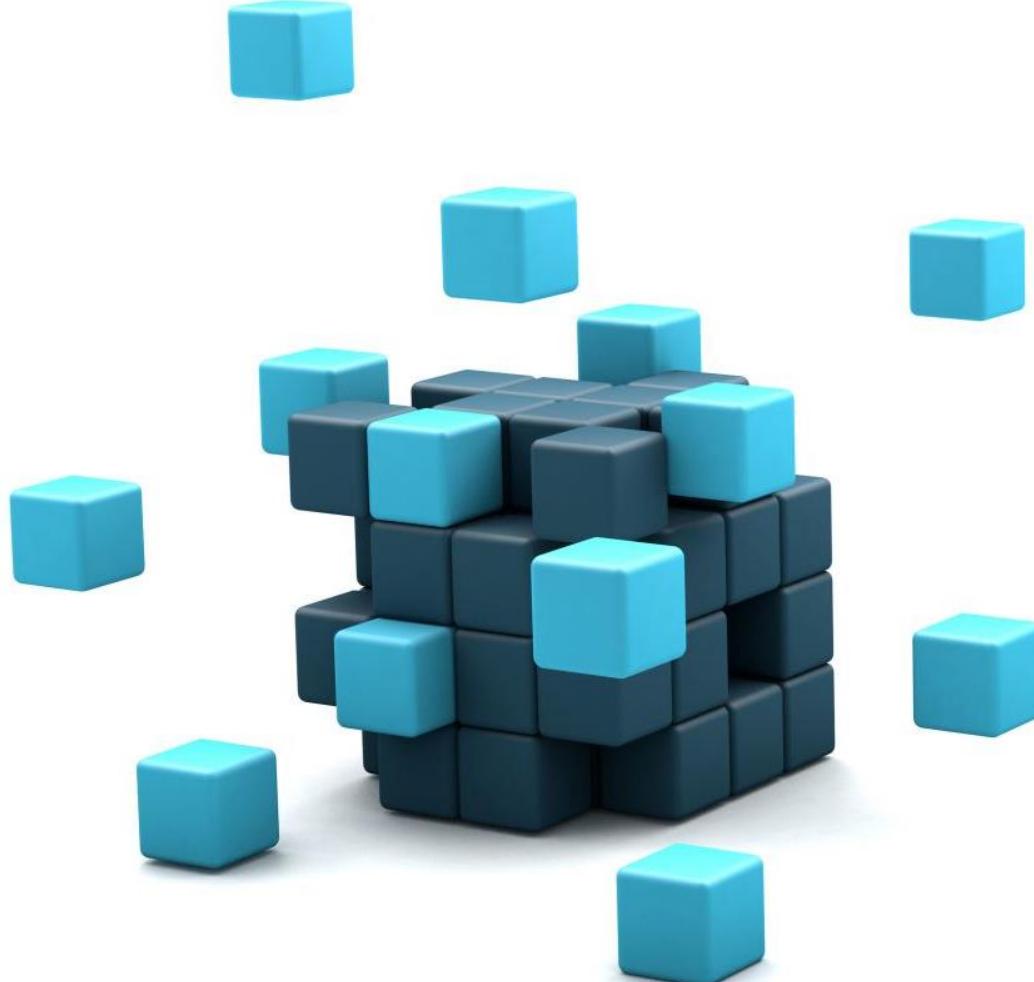
# VELES in Practice: Building and Operating a Regional Excellence Hub

