

NATIONAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT
AND INNOVATION FUND

2026 PROGRAMME STRATEGY

NOVEMBER 2025



MINISTRY OF CULTURE
AND INNOVATION

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NATIONAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT
AND INNOVATION OFFICE
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NATIONAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION FUND 2026 PROGRAMME STRATEGY

In accordance with the provisions of Act LXXVI of 2014 on scientific research, development and innovation (hereinafter: RDI Act, domestic public funding schemes managed by the NRDI Office are financed from the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund (hereinafter: NRDI Fund), according to the portfolio of competitive funding schemes set out by the NRDI Office in the NRDI Fund's annual Programme Strategy.

The Programme Strategy for 2026 proposes a total budget of **HUF 118.287 billion** for the launch and management of new calls financed by the NRDI Fund.

The committed budget for programmes announced in 2025, to be implemented under the 2026 Programme Strategy, is **HUF 32.22 billion**.

In addition to and complementing the schemes set out in the 2026 Programme Strategy of the NRDI Fund, the Hungarian RDI ecosystem will also be supported by the RDI calls to be announced in the fourth quarter of 2025 and opened in the first quarter of 2026 under Priority 2 "Research, Development and Innovation" of the Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme (EDIOP) Plus, including the re-opened phases of previously announced schemes. With the financing provided under Priority 2 of the operational programme, a total of **HUF 261 billion** in non-refundable funding will become available in the fourth quarter of 2025 and throughout 2026 to the stakeholders of the Hungarian innovation ecosystem. In addition to standard calls for proposals, two capital programmes, with a total budget of **more than HUF 73 billion**, will also be launched with support from EDIOP Plus. These financial instruments aim to foster the growth of startups with high innovation potential, as well as enterprises building on scientific results and capable of achieving technological breakthroughs (Deep Tech companies).

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PROGRAMME STRATEGY

The 2026 Programme Strategy contributes to the implementation of Hungary's Research, Development and Innovation Strategy (2021–2030), supports the RDI measures of the medium-term policy strategy “Shifting of Gears in Higher Education”, and takes into account the priority sectors of Hungary's Competitiveness Strategy 2024–2030.

Hungary's Research, Development and Innovation Strategy (2021–2030) sets the target for R&D expenditure to reach 3% of GDP by 2030. A key instrument for achieving this target is the NRDIFund and its respective Programme Strategy. The NRDIFund provides the largest share of public R&D expenditures, yet, at the same time, the funding system prioritizes the increased involvement and encouragement of non-governmental funding sources, too. Both Hungary's Research, Development and Innovation Strategy and the Programme Strategy of the NRDIFund are aligned with the overarching National Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) 2021–2027, which identified Hungary's territorial strengths and national economic and horizontal priorities in the fields of RDI, business development and digitalisation.

The primary consideration for the programmes and funding schemes outlined in the 2026 Programme Strategy, is to maximize their contribution to the strategic objective of positioning Hungary among the top 25 most innovative countries in the world by 2030 and among the top 10 by 2040, according to the Global Innovation Index (GII).

The 2026 Programme Strategy contributes to the achievement of the main objectives set by the RDI policy up to 2030:



The headcount of researchers and developers per million inhabitants should reach **9000**.



Every second enterprise should innovate.



One in four innovative businesses should cooperate with universities and research institutes.



The number of patent applications filed under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) should reach **3.5 per 1 billion** in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) of GDP.

THE INTERVENTION LOGIC OF THE PROGRAMME STRATEGY

The 2026 Programme Strategy has a three-year horizon, setting out the programmes to be announced on an annual basis and those to be announced on a multi-annual cycle.

In accordance with the foregoing, the following **annual programmes** will be launched in **2026**:

- under the **Innovation Sub-fund**: Industrial property call, as well as international bilateral and EU partnership programmes
- under the **Research Sub-fund**: University Research Scholarship Programme (EKÖP), National Research Excellence Programme (NKKP)
- under the **Missions Sub-fund**: HU-rizon Programme, support for increased utilisation of international and domestic research infrastructures.

Following the multi-year cycle, the following **programmes will be re-launched in 2026**:

- under the **Innovation Sub-fund**: Startup Factory
- under the **Research Sub-fund**: Scientific Patronage Programme re-structured into a two-year cycle programme based on experience gained from previous calls.

