CECIMO GUIDE
EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

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INTRODUCTION

In the current digital age, research and innovation represents an important instrument towards achieving Europe's competitiveness and economic resilience and securing its strategic technological autonomy.

This booklet has been created by CECIMO to **give its members and their associates a simple and reliable way to find current and upcoming funding opportunities in Europe**. Many valuable EU programmes open calls throughout the year, but the information is often scattered across different platforms and can be difficult to follow. We assembled this guide to make that process easier.

You will find an overview of the main EU programmes that support research, innovation, skills development, digitalisation, and industrial competitiveness. These include Horizon Europe, the Digital Europe Programme, the European Innovation Council, EIT Manufacturing, and Erasmus+. The booklet also explains how cascade funding works and how smaller organisations, especially SMEs, can benefit from it.

By collecting this information in one place, we aim to support you in accessing the resources you need to move your projects and initiatives forward.

1 Horizon Europe

The Horizon Europe 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework has allocated a budget of €95.5 billion to the EU's Research and Innovation programme that focuses on three main pillars: open access to science, tackling global challenges, and the pursuit of an innovative Europe through increasing European industrial competitiveness. On 16 July 2025, the European Commission put forward its proposal for the Horizon Europe Framework Programme (2028–2034) with a proposed € 175 billion budget to boost Europe's productivity and competitiveness.

Open Calls

SCALING UP DEEP TECH ECOSYSTEMS
HORIZON-EIE-2026-01-CONNECT-03
Deadline: 20/01/2026

The aim is to respond to industry needs and to better valorise interactions that research infrastructures have with companies, facilitating deep collaboration and co-development. The proposals should pilot the possibility to seed the development of innovation ecosystems around diverse technological areas related to pan-European research infrastructures by providing grants to pilot projects in three to five different technological areas.

INTEGRATING ADVANCED MATERIALS, CELL DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING DEVELOPMENT FOR HIGH-PERFORMANCE BATTERIES AIMED AT MOBILITY (BATT4EU PARTNERSHIP)
HORIZON-CL5-2026-01-D2-04
Deadline: 20/01/2026

Projects are expected to identify and target at least one key manufacturing process for enhancement, and to focus on optimising and testing the specific critical process(es) within existing production lines rather than overhauling the entire production system. These processes must be critical to the transition from liquid electrolyte to solid-state batteries and have the potential for high-impact improvements in terms of production yield, quality, cost, and sustainability.

ON-SITE INNOVATIVE ROBOTIC AND AUTOMATED SOLUTIONS AND TECHNIQUES FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE AND LESS DISRUPTIVE BUILDING RENOVATION AND CONSTRUCTION
HORIZON-CL5-2026-02-D4-01
Deadline: 17/02/2026

Buildings need to be sustainable and resource efficient. This can be accelerated by modernising the construction sector and embracing the latest developments in robotics and automated systems. Proposals are expected to address, among others, test and validate the use of innovative on-site robotic and automated solutions and techniques both for construction of buildings and for renovation of which at least one must investigate 3D printing.

1 Horizon Europe
Made in Europe Projects

Open Calls

NEXT-GENERATION AI AGENTS FOR REAL-WORLD APPLICATIONS IN THE APPLY AI SECTORS (RIA) (PARTNERSHIP IN AI, DATA AND ROBOTICS)
HORIZON-CL4-2026-05-DIGITAL-EMERGING-02
Deadline: 15/04/2026

Next-generation AI agents are autonomous systems powered by large AI language models (e.g., large language models or large multimodal models), that can plan, utilize tools and perform actions autonomously to achieve specified goals based on high-level instructions. Projects selected in this topic should link to the resources offered by the AI Factories, including the Data Labs. The results may be validated in the Testing and Experiment Facilities and further deployed via the European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIHs) and will contribute to the Apply AI strategy. This implements the co-programmed European Partnership on AI, data, and robotics (ADRA).