Dr. Ioana Spanache, Project  
responsible



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# Structure



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



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# Excellence Hubs

The why, characteristics



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# Excellence Hubs

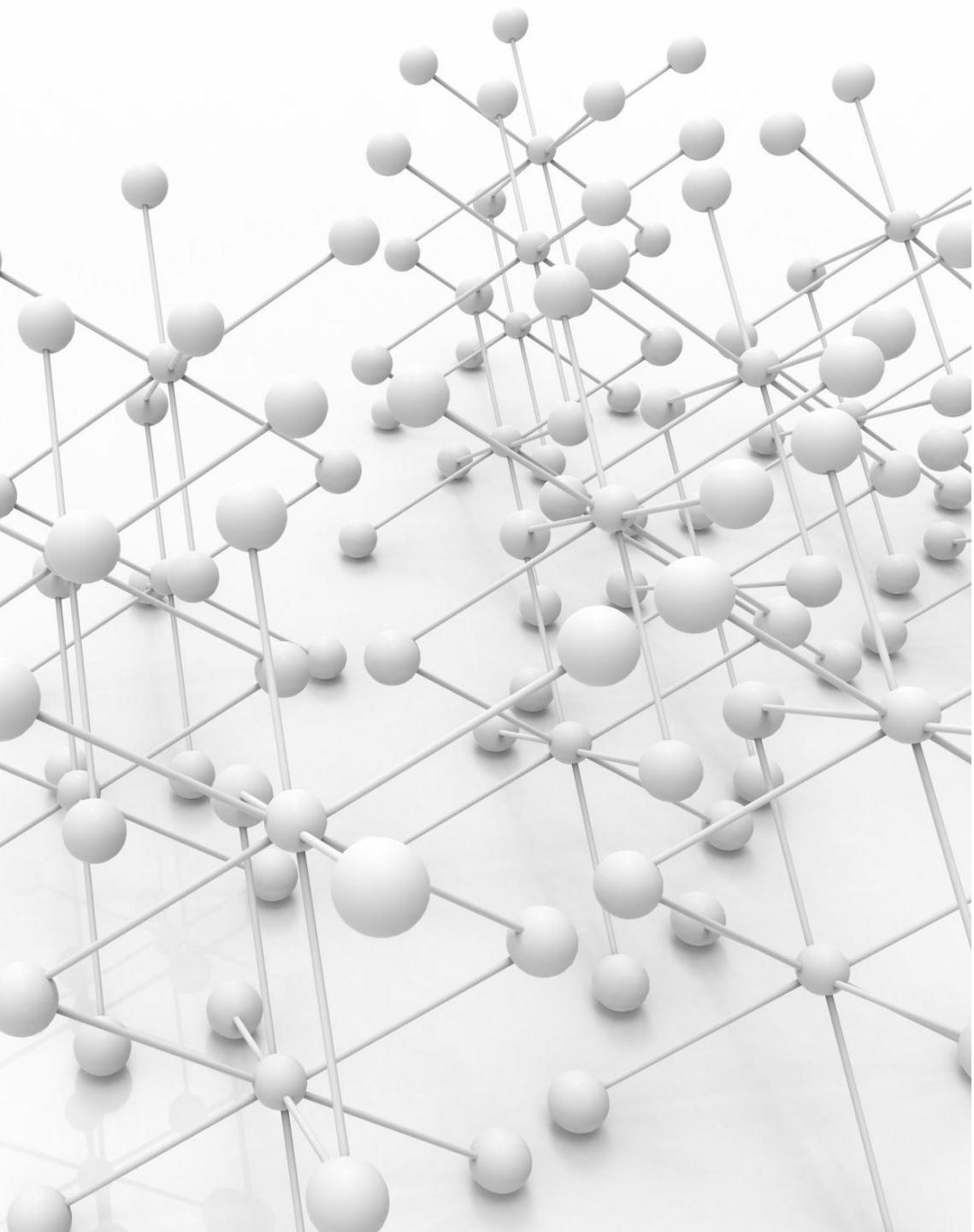


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## Call: HORIZON-WIDERA-2027-04-WIDENING-01: Excellence Hubs