A further important aspect of the design of the programmes and calls presented in the Programme Strategy is to ensure that they are consistent with the RDI calls for proposals planned under Priority 2 of the EDIOP Plus programme, in order to ensure that the interventions reinforce or complement each other.

The calls for proposals included in the NRDIFund's Programme Strategy are closely aligned with certain schemes under the EDIOP Plus (GINOP Plusz), of which the following are particularly noteworthy:

- The call for proposals **EDIOP Plus-2.1.6-25 Large Company Focus Area Innovation Programme** mirrors the technology development component of the NRDIFund's call for proposal launched in 2024 under code number 2024-1.1.2-NAGYVÁLL_FÓKUSZ, launched from the NRDIFund in 2024.
- The **Life Sciences Programme** supports translational projects across various sectors of the healthcare industry within the framework of calls funded by the NRDIFund and the EDIOP Plus. The NRDIFund's relevant schemes focus on exploratory research and preclinical phases of drug development, while the call for proposals EDIOP Plus-2.1.5-25 specifically supports Phase I clinical trials in drug development, as well as the advancement of medical technology and diagnostic devices.
- The call for proposals **EDIOP Plus-2.2.1-25**, published with a total budget of HUF 26 billion in October 2025, supports the complex development and expansion of domestic research infrastructures, primarily through laboratory development and the expansion of the research equipment pool. The call aims to achieve more efficient and effective research processes through strengthened research infrastructures, thereby promoting the more active involvement of Hungarian researchers in international RDI collaborations. In addition, research infrastructures should contribute to the inward transfer of international knowledge (brain circulation) and, through their services, help to strengthen the economic competitiveness of businesses and in the given region.

INNOVATION SUB-FUND

Dedicated funding for financing healthcare industry projects that are more complex and riskier than average was previously available only to a limited extent, even though this sector is considered a national economic priority. The commercialisation of new technologies in the fields of drug development, biotechnology and medical device development is a lengthy, high-risk and extremely capital-intensive process that market and academic stakeholders are often unable to finance on their own. Targeted state involvement in health industry RDI enables Hungarian researchers and businesses to pursue internationally competitive projects that contribute directly to improved healthcare and quality of life, and reinforce Hungary's scientific and economic positions in this domain. For this reason, the 2026 Programme Strategy of the NRDIFund introduces three programmes specifically tailored to the unique needs of the healthcare industry:

- The general objective of the **Life Sciences Catalyst Programme** is to support health-related projects that can offer new therapeutic solutions to critical, unmet clinical needs. The calls financed from the NRDIFund under the Life Sciences Catalyst Programme were prepared and launched in 2025. However, their funding will be implemented under the 2026 Programme Strategy. The two calls of the Life Sciences Catalyst Programme support drug development projects in Hungary from exploratory research through the preclinical phase, that is, prior to the commencement of human clinical trials.
- In 2025, a new call was prepared, the **MEDTECH Hospital Incubator Program**, which aims to incubate innovative solutions emerging in hospitals and other healthcare institutions, through the public-private financing model of the technology incubators. The programme will be financed under the 2026 Programme Strategy framework.
- In the 2026 Programme Strategy, non-refundable funding targeting the life sciences and health industry are complemented by a **university-focused venture capital programme** specifically designed for these sectors. The venture capital programme supporting healthcare innovations seeks, through state-backed equity financing, to facilitate the commercial development of R&D results generated by universities and research institutes with life sciences expertise.

INNOVATION SUB-FUND

Among the financial instruments, the **SEED co-investment fund programme**, prepared in the previous year, will be launched in 2026. An additional objective is to introduce new types of financial instruments, thus opening up the opportunity to launch a guarantee programme for business angel investors.

The Innovation Sub-fund will continue to support, **through the Government Guarantee Fund, the participation of model-changing higher education institutions** in projects, managed either directly or indirectly, under EU programmes for education, science, research, development, and innovation, as well as, as a new initiative, the development of the network of university and research institute technology transfer companies (TTCs).

