EIT Culture & Creativity

Co-funded by the European Union

Open call for Financial Support to Startups and Scaleups (Shape Accelerator & Scale Post-Accelerator)

Call reference number:

26-BCR-ACC-015-X

EIT Culture & Creativity

Cologne | 10 August 2026

https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/

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Document History

Version 1.0 (2026)

Changelog

Version	Date	Changes
1.0	10/08/2026	Initial version

Abbreviations

EIT	European Institute of Innovation and Technology
EIT KPIs	Key Performance Indicators defined by the EIT
EIT SIA	EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda
FSTP	Financial support to third parties
HE MGA	Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement
BP	Business Plan
KAVA	KIC-added value activity
KIC	Knowledge and Innovation Community
KIC SA	KIC Strategic Agenda
NEB	New European Bauhaus
PA	Partnership Agreement
PMO	Project Management Office
PRA	Subgrant agreement - Project agreement
RIS	Regional Innovation Scheme
AVM	Audio-Visual Media
100TW	EIT Culture & Creativity 100-to-Watch list: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/what-we-do/business-creation/100-to-watch

Definitions

Associated partner	A legal entity that participates in an action without signing the Subgrant Agreement and without receiving financial support from EIT Culture & Creativity. Associated partners do not become beneficiaries and may not declare eligible costs under the action. Associated partners are not permitted under this call.
Deliverable	Deliverables are tangible or intangible goods or service produced during the project implementation phase. They track the progress made towards a project's objectives and may take the form of a report, document, software product, course, event or any other building block of a project. The deliverables specified need to fully demonstrate the project's achievements and the judicious use of public funds.
EIT KPI	The set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) defined by the EIT that reflect the EIT operational objectives for education, entrepreneurship, and innovation. These KPIs are used to measure how effectively a KIC/project meets the objectives of the EIT.
Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement	The Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (HE MGA) sets out the rights and obligations and the terms and conditions applicable to the implementation of the EIT grant.
Knowledge Triangle Integration	The EIT is established to complement existing Union and national policies and initiatives by fostering the integration of the knowledge triangle - higher education, research and innovation, and business creation - across the Union.
Standstill period	A mandatory waiting period following the communication of award decisions, during which no contracts are signed and applicants are not permitted to publicly announce the outcome - even if they have already received written notification. It gives unsuccessful applicants the opportunity to submit an appeal before any funding agreements are finalised.
Shape	Shape is EIT Culture & Creativity's acceleration programme for cultural and creative tech startups or SMEs that have developed a validated MVP and market presence. It supports concept refinement, market validation, business model development, and investment readiness through hybrid formats.
Scale	Scale is EIT Culture & Creativity's post-acceleration programme for growth-stage cultural and creative tech start-ups or scaleups seeking to scale their operations, fundraise (currently or recently) and expand into new markets. It supports internationalisation, scaling strategy, and investor relations through targeted mentoring, expert support, and structured hybrid activities.

Proposals	Applications are formal submissions presented by eligible entities expressing their interest in participating in EIT Culture & Creativity programmes, initiatives, or funding opportunities.

Overview of key information on the call

Call reference number	26-BCR-ACC-015-X
Purpose of the call	Financial and (Post) Acceleration support to startups and scaleups
Call opening and deadline for applications	**Call publication / opening:** 10/08/2026 **Deadline for applications:** 12/10/2026, 17:00 CEST (Berlin time)
Evaluation and implementation timeline (indicative)	• Evaluation of proposals: from October to December 2026 • Communication of results to applicants: Mid-December 2026 • Standstill period: 30 calendar days, as agreed with EIT, counted from the day after dispatch of the communication of results • Publication of results: Mid-January 2027 • Signature of the subgrant agreement - Project agreement: January 2027 (subject to expiry of the applicable stand-still period, completion of procedural and contracting checks, and, where applicable, legal entity validation by the EIT Onboarding Service) • Tentative start of the projects (according to date defined on the subgrant agreement - Project agreement): January 2027 • Tentative end of the projects: December 2027
Maximum EIT funding allocated to this call	The maximum EIT funding allocated to this call is up to EUR 8,600,000 allocated as follows: • **Shape programme**: EUR 3,400,000 • **Scale programme:** EUR 5,200,000
Funding model	The funding model for this call is the **actual cost model**. Such model reimburses real expenses backed by detailed financial records (e.g., timesheets, invoices).
Reimbursement rate	EIT Culture & Creativity financial support may reimburse up to **100% of the total eligible project costs**, subject to the maximum EIT Culture & Creativity contribution available under this call and the approved project budget. Costs already funded by other EU programmes or sources cannot be reimbursed under this call, in order to avoid double funding.
Who can apply	This call is open to **legal entities** established in **EU Member States and Horizon Europe Associated Countries. It supports ventures at different stages of maturity:** • Start-ups that have validated a market need through early traction, such as pilot customers or initial revenues, may apply for financial support of up to EUR 100,000. This support is intended for ventures that are ready to strengthen product-market fit, refine their business model, and prepare for future investment. Top-ranked ventures may receive up to

	an additional EUR 100,000 following the Shape Acceleration Programme Demo Day. • Start-ups and scale-ups that have demonstrated product-market fit, recurring revenues, and international scaling potential may apply for financial support of up to EUR 200,000, or up to EUR 500,000 if headquartered in an EIT RIS country. This support is intended for ventures that are actively raising capital or have recently secured investment and are ready to accelerate international expansion. Applicants must either be actively fundraising with a lead investor and signed term sheet(s) worth at least EUR 200,000 or have secured at least EUR 200,000 from qualified investor(s) within the past 18 months.
List of call documents	• Call guidelines • Application form, as available on the submission platform • Budget plan and EIT funding request template • Eligibility of Expenditure guidelines • Subgrant agreement - Project agreement (note: the PRA template is subject to change) • Financial Sustainability Mechanism (FSM) • Declaration of Honour template • EIT Culture & Creativity Guidelines for Project Monitoring and Controlling
List of reference documents (with links)	• EIT Culture & Creativity Strategic Agenda 2024-2027 • List of participating countries in Horizon Europe • EIT Culture & Creativity Code of Conduct • EIT Impact Framework (2022-2027) with codes
List of documents to be submitted	Documents required from all applicants: • Application form, as available on the submission platform; • Pitch Deck prepared using the applicable Pitch Deck template; • Proof of company registration; • Detailed budget and EIT Culture & Creativity funding request template; • At least one form of tangible evidence of the solution in action, such as a screen recording or screenshot of a product demo, a link to a working demo, or a product deck; and • Latest available company financial information, including current burn rate, runway, Monthly Recurring Revenue (MRR), Annual Recurring Revenue (ARR), where applicable, and evidence of the company's current cash position. Additional documents for Shape applicants: • Venture Execution Plan prepared using the applicable Venture Execution Plan template.