### 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 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

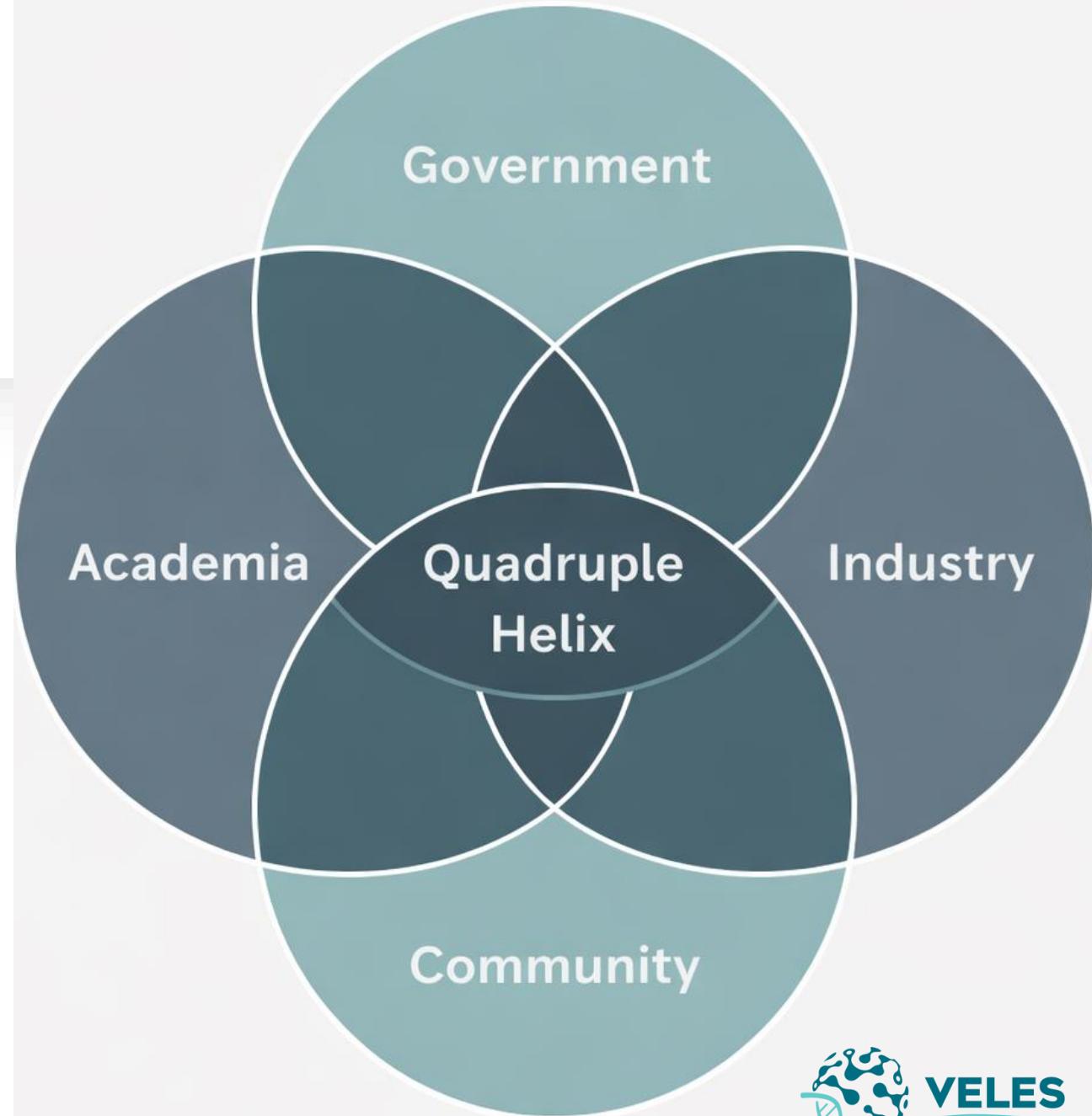
- “Place-based” ≠ only regional funding
  - Anchored in regional assets, needs, RIS3 priorities
  - Mobilising existing actors, not creating parallel structures
  - Connecting local ecosystems across borders

# 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
<b>JOIST Innovation Park</b> <a href="https://joistpark.e">https://joistpark.e</a>				<b>Greece</b>	2	Strategy identifies eight priorities: 1. Agri Food; 2. Health- Biosciences; 3. ICT; 4. Energy; 5. Environment & Sustainable Development;	<b>Cancer treatment</b> HDHC, is facil
<b>Hellenic Digital Health Cluster</b> <a href="http://www.hdhc.gr">http://www.hdhc.gr</a> - proposed by Mari							
SU, GATE	Ministry of electronic governance	TBS					
<a href="https://www.biocluster.bg">https://www.biocluster.bg</a>				<b>Bulgaria</b>	4	<b>1. ICT;</b> 2. Mechatronics; Health and biotechnology industries; 3. New technologies in creative industries; 4. Clean	Alzheimer
	UEFISCDI						
<b>North East Regional Innovative Cluster for Structural and Molecular Imaging (Imago-Mol)</b>				<b>Romania</b>	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)
National eHealth Authori			AMEN - Archangel Michael Nursery Centre - dementia pilots can be run - we collaborate with them in other EU projects				
<b>CYENS</b>				<b>Cyprus</b>	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
<b>CIT</b>				<b>Sweden</b>	1		
<b>INSOMNIA</b>				<b>Spain</b>	1		
<b>International data space association</b>				<b>Germany</b>	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 Industrieknik**



