



FORTISSIMO
PLUS

Second Open Call for Innovation Studies

Financiación de retos de negocio que requieren IA generativa y supercomputación

- Official announcement: 3 December 2025
- Submit the proposal: **3 February - 25 February** or until **250** proposals have been received

• Ana Labrador, CESGA

Ana Labrador, CESGA. 16 Enero 2026



EuroHPC
Joint Undertaking

This project has received funding from the European High-Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (JU) under grant agreement No 101163317. The JU receives support from the Digital Europe Programme.



www.ffplus-project.eu

Fortissimo saga



Supporting SMEs competitiveness and innovation potential

- ❑ **FFplus OC2-T2:** a strategic financial bridge between high-level **AI proficiency and large-scale*** computational power

*pre-exascale and exascale

*Scaling tech-savvy **AI expertise** into transformative, market-ready **success stories***

Digital Europe

Digital technology to businesses, citizens and public administrations

EuroHPC JU. Call: DIGITAL-EUROHPC-JU-2023-SME-01

Supporting competitiveness and innovation potential of SMEs

FFPlus (Fortissimo Plus)



FORTISSIMO
PLUS

Consortium of 7 HPC expert organisations:

CINECA: Italy, 1969	WP3 - Projects Oversight
Cyfronet (AGH University): Poland, 1973	
ARCTUR: Slovenia, 1992	WP5 - Success Stories
CESGA: Spain, 1993	
HLRS: Germany, 1996	WP1 - Project Coordinator
scapos: Germany, 2002	WP2 - Open Call Management
Teratec: France, 2005	WP4 - Business and exploitation

CINECA



ARCTUR



scapos



ENFOQUE FORTISSIMO

Objetivo

Demostrar cómo las pymes europeas pueden obtener beneficios reales al aplicar HPC (supercomputación) a retos concretos de negocio.

¿Cómo?

- A través de experimentos empresariales, liderados por pymes
- Con apoyo técnico de organizaciones especializadas
- Financiados por convocatorias abiertas y competitivas

Resultado esperado:

- Impacto directo en productividad, costes, innovación...
- Generación de historias de éxito que sirvan como inspiración
- Visibilidad del valor de HPC en el tejido empresarial europeo



Evolución: Fortissimo → Fortissimo 2 → FF4EuroHPC → FFplus: T1 & T2

ENFOQUE FFPLUS

Objetivos Generales (The Big Picture)

- Empoderar a las pymes y startups europeas con capacidades computacionales avanzadas basadas en HPC
- Impulsar la innovación y aumentar la competitividad
- Superar los desafíos de la **digitalización de procesos de I+D y de negocio**
- Optimizar la **excelencia técnica (HPC)** y el **planteamiento estratégico de negocio** para fundamentar la viabilidad comercial y una **visión de éxito** clara, respaldada por una **capacidad técnica** demostrada y **planes de explotación** sólidos

Objetivos Específicos (como se alcanzarán los objetivos)

- Ejecutando **6 convocatorias abiertas**:
 - 3 para **Business Experiments** (experimentos empresariales) - T1
 - 3 para **Innovation Studies** (estudios de innovación basados en IA generativa) - T2
- Poniendo a disposición de las pymes **24 M€ de presupuesto (FSTP)**

Resultados Esperados (impacto esperado)

- Generación de historias de éxito que demuestren el impacto real del HPC.
- Crecimiento de la base de usuarios de HPC entre pymes europeas.
- Transferencia de conocimiento y fortalecimiento del ecosistema digital SME.

FFplus Open Calls. **PROJECTS TYPES: T1 & T2**

Solve your business challenges and shift to the next level with the help of HPC!

Business experiments (T1)

Adopción (Uptake) inicial de HPC para resolver retos de negocio.

Entidades innovadoras **sin experiencia previa** en de HPC.

HPC **estándar** para demostrar impacto empresarial.

Objetivo Estratégico

Perfil de la PYME

Recursos Computacional

Enhance your innovation potential by leveraging HPC-enabled Generative AI!