	The detailed budget submitted by Shape applicants must cover only the initial financial support requested, up to a maximum EIT Culture & Creativity contribution of EUR 100,000. Applicants must not include the potential additional financial support available after the Shape Programme Demo Day in the application budget. **Additional documents for Scale applicants:** • Venture Scaling Plan prepared using the applicable Venture Scaling Plan template; • Cash-flow or use-of-funds forecast; and • Evidence that the applicant is actively fundraising with a lead investor and signed term sheet(s) representing at least EUR 200,000, or evidence that the applicant has secured investment of at least EUR 200,000 from qualified investor(s) within the 18 months preceding the call deadline. Evidence may include a signed term sheet, signed investment commitment or documentation confirming the closing of the qualifying investment round, supported, where relevant, by an updated cap table.
Link to the PIC registration and submission portal	• **Step 1:** Register your organisation in the EU Funding & tender opportunities portal to obtain the nine-digit Participant Identification Code (PIC number). If you do not know if your organisation already has a PIC number, you can verify directly on the EU Portal (click here) whether your organisation is already registered. • **Step 2:** Link to the submission platform of the call. The application form will be available from 10 August 2026 **to 12 October 2026 at 17:00 CEST**.
Topics to be addressed	• 2027 Cohort (start Jan 2027): Fashion, Architecture, Audio-Visual Media. • Additional cohorts covering additional topics will be announced later.
KPIs to be addressed	For details, please see Section 2.3.4. The activities delivered under this call are expected to contribute to the achievement of EIT Culture & Creativity's Business Creation KPIs, notably: • **EITHE03.1** - Number of startups and scale-ups supported by the KIC for at least two months in the reporting year • **EITHE04.1** - Number of startups established in the reporting year • **EITHE04.4** - Start-ups created having a financial transaction of at least 10,000 EUR for a service/product (result of the KIC KAVA) sold to customers • **EITHE06.1** - Total euro amount of private and public capital attracted within year N by supported startups and scale-up Formal KPI ownership, consolidation and reporting to the EIT remain the responsibility of EIT Culture & Creativity. EIT Culture & Creativity reserves the

	right to request evidence and documentation to selected applicants for reporting purposes.
Contact point Q&A	Applicants may submit their inquiries via the official EIT Culture & Creativity Contact Form. This form can be used for all questions related to call content, technical aspects, thematic focus, administrative, financial, or procedural matters. The relevant team will review and respond accordingly to provide clear and aligned guidance throughout the application process. Questions submitted by applicants during the submission period will be anonymised, reviewed, and – where appropriate – published on the call page under the FAQ section. The FAQ section will be updated throughout the call period to ensure equal access to information for all applicants.
Further information to interested applicants	Interested applicants are invited to attend an online information sessions related to this call on: • 27/08/2026 11:00 CEST (Berlin time); • 22/09/2026 15:00 CEST (Berlin time). **Registration** is required through the following form: Registration form. The Teams meeting link will be shared with registered participants after registration. Information sessions will focus on the call content, topics, and requirements, and on general procedures, such as the submission and evaluation process. The information sessions will be recorded and made available on the EIT Culture & Creativity website. Applicants are encouraged to check the call webpage regularly for updates.

1. Introduction

1.1. Information on the EIT

European Institute of Innovation and Technology

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is an **independent body of the European Union** with its own legal personality and the broad legal capacity granted to legal persons under national law. Established by the EU in 2008, the EIT aims to strengthen Europe's innovation capacity and global competitiveness by fostering the integration of business, higher education, and research within its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs).

The EIT is governed by Regulation (EU) 2021/695 (EIT Regulation), which aligns the EIT's mission with the EU's priorities and the objectives of Horizon Europe on evolving research, innovation, economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness, sustainable growth, higher education and entrepreneurship, by means of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), which address specific societal challenges and are established and supported by the EIT.

The EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021-2027 is aligned with Horizon Europe and lays down the priority fields and the strategy of the EIT for future initiatives, capacity to generate the best innovation added-value, objectives, key actions, mode of operation, expected results, impact, as well as an estimate of the resources needed for the duration of Horizon Europe.

Horizon Europe Regulation

The Horizon Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/695 foresees that the EIT takes part in the implementation of the Horizon Europe Programme in accordance with its strategic objectives for the period 2021 to 2027, as laid down in the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the EIT, and taking into account the strategic planning of Horizon Europe.

EIT and Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) relations

The EIT Regulation defines KICs as large-scale Institutionalised European Partnerships of higher education institutions, research organisations, companies and other stakeholders in the innovation process in the form of a strategic network, regardless of its legal form, based on joint mid- to long-term innovation planning to meet the EIT's challenges and contribute to attaining the objectives established.

According to the EIT Regulation, and without prejudice to the partnership agreements and grant agreements between the EIT and each KIC, the KICs have substantial autonomy to establish their internal organisation and composition, as well as their agenda and working methods, provided that they result in progress towards achieving the objectives of the EIT and the KICs, taking into account the strategic planning of Horizon Europe and the strategic direction of the EIT set out in the SIA and by the Governing Board.

Contractual framework between the EIT and the KICs

The long-term relations between the EIT and each KIC are based on a **seven-year Partnership Agreement** (PA)[1] laying down the general terms and conditions under which the KIC operates as an Institutionalised European Partnership. Subject to positive performance, interim review and outcome of comprehensive assessment of the KIC, the PA can be extended for another period of a maximum of seven years.

The Partnership Agreement between the EIT and EIT Culture & Creativity entered into force on 1 January 2024 (PA reference: PA2024/EIT/EIT CC).

The **Grant Agreement** (GA)[2] is the contractual instrument laying down the provisions concerning the implementation of the KIC activities (KIC Business Plan, Cross-KIC activities, etc.) through grants, on an annual or multi-annual basis of up to three years with the KICs. Business plans describe the main objectives and expected results and actions taken by the KICs.

The Grant Agreement between the EIT and EIT Culture & Creativity for the 2026-2028 period entered into force on 6 May 2026 (Grant Agreement No.: GA-101264271).

Contractual framework between the KIC and the subgrantees

In line with Annex 5 of the Grant Agreement, selected applicants will be offered Subgrant agreement - Project agreements governing the implementation of the awarded projects or prizes.