**International Data Spaces Association (IDSA)**

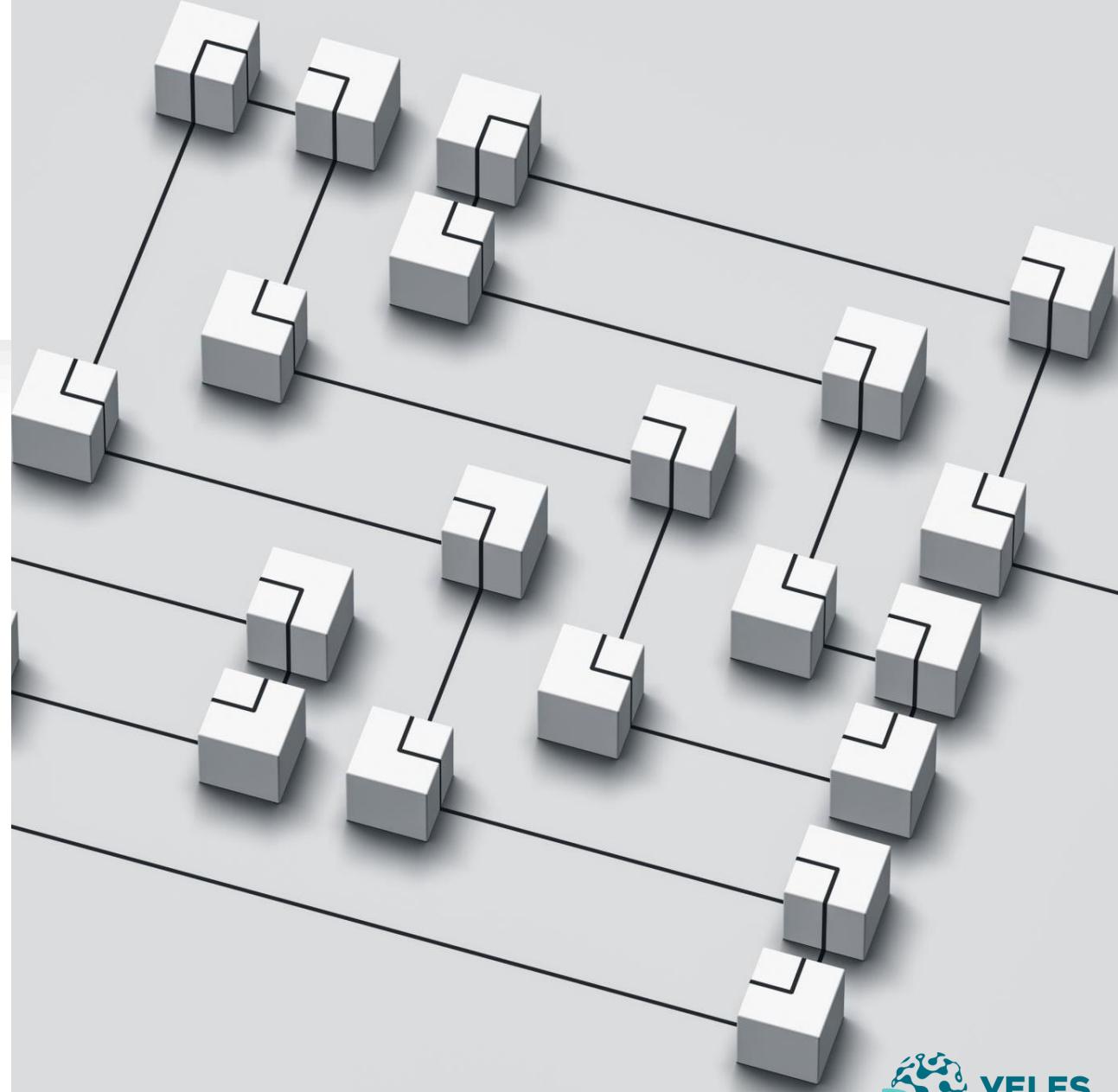


**Inneurope**

# 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



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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

