

MISSIONE 4
ISTRUZIONE
RICERCA

RAISE ECS00000035

**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
FOR EVALUATORS**

OF PROPOSALS SUBMITTED
UNDER THE **ROBOTICS AND AI FOR
SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
(RAISE)** CASCADE FUNDING OPEN
CALLS FOR INNOVATION



Finanziato
dall'Unione europea
NextGenerationEU



Ministero
dell'Università
e della Ricerca



Italiadomani
PIANO NAZIONALE
DI RIPRESA E RESILIENZA

With reference to the project "RAISE" (Robotics and AI for Socio-economic Empowerment) CUP J33C22001220001, admitted for funding by the MUR by Directorial Decree granting facilities No. 1053 of June 23, 2022, in response to Notice No. 3277 of 30/12/2021 "Public Notice for the submission of Intervention Proposals for the creation and strengthening of "innovation ecosystems", construction of "territorial leaders of R&D" - Ecosystems of Innovation - under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, Mission 4 Education and Research Component 2 From Research to Enterprise - Investment 1.5, funded by the European Union - NextGenerationEU"

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1. The RAISE Value Proposition: vision, targets, goals.

Artificial Intelligence and Robotics are extremely valuable realms to spur scientific and technological advancements. This is even more true if we think about how these can improve the use of digital technology across several sectors and the extent to which they come in aid when dealing with specific scenarios, such as *black swans* (for instance, pandemics or wars), *singularity paths* (journeys with such a high level of impact on technological progress that end up tackling different aspects of society), or on the *twin green and digital transitions* (actions simultaneously addressing the themes of climate change and digitalization with the final goal of building a more sustainable and competitive economy).

Within this configuration, RAISE was born as an innovation ecosystem (conceived by IIT, CNR, UniGe, with the participation of selected affiliates) to leverage the power of Robotics and AI to build a true hub of Innovation, with the mission of nurturing value both on a societal and economical level by bringing together Ligurian firms, institutions, and individuals with whom to give birth to new products, services, processes, ideas, and technologies.

The project targets several areas of interest, also known as “Spokes”. Each Spoke acts on a different area of interest: accessibility and inclusion in the urban context, personal and remote healthcare, environmental care and protection, smart ports, and Knowledge Transfer. Overall, the mission is to focus on taking care of the people living in the local territory, valuing their needs, and creating new innovative ways to tackle their issues: essentially, to better their quality of life and hopefully, that of the whole nation.

Also, due to its geographical and demographic configuration, the Ligurian territory perfectly lends itself to the project testing and its national spread. Among its strengths: the high level of specific professional figures such as scientists and engineers, the high level of robotics, the presence of biomedical and ICT industries, and that of three of the most important national seaports. On the other hand, some of the weaknesses include a low birth rate, a low ratio of innovative startups compared to the national total percentage, a low presence of startups, and almost no availability for them to incubate or accelerate their ideas through certified services.

In light of this, the project has three main purposes to reach:

- representing the skills and excellence of the proposing subjects;
- enhance the industrial vocation of the Ligurian territory;
- enhance the projects and infrastructure already based in the area.

As mentioned before, RAISE does not only aim at operating within the Ligurian territory, but also to spread across the whole national landscape, to respond to the needs of stakeholders within the field of innovative solutions. Thus, the vision is to become an established ecosystem able to attract target investors, firms, and researchers from all over the world. To pursue these goals, RAISE also aims at creating synergies with national players to enable the whole Italian landscape to benefit from the initiatives that the project will bring. Part of the funding, indeed, will be dedicated to Southern Italy, taking the project name of RAISE Connect.

Against this background, the ecosystem represents a sort of “engine” rewriting the basis of Italian industrialization - not only addressing the so-called “Digital Transformation”, but also going towards a further evolution where the looming “lack of hands” will be solved through a “Robotic Transformation” that requires strategic and technological support. In this sense, research, business, and the financial system need to rethink the way they develop in Italy, to tackle the energy challenge and, in line with the RRI approach promoted by EC, to include a solid ethical and human-centered design, by creating stable and virtuous connections among the actors involved and enacting an environment that favors innovation with high economic and social impact. Finally, RAISE has the ambitious objective of assuming a reference role in the outlined specialization area, at a national and international level.

2. Governance

The **Ecosystem hub, RAISE scarl** (defined below as “the Hub”) is the implementing body in charge of the project. The hub is an implementation body composed of 9 actors that respond to specific objectives of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) and covers specific Smart Specialization Strategy priority themes. These nine actors include: advisory board and scientific committee, respectively working on strategic guidance and scientific guidance, quality and control; a PMO office, dealing with administrative and financial management, with a board of directors at the center that deals with monitoring, evaluating, and decision-making; and finally, a research manager, handling, in turn, the different spokes.

On the other hand, Spokes are the implementing entities of the main hub, connecting the economic vocation and territorial needs of the Liguria region with high-potential applications in specialized areas such as robotic technologies, machine learning, artificial intelligence, and smart sensors. These spokes are defined as - on the one hand - the connecting elements between the needs of the territory and its economic vocation, while - on the other hand - as high-potential applications of the areas of specialization (robotic technologies, Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence, and smart sensors). They cover research and innovation activities, training, technology transfer, and dissemination of results.