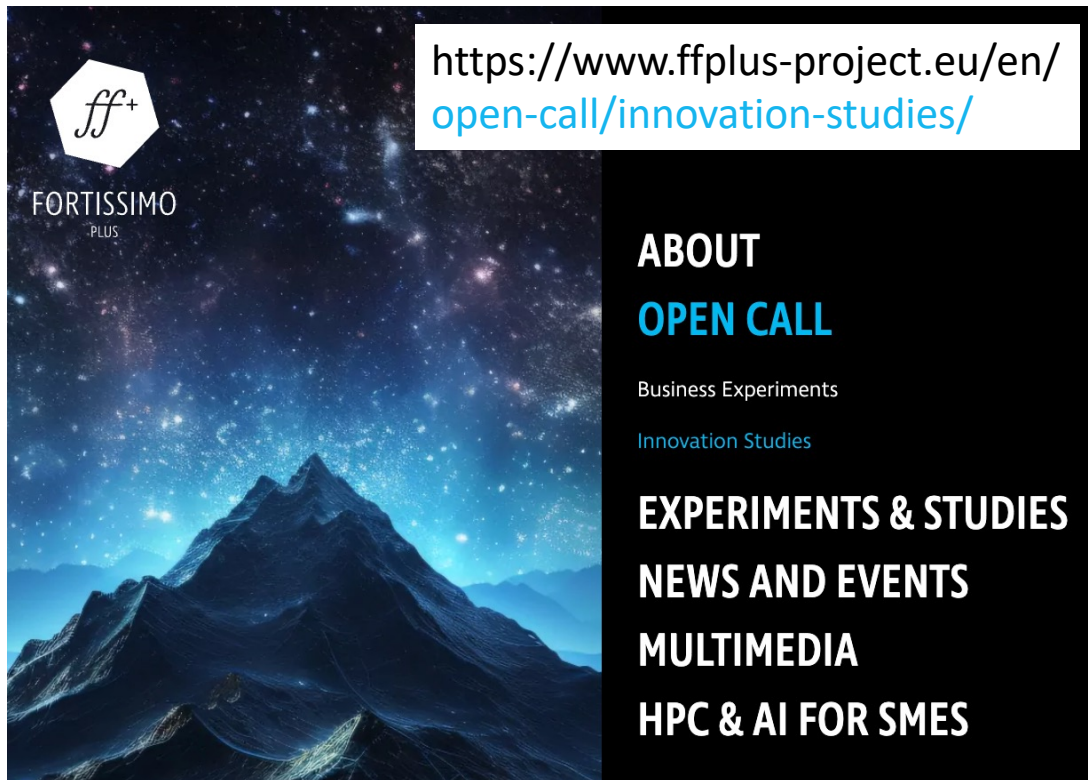
Innovation studies (T2)

Escalar (Scaling up) modelos de IA Generativa usando supercomputación.

PYMES "**tech-savvy**" altamente competentes en IA, software y datos.

HPC a gran escala (*pre-exascale* y *exascale*).

FFPLUS OC2 – T2



✉ ffplus-call2-t2@scapos.eu

The complete announcement and Proposer's Guide [pdf](#)

The bridge between the EU's strategic goals ("what it wants") and the technical evidence required from applicants ("how you prove it").

The guide acts as a roadmap that transforms high-level policy objectives into a **mandatory set of expectations** and **evaluation criteria**.

Core Questions:

1. What is this call about?
2. What is expected from applicants?
3. Who is eligible?
4. How proposals are evaluated?

16 January 2026



STRATEGIC FIT AND TECHNICAL PILLARS: ROADMAP TO A SUCCESSFUL T2 PROPOSAL

1. What is this call about?

- Who it's for?
- What it supports?
- What it aims to achieve?

2. What is expected from applicants?

- Strategic Fit
- Planning & Execution
- Resources & Budget
- Data protection & Risk Management

3. Who is eligible?

4. How proposals are evaluated?

5. Funding Conditions?

6. HPC Access Opportunities?

7. Proposal submission

Who it's for?

- European Tech-savvy (technologically mature) SMEs and start-ups having:
 1. **Expertise in Generative AI**, professional software development, and data processing.
 2. AI-driven business model needing **large-scale computational resources** (pre-exascale/exascale) to **scale up their technology**

What it supports?

- **Generative AI Focus:** foundation models, Large Language Models (LLMs), or other generative methods.
- **Development Flexibility:** models from scratch, **fine-tuning or customisation**.
- **ML Lifecycle work plan structure:** data preparation, model engineering (development), and model evaluation.
- **Model deployment, commercial exploitation, or operation are explicitly out of scope.**

What it aims to achieve?

- ☐ **Strengthen EU AI Technology Landscape**

To facilitate and support the technological development of European SMEs specifically within the **generative AI arena**.

- ☐ **Enhanced Innovation Potential**

To allow SMEs to overcome technical obstacles (such as scaling issues) that prevented them from innovating sooner.