SPACE CRITICAL EQUIPMENT FOR EU NON-DEPENDENCE – SPACE REFUELLING INTERFACE
HORIZON-CL4-2026-SPACE-03-86
Deadline: 03/09/2026

Unrestricted access to state-of-art space equipment and related technologies is a pre-requisite for the EU space industry responding to EU space missions. Within the frame of this topic, it is expected to finance and implement a development project aiming at maturing critical equipment with the final goal of lowering the dependency from outside EU. This will be done by establishing a long-term sustainable supply chain for supporting EU strategic autonomy in the space sector.

DIGITAL ENABLERS AND BUILDING-BLOCKS FOR EARTH OBSERVATION AND SATELLITE TELECOMMUNICATION FOR SPACE SOLUTIONS (SPACE PARTNERSHIP)
HORIZON-CL4-2026-SPACE-03-31
Deadline: 03/09/2026

This call will contribute to developing, deploying global, more flexible and reactive space-based services applications, to contribute to fostering the EU's space sector competitiveness, as stated in the expected impact of this destination. Proposals may contribute to one or more of the above R&I areas, however the main area addressed must be clearly and unambiguously identified in the proposal text. Proposals are expected to promote cooperation between different actors (industry, SMEs, research institutions and infrastructures and academia) and consider opportunities to quickly turn technological innovation into commercial use in space.

APPLY AI: NEXT-GENERATION AGILE AND INTELLIGENT ROBOTICS PLATFORMS FOR INDUSTRIAL AND SERVICE APPLICATIONS (PARTNERSHIP IN AI, DATA AND ROBOTICS) (RIA)
HORIZON-CL4-2026-05-DIGITAL-EMERGING-03
Deadline: 15/04/2026

The Apply AI Strategy foresees acceleration pipelines to speed up the adoption of AI-powered robotics and ensure continuity from research and innovation to deployment. By developing next-generation platforms as common building blocks, this topic will support these pipelines across multiple use cases. To ensure relevance and uptake, solutions must address industrial demands for high speed, precision, and reliability, enabling deployment in real-time, high-performance operational contexts. Emphasis should be placed on the development of robotic systems that can be seamlessly integrated into existing industrial and service workflows, enhancing productivity and operational flexibility.

NEW OR ENHANCED INNOVATIVE ADVANCED MATERIALS (IAM) ENABLED SENSING FUNCTIONALITY (RIA)
HORIZON-CL4-2026-05-MAT-PROD-25
Deadline: 15/04/2026

Proposals should address at least one of the following two areas:

A. IAM-enabled multifunctional surfaces able to detect and respond to changes in the environment, such as temperature, pH, moisture, microbiological or chemical pollutants, concentration of chemical species in air, gases and liquids, and converting these signals into measurable outputs. Such surfaces should demonstrate high performance in terms of sensitivity, selectivity, response time, durability and cost-effectiveness. Proposals should target applications such as environmental and ecosystems monitoring, as well as health monitoring.

B. The development of enhanced IAM-based sensor demonstrators, that enable miniaturization and integration into application systems e.g. into portable IoT devices, lightweight wearables and wearable systems. These sensors must meet key performance requirements, e.g. compatibility with silicon technology, operation in real conditions with low power consumption, high sensitivity (low limit of detection and/or high signal to noise ratio), high selectivity and fast detection speed.

APPLY AI: ROBOTICS FOR MANUFACTURING: ADVANCING CORE SKILLS THROUGH TECHNICAL CHALLENGES (RIA) (PARTNERSHIP IN AI, DATA AND ROBOTICS)
HORIZON-CL4-2026-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-08
Deadline: 15/04/2026

The Apply AI Strategy highlights the need to accelerate the uptake of AI-powered robotics through sectoral pipelines that connect research and deployment. By developing advanced robotics skills based on foundation models and creating adaptable frameworks that can be transferred across different industrial contexts, including automotive, this topic will provide common tools and building blocks to strengthen those pipelines and ensure broad industrial relevance.

The project will create a comprehensive framework for robotics skills development in manufacturing, including the initial definition of three technical challenges that must be clearly described at proposal stage, with evidence of their industrial relevance and potential impact. The detailed specification and design of these challenges may be further refined during the first phase of the project in collaboration with industry partners.