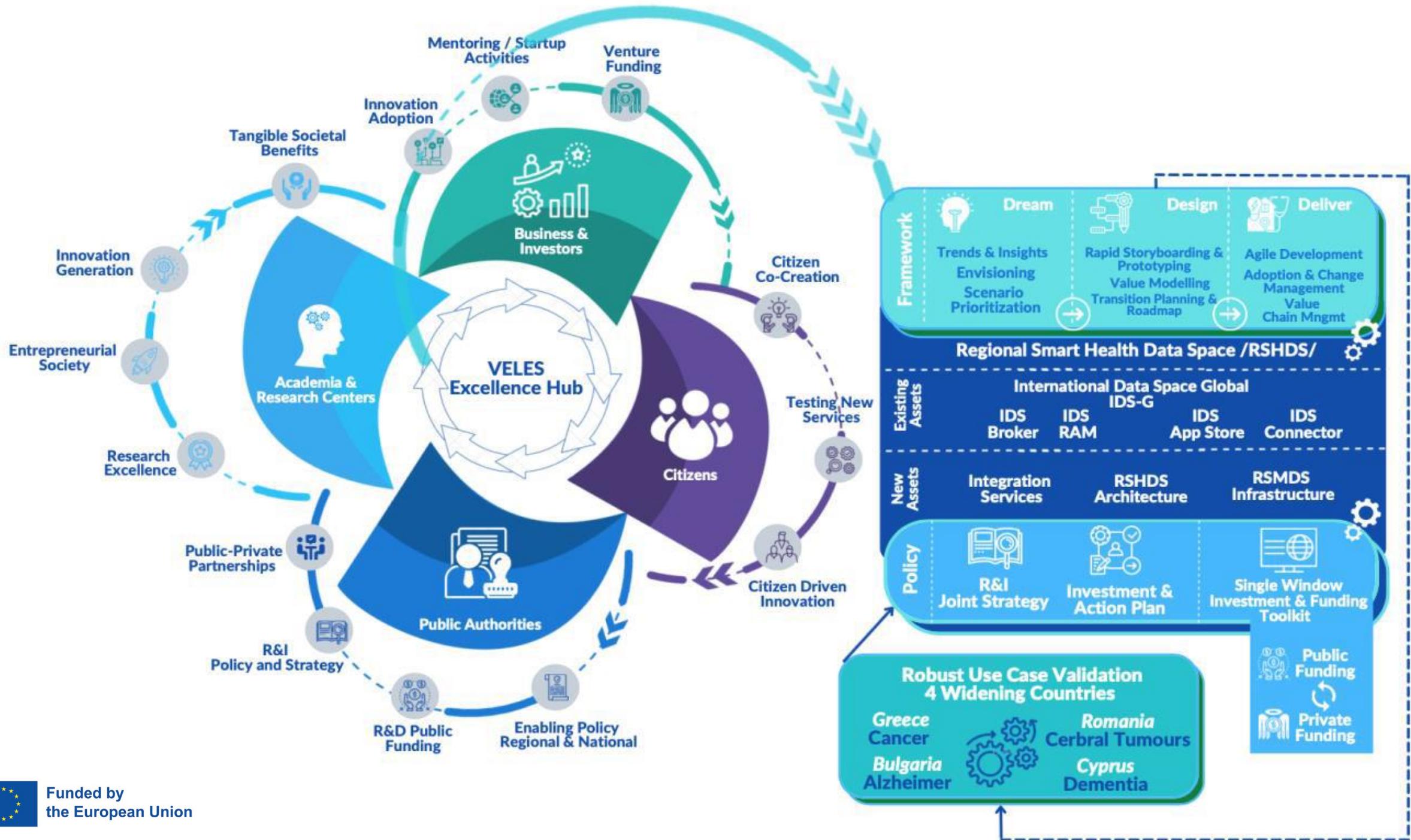
- Excellence Hub under WIDERA
- Smart Health focus
- South-East Europe
  - Widening partners from: BG, RO, EL, CY
  - Other partners: DE, SE, ES
- Place-based, cross-border ecosystem
- Jun. 2023-May 2027

Aligned with:

- RIS3
- European Health Data Space priorities



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# R&I pilots in VELES



**Cancer Treatment  
Pilot**

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



**Alzheimer Pilot**

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



**Cerebral Tumours Pilot**

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



**Dementia Pilot**

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



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# 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