- ☐ **Demonstrable Business Impact. Commercial Viability**

To prove that leveraging supercomputing for AI leads to tangible **real-world benefits**, such as additional income, new business models, or decreased costs.

- ☐ **Pan-European Visibility**

Creation of **Success Stories** to inspire the broader European SME ecosystem by showcasing how supercomputing solved specific AI challenges. It also emphasises addressing **societal and environmental impacts**

FFplus OC2 – T2. **EXPECTATIONS** (What is Expected from Applicants?) 1/3

- ❑ Expectations to ensure that proposals address the specific **technical and strategic demands** of scaling **Generative AI** using European supercomputing.
- Found in **Proposer's Guide.pdf**.
- Reinforced in the **Part B Proposal Template**.
- Cross-referenced in the **Evaluation Check-list**.

Strategic Fit?

Aligned with FFplus objectives of empowering European SMEs through advanced computational capabilities in the area of generative AI.

- Motivate the decision to use **generative AI** as the specific **solution to a business**.
- Explain the **need for HPC** (systems and advanced services).
- **Business Challenge Justification:** Clearly define the tangible business need and why HPC is necessary.
- **Vision of Success:** Detail how the use of pre-exascale or exascale HPC will lead to a **positive business impact**, including defined value propositions and the process of value creation.
- **Innovation Potential:** The study is expected to significantly enhance the **innovation potential** of the SME, rather than just repeating existing activities.
- **Success Stories:** Commit to support FFplus dissemination to clearly identify the business benefits and technical milestones achieved.
- **Demonstrate timeliness** justify why the proposed development is **imperative and timely**. identifying the obstacles that previously prevented this progress.

Planning & Execution

- Studies have a maximum duration of **10 months**.
- Define a **work plan** with specific **objectives**.
- **The ML Lifecycle**. The work plan must cover data preparation, model engineering/development, and technical evaluation.
- **Reproducibility and Metrics**. Performance metrics and benchmarks to establish baselines and ensure experiment reproducibility.
- Mandatory Intermediate **Impact Report** is due at **Month 7** to evaluate future extension eligibility.
- **Consortium Structure**. All consortium parties (Max. 3) must be involved on the action plan.
- **Technical Excellence**.

“While the studies aim for market readiness, the sources clarify that **model exploitation, deployment, and operation** are themselves out of scope for FFplus funding.

The project focuses on the **innovation and development phase**, ensuring the developed models are technically validated and ready for future commercial scaling.”

Resources & Budget

- **Large-Scale HPC Use:** Justify their need for pre-exascale or exascale resources that clearly exceed standard "playground" access, i.e. more than 5,000 GPU hours
- **Resource Gap Analysis:** You must demonstrate how the requested personnel and computing resources fill current gaps in your implementation processes.
- **Consistency:** Budget information must be perfectly consistent between the administrative and technical parts.
- **Clear roles** defined for each partner.
- Specify needed **resources** (hardware, node hours, EuroHPC system) **and associated costs**.

Data protection & Risk Management

- **Trustworthy AI:** Declare potential risks related to unfairness, bias, hallucinations, and model drift in line with EU guidelines for trustworthy AI.
- **Data Availability:** A suitable training dataset is already available.
- **Comprehensive Data Management Plan (DMP):** Policies for data access, usage, sharing, and disposal while incorporating FAIR principles.
- **Ethics and GDPR:** Declare any data protection issues and specify mechanisms to ensure the experiment adheres to European law (GDPR). Security and Privacy.

FFplus OC2 – T2. **ELIGIBILITY** (Who is eligible?)

- **Organisation Type**
 - Only SMEs and start-ups (as defined by the European Commission) can be the "Main Participant".
- **Organisations Geographic Origin**
 - EU Member State or a country associated with the Digital Europe Programme
- **Legal Status**
 - Funding is only available to legal organisations.
 - Natural persons (individuals) are strictly ineligible
 - The 7 FFplus project beneficiaries are prohibited from participating as either Main or Supporting participants.
- **Consortium Structure**
 - The consortium is limited to a maximum of 3 partners.
 - The Main Participant business challenge drive the experiment.
 - Single-member consortia must prove it has all necessary competencies as an entity.
- **Extension Eligibility**
 - SMEs from OC1-T2 are only eligible if their Month 7 impact report was ranked in the top 70% of studies.