[APPLY AI: CHALLENGE-DRIVEN AI INNOVATION BOOSTER IN APPLY AI PRIORITISED SECTORS (RIA) (PARTNERSHIP IN AI, DATA AND ROBOTICS)](#)
HORIZON-CL4-2027-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-04
Deadline: 15/04/2026

The Challenge-Driven AI Innovation Booster aims to drive significant technological progress and innovation in Apply AI prioritised sectors through challenge-oriented, AI-powered solutions. This initiative seeks to boost Europe's developer community and the adoption of powerful, trustworthy AI solutions in three strategic domains: advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and autonomous driving. It is expected to focus primarily on the definition and organization of a multi-stage competition in the chosen sector, as well as on the accompanying support to the SMEs/teams taking part in each of the challenges.

[APPLY AI: AI-DRIVEN ROBOTICS FOR INDUSTRY: ENABLING SYSTEM INTEGRATION AND ADOPTION (IA) (PARTNERSHIP IN AI, DATA AND ROBOTICS)](#)
HORIZON-CL4-2027-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-05
Deadline: 15/04/2026

The project will address the current European gap in system integration capabilities for robotics solutions addressing the various needs of industries. The project will aim at disseminating a deep understanding of state-of-the-art robotics components, including both hardware and software, and expertise in addressing interoperability issues for the upskilling of system integrators.

To maximise the impact and adaptability of deployed systems, the approach should consider the most appropriate tools to speed up integration processes and suitable AI design, training and inference methodologies, ensuring scalability, transferability, transparency, robustness, flexibility, and real-world applicability in diverse industrial environments, and should remain adaptable to the latest technological developments.

[EU FRONTIER AI INITIATIVE: DEVELOPING FRONTIER AI SOLUTIONS THAT ARE SAFE AND COMPUTATIONALLY EFFICIENT WITHIN APPLY AI (RIA)](#)
HORIZON-CL4-2027-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-11
Deadline: 15/04/2026

To advance developments of frontier AI models towards highest-level performance, while ensuring energy efficiency, addressing computational constraints, and strengthening safety. The approach of this topic is twofold. First, it aims to advance the AI field through the development and training of a frontier AI model. The AI model should demonstrate state-of-the-art performance, have multimodal capabilities, and be optimized for agentic AI capabilities such as tool use, reasoning, and autonomous problem-solving. Second, this topic supports research on comprehensive methods to reduce the computational demands of frontier AI models and to ensure their safety, including technical methodologies such as automated testing and interpretability.

The project should establish strong links with the Resource for AI Science in Europe (RAISE), ensuring that its priorities inform the research topics addressed. Activities are expected to involve the European AI research community and attract and retain top AI talent working on frontier models and related areas.

2 European Innovation Council (EIC)

The EIC has set out the Work Programme 2026 worth over €1.4 billion for funding opportunities in strategic technologies and scaling up companies. It supports SMEs and high-risk projects through business acceleration services. The EIC underpins breakthrough technologies and game-changing innovations through these funding schemes:

- **EIC Pathfinder** (€262 million) for advanced research on breakthrough or game-changing technologies;
- **EIC Transition** (€100 million) for turning research results into specific applications;
- **EIC Accelerator** (€600 million) to develop breakthrough innovations with high risk and high impact;
- **EIC Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform STEP** (€300 million) for additional equity funding to companies driving innovation;
- **Advanced Innovation Challenge** (€6 million) to support high-risk, demand-driven deep tech innovation with transformative potential.

Open Calls

ACCELERATING PHYSICAL AI: EMBODIED INTELLIGENCE FOR THE NEXT FRONTIER OF AI-POWERED ROBOTICS
HORIZON-EIC-2026-AIC-01
Deadline: 26/02/2026

The aim of the action is to respond to industry needs and to better valorise interactions that research infrastructures have with companies, facilitating deep collaboration and co-development. The proposals should pilot the possibility to seed the development of innovation ecosystems around diverse technological areas related to pan-European research infrastructures.

EIC STEP SCALE UP
HORIZON-EIC-2026-STEP
Deadline: 25/11/2026

It offers a total indicative budget of EUR 300 million for 2026. The support will be equity-only investments managed by the EIC Fund. Applicants should apply for an investment of a min of EUR 10 million and max of EUR 30 million, to co-invest in a funding round in the range of EUR 50 to 150 million, and at least three to five times the amount of the requested EIC contribution. Specific terms are in accordance with the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines.