International Programmes will be announced under the Innovation Sub-fund. Among these, on the one hand, we support Hungarian participation in European partnerships, such as Biodiversity, Water4All, EUROSTARS-3, Driving Urban Transition (DUT), Clean Energy Transition (CETP), Key Digital Technologies (KDT), ERA for Health, ERDERA, Agroecology, Personalized Medicine, as well as in the Horizon Europe research and innovation framework programme, through various funding schemes. On the other hand, we also provide funding under this Sub-fund for **researcher mobility and joint research projects in bilateral collaborations** with European and non-European countries of strategic importance to Hungary.

RESEARCH SUB-FUND

The portfolio of the Research Sub-fund follows the recommendations of the Research Council of Hungary.

The **National Research Excellence Programme (NKKP)** encompasses four excellence sub-programmes targeting different groups, as well as two international excellence sub-programmes implemented in collaboration with Austria and Slovenia. The objectives of the NKKP are to

- strengthen the scientific creativity and research excellence of young researchers who have already gained experience in research;
- ensure support for experienced researchers with independent research groups and their respective research groups;
- provide opportunities to prepare for successful participation in European Research Council (ERC) calls;
- facilitate the continued effective operation of research groups that have been established and have demonstrated outstanding performance through previous excellence funding.

The **University Research Scholarship Programme (EKÖP)** will continue to be implemented under the Research Sub-fund, and the **Scientific Patronage Programme** that has enjoyed great success in previous years will be announced again.

MISSIONS SUB-FUND

With the amendment of the RDI Act, in effect from 1 January 2025, the previous National Laboratories Sub-fund of the NRDI Fund was renamed Missions Sub-fund.

This will ensure the launch of the Further development of Mission-Driven **National Laboratories**, which will continue to support the thematic areas identified during the evaluation of the previous National Laboratories Programme and the Thematic Excellence Programme. The primary goal of the programme is to generate scientific results and innovations that address significant societal and environmental challenges across the economy and society as a whole, by effectively linking domestic capacities in the designated research areas, so-called missions, within the given thematic fields.

In 2026, the **HU-rizon International Research Excellence Cooperation Programme** will continue, under the Missions Sub-fund, along with a call enabling Hungarian researchers to **access research and measurement opportunities** provided by domestic and international research infrastructures (RIs).

Funding will also be provided from the Missions Sub-fund for the outstanding RDI activities of the Szeged ELI-ALPS, a key research infrastructure.

Funding provided from the NRDI Fund, in addition to the budget of the 2026 Programme Strategy:

- **Doctoral Student Pension Matching-Fund Programme** pursuant to Government Decision 1242/2023. (VI. 21.): **HUF 0.300 bn**
- **Budget for individual applications** for funding pursuant to Section 13(3) of the RDI Act: **HUF 4.356 bn**

Regulatory environment and obligations

Pursuant to Section 50(1) of Government Decree 380/2014 (XII. 13.) on the rules of operation and use of the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund, the annual programme strategy of the NRDIFund – which is publicly accessible to potential participants – shall include the names and brief description of the calls for the given budget year, the budget allocated for the given call and the budget available for the NRDIFund.

Pursuant to Section 12(2) of the RDI Act, the annual programme strategy of the NRDIFund is approved by the minister responsible for science policy coordination, after consulting the National Science Policy Council (hereinafter: “NTT”).

Pursuant to Section 10/D of the RDI Act, the Research Council of Hungary (KKT) has authority over the excellence-based research funding available under the Research Sub-fund.

According to Government Decree 24/2013 (II.5.) on national excellence in higher education, the funding of the EKÖP scholarship programme shall be provided from the budget of the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund.

Pursuant to Government Decision 1410/2022 (VIII.18.) on joining certain partnerships under the Horizon Europe research and innovation framework programme and providing the necessary financial coverage for such participation, the resources required for Hungarian participation in Horizon Europe partnerships must be provided from the National Research Development and Innovation Fund.

Pursuant to Government Decision 1242/2023 (VI.21.) on additional funding required to increase the number of students pursuing doctoral studies, an additional funding of 50% is required for higher education institutions that assume the payment of the pension contribution of their doctoral students.

