



## Fostering Talent Ecosystems for Early-Stage Researchers in Deep Tech

*Building a sustainable future for early career researchers in AI, quantum computing, robotics, and advanced materials.*

# NEWSLETTER

## ISSUE 1

*October 2025 – March 2026*



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## INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present the first newsletter of the DeepTechSeeds project (funded from HORIZON.4.2 - Reforming and enhancing the European R&I System), highlighting key activities and achievements from its first six months.

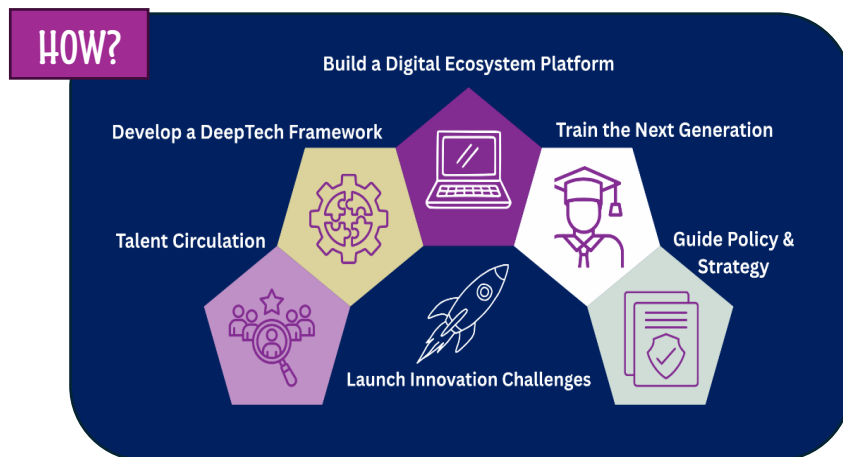
Launched in **October 2025**, DeepTechSeeds brings together a consortium of eight partners from six countries, combining diverse and complementary expertise and networks to build a strong and dynamic deep-tech talent ecosystem.



DeepTechSeeds tackles the urgent need for a highly skilled, adaptable workforce in Europe’s deep-tech sectors. As global competition intensifies in areas like **AI, quantum computing, robotics, and advanced materials**, the project builds a dynamic ecosystem linking academia, industry, and the public sector.

It aims to reshape **early research careers** by introducing a framework based on the Charter for Researchers, supporting organizations in creating sustainable and attractive pathways for Early Career Researchers.

Ultimately, DeepTechSeeds fosters a new generation of researchers to strengthen Europe’s leadership in deep tech and drive a more innovative, sustainable, and competitive landscape.





## KICK-OFF MEETING

### The Kick-off Meeting

The DeepTechSeeds Project started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2025 and was officially launched during its online Kick-off Meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October. Our Project Coordinator, Dr. Harilaos Koumaras from **FRONT Research Group | NCSR "DEMOKRITOS"**, warmly welcomed the consortium and after everyone introduced themselves, Harilaos presented an overview of the project, offering a first glimpse into its objectives and WP structure, followed by the Task Leaders' presentations.

🙌 We would like to thank our Project Officer, Mr. Stijn Delaure, for his participation in our first meeting and his valuable feedback and comments, as well as EU Policy Officer, Mr. Dario Capezzuto, for his enlightening presentation where he highlighted the special focus on Early Career Researchers and the importance of strong cooperation - both with the European Commission and among the ten Talent Ecosystem projects. He encouraged partners to engage actively in joint activities and share feedback to help ensure meaningful outcomes and lasting impact.





## PLENARY MEETING

### The 1<sup>st</sup> Plenary Meeting

The DeepTechSeeds consortium gathered in Brussels for the 1<sup>st</sup> Plenary Meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2025. It was a full-day exchange dedicated to aligning our vision and shaping the next steps of this ambitious Horizon Europe initiative. We would also like to thank our Project Officer, Stijn Delaure, for his support and for his enlightening presentation on the new European Research Area (ERA). He also announced an important update to the ResearchComp framework with the addition of a new competence on “Leveraging Artificial Intelligence.” Additionally, he also introduced the newly launched ResearchComp Self-Assessment Tool (SAT), a free online platform built around seven competence areas and four proficiency levels, enabling researchers to identify their skills gaps and training needs.

The meeting was filled with productive discussions, shared expertise, and a strong commitment to driving meaningful impact.

A big thank you to all partners for their collaboration and contributions.