EIC ACCELERATOR 2026 SHORT PROPOSAL
HORIZON-EIC-2026-ACCELERATOR-01
Deadline: 17/12/2026

The EIC Accelerator supports companies (principally SMEs, including start-ups) to scale up high impact innovations with the potential to create new markets or disrupt existing ones. It focuses on innovations building on scientific discovery or technological breakthroughs and where significant funding is needed over a long timeframe before returns can be generated.

3 Digital Europe Programme

The Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL) is being executed through four multiannual work programs and focuses on propelling the digital transformation of SMEs, industries, and public administrations through an enhanced network of European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH). Notably, the Work Programme of the Digital Europe Programme for the period 2025-2027 endowed with a budget of €3.2 billion, out of which €820.2 million to the EuroHPC Joint Undertaking, €367.2 million to the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre, and €713.6 to the Chips Joint Undertaking. The remaining €1305.9 million covers the main DIGITAL Work Programme, including the network of European Digital Innovation Hubs.

Open Calls

DATA SPACE FOR MANUFACTURING
DIGITAL-2026-DSM-AI-09-DS-MANUFACTUR-STEP
Deadline: 03/03/2026

This action aims to support the continued **uptake and further expansion of the data space for manufacturing**. The primary objective is to develop legal, technical and business solutions to pool sufficient data and enable authorized AI developers to have direct or indirect data access to train generative AI models specifically for the manufacturing sector. This initiative seeks to reinforce the role of the data space for manufacturing as a major productivity enhancement and collaboration mechanism within the EU. More information can be found in the **Digital Europe Programme (AI Continent) Call for proposals**. The available budget is **9 million EUR**.

UPTAKE OF INNOVATIVE CYBERSECURITY SOLUTIONS FOR SMES
DIGITAL-ECCC-2025-DEPLOY-CYBER-09-UPTAKE
Deadline: 31/03/2026

The action aims at improving **industrial and market readiness for the cybersecurity requirements** for SMEs as specified in relevant EU cybersecurity legislation as set in the Cyber Resilience Act ensuring more secure hardware and software products. This call provides funding for the development of a cyber toolkit as a service to support SMEs managing cyber risks, defining, and implementing their **cybersecurity strategy**. This topic targets in particular SMEs but other applicants, such as private and public entities implementing NIS 2 Directive, Cyber Resilience Act, research and academia and end-users can be also considered. More information can be found in the **Digital Europe Programme Call for proposals**. The available budget is **15 million EUR**.

4 European Innovation and Technology (EIT) Manufacturing

EIT Manufacturing connects key manufacturers in Europe with a focus on innovation for global competitiveness and sustainability in terms of manufacturing. The purpose of this innovation community is to bring new technologies to the market, protect the EU's strategic interests and develop innovation capabilities for European States that still lag in terms of industry modernisation. **Every year, the application process for open calls is split into two rounds,** meaning that missing the deadline for the first call round will be impossible to proceed to the second call round. We recommend you regularly check on the EIT Manufacturing website for potential new calls to stay updated.

Open Calls

AI FOR MANUFACTURING CHALLENGE: REVISITING INDUSTRIAL DESIGN WITH AI
Deadline: 10/02/2026

Région Ile de France, EIT Manufacturing, Fives and Michelin have launched this initiative to identify practical AI solutions that can support and improve industrial design processes. The challenge was officially presented last week during an industry event at Paris Region. Research teams, labs, startups, SMEs and mid-caps are invited to apply, either individually or as a consortium.

Proposed solutions should address one of the following use cases: Producing technical documents and user manuals; Designing recurring elements; Detecting and assisting with non-conformities; Translating technical specifications into design constraints; Generating new designs from historical ones.

Applicants must be either: Microbusinesses and small businesses; Medium-sized enterprises; Mid-cap companies; Consortia.

Maximum grant: EUR 500,000 including tax, to be divided among the partners in a consortium bid, according to the following rates: **60%** of project-related expenses for micro-enterprises and small enterprises; **50%** of post-Challenge project-related expenses for medium-sized enterprises; **40%** of post-Challenge project-related expenses for mid-cap companies.