Proposal content

1. Summary (0.5 pages)
2. Industrial relevance, potential impact (including societal impact) and exploitation plans (3.5 pages)
3. Description of the work plan, technological/algorithmic approach, and software development strategy – please refer to the “Expectations” section above (5 pages)
4. Quality of the consortium as a whole and of the individual proposers (1-2 pages)
5. Justification of costs and resources (1-2 pages)

1) **Impact**

- Business and industrial relevance
- Potential societal relevance
- Exploitation plans
- Alignment with FFplus call objectives

2) **Excellence**

- Conceptual and Technical Excellence: Focuses on ML lifecycle, model architecture, scaling, reproducibility.
- Soundness of the concept
- Degree of innovation
- Quality of the work plan

3) **Implementation/ Consortium & Resources**

- Workplan and data management plan.
- Capacity to execute the work.
- Effective and justified deployment of resources. Data Management: Includes mandatory assessment of FAIR principles and trustworthy AI (bias, drift, etc.)

CRITERIA

Scoring Details (max. 15 points)

- Scoring Scale: Each criterion scored 0–5
- Threshold per criterion : 3
- Overall Acceptance Threshold: 10
- **Tiebreakers (in order):**
 - 1) Impact
 - 2) Excellence
 - 3) Implementation
 - 4) Total requested funding

- **External Expertise:** All proposals are evaluated by independent, external experts with demonstrated competency in the specific field of the proposal.

Submission and Evaluation Procedure

1. proposal submission;
2. admissibility/eligibility check of the proposal;
3. first-stage evaluation (initial ranking) of proposals (if applicable);
4. final selection (second-stage evaluation) of the proposals (CR);
5. Funding Decision

Template for the funding agreement

Non-negotiable: no changes or modifications are permitted

Distribution of Funding

- Consortium: Max. €300,000
- MP: Max. €200,000
- **SP: Max. €150,000 per study.**
- MP: gets at least 50% of the total funding.
- SP: can only claim technical/engineering tasks.

Not funding for:

- Business consultancy or sub-contracting
- Marketing or adm. tasks
- other non-technical/non-engineering services

Funding model: Digital Europe regulations

100% funding of the eligible **Direct costs** for executing the experiment.

Indirect costs (overheads) will not be funded.

“Large-scale AI training is **prohibitively expensive** not just because of hardware, but because of the **expert engineering effort** required to port and optimise workflows for exascale environments. FFplus funds this human expertise, while the EuroHPC JU provides the “**free of charge**” **computational fuel**.”

FFplus OC2 – T2. **FUNDING** (Funding Conditions)

2/2

Budget module	Additional details
Personnel	Personnel costs need to be commensurate with the work to be performed
Equipment	Depreciation costs only. Only specialized equipment necessary for conducting the innovation study is permitted. Costs for common-use equipment such as laptops, monitors, etc., are not eligible.
Travel	Travel must be justified in terms of the necessity for performance of the proposed innovation study work plan.
HPC compute capacity	Compute Resources need to be justified. Ideally, EuroHPC systems will be used for the work. A decision not to apply for access to the EuroHPC systems should be duly justified.
Material	1. Costs for acquiring specialised SW licenses for conducting the innovation study (licenses for general office software, for example, are not eligible). 2. Costs for acquiring or using data sets or collections needed to conduct the innovation study.

- ❑ Model **exploitation, deployment or operation** are all **out of scope** of activities eligible to be funded by the FFplus project.
- ❑ **Revenue** generated through **deployment of the developed** model during the funding phase of the study needs to be reported and **impacts the final funding** of the study.

- ❑ The innovation studies will receive support from the project with a range of actions relating to **interactions** with the project and also relating to potential **collaborations** with other sub-projects.
- ❑ Furthermore, **direct support** for each individual innovation study will be provided relating to **gaining access** to EuroHPC JU-provided computing resources and **technical** consultation relating to the **effective execution** of the innovation study **work plan**.

FFplus OC2 – T2. **HPC ACCESS OPPORTUNITIES?**

❑ **LARGE-SCALE HPC NECESSITY**

✓ EUROHPC JU FREE ACCESS

- FFplus provides FUNDING to perform the HPC experiments
- FFplus does not provide HPC access
- FFplus does not have reserved allocation on EuroHPC systems

✓ **FFplus offers:**

- ✓ **Technical consultation** for the effective **execution of the work plan.**
- ✓ **Guidance and assistance** in selecting and applying for the appropriate EuroHPC **JU access schemes** (specifically the AI Factories scheme).