Special thanks to the [Region of Valencia EU Office](#) for hosting us.

## EVENTS

### **RUN – EU Delegation Visits Technical University of Liberec** *Exploring Shared Goals and New Collaboration*

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2025, the **Technical University of Liberec (TUL)** hosted around **50** representatives from **nine** European universities participating in the RUN-EU alliance. The visit underscored strong synergies between TUL and its partners, particularly in the areas of applied research, regional engagement, and industry collaboration.

As part of the programme, Prof. Petr Šidlof, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Mechatronics, introduced DeepTechSeeds, as a newly launched Horizon Europe project at TUL. The initiative aims to support early-stage researchers by fostering skills development, promoting mobility, and strengthening links with industry in deep-tech domains.

Given the shared ambition of RUN-EU and DeepTechSeeds to connect academia with real-world practice, the visiting delegation was invited to explore opportunities for future collaboration within the project's framework.



### **DeepTechSeeds Survey results presented at mentoring conference** **organized by Cross Project**

On 11<sup>th</sup> –12<sup>th</sup> of February 2026, Jana Vitvarová and Jana Šimanová from the **Technical University of Liberec** presented key findings from the DeepTechSeeds research on the needs of early-career researchers (ECRs) in deep-tech domains, including AI/ML, robotics, 5G/6G, and advanced materials. The presentation took place during a mentoring conference organised by the sister project CROSS (Career Management Services for European Talents).

The results, based on a European-wide survey and a series of focus groups, highlighted several important insights. Among them, the critical role of strong mentoring and supervision emerged as one of the most influential factors in shaping successful ECR career paths. At the same time, many researchers reported challenges such as unclear career trajectories, fragmented mentoring structures, and limited guidance bridging academia and industry.

The event provided an excellent platform for discussion and exchange, fostering a highly engaging and collaborative atmosphere.

Special thanks go to the organisers from the University of Chemistry and Technology in Prague (UCT Prague), particularly Miroslava Grunwaldt and Zuzana Jalovcová, for their efforts.

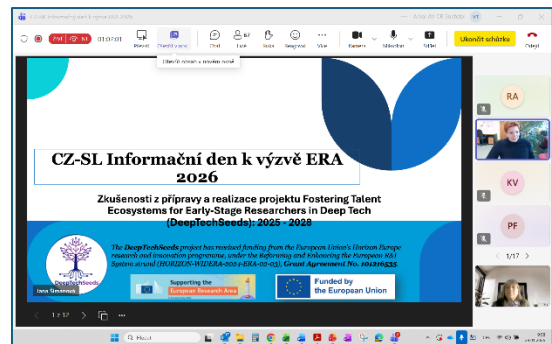
We look forward to continuing collaboration between the projects.



## Czech - Slovak Information Days

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2026, DeepTechSeed project contributed to the Czech - Slovak Information Days organised by Technologické centrum Praha.

The **Technical University of Liberec** represented by Jana Šimanová shared both practical lessons learned from proposal preparation and current insights from the implementation of the DeepTechSeeds project.



We are especially proud that DeepTechSeeds is one of only 10 projects funded under the ERA call HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-02, and we truly value the open discussion on how to strengthen Europe's deep-tech talent base.

With around 160 registered participants, mainly from the academic community, the event confirmed how strong the interest is in actively contributing ideas, perspectives, and experience to the future of deep-tech research careers.

## EVENTS

### Technical University of Liberec hosts a Deep-Tech Round Table

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, **Technical University of Liberec** hosted a Deep-Tech Round Table for bringing together researchers and industry leaders to discuss the future of AI/ML, robotics and advanced material.

Experts from companies and research institutions shared a clear message:

#### **Technical excellence alone is not enough.**

To transform cutting-edge research into real innovation, early-career researchers need strong transversal skills alongside their deep technical expertise.

- Among the skills highlighted during the discussion were:
- communicating across disciplines and sectors
- collaborating with industry partners
- systems thinking and problem framing
- leadership in multidisciplinary teams
- entrepreneurial thinking and understanding real-world applications

The discussion was facilitated using a Delphi method, supported by a digital tool developed by TUL students, helping participants collectively prioritise the skills and directions needed for the future of deep-tech research.

These insights will now feed directly into the DeepTechSeeds project, which aims to strengthen European talent ecosystems for Early-Career Researchers in deep-tech fields.



A big thank you to all participants from academia and industry for an inspiring and open exchange.



