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GENE

Gene Therapy Accelerator

From research translation to market-ready gene therapies

Contents

1. Call Summary

Key Dates	
Call Opening	05 March 2026
Call deadline	03 April 2026*
Evaluation of the participants	06-13 April 2026*
Gene Therapy Accelerator	22 April – 13 May 2026
Demo Day	20 May 2026

Target Audience
○ Academic researchers and research teams ○ Early-stage start-ups and spin-offs ○ Clinical innovators and healthcare professionals

The Course	
Week 01 22-April	**From Research to Innovation Pathways:** ○ Gene Therapy Landscape ○ Tech Transfer and Intellectual Property in Health, ○ HealthCare Business Basics
Week 02 29-April	**Regulatory Frameworks, Product Development, and Funding** ○ EU regulation landscape ○ Regional Innovation Strategies, Funding Opportunities, policy alignment, and ecosystem development
Week 03 6-May	**Business strategy and entrepreneurship** ○ Business Modelling and Market Analysis
Week 04 13-May	**Pitch Training:** ○ How to Pitch to Investors ○ Communication and Public Speaking. ○ Reverse Pitching
Final Day 20-May	**DEMO DAY** Participants will present their ideas in a pitch competition format, demonstrating the innovation, marketing strategy, and stakeholder engagement strategies they developed throughout the course

Training Type/ Modality
○ Presencial at IPN

Submissions Form
○ Gene Therapy Accelerator Form

*These dates may be changed depending on the number of applications received and/or if the call deadline is extended.

2. GeneH Project

Project acronym	GeneH
Project title	Excellence Hub for Advancing Innovation in Gene Therapy
Project number	101186939
Funding scheme	HORIZON-CSA - HORIZON Coordination and Support Actions
Funding program	HORIZON.4.1 - Widening participation and spreading excellence Topic: HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-07-01 - Excellence Hubs

The GeneH project is designed to bridge the gap between advanced gene therapy research and real-world clinical application. It does so by fostering a robust, transnational innovation ecosystem that unites key stakeholders across two widening countries: Portugal and Slovenia.

At its core, GeneH is driven by the ambition to transform Europe's capacity to deliver safe, effective, and accessible gene therapy solutions. The project brings together a powerful consortium composed of top-tier academic institutions, biotechnology firms, regional development agencies, policy makers, healthcare providers, and patient organizations. Together, these actors form an integrated "4-Helix" innovation model — academia, industry, public authorities, and civil society — to ensure cross-sectoral collaboration and systemic change.
The project is anchored in two complementary Research Institutes of Excellence: The University of Coimbra (UC) in Portugal and the National Institute of Chemistry (KI) in Slovenia. These institutions serve as foundational nodes in a wider network that includes infrastructure for clinical translation, GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) facilities, technology transfer capabilities, innovation accelerators, and training programs.

Key project pillars include:

- Promoting cross-sector collaboration (between academia, industry, public authorities, and society) to ensure a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach
- Accelerating research, development, and innovation (RDI) in novel gene therapies
- Bridging the gap between scientific discovery and clinical application
- Addressing regulatory, policy, and financial barriers
- Enhancing education and training in gene therapy
- Increasing public and patient engagement to ensure the voices and needs of affected individuals are considered

The GeneH project is positioned to generate high-impact scientific results, establish long-lasting transnational partnerships, influence health policy, and provide a replicable model for future excellence hubs across Europe.

3. SCOPE

3.1 Programme Overview

The Gene Therapy Accelerator aims to identify and support high-potential teams in the field of gene therapy, accelerating the translation of research findings into clinically relevant and commercially viable products and services.

This is a four-week intensive training programme designed to empower participants with the essential skills, knowledge, and connections to thrive in the fast-paced healthcare industry. This programme offers a dynamic blend of interactive workshops, expert-led mentoring sessions, and hands-on group projects, diving deep into key aspects of innovation and entrepreneurship, specifically tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities within the healthcare sector.

To achieve this overarching goal, the programme pursues the following objectives:

- **Strengthen translational and entrepreneurial capacity** by providing structured guidance on technology transfer, intellectual property management, and business development, tailored to the specificities of the biotechnology and gene therapy sectors.
- **Enhance regulatory and industrial readiness** by familiarizing teams with applicable regulatory frameworks and supporting informed decision-making in early development stages.
- **Increase visibility and stakeholder engagement** by creating opportunities for teams to showcase their innovations to industry partners, regulators, investors, and other key actors.
- **Facilitate access to funding and investment** by connecting participants with diverse financing opportunities, including grants, venture capital, angel investors, and public funding instruments.
- **Strengthen ecosystem integration and collaboration** across academia, industry, clinical institutions, regulators, and patient associations, ensuring that accelerated projects contribute to sustainable innovation, patient access, and Europe's long-term leadership in gene therapy.
- **Promote personal and professional development** of participants by fostering key soft skills, including leadership, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, and by strengthening the ability to work effectively within multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral teams.