1.2. Information on EIT Culture & Creativity

EIT Culture & Creativity is the institutional partnership dedicated to strengthening the European Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI), enabling them to become more sustainable, resilient, and globally competitive.

Launched in 2023 by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), a body of the European Union, we provide access to funding, knowledge, and tailored support. As part of Europe's largest innovation ecosystem, we connect research, industry, academia, and cultural institutions to drive systemic innovation.

Our initial focus spans five key sectors: architecture, gaming, fashion, cultural heritage, and audio-visual and media. Across these domains, we support innovators end-to-end - from idea to market - scaling solutions, translating innovation into impact, and redefining entrepreneurship in the CCSI.

We are active in over 30 countries, with headquarters in Cologne and Regional Hubs in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Bologna, Helsinki, Košice, and Vienna. Together, we are building a pan-European ecosystem that transcends silos, sectors, and geographies.

We believe that culture and creativity are not luxuries, but critical infrastructure for resilience, renewal, and sustainable economic growth. Whether you are an innovator, company, university, research center,

[1] Model Partnership Agreement: Partnership Agreement
[2] Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement: general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

cultural institution, investor, policymaker, civic leader, or learner, we invite you to join us in shaping desirable futures for Europe.

1.2.1. MISSION AND VISION

Vision

To position the CCSI as a central driver of Europe's economic, societal, and environmental transformation.

Mission

To drive sustainable and responsible growth within and beyond the CCSI through innovation, education, business creation, and societal transformation.

Impact goals

Working towards this mission, EIT Culture & Creativity will pursue three overarching impact goals for the EU CCSI:

- Create and safeguard jobs in a resilient European CCSI ecosystem that can scale, innovate, and compete in global markets.
- Strengthen resilience within and through the EU CCSI by reducing environmental impact, supporting inclusive growth, and increasing social cohesion.
- Accelerate the transition towards sustainable, responsible, and competitive economic growth across the EU CCSI.

Challenges

EIT Culture & Creativity has identified three core challenges limiting the ability of the CCSI to remain globally competitive, resilient, and impactful:

- Skills gaps for future job markets – insufficient alignment between education, training, and the rapidly evolving needs of the CCSI workforce.
- Limited innovation implementation capacity – strong creative potential exists, but it is not consistently translated into scalable, market-ready solutions.
- Weak venture creation, scaling, and value capture – insufficient support for building and growing companies, coupled with underdeveloped monetisation of intellectual property and revenue generation.

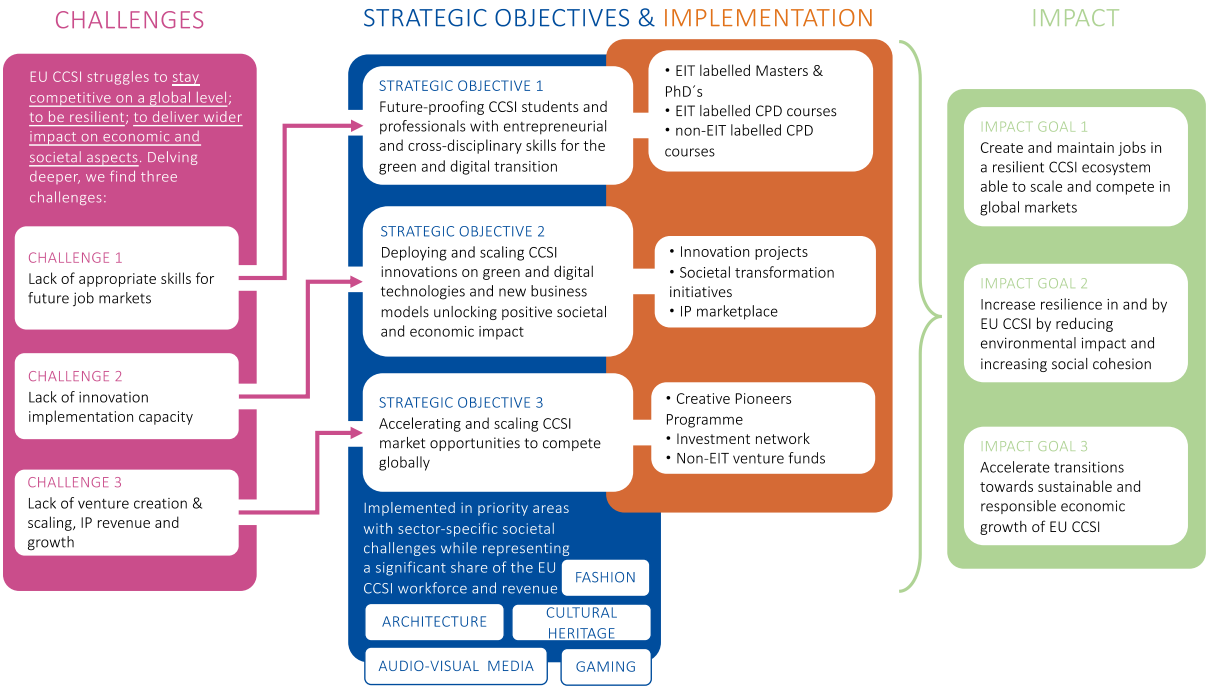
1.2.2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

To achieve our mission, EIT Culture & Creativity will focus on the following strategic objectives (SOs):

- Future-proofing CCSI students: Equip CCSI students with entrepreneurial and cross-disciplinary skills necessary for the green and digital transitions. This includes addressing emerging technologies, environmental challenges, market disruptions, globalisation, and talent shortages.

- Deploying and scaling CCSI innovations: Support collaborative innovations that have significant commercial potential and societal benefits, focusing on green and digital technologies and new business models.
- Accelerating and scaling CCSI market opportunities: Provide business support to create and scale ventures, enabling them to compete globally and access necessary capital, markets, and audiences.

These strategic objectives are designed to create and maintain jobs, enhance resilience, and accelerate sustainable economic growth within the EU's CCSI.



This graphic illustrates the relationship between our challenges, strategic objectives, and impact goals, highlighting how each proposal can contribute to the overarching mission and vision of EIT Culture & Creativity.