Upcoming Calls

An Innovation Open Call for proposals is opening soon on **Manufacturing solutions for Key Strategic Industries and Value Chains**. This call aims to support consortia that bring together diverse skills and expertise to address complex industry challenges with significant innovation potential, thereby generating tangible impact along the value chain in key strategic EU industries. You can check more information on the webpage here, however the call opening and closing dates are still to be defined.

5 Erasmus+

Erasmus+ supports significant projects in inclusive digital education, youth learning mobility, and the adaptation of education and training systems to address the dual challenge of digital and environmental transitions. For the 2026 Annual Work Programme the allocated budget is of 5.2 billion EUR. Click here to download a full overview of the **Erasmus+ 2026 Annual Work Programme**. The program aims to inspire more individuals and organisations to acquire digital and green skills, as well as knowledge in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

The Erasmus+ Programme implements:

- **Key Action 1 (KA1)** – Learning mobility;
- **Key Action 2 (KA2)** – Cooperation among organisations and institutions;
- **Key Action 3 (KA3)** – Support to policy development and cooperation;
- **Jean Monnet Actions**.

Open Calls

PARTNERSHIPS FOR COOPERATION - COOPERATION PARTNERSHIPS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING SUBMITTED BY EUROPEAN NGOS
ERASMUS-EDU-2026-PCOOP-ENGO
Deadline: 05/03/2026

The primary goal of Cooperation Partnerships is to allow organisations to increase the quality and relevance of their activities, to develop and reinforce their networks of partners, to increase their capacity to operate jointly at transnational level, boosting internationalisation of their activities and through exchanging or developing new practices and methods as well as sharing and confronting ideas. he applicant coordinator must be a **European NGO active in the field of education and training**. This is a lump sum grant.

ALLIANCES FOR EDUCATION AND ENTERPRISES
ERASMUS-EDU-2026-PI-ALL-INNO-EDU-ENTERP
Deadline: 10/03/2026

Alliances for Innovation aim to strengthen Europe's innovation capacity by boosting innovation through cooperation and flow of knowledge among higher education, vocational education and training, and the broader socio-economic environment, including research. It supports skills development in the STEM domains, Europe's innovation capacity by broadening its talent pool for new, disruptive technologies, and fosters the **setting up of incubators** within education and training institutions across Europe. This is a **lump sum grant**, and the total funding available is 1 million EUR for 2-year projects and 1.5 million EUR for 2-year projects.

5 Erasmus+

ALLIANCES FOR STEM SKILLS FOUNDRIES
ERASMUS-EDU-2026-PI-ALL-INNO-STEM
Deadline: 10/03/2026

STEM Skills Foundries aim to create sectorial, transnational and sustainable cooperation between higher education institutions, VET providers and business companies that will foster new, innovative and multidisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning by providing young student entrepreneurs with real business-insights and mentoring opportunities. This is a **lump sum grant**, and the total funding available is 1.5 million EUR for 2-year projects.

CENTRES OF VOCATIONAL EXCELLENCE
ERASMUS-EDU-2026-PEX-COVE
Deadline: 03/09/2026

Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) aim to be a driving force for reforms in the Vocational Education Training (VET) sector. The main objective is the establishment of transnational collaborative networks that bring together local and regional VET stakeholders in strong and broad partnerships, thereby creating comprehensive skills ecosystems for innovation, regional development, and social inclusion. The partners of the consortium must include at least 1 enterprise, industry, other employers or sector representative organisation. This is a **lump sum grant**, and the total funding available is 4 million EUR per project.

ALLIANCES FOR SECTORAL COOPERATION ON SKILLS (IMPLEMENTING THE 'BLUEPRINT')
ERASMUS-EDU-2026-PI-ALL-INNO-BLUEPRINT
Deadline: 10/03/2026

The initiative provides large-scale partnerships established under the Pact for Skills, with the opportunity to support the development of sector skills strategies, as well as the revision and development of job profiles and of related training programmes. The main objective of the Pact is to mobilise and incentivize all relevant stakeholders and leverage public-private partnerships to take concrete actions for the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce. This is a **lump sum grant**, and the total funding available is 4 million EUR for 4-year projects.