## UPCOMING event

### Open Community Experience Event



*‘Open Community Experience is where developers, architects, maintainers, and open-source builders meet in real life.’*

From the 21 to 23 of April 2026, the Project Coordinator, Harilaos Koumaras, and Deputy Project Coordinator, Stefanos Plastras, from **NCSR “Demokritos”** will represent the project at the Open Community Experience event in Brussels.

As part of the programme, the session titled *“A European Talent Ecosystem for Early Career Researchers”* will take place on 22 April (13:00–14:15 CET, Studio 4). Alongside our



representatives, Dr. Stijn Delaure and Mr. Dario Capezzut from the European Commission will also contribute to the discussion.

*This session explores the foundations of a European Talent Ecosystem for Early Career Researchers, introducing the DeepTechSeeds framework as a practical example of how Europe can nurture, empower, and retain its next generation of scientific leaders. Participants will gain an overview of the evolving European Research Area (ERA) landscape, the policy context shaping research careers, and the strategic priorities driving Europe’s talent agenda. The session will also present the newly established ERA Talent Ecosystem Working Groups, outlining their role in coordinating actions, aligning stakeholders and supporting a more connected and resilient European research workforce.*

You may learn more about the event [here](#).

### A European Talent Ecosystem for Early Career Researchers x

22 April 2026 13:30-14:15 CET share session





OC for Research

Studio 4

Agenda:

- A European Talent Ecosystem for Early Career Researchers: The DeepTechSeeds Framework, by Harilaos Koumaras (NCSR Demokritos)
- The new European Research Area Landscape, by Delaure Stijn (REA EU Project Adviser)
- Policy Context for European Talent Ecosystem, by Dario Capezzuto (EU Policy Officer)
- Introducing ERA Talent Ecosystem Working Groups, by Stefanos Plastras (NCSR Demokritos)

This session explores the foundations of a European Talent Ecosystem for Early Career Researchers, introducing the DeepTechSeeds framework as a practical example of how Europe can nurture, empower, and retain its next generation of scientific leaders. Participants will gain an overview of the evolving European Research Area (ERA) landscape, the policy context shaping research careers, and the strategic priorities driving Europe’s talent agenda. The session will also present the newly established ERA Talent Ecosystem Working Groups, outlining their role in coordinating actions, aligning stakeholders and supporting a more connected and resilient European research workforce. An example of the applicability of the ERA WGs on the UNITY-6G Horizon Europe project will be also presented as an example of a project working on OpenSource and how the ERA WGs could be used to facilitate the career paths of ECRs working in it.

 <b>Dr. Stijn DELAURE</b> Project Officer European Commission	 <b>Dario Capezzuto</b> Project Officer European Commission
 <b>Stefanos Plastras</b> Research Associate NCSR Demokritos	 <b>Harilaos Koumaras</b> Research Director & Assistant P... NCSR Demokritos

## THE STUDY

### The DeepTechSeeds Study

#### *How Are the European Charter for Researchers Principles Implemented in Deep-Tech Ecosystems?*

Within the framework of WP2, “Development of the DeepTech Framework for ECRs”, the DeepTechSeeds project carried out an extensive study led by the Technical University of Liberec. The research combined surveys and focus groups targeting early-career researchers, industry representatives, and academic stakeholders.

The report is based on a robust mixed-methods approach, bringing together survey data from 354 participants (including 218 early-career researchers, 78 research-performing organisations, and 58 industry representatives), along with stakeholder-specific focus groups, structured interviews, and comparative national analysis.

#### Key insights from the study:

- ◆ **354** stakeholders surveyed across academia, industry and early-career researchers
- ◆ Strong perception of transparent and merit-based recruitment (4.21/5)
- ◆ However, career pathway clarity remains limited (3.36/5)
- ◆ **48.6%** of early-career researchers report unclear career progression



- ◆ High interest in industry mobility (**79.8%**), but systemic pathways remain fragile
- ◆ Significant skills gap in IP and innovation governance training

Overall, the findings suggest that the main challenges are structural rather than procedural. Key barriers include reliance on project-based funding, evaluation systems that continue to prioritise publications, limited institutional support for academia–industry mobility, and inconsistent integration of intellectual property training within research career development.

You may read more in the *Deliverable 2.1 – Analysis Report on Charter Implementation* [here](#).