1.2.3. PRIORITY AREAS

EIT Culture & Creativity's Strategic Agenda 2024-2027 covers five priority areas - Architecture, Audio-Visual Media, Cultural Heritage, Fashion, and Gaming - all of which are described in the table below. Each represents a significant share of the EU CCSI workforce and revenue and faces unique challenges requiring targeted intervention. In line with the Business Plan 2026-2028, the 2026 calls concentrate their funding scope on three of these areas: Architecture, Audio-Visual Media, and Fashion. Cultural Heritage and Gaming remain strategic priorities of EIT Culture & Creativity and are included here for full context; they are planned for expanded call coverage from 2027 onwards as set out in the Business Plan.

Priority area	Objective	Key challenges (non-exhaustive list)
Architecture	• Foster circular innovation with a social dimension, focusing on new bio-based materials and technologies. • Affordable climate adaptation, enhancing liveability and cohesion in urban environments.	• Growing demand for reusing and renovating existing buildings over new constructions. • Limited entrepreneurial skills among architects and lack of capacity to use architecture to promote social cohesion. • SMEs and freelancers in architecture struggle to scale and find appropriate economic models.
Audio-Visual Media	• Promote responsible and trustworthy use of technology, including generative AI, audience data collection.	• Limited capacity to implement and commercialise new technologies. • New business models based on disruptive technologies. • Issues with data ownership and privacy. • Stagnant revenues and limited investment capabilities.
Cultural Heritage	• Integrate emerging technologies and new business models for commercialising scalable products and services. • Preserve cultural heritage, increase societal impact towards social cohesion.	• Disappearing traditional knowledge and craft skills. • Limited skills for emerging technologies and entrepreneurship. • Financial bottlenecks making it difficult to monetise and find new revenue streams from cultural heritage.
Fashion	• Drive circular innovations, new textile processing, recycling technologies, and supply chain innovations. • Promote circular business models and circular design.	• High reliance on raw material consumption and environmentally damaging production processes. • Significant waste generation leading to environmental degradation and social issues. • SMEs and new ventures face difficulty competing with global industry players and scaling up.
Gaming	• Foster innovation with disruptive technologies focused on digital ethics and cross-sectoral collaboration. • Enhance the societal impact of the gaming sector.	• Access to funding • Access to talent and strict industry-specific curricula. • Barriers from global platforms restricting market access and choice of distribution channels. • Difficult for EU gaming companies to maintain and grow market share against dominant American and Asian players.

1.2.4. MISSION OF THE PROGRAMMATIC PILLARS

Education

The Education area equips learners with the skills and entrepreneurial mindsets needed to lead the green, digital and social transitions. By integrating creativity, technology, sustainability and business expertise, it fosters cross-disciplinary innovation across and beyond Europe's Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI). Through practice-based learning, industry collaboration and forward-looking curricula, Education strengthens capacity for inclusive, responsible and future-oriented growth.

Innovation

The Innovation area bridges groundbreaking ideas and commercial viability through a structured, impact-driven pipeline. It advances high-potential, close-to-market projects (TRL 7-9) from validation to deployment and commercialisation through rigorous selection, milestone-based funding, and robust business models - accelerating their path to scalable impact. By mobilising cross-sector expertise and strategic investment, Innovation strengthens Europe's cultural ecosystems and enhances global competitiveness. It delivers measurable economic, societal, and financial impact for the CCSI by connecting projects to international markets, investors, and EIT business creation pathways - ensuring long-term growth and value creation.

Business Creation

The Business Creation area supports entrepreneurs and ventures in building, scaling, and internationalising sustainable, competitive businesses, while unlocking access to public and private finance. Through incubation, acceleration, and post-acceleration support, it guides companies from product development and IP strategy to market entry and expansion. With a strong focus on robust business models, investor readiness, and global positioning, Business Creation ensures that creative innovation translates into scalable ventures - driving economic resilience, long-term value creation, and measurable impact across Europe.

Transformation & New European Bauhaus (NEB), including RIS

The Transformation & NEB area drives systemic change through cultural practices and creative approaches (artistic and design methodologies), with a focus on priority areas including sustainable fashion and textiles, design, architecture, and the transformation of the lived environment. It explores new models of collaboration, governance and societal engagement, turning experimental ideas into practical, scalable initiatives. Rooted in inclusion, sustainability and shared responsibility, Transformation strengthens social cohesion and resilience, fostering place-based innovation and shaping a more sustainable, beautiful and inclusive European future.

2. Description of the subject matter of the call

2.1. Call for Financial Support to startups and scaleups (Shape & Scale)

This call for proposals aligns with the EIT Culture & Creativity Strategic Agenda 2024-2027. Proposals submitted to this call must support the EIT Culture & Creativity vision and mission and directly contribute to tackling our challenges, impact goals, strategic objectives (SOs) and priority areas (see Section 1.2).

EIT Culture & Creativity acts in compliance with Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (HE MGA) regulations and ensures that the principles of transparency, non-discrimination, sound financial management and no conflict of interest (including having procedures agreed with the granting authority regarding links with recipients) are ensured throughout the selection, evaluation and implementation of the sub granted activities.

Proposals need to demonstrate how the proposal will not just align with but will also actively contribute to the EIT Culture & Creativity Strategic Agenda 2024-2027.

This Open Call invites startups and scaleups in the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI) to apply for financial support under an actual-cost reimbursement model, complemented by capacity development support, to grow their companies, accelerate international market expansion and strengthen their investment readiness and fundraising activities. EIT Culture & Creativity will provide financial support to:

- Growth-stage ventures selected for the Shape Acceleration Programme, with initial financial support of up to EUR 100,000 and, or up to four ventures selected under this call, additional financial support of up to EUR 100,000, subject to the applicable evaluation, contractual, budget and eligibility conditions; and
- Scaling-stage ventures selected for the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme, with financial support of up to EUR 200,000 for non-RIS-based ventures and eligible ventures in the EIT Culture & Creativity 100-to-Watch portfolio, or up to EUR 500,000 for eligible RIS-based ventures.

This financial support covers growth- and scale-related activities such as business development, investor outreach and fundraising preparation, team expansion, marketing and commercial tools, participation in programme and industry events, governance setup, tax and legal advisory services, and IP-related costs, as well as other actions directly supporting commercial execution and investment readiness.

Financial support will be calculated on the basis of actual eligible costs incurred, reported and accepted, up to the maximum EIT Culture & Creativity contribution awarded under the relevant Subgrant Agreement and within the approved budget. The payment arrangements, including prefinancing and the final actual-cost settlement, are described in Section 3.3.

Financial support is complemented by mandatory tailored, maturity-based skill development and growth programmes delivered by EIT Culture & Creativity. Depending on their stage, selected companies receive

structured support through the **Acceleration (Shape)** or **Post-Acceleration (Scale) programmes**, combining training, coaching, and mentoring with access to EIT Culture & Creativity's European network of investors, corporates, experts, and innovation ecosystems.