PROGRAMME STRATEGY

OF THE NATIONAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION FUND FOR THE YEAR 2026

INNOVATION SUB-FUND New programmes to be launched in 2026

	Title of the programme	Total budget in 2026 (bn HUF)	Short description
1	Intellectual Property call	0.400	Supporting activities aimed at securing Hungarian and/or international Intellectual property protection for intellectual property, including novelty searches, acquisition and maintenance of protection rights, as well as the evaluation of intellectual properties.
2	Startup Factory	6.000	The programme aims to enable technology incubators operating under the previously successful public-private co-investment model to continue their activities, while also providing entry opportunities for additional incubators. The incubator programme is intended for businesses interested in incubating early-stage start-ups based on innovative technologies through investment and extensive professional and business knowledge transfer, bringing the start-ups' technology-based products to market, and securing the necessary additional financing.
3	Business Angel Guarantee Programme	0.500	An equity guarantee support programme for business angels (angel investors) who provide venture capital to support the launch of start-ups developing innovative ideas and having a high growth potential.
4	Life Sciences Catalyst Venture Capital Fund	20.000	The university venture capital programme specializing in the life sciences sector aims to support, in a unique and complementary manner, early-stage technology developments based on scientific research in the domestic university sector and their commercialisation through long-term capital investments. The funding primarily, but not exclusively, serves to support pharmaceutical and medical technology developments in the portfolios of technology transfer companies (TTCs) of higher education institutions specializing in life sciences. The plan is designed to invest at the individual investment level in a co-investment structure in technology-oriented life science start-ups/spin-offs with scale-up potential and above technology readiness level (TRL) 4.

	Title of the programme	Total budget in 2026 (bn HUF)	Short description
5	Development of Technology Transfer Company (TTC) network	6.000	The programme aims to enhance technology and knowledge transfer processes in the academic sector (universities and research networks) through TTCs in three main directions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing and operating new TTCs • Integrating existing TTCs into a network (TTC hubs) • Further developing already operational TTCs.
6	International Programmes	7.787	On the one hand, International Programmes support Hungarian participation in European partnerships and the Horizon Europe framework programme through several schemes: they facilitate the involvement of Hungarian researchers, companies and other RDI actors in excellence-driven collaborations co-funded by the European Commission and other member states; they also support the European networking of Hungarian universities and the building of consortia necessary for high-quality Horizon Europe proposals. On the other hand, through several schemes, they support the mobility and joint research projects of researchers participating in bilateral collaborations with European and non-European countries that are of particular importance for Hungary.
7	Government Guarantee Fund	8.000	Supporting the participation of model-changing higher education institutions in EU RDI projects.

Total of new programmes to be launched in 2026 Innovation Sub-fund	HUF 48.687 billion
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INNOVATION SUB-FUND
Programmes announced in 2025, to be implemented
under the 2026 Programme Strategy

	Title of the programme	Total budget in 2026 (bn HUF)	Short description
8	Intellectual Property call	0.100	Supporting activities aimed at securing Hungarian and/or international intellectual property protection including novelty search, acquisition and maintenance of protection rights, as well as the evaluation of intellectual properties.
9	Life Sciences Catalyst Program “I. From target to proof of concept”	5.000	The programme aims to exploit Hungary’s life sciences R&D potential by supporting internationally competitive translational projects focused on addressing unmet medical needs and aiming at commercialisation. The programme comprises two calls with the first one targeting early-stage projects, while the second designed to support advanced developments that have already achieved Proof of Concept results. The aim of the “Target to Proof of Concept I” call is to support early-stage life science R&D projects with translational potential that may provide therapeutic options for unmet critical clinical needs. The call supports applicants in progressing from the start of exploratory research to the Proof-of-Concept stage.
10	Life Sciences Catalyst Program “II. From proof of concept to clinical trials”	5.000	The Life Sciences Catalyst Program’s call “II. From Proof of Concept to Clinical Trials II” supports advanced pharmaceutical R&D projects with Proof-of-Concept results. The call aims to ensure that developments reach the clinical trials stage as quickly as possible and demonstrate their competitive market potential through the funding granted.