EUROHPC Calls

- EuroHPC Supercomputers Access
- **AI Factories Access Calls**

“The innovation studies will receive support from the project with a range of actions relating to **interactions** with the project and also relating to potential **collaborations** with other sub-projects.

Furthermore, direct support for each individual innovation study will be provided relating to gaining access to EuroHPC JU-provided computing resources and technical consultation relating to the effective execution of the innovation study work plan. “

Use only these Downloadable Proposal Templates:

<https://www.ffplus-project.eu/en/open-call/innovation-studies/>

Part A: submit as Excel

Spreadsheet with administrative info and participants contacts details

Part B: submit as PDF

Technical description* & breakdown of the proposal **budget (embedded Excel)**
(max. **13 pages**, excl. cover. File size limit: 5.0 MB, **11-point Arial**)

1. Do not include additional information/pages — it will be rejected without evaluation.
2. Do not change the Part A excel template
3. Check Consistency Between Part A and Part B
4. Follow the structure and instructions in the call documents and available material as FAQ and evaluation criteria guidelines
5. Helpdesk: ffplus-call2-t2@scapos.eu

*should only include tasks for the **technical management** of the study activities.

The management **structure** in the framework of the FFplus project **will be established** for the successful proposals.

FFplus. Stay Connected

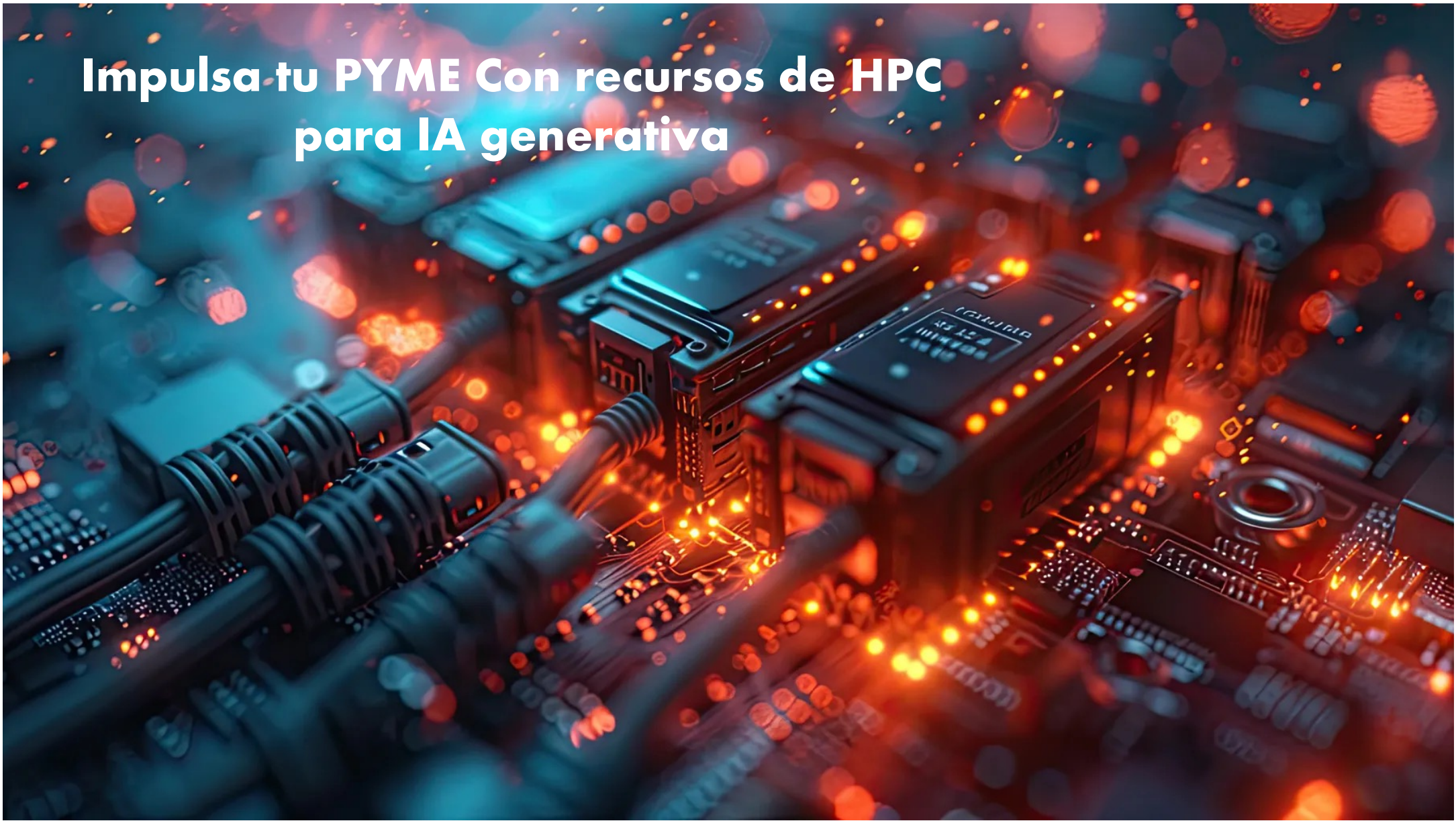
- Project site: www.ffplus-project.eu
- Social media: @ffplusproject
LinkedIn & YouTube
- Subscribe to FFplus newsletter
- Get inspired:
<https://www.ff4eurohpc.eu/en/success-stories/>