Companies are selected under different support programmes according to their stage of development and investment readiness. A single application, evaluation and selection process will be carried out under this call.

2.1.1. PURPOSE OF THIS CALL

This call provides financial support and structured growth support to startups and scaleups with high growth potential operating in the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI). It targets ventures developing tech-enabled, market-driven, and IP-leveraged solutions capable of scaling commercially, generating economic and societal value, and strengthening the competitiveness of Europe's creative economy. Through a single application process, companies may access different funding and support depending on their stage of development and investment readiness.

2.1.1.1. Financial Support to Growth-stage Ventures (Shape Acceleration Programme)

This support is designed for early-stage startups that have validated an initial market need and are beginning to generate traction, revenues, or pilot customers, but still require support to strengthen product-market fit, refine their business model, and prepare for larger-scale commercial growth and future investment.

Selected ventures may receive initial financial support of up to EUR 100,000 under the actual-cost reimbursement model described in Section 3, complemented by structured business development, mentoring and investment-readiness support through the EIT Culture & Creativity Shape Acceleration Programme.

Selection focuses primarily on:

- Innovation potential;
- Early market validation;
- Scalability of the business model;
- Team capability; and
- Readiness to transition from early traction to structured growth.

During the programme's Demo Day, up to four Shape ventures may be selected to receive additional financial support of up to EUR 100,000.

Selection during the Demo Day does not automatically create an entitlement to payment. The additional financial support remains subject to:

- Submission and acceptance of an updated Venture Execution Plan and corresponding detailed budget covering the additional activities, supported by the information included in the Pitch Deck presented at the Demo Day;

- Submission and acceptance of a corresponding detailed budget;
- Successful completion of the applicable eligibility, budget, financial and compliance checks; and
- Signature of the relevant additional Subgrant Agreement or amendment.

A reserve list will be established on the basis of the Demo Day ranking. If a selected venture does not submit the required documentation, does not successfully complete the applicable checks or does not sign the relevant Subgrant Agreement or amendment within the established deadline, EIT Culture & Creativity may invite the next highest-ranked venture on the reserve list, subject to the availability of funding and sufficient remaining implementation time.

2.1.1.2. Financial Support to Scaling-stage Ventures (Scale Post-Acceleration Programme)

This support targets mature startups and scale-ups that have already demonstrated strong product-market fit, recurring revenues, customer growth, and international scaling potential, and are now seeking to accelerate expansion through external investment and market scaling.

Eligible ventures must demonstrate[3]:

- A proven and scalable business model;
- Measurable commercial traction;
- Strong growth indicators;
- Internationalisation readiness; and
- The organisational capacity to execute rapid scaling.

Applicants must either:

- Be actively fundraising with a lead investor and term sheet(s) of at least EUR 200,000 in place, or
- Have secured capital from qualified investor(s) of at least EUR 200,000 within the 18 months preceding the applicable call deadline.

Selected ventures may receive financial support of up to:

- EUR 200,000 for non-RIS-based ventures and eligible ventures already included in the EIT Culture & Creativity 100-to-Watch portfolio; or
- EUR 500,000 for eligible RIS-based ventures.

The financial support will be calculated and settled based on actual eligible costs incurred, reported and accepted, in accordance with Section 3.

3 Evidence of traction and business maturity may vary depending on the business model. For software as a service (SaaS) and other digital first models, applicants are generally expected to demonstrate product market fit through recurring revenues, active users, customer retention, or comparable commercial indicators. For hardware or deep tech models with longer development cycles, pre revenue ventures may still be considered where there is credible external investor validation, clear market demand, and evidence of technical and commercial readiness.

2.1.2. SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES UNDER THIS CALL

This call combines financial support with structured venture development support to help high-potential Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI) ventures grow, scale, and strengthen their international market position.

All selected ventures receive financial support together with participation in the relevant EIT Culture & Creativity support programme. Programme activities include coaching, mentoring, expert guidance, investor engagement, peer learning, and access to industry and innovation networks. Participation in the relevant programme is mandatory and forms an integral part of the support provided under this call.

Financial support ceilings, reimbursement rates, funding conditions, payment arrangements, and implementation requirements are described in Sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.

Participation in the programmes requires beneficiaries to enter into a Financial Sustainability Mechanism (FSM) with EIT Culture & Creativity. The FSM, in line with EIT requirements, is designed to support the long-term financial sustainability of EIT Culture & Creativity by reinvesting part of the value created through supported ventures into future programmes and activities. Under this call, FSM will take the form of a Call Option Agreement. Detailed information can be found in Section 3.4 and Annex V.

2.1.2.1. Shape Acceleration Programme: initial financial support of up to EUR 100,000 and potential additional financial support of up to EUR 100,000

Companies may use the financial support awarded under this call to accelerate commercial execution and prepare for investment, including activities such as business development, investor outreach and fundraising preparation, team expansion, marketing and commercial tools, participation in programme and industry events, governance setup, tax and legal advisory services, IP-related costs, and other actions directly supporting growth, commercial execution and investment readiness. Further information on programme design, highlights and indicative activities is provided in Annex III - Programme Initiatives and Activities.

The Shape Programme uses an actual-cost reimbursement model. Financial support will be calculated on the basis of actual eligible costs incurred, reported and accepted, up to the maximum amount awarded under the relevant Subgrant Agreement.

Initial financial support of up to EUR 100,000

The initial financial support will be paid as follows:

- **Prefinancing:** 80% of the initial financial support, distributed in two payments: 50% at M0 following the Kick-off and up to an additional 30% at M6 following the Demo Day and completion of the applicable monitoring checks.

- **Final settlement:** up to the remaining 20%, following acceptance of the final deliverables, final actual-cost report and completion of the annual reporting review.

The second prefinancing payment is linked to completion of the M6 programme and monitoring requirements (including participation in the corresponding Demo Day) and does not constitute reimbursement or settlement of the expenditure presented for the M0-M6 period. The final balance will be calculated on the basis of the actual eligible costs accepted, less all prefinancing amounts already paid.

Additional financial support of up to EUR 100,000

Up to four ventures may be selected during the Demo Day to receive up to an additional EUR 100,000 subject to the evaluation conditions presented in the call guidelines.

Selected ventures must:

- Submit and obtain acceptance of an updated Venture Execution Plan covering the additional financial support;
- Submit and obtain acceptance of a corresponding detailed budget;
- Successfully complete the applicable budget and eligibility checks;
- Sign an additional Subgrant Agreement or amendment.