3.2 Target Audience

The Gene Therapy Accelerator is designed to attract diverse stakeholders from the gene therapy ecosystem, ensuring that promising ideas and technologies are supported along their pathway to commercialization. Its target participants reflect the multidisciplinary nature of gene therapy innovation, combining scientific excellence, entrepreneurial drive, and societal engagement.

- **Academic researchers and research teams**: Scientists and research groups developing gene therapy projects with translational potential, particularly those seeking to advance discoveries from the laboratory towards clinical or industrial applications.

- **Early-stage start-ups and spin-offs:** Newly created companies emerging from universities, research centers, or incubators, with innovative approaches in gene therapy and a need for structured support in business development, regulatory navigation, and market entry.
- **Clinical innovators and healthcare professionals:** Physicians, clinicians, and hospital-based innovators developing solutions that bridge research and patient care, including novel therapeutic approaches, delivery strategies, or implementation models.

3.3 Programmatic Content

The Gene Therapy Accelerator will run over four weeks, complemented by a Demo Day, and will total 36-40 hours (approximately 8 hours per week, plus 4 hours for the Demo Day).

The programme follows a blended format combining guest presentations on key topics, interactive workshops, mentoring sessions, group work, and practical assignments (deliverables). Teams will be allowed to work on each deliverable till the following session, with support from dedicated mentors. This structure enables a balance between collective learning and tailored, one-to-one guidance, while offering sufficient flexibility to accommodate participants' professional and academic commitments.

The curriculum is designed to guide teams from research translation towards market readiness progressively. Core topics will include:

- Technology transfer and intellectual property management (week 01);
- Regulatory compliance for advanced therapy medicinal products (ATMPs) and product development aligned with best practices and quality standards (week 02);
- Business strategy and entrepreneurship (week 03);
- Funding, sustainability strategies, and investor engagement (week 04).

The programme will culminate in a Demo Day, during which teams will present their projects to a panel of investors, different stakeholders in the field (as industry representatives, regulators, and clinicians), and GeneH consortium members. This final event will provide visibility, foster networking, and open pathways for future collaboration and investment, positioning teams to take the next step in their innovation journey.

Week 01

From Research to Innovation Pathways: Gene Therapy Landscape, Tech Transfer and Intellectual Property, HealthCare Business Basics

Deliverable: IP Roadmap

Week 02

Regulatory Frameworks, Product Development and Funding: EU regulation landscape, Regional Innovation Strategies, Funding Opportunities, policy alignment, and ecosystem development

Deliverable: Product and Regulatory

Week 03

Business Strategy and Market Analysis: Business Modelling and Market Analysis

Deliverable: Business Model definition and competitor analysis

Week 04

Pitch Training: How to Pitch to Investors, Communication and Public Speak.

Deliverable: Pitch Deck.

Pitch Day

Final Day: Participants will present their startup ideas in a pitch competition format, demonstrating the innovation, marketing strategy, and stakeholder engagement strategies they developed throughout the course

3.4 Experts and Contributors

The Gene Therapy Accelerator will be supported by a structured and robust mentoring model based on a dual-support approach, combining thematic mentors with dedicated tutors. This model ensures both specialized, topic-driven expertise and continuous, individualized guidance throughout the program.

Regarding thematic mentors, the program will leverage the quadruple helix structure of the GeneH Excellence Hub, mobilizing expertise from academia, industry, regulatory and clinical practice, public authorities, and civil society:

- **Academic and Scientific Experts**: Researchers working in gene therapy (UC, KI) will provide scientific depth and feedback on translational potential in gene therapy.
- **Industry and Entrepreneurial Leaders**: Representatives from innovation hubs, biotech and pharmaceutical companies (IPN, Biocant, Bluepharma, SIH, JAFRAL, and BioSistemika) will share practical insights on commercialization, market positioning, and scaling strategies.
- **Regulatory and Clinical Specialists**: Experts connected to regulatory authorities and clinical practice (ULS Coimbra) will guide teams through ATMP frameworks, compliance requirements, and patient-centered innovation.
- **Regional and Policy Experts:** Representatives from public authorities (CCDRC, RRA LUR) will provide guidance on regional innovation strategies, funding opportunities, policy alignment, and ecosystem development, supporting teams in navigating the regional and broader European innovation landscape.
- **Societal and Patient Representatives:** Contributors from patient associations and civil society (APAHE, ZOPS) will ensure that innovations remain aligned with ethical standards, societal needs, and public trust.

3.5 Resources and Tools

Participants will have access to a comprehensive set of resources and tools, including training materials, mentorship support, templates for programme deliverables, physical facilities for on-site activities, and a dedicated digital collaboration platform.

Training materials and templates will be provided by both internal and external trainers and will be made available through IPN's Moodle platform. The platform supports communication between teams and mentors, submission of deliverables, and continued access to materials after the programme concludes, ensuring long-term value for participants.