6 Cascade Funding

Cascade funding, also known as **Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP)**, is a mechanism used by the European Commission to allocate subsidies to SMEs and start-ups to motivate them to deploy innovative digital solutions. These open calls tend to be more competitive, with the European focus on specific innovative technologies that will encourage the development of entirely new knowledge-based industries. Most of Cascade's funding address digital fields such as Industry 4.0, Big Data, Internet of Things, Robotics and Innovation through value chains.

Open Calls

FORTIS PROJECT OPEN CALL 1
Deadline: 21/01/2026

This is for innovative projects that enhance **collaboration between humans and robots**, increasing efficiency, safety and productivity in industrial environments. SMEs, mid caps, universities and research institutions developing solutions in collaborative robotics, AI-driven automation, or digital twin environments can apply. FORTIS Open Call #1 offers a contribution **up to € 250,000 per project** (and a maximum of € 200,000 per entity).

WE-RISE OPEN CALL 2 PHASE 1
Deadline: 12/02/2026

The **Women Entrepreneurs in Renewable, Innovative, and Sustainable Enterprises** Open Call aims to select **20 women-led tech startups** in GreenTech, AgriTech, and ClimateTech sectors. The Open Call aims are that 1**00% of the selected startups must be women-led**, and at least **60%** of the selected startups must be established in **emerging/moderate innovator countries**. The total budget to be allocated for the Open Call is **EUR 600.000**.

ARISE OPEN CALL 2
Deadline: 04/12/2026

ARISE is launching 2 Open Calls to select **up to 26 projects for HRI-enabled solutions** for industrial robotics automation. These projects will be consortium based, with a tech provider for developing solutions, and an end user setting the industrial case. The available funding is **EUR 200,000 per FSTP Project**. The **Guide for Applicants** contains all the necessary information to submit an application.

OPEN HORIZONS OPEN CALL 2
Deadline: 21/01/2026

Opportunity fo**r women-led deep tech and digital startups** to access funding, co-create pilot projects with major European corporates, and scale their solutions with real-world backing. **€1.2 million of total funding** will be distributed **across 39 women-led startups**. Grantees will also receive **tailored mentoring** from experts and business coaches, **visibility** across the European innovation ecosystem, and access to **future investors.**

7 SMART EUREKA Cluster Program

SMART stands as a flexible and industry-oriented program within the EUREKA Cluster focusing on Advanced Manufacturing. Its primary goal is to cultivate cooperative, global, and market-oriented initiatives in Research, Development, and Innovation (R&D&I). Supported by CECIMO's member associations AFM and AGORIA, from Spain and Belgium respectively, SMART endeavours to enhance the competitiveness, expansion, and attractiveness of the European discrete manufacturing industries.

SMART supports innovative project proposals by assisting in the **development of a finalised project proposal and identifying national funding opportunities**. Subsequently, national applications for funding should be submitted after obtaining SMART labeling or earlier depending on national procedures. Given the variation in submission deadlines across countries, each project partner or consortium's national contact person should proactively engage with the relevant public authority's contact person well in advance.

Open Calls

PROJECT OUTLINE
Deadline for Project Outline: 22/01/2026
Deadline for Full Project Proposal: 27/02/2026

The Project Outline (PO) provides a short overview of the concept, the objectives of the project and the partnership even if they are not entirely settled, as it allows early advice and feedback from the evaluation. This step is mandatory, but in exceptional cases participants may submit a Full Project Proposal (FPP) straightforward. The deadline to submit a PO is on 22/01/2026. The deadline for the FPP is on 27/02/2026.

8 European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH) Network

The **EDIH Network** is the driving force behind Europe's digitalisation, working as one-stop shops throughout all EU regions. With the support of the European Commission, the EDIH Network is a **community of tech experts that work together** to help and assist Europe's businesses and organisations on their path towards digital transformation.

EDIHs are at the heart of the European AI innovation ecosystem, playing a key role in supporting SMEs to adopt AI. You can find a **map** with all the EDIHs **at this link**. To learn about opportunities to cooperate with the EDIHs in your area, you can find the relevant contacts in the map.