While the project looks toward the digital and ecological transition, RAISE considers the centrality of the individual as an element that connects all the choices that underlie the ecosystem. More specifically:

Spoke 1. “Urban Technologies for Inclusive Engagement”, emphasizes the search for solutions to better the livability of the urban environment, in a context characterized by multiple categories of populations with specific needs

Spoke 2. “Smart Devices and Technologies for Personal and Remote Healthcare”, on the other hand, assumes a strategic value in responding to the needs of the aging population. **Spoke 3. “Environmental Caring & Protection Technologies, and Towards a Zero Emission Environment”** responds to the need of addressing some of the main fragilities of the Ligurian territory, such as hydrogeological and seismic risk and the quality of the marine environment. Furthermore, this spoke (as well as Spoke 4) aims at contributing to energy transition through more efficient use of energy and the development of renewable sources. **Spoke 4 “Smart and Sustainable Ports”** is dedicated to strengthening the economic engine of the Liguria region, i.e.

its port systems. This spoke has a strong focus on issues of safety and security, as well as on environmental sustainability, both concerning global climate objectives and the reduction of their negative environmental impacts on local communities and the environment.

Spoke 5. “An engine for Knowledge and Technology Transfer” represents a transversal objective aimed at maximizing the possible outcomes of scientific research, making the processes developed within RAISE long-lasting and self-reinforcing. More specifically, Spoke 5 focuses on accelerating the regional innovation ecosystem, thus multiplying the economic and social impact of the solutions developed within RAISE; provides management and technical capacity building to human capital, for supporting territorial knowledge competitiveness at a global scale; supports Spokes, from 1 to 4, in their transition towards the market, providing dedicated programs and procedures.

For further information please follow the URL:

<https://www.raiseliguria.it/chi-governa-ecosistema-hub>

Spokes coordinators will manage the definition and deployment of specific cascade funding instruments, including tender for service contracts, and call for grants.

3. Scope

Within the RAISE initiative, the Hub aims at setting up a **RAISE External Pool of Evaluators (REPE)** to:

- support the review process of the proposals received under the RAISE Spoke 5 cascade funding open calls for innovation;
- support the review process of the proposals received under the other RAISE Spokes (1-4) cascade funding calls.

Calls are published on the RAISE website at the URL www.raiseliguria.it

4. Profile of Evaluators

We are looking for experts in the domains of Robotics and Artificial Intelligence, with experience in evaluating EU-funded projects and a proven track record in the technical areas corresponding to the “RAISE Cascade Funding Open Calls for Innovation” addressed topics: sustainable, inclusive, and resilient technology solutions in the domains of robotics and artificial intelligence. For accessibility and inclusion in the urban context. For personal and remote healthcare. For environmental care and protection. For smart ports.

5. Activities required

Evaluators will help the Hub assess applications for funding, including tenders, and provide input on specific issues. They will provide remote services, including a neutral and objective scientific and/or business review of received applications.

The details of the activities to be carried out may vary from call to call and will be listed specifically in the document “Raise Cascade Funding - Open Calls for Innovation - Guide for Evaluators” and its annexes. Given slight differences between the calls, the document may vary for each call and will be provided to evaluators selected after each signature of a specific agreement (see below).

6. Conditions for assignment and contracting

It is mandatory to be registered in the REPE before being contracted as an expert. The Hub will set up and maintain the Pool. Implementing Bodies, namely, RAISE Spokes, will engage the pool according to the deployment of each Call for Proposals, and prior to being selected for a specific application, all evaluators will need to sign a non-conflict of interest declaration and a contract with the Spoke Coordinator managing the cascade funding call. Expressing interest in participating in this call for evaluators for the RAISE project does not create a binding commitment to the project itself.

Selection of evaluators to support the Spoke Coordinators in assessing proposals for the RAISE Open Calls will be done at a later stage, considering the number and origin of the proposals, the target domain, the evaluators' affiliations, expertise, and other criteria such as gender, age, and background. Additionally, frequent rotation of experts involved in proposal evaluations will have to be ensured. If chosen for an assignment, a contract will need to be signed.

Evaluators will be compensated for their time and work based on the number of proposals evaluated and the criteria set in the contract and all the related supporting documents.

By replying to this call and signing the contract, evaluators will agree to perform the assignments to the highest professional standards and in compliance with the requirements and related documents provided by RAISE in their version as published when signing the proposed contract itself.

7. Opening

Applications must be submitted only using the online module available at the following url

https://bit.ly/raise_evaluators



Please be informed that together with general information on your experience/expertise you will be required to upload an updated cv.

No deadline for submitting your Expression of Interest is foreseen, even if you should be aware of the importance of submitting it as soon as possible.

9. Further information

For further information please drop us a line at raisespk5@iit.it, cc: funding@raiseliguria.it.

10. Processing of personal data

All personal data of which RAISE scarl comes into possession during the completion of the procedures referred to in this notice will be treated in compliance with Legislative Decree n. 196/2003 and EU Regulation no. 2016/679. The information and relative acknowledgment can be found at the bottom of the application form.