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



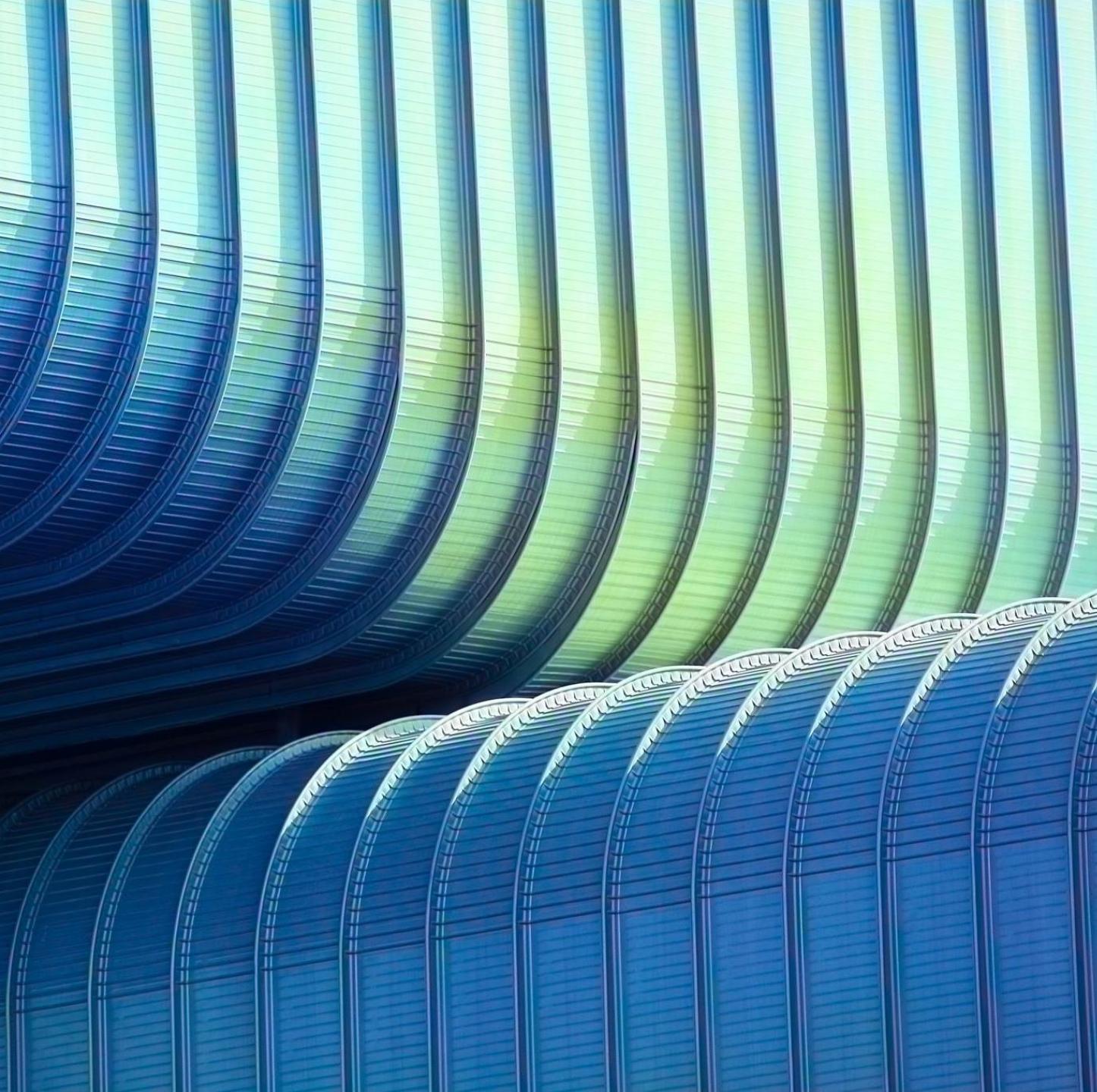
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## Welcome to the Health Data Community in BrainMap

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



A large, abstract background image on the left side of the slide, consisting of numerous curved, translucent lines in shades of blue and green, creating a sense of depth and motion.

# Thank you!

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Ioana Spanache, PhD

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Project Responsible – VELES  
Excellence Hub UEFISCDI

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