## COMMUNICATION MATERIAL

### Project Leaflet and Roll-up

You may download them from our [website](#)

#### Project leaflet A4

**Fostering Talent Ecosystems for Early-Stage Researchers in Deep Tech Industry**

DeepTechSeeds responds to the growing demand for a highly skilled and flexible research workforce across Europe's deep-tech sectors. As global competition intensifies in areas like **AI, quantum computing, robotics and advanced materials**, the project works to build a **vibrant talent ecosystem** that brings together **academia, industry, and the public sector**.

**How?**

- Build a Digital Ecosystem Platform
- Develop a DeepTech Framework
- Train the Next Generation
- Talent Circulation
- Launch Innovation Challenges
- Guide Policy & Strategy

DeepTechSeeds envisions a future where innovation is **inclusive**, talent is **supported**, and Europe remains at the forefront of **global technological advancement**.

www.deeptechseeds.eu

Funded by the European Union

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Supporting the European Research Area

#### Project Roll-up

**Fostering Talent Ecosystems for Early-Stage Researchers in Deep Tech Industry**

Develop a DeepTech Framework

Train the Next Generation

Talent Circulation

Build a Digital Ecosystem Platform

Launch Innovation Challenges

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Supporting the European Research Area



## era working groups

### ERA Working Groups Initiative

On 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2026, DeepTechSeeds launched an initiative bringing together ERA sister projects to strengthen collaboration across the ecosystem. The initiative aims to raise awareness of the ERA landscape while fostering cumulative progress and shared results. Through monthly meetings and three dedicated Working Groups, it promotes knowledge exchange, alignment of activities, and co-creation of outputs, while remaining complementary to other clustering efforts. Designed with long-term impact in mind, the Working Groups will continue beyond project lifetimes, allowing new projects to join and contribute to a sustainable and evolving ERA ecosystem.

Each meeting includes: **3 ERA Working Groups**

- **WG1:** Innovative Frameworks and Tools for Strengthening Research Careers in ERA
- **WG2:** Talent Platforms and Matchmaking Activities for the ERA Ecosystem
- **WG3:** Communication, Impact, and Policy Feedback of the ERA Ecosystem

Each WG is governed by a Chair and a Co-chair project representative and is also followed by an ERA representative:

	Chair	Co-Chair	ERA Representative
WG1	Harilaos Koumaras (DeepTechSeeds)	Danijela Ciric Lalic (SMART)	Silvia Abad
WG2	Cristina Skoubridou (DeepTechSeeds)	Ivana Gulisija (AttractAdria)	Molina Martinez Jorge
WG3	Marina Koulaloglou (DeepTechSeeds)	Martin Grund (SECURE2)	Moungou Athanasia

This initiative marks the beginning of building a sustainable ERA ecosystem that will extend beyond the lifetime of individual projects.

#### Key Features

- ERA WGs is designed to continue operating after project completion.
- New projects can join and nominate Chairs or Co-Chairs.
- Monthly meetings ensure continuity and alignment.

**Participating Projects:** DeepTechSeeds, [SMART Researchers](#), [SECURE2](#), [ARCOE](#), [AttractAdria](#), [BREATH](#).



## DELIVERABLES

### Period and Upcoming Deliverables

<https://deeptechseeds.eu/deliverables/>

Title	Submission Date	Status
<b>SUBMITTED</b>		
D1.1 - Project Management Handbook	Submitted - November 2025	Sensitive
D1.2 - Data Management Plan	Submitted - December 2025	Sensitive
D1.3 - Gender Equality Strategy	Submitted - November 2025	Sensitive
D6.1 - Communication and Dissemination Plan	Submitted – January 2026	Public
D2.1 - Analysis Report on Charter Implementation	Submitted – February 2026	Public
<b>UPCOMING</b>		
D4.1 - Transversal Deep Tech Skills Outlook	<b>May 2026</b>	<b>Public</b>
D2.2 - Implementation Framework	<b>July 2026</b>	<b>Public</b>

### More Interesting Links:

1. **WIDERA Funding** - [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/widening-participation-and-spreading-excellence\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/widening-participation-and-spreading-excellence_en)
2. **European Research Area (ERA)** - <https://european-research-area.ec.europa.eu/>
3. **THE EUROPEAN COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCHERS** - [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/7da29338-37bf-4d51-b5eb-a1571b84c7ad\\_en?filename=ec\\_rtd\\_research-competence-presentation.pdf](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/7da29338-37bf-4d51-b5eb-a1571b84c7ad_en?filename=ec_rtd_research-competence-presentation.pdf)



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<https://deeptechseeds.eu/>