Following signature, the venture will receive:

- **Prefinancing:** 50% of the additional financial support following the Demo Day selection, completion of the applicable checks and signature of the additional Subgrant Agreement or amendment.
- **Final settlement:** up to the remaining 50%, following acceptance of the final deliverables and actual eligible costs related to the additional support.

The effective implementation of the supported activities is monitored through participation in EIT Culture & Creativity's Shape Acceleration Programme, which provides structured guidance, coaching and expert input to help companies prioritise activities, track progress against agreed milestones, and strengthen their growth and investment-readiness pathway.

The final payment and administrative closure will take place in April of the year following the relevant cohort and will not extend the programme implementation period.

2.1.2.2. Scale Post-Accelerator Programme (up to EUR 200,000, or up to EUR 500,000 for eligible RIS-based ventures)

Companies may use the financial support awarded under this call to accelerate international scaling and fundraising execution, including activities such as investor outreach and deal execution, expansion of commercial and operational teams, market entry and internationalisation activities, marketing and

commercial tools, participation in programme and industry events, governance strengthening, tax and legal advisory services, IP-related costs, and other actions directly supporting scale-up execution, fundraising and follow-on investment plans. Further information on programme design, highlights and indicative activities is provided in Annex III - Programme Initiatives and Activities.

Selected Scale ventures may receive financial support of up to EUR 200,000 for non-RIS-based[4] ventures and eligible ventures already included in the EIT Culture & Creativity 100-to-Watch portfolio[5], or up to EUR 500,000 for eligible RIS-based ventures[6]. The Scale Programme uses an actual-cost reimbursement model. Financial support will be calculated on the basis of actual eligible costs incurred, reported and accepted, up to the maximum amount awarded under the relevant Subgrant Agreement.

The financial support will be paid as follows:

- **Prefinancing:** 70% of the approved EIT Culture & Creativity contribution, distributed in two payments: 40% at M0 following the Kick-off and up to an additional 30% at M6 following the Demo Day and completion of the required monitoring checks.
- **Final settlement**: up to the remaining 30%, following acceptance of the final deliverables, final actual-cost report and completion of the annual reporting review.

The second prefinancing payment is linked to the M6 programme and monitoring requirements (including participation in the corresponding Demo Day and acceptance of an updated Pitch Deck including details on the use of current funds) and does not constitute reimbursement of the costs reported for M0-M6. The final balance will be calculated on the basis of the accepted actual eligible costs, less the total prefinancing already paid.

The Scale Demo Day is a programme and monitoring checkpoint. It is not a competition for additional financial support.

The final payment and administrative closure will take place in April of the year following the relevant cohort and will not extend the programme implementation period.

The detailed payment arrangements are set out in Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2.

2.1.3. POST-PROGRAMME SUPPORT & 100-TO-WATCH

EIT Culture & Creativity supports ventures throughout their growth journey, ensuring continuity beyond the duration of the funding or the individual programmes. Ventures that enter a financial sustainability mechanism (FSM) agreement (Section 3.4) with EIT Culture & Creativity, become part of the **100-to-Watch**

[4] For more information about the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS), visit https://eit-ris.eu/
[5] A complete overview of EIT Culture & Creativity's 100-To-Watch portfolio is available here: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/what-we-do/business-creation/100-to-watch
[6] For more information about the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS), visit https://eit-ris.eu/

portfolio — a curated group of Europe's most promising start-ups in cultural and creative technology. Being part of the 100-to-Watch portfolio places ventures at the forefront of EIT Culture & Creativity's ecosystem, providing enhanced visibility, credibility, and exposure to a pan-European network of investors, corporates, partners, and ecosystem actors.

As part of this community, founders can build long term partnerships and access resources, expertise, and networking opportunities on an ongoing basis. This continued engagement helps ventures navigate challenges, capture opportunities, and sustain growth beyond the programme. It also offers access to follow on financial support, as outlined in this call.

2.1.4. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

Selected ventures must comply with the applicable communication, dissemination, acknowledgement and European Union visibility obligations set out in the relevant Subgrant Agreement. This includes using the prescribed EIT Culture & Creativity and European Union funding acknowledgement in public communication relating to the supported activities, providing reasonable non-confidential information and materials for programme communication and reporting, and cooperating with relevant programme dissemination and outreach activities, subject to the applicable confidentiality and data protection requirements.

2.1.5. EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The call is expected to support high-potential startups and scaleups in the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI) to accelerate commercial growth, strengthen investment readiness, and expand into European and international markets.

Through the financial support combined with the Shape Acceleration and Scale Post-Acceleration Programmes, selected ventures are expected to:

- Strengthen their product-market fit, business model, growth strategy and investment positioning;
- Increase commercial traction, customer acquisition, partnerships, pilots, revenues and market expansion opportunities;
- Improve fundraising readiness and capacity to attract private and/or public investment;
- Contribute to the development of a stronger European CCSI venture pipeline, including ventures from EIT RIS countries;
- Support EIT Culture & Creativity's long-term portfolio development and financial sustainability objectives.

The call is expected to contribute to relevant EIT Culture & Creativity Business Plan KPIs, in particular those related to startups and scaleups supported, investment attracted, and, where applicable, startup creation and RIS-related outcomes. Formal KPI consolidation and reporting to the EIT remain the responsibility of EIT Culture & Creativity.

2.2. Main requirements for applicants

This call is open to eligible legal entities established in European Union Member States or countries associated with Horizon Europe, subject to the conditions and restrictions set out in Sections 2.2.2 and 4.2.

To be considered eligible and be evaluated, applications must first successfully pass the Admissibility and Eligibility check. Please also refer to Section 4 for details.

Who can apply for financial support of up to EUR 100,000, with potential additional follow-on support of up to EUR 100,000 (and participation in the Shape Acceleration programme).

This level of financial support is targeted at startups with early traction, including existing market activity and early revenues, that are ready to strengthen their business models, accelerate go-to-market execution, and prepare for investment. Previous fundraising from private investors is not a requirement. Selection primarily focuses on the strength and scalability of the business model, demonstrated market traction, and a clear ambition to grow internationally.

The detailed budget submitted with the Shape application must cover only the activities proposed under the initial financial support, up to a maximum EIT Culture & Creativity contribution of EUR 100,000. Applicants must not include the potential additional financial support in the application budget. Ventures selected for additional financial support during the Demo Day will be required to submit a separate or updated detailed budget covering the additional activities.