	Title of the programme	Total budget in 2026 (bn HUF)	Short description
11	MEDTECH hospital incubator programme	2.000	The funding programme aims to incubate innovative hospital and clinical entrepreneurship ideas that go beyond traditional patient care. Practical healing/nursing work in hospitals provides many solutions to existing problems faced by patients and healthcare providers. Incubators working with hospitals are responsible for taking solutions from prototype to product and market.
12	SEED co-investment fund	10.000	The capital programme aims to provide early-stage financing on a commercial basis within a matching fund structure, primarily for innovative startups or early-stage micro and small enterprises with high innovation potential. Within this framework, the market investor initiates the deal and is the first to assess the financial parameters of the target company.
13	International Programmes	0.120	The International Programmes support Hungarian participation in European partnerships and the horizon Europe framework programme, as well as facilitate the mobility and joint research projects of researchers participating in bilateral collaborations with European and non-European countries that are of particular importance for Hungary. In line with the schedule of international collaborations, the commitment for certain programmes is made in the year following their announcement.

Total of programmes announced in 2025 Innovation Sub-fund	HUF 22.220 billion
Innovation Sub-fund sub-total	HUF 70.907 billion

RESEARCH SUB-FUND

	Title of the programme	Total budget in 2026 (bn HUF)	Short description
14	EKÖP University Research Scholarship Programme	5.000	The excellence scholarship programme is designed to recognise excellence in research and to support young people of outstanding potential to embark on a career in research.
15	NKKP National Research Excellence Programme	40.000	The National Research Excellence Programme is implemented through several sub-programmes. Excellence-based research funding aims to strengthen research excellence by supporting, without thematic restrictions, promising researcher-initiated basic research projects that are expected to deliver globally outstanding scientific results. The development of research resources is achieved, on the one hand, through the intensive involvement of PhD students, post-docs and young researchers, and, on the other hand, through the small-scale but continuous renewal and expansion of the local laboratory facilities.
16	Scientific Patronage Programme	2.000	The aim of the Scientific Patronage Programme is to encourage the integration of the Hungarian scientific research community into international scientific networks and to support the advancement of science communication and open science in Hungary.

**Sub-total of the Research
Sub-fund**

**HUF 47.000
billion**

MISSIONS SUB-FUND

New programmes to be launched in 2026

	Title of the programme	Total budget in 2026 (bn HUF)	Short description
17	Further development of Mission-Driven National Laboratories	10.000	The programme aims to generate scientific results and innovations that address significant societal and environmental challenges across the economy and society as a whole, by effectively linking domestic capacities in the designated research areas, so-called missions, within the given fields.
18	HU-rizon International Research Excellence Cooperation Programme	8.000	An international funding scheme that provides broad opportunities for researcher creativity and collaboration within the innovation ecosystem. It seeks innovative solutions and R&D concepts addressing relevant and current challenges for the Hungarian society, led by domestic universities and implemented through international research cooperation.
19	Support for increased utilisation of international and domestic research infrastructures	0.100	The programme aims to support researchers in accessing research and measurement opportunities provided by research infrastructures (RIs).
20	ELI-ALPS RDI development	4.500	Expanding research opportunities offered by the user programme of the ELI-ALPS Research Institute, which operates as a user facility, and further developing the research equipment pool in line with user needs. The expansion and modernization of the capacity and capabilities of the laser-based research infrastructure in the following priority areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving and making tunable the main experimental parameters of light sources (e.g., optimized repetition rate, pulse energy, pulse duration). • Enhancing the capabilities of the experimental stations, for example through the introduction of new pump-probe schemes and detectors. • Developing a dedicated experimental station for studying quantum processes. • Further developing beamlines based on laser-matter interaction for use as radiation or particle sources. • Modernizing the workshops and cleanroom mechanical infrastructure.

Total of new programmes to be launched in 2026
Missions Sub-fund

HUF 22.600
billion

MISSIONS SUB-FUND
Programmes announced in 2025, to be implemented
under the 2026 Programme Strategy

	Title of the programme	Total budget in 2026 (bn HUF)	Short description
21	Further development of Mission-Driven National Laboratories	10.000	The programme aims to generate scientific results and innovations that address significant societal and environmental challenges across the economy and society as a whole, by effectively linking domestic capacities in the designated research areas, so-called missions, within the given fields.

Total of programmes announced in 2025 Missions Sub-fund	HUF 10.000 billion
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Missions Sub-fund sub-total	HUF 32.600 billion
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THE TOTAL BUDGET OF THE 2026 PROGRAMME STRATEGY	HUF 150.507 billion
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