The screenshot displays the 'INNOVATION STUDIES' section of the FFplus portal. At the top, there are search filters for 'Search by name', 'Sector', 'Country', and 'Technology'. A dropdown menu for 'Technology' is open, showing options: LLM, CFD, HPC, and AI. Another dropdown menu for 'Sector' is also open, showing options: Manufacturing, Digital Transformation, Info / Media / Research, Medicine, MedTech, Insurance, Geospatial, and Energy. Below the filters, a grid of project cards is visible. Some of the project titles include: 'Generative Craniofacial Reconstruction as a Game-Changing Tool for Forensic Human Identification', 'DOSIMETREYE: A GenAI-based Tool for 3D Dosimetry from 2D Imaging for Preclinical Studies', 'Generative AI-based Co-Pilot Citizen in Energy Transition: Benefits of HPC', 'Assisted Low-code Generation and Optimization', 'BankOPT is the Specialized LLM for Finance and Banking in Europe', 'Locally Deployable Enterprise Search and Q&A Solution', 'Multimodal Foundation Model for German Property Invoice Checking', 'A Hybrid AI Model for Resolving Molecular Structures Integrating Sequence and Cryo-Electron Microscopy Data', 'On Device AI Assistant: Real-Time API Interactions with Intelligence', 'FF4EuroHPC Success Stories: SME Innovation Through HPC', and 'Adaptive Prompt Routing and Hallucination Detection for Enhanced Multilingual Open-Source LLMs'. A large image on the right side of the grid shows a circuit board with the text 'FF4EuroHPC Success Stories' and '2nd Edition'.

16 January 2026



**Impulsa tu PYME Con recursos de HPC
para IA generativa**



"GOLD THREAD" OF STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Conceptual draft!

1) You are a **tech-savvy SME or start-up**.

The "Who": Eligibility & Consortium Quality

Reflected In:

- **Eligibility:** Mandatory status as an SME/start-up established in EU/Associated countries.
- **Evaluation (Consortium):** Scored on the **documented proficiency** of staff in **Generative AI, professional software development, and data processing**.
- **Proposal (Section 4):** You must prove you have an **existing AI business model** that will benefit from this development

2) You are solving a **business challenge** using a full **ML**

The "What": Excellence & Work Plan

Reflected In:

- **Proposal (Section 3):** Work plan must be structured around **data preparation, model engineering, and evaluation**.
- **Evaluation (Excellence):** Scored on **conceptual soundness** and technical requirements (model size, hyperparameters, and architecture).
- **Deliverables:** Mandatory submission of an **Intermediate Impact Report at Month 7** to qualify for future extensions.

3) You require **Large-Scale European HPC** to overcome technical bottlenecks.

The "Scale": Resources & Implementation

Reflected In:

- **Proposal (Section 5):** You must justify why your needs **exceed standard "playground" access** and require pre-exascale/exascale resources.
- **Evaluation (Implementation):** Scored on the **justification for computation resources** and their link to the work plan.
- **Constraint:** Direct costs only; **subcontracting is ineligible** for T2

4) Your results create **market-ready success stories** for the European ecosystem

The "Value": Impact & Success Stories

Reflected In:

- **Evaluation (Impact):** The highest priority criterion; assesses **commercial viability** and **value creation**.
- **Proposal (Section 2):** Must substantiate expected impact with **market figures** and plans for **dissemination**.
- **Obligation:** Commitment to providing multimedia data for **public success stories** (logos, videos, team images).