To be considered eligible for this call, applicants must also meet all the following mandatory criteria[7].

The applicant must:

- Be a legally established entity in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe associated country;
- Operate within the CCSI priority areas:
  - 2027 Cohort: Fashion, Architecture, Audio Visual Media[8];
- Be a for profit company. NGOs, associations, cooperatives, and foundations are not eligible;
- Clearly articulate a differentiated value proposition and demonstrate a strong understanding of the competitive landscape, including existing or emerging competitive advantages such as differentiated technology, unique market positioning, network effects, audience access, data capabilities, strategic partnerships, or other scalable and defensible differentiators;
- Demonstrate a clear and credible competitive differentiation compared to existing market solutions, for example through differentiated technology, innovative monetisation approaches, material innovation, novel business models, unique creative or market positioning, or significantly improved user or customer experience;

7 Please consider that Section 4 on Admissibility and Eligibility Criteria provides additional details on assessment and eligibility rules.

8 Open Calls for subsequent cohorts and other EIT Culture & Creativity priority areas (i.e. gaming, cultural heritage) will be announced in the future.

- Demonstrate real market traction supported by proven revenue and/or active commercial pilots;
- Ensure the core product or technology is the primary driver of revenue or planned revenue, not a supporting service;
- Have founding teams with complementary skills across creativity, technology, and business or a clear plan to address any gaps;
- Have at least one founder working full time on the venture;
- Include at least one founder with clear domain expertise in the relevant sector
- Demonstrate strong execution discipline and the ability to deliver between programme milestones;
- Show openness to mentoring, iteration, and collaboration with external partners;
- Show openness to equity dilution and external investment;
- Commit to building a scalable business beyond a lifestyle company.

Who can apply for financial support of up to EUR 200,000, or up to EUR 500,000 for eligible RIS-based ventures (and participation in the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme)

This level of financial support is targeted at startups and scaleups operating in CCSI that are actively raising or have raised capital in the last 18 months and ready to expand internationally. It is designed for ventures with clear value proposition and strong differentiation, where technology plays a central role in enabling scale.

To be considered eligible for this Call, applicants must also meet all the following mandatory criteria[9].

The applicant must:

- Be a legally established for profit entity located in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe-associated country;
- Operate within the CCSI priority areas and offer a solution with a strong technological component:
  - **2027 Cohort**: Fashion, Architecture, Audio-Visual Media[10];
- Prove a scalable business model with strong traction (investor and/or user) and (ideally) evidence of sustained growth, including pre-revenue companies showing clear product or market validation;
- Show early presence or validation in multiple EU markets and clear ambition for international expansion, while (ideally) maintaining core intellectual property within Europe;
- Have a strong founding team with in-house technical expertise essential to the development and scaling of the product or technology;
- Demonstrate a clear competitive advantage, such as technology, access to distribution channels, network effects, brand positioning, or unique data assets;
- Meet at least one of the following conditions: **a)** currently in an active fundraising rounds with a lead investor and signed term sheet(s) for at least EUR 200,000, or **b)** having recently closed

9 Please consider that Section 4 on Admission and Eligibility Criteria provides additional details on assessment and eligibility rules.

10 Open Calls for subsequent cohorts and other EIT Culture & Creativity priority areas (i.e. gaming, cultural heritage) will be announced in the future.

investment round of at least EUR 200,000 (within the past 18 months) from venture capital, corporate venture capital, credible angel investors, or other institutional investors. In all cases, a signed term sheet or equivalent is required as proof.

The financial support available is structured according to the venture's profile and regional or strategic classification:

- Ventures headquartered in non-EIT RIS countries may apply for up to EUR 200,000;
- Ventures headquartered in EIT RIS[11] countries may apply for up to EUR 500,000.

In addition, EIT Culture & Creativity has reserved up to two funding slots of, EUR 200,000, for ventures that are already part of the EIT Culture & Creativity 100-to-Watch portfolio and meet the above-mentioned criteria.

2.2.1. FINANCIAL SUPPORT ELIGIBILITY OVERVIEW

The table below provides an overview of the support pathways available under this call. The final amount of financial support awarded will depend on the applicant's eligibility, evaluation results, programme allocation, available budget and compliance with the conditions set out in this call.

Venture current investment status	Fundraising Eligibility Criteria	Maximum Funding Available	Programme Allocation
Growth-stage startup	Startups with proven traction, early revenues or market activity, and a clear ambition to grow internationally. Previous private fundraising is not required.	Initial financial support of up to EUR 100,000. Up to four ventures per cohort may subsequently be selected during the Shape Programme Demo Day to receive additional financial support of up to EUR 100,000, subject to the applicable ranking, budget and eligibility checks, submission and acceptance of the updated Venture Execution Plan and detailed budget, and signature of the relevant additional Subgrant Agreement or amendment.	Shape Acceleration Programme

[11] For a full overview of the countries listed under the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS), please visit https://eit-ris.eu/

Venture current investment status	Fundraising Eligibility Criteria	Maximum Funding Available	Programme Allocation
Scaling venture - Non-RIS	Startups and scaleups that are actively raising capital (with a lead investor and term sheet in hand) or have secured capital from qualified investor(s) within the past 18 months and ready to scale internationally.	Up to EUR 200,000	Scale Post-Acceleration Programme
Scaling venture - RIS-based	Startups or scaleups headquartered in an EIT RIS country[12], actively fundraising or having closed a qualifying investment round within the past 18 months, and ready for international scaling.	Up to EUR 500,000	Scale Post-Acceleration Programme
100-to-Watch venture	Venture already part of the EIT Culture & Creativity 100-to-Watch portfolio actively fundraising or having closed a qualifying investment round within the past 18 months, and ready for international scaling.	Up to EUR 200,000	Scale Post-Acceleration Programme

For Scaling Ventures (Non-RIS and RIS-based) and 100-to-Watch ventures:

- **If currently raising investment:** the venture must demonstrate a minimum of EUR 200,000 in committed funding, evidenced through a signed term sheet or an equivalent formal investment commitment from qualified investor(s).
- **If not currently raising investment:** the venture must have successfully secured a minimum of EUR 200,000 in private investment within the preceding 18 months.

For the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme, applicants must provide evidence of active fundraising or a recent qualifying investment round, such as a signed term sheet, signed investment commitment, or evidence of a closed investment round, as further detailed in the eligibility requirements.

Qualified investor(s) may include public funding agencies (Other than EIT Culture & Creativity), venture capital funds, corporate venture capital investors, credible angel investor(s) or equivalent investment actors, where duly documented.

[12] [12] For a full overview of the countries listed under the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS), please visit https://eit-ris.eu/

2.2.2. SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

- **Eligibility of Associated Countries** - Countries in the process of associating with Horizon Europe must have completed their association agreement by the launch date of this call to be considered eligible. Only entities from countries officially associated at the time of publication of this call will be eligible for funding. Any association agreements finalised after the call's publication date will not apply retroactively to this call. For reference, see paragraph "Third countries associated to Horizon Europe" in the List of participating countries in Horizon Europe. Please note: European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is situated in Pillar III. Countries eligible for funding under this call must be associated to pillar III.
- **Legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine** – Given the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the involvement of Belarus, there is currently no appropriate context allowing the implementation of the actions foreseen in this programme with legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine. Therefore, even where such entities are not subject to EU restrictive measures, such legal entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity. This includes participation as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any). Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for justified reasons.

  With specific regard to measures addressed to Russia, following the adoption of the Council Regulation (EU) 2024/1745 of 24 June 2024[13] (amending Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 of 31 July 2014) concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine, legal entities established outside Russia but whose proprietary rights are directly or indirectly owned for more than 50% by a legal person, entity or body established in Russia are also not eligible to participate in any capacity.
- **Measures for the protection of the Union budget against breaches of the principles of the rule of law in Hungary** – Following the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506, as of 16 December 2022, no legal commitments can be entered into with Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain. Affected entities may continue to apply to calls for proposals and can participate without receiving EU funding, as associated partners, if allowed by the call conditions. However, as long as the Council measures are not lifted, such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc.). In case of multi-beneficiary grant calls, applicants will be invited to remove or replace that entity in any funded role and/or to change its status into associated partner. Tasks and budget may be redistributed accordingly.

[13] following the adoption of Council Regulation (EU) 2024/1745 of 24 June 2024 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine.

2.2.3. SUPPORTING THE KNOWLEDGE TRIANGLE INTEGRATION (KTI)

Supporting the Knowledge Triangle Integration is not applicable under this call.

2.2.4. INTEGRATION OF RIS APPLICANTS

EIT Culture & Creativity encourages the participation of organisations from countries with moderate or emerging innovation scores, as defined by the European Innovation Scoreboard. These countries are part of the Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS), and applicants from these regions are referred to as "RIS applicants".

For the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme, eligible ventures headquartered in EIT RIS countries may apply for financial support of up to EUR 500,000. The higher funding level is intended to strengthen ventures operating in ecosystems with moderate or emerging innovation performance, where additional support may be required to accelerate international scaling, investment readiness, and access to markets and investors.

Reimbursement rate

RIS applicants are subject to the same reimbursement rate as all other applicants. Costs funded by other EU programmes or sources are not eligible as reimbursement to avoid double funding.

2.3. Main requirements for project implementation

2.3.1. PROJECT DURATION

The implementation period of 2027 cohort (under this call) is 12 months:

- 2027 Cohort: January-December 2027

All supported activities and eligible costs must fall within the applicable implementation period established in the relevant Subgrant Agreement.

Final technical deliverables and the final actual-cost report must be submitted at Month 12, in December of the relevant cohort year. The final and annual reporting review will take place between January and March of the following year, and the final settlement will be processed during the April payment window.

The post-Month 12 reporting review, final settlement and administrative closure do not extend the programme implementation period.

2.3.2. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REPORTING

EIT Culture & Creativity will monitor both the Shape Acceleration Programme and the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme to ensure that selected ventures actively engage in programme activities,

effectively utilise the support and mentoring provided, and demonstrate tangible progress in business development, commercial growth, investment readiness, and market expansion. Monitoring will also verify completion of the programme, reporting and monitoring requirements linked to the applicable prefinancing payments and final settlement.

The monitoring approach is designed to remain proportionate, practical, and impact-oriented, focusing primarily on venture progress, programme engagement, milestone delivery, and measurable business development outcomes rather than burdensome administrative reporting requirements.

Both programmes follow a common monitoring framework, while applying programme-specific tracking mechanisms aligned with their respective objectives, maturity levels, and growth trajectories.

Financial support under both programmes will be monitored through three common programme and reporting checkpoints:

- Month 0 (M0) / Programme start and Kick-off: completion of the applicable validation, contracting and programme-start requirements linked to the initial prefinancing payment;
- Month 6 (M6) / Demo Day and monitoring checkpoint: submission of the applicable M6 deliverables and completion of the internal monitoring and verification linked to the possible second prefinancing payment; and
- Month 12 (M12) / Final reporting: submission of the final technical deliverables, final actual-cost report and other required final reporting documentation. No immediate payment is made at M12.

The M6 payment is a second prefinancing payment and does not constitute reimbursement or settlement of the expenditure presented for the M0-M6 period. Final deliverables and actual eligible costs will be reviewed after M12, and the final settlement will be processed during the April 2028 payment window following completion of the annual reporting review.

Monitoring during the programme will focus on engagement, progress tracking, milestone delivery, and completion of the required programme outputs. The following key elements will be assessed:

- Feedback from mentors and coaches will be collected to assess participant engagement, progress achieved, and areas needing further support. Ventures must actively participate in all scheduled mentoring, coaching, and programme activities. This information will be used by EIT Culture & Creativity to assess ventures' progress regarding market entry plans, customer acquisition, revenue generation, and investor relations to help measure commercialisation progress and define next steps for growth and scaling.
- All ventures will be required to submit the mandatory deliverables linked to each milestone. For both Shape and Scale, the Month 6 deliverables must demonstrate progress against the execution or scaling plan agreed after the Kick-off and provide the basis for the second installment of the pre-financing . Further information is provided in Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2.

Programme Completion Monitoring Requirements

At M12, programme completion monitoring will assess the results of the acceleration or post-acceleration support, including business growth, investment readiness, scaling progress, implementation of the approved plan and the actual eligible costs incurred.

Shape Accelerator Programme participant ventures must submit:

- Final technical and performance report covering implementation of the Venture Execution Plan;
- Final actual-cost report;
- Updated Pitch Deck;
- Completed impact survey;
- Final KPI and output evidence;
- Explanation of any deviations from the approved plan and budget.

Ventures receiving only the initial financial support must report the actual eligible costs incurred under the initial Subgrant Agreement.

Ventures receiving additional financial support must report separately on the actual eligible costs incurred under the initial and additional financial support.

Scale Post-Accelerator Programme participant ventures must submit:

- Final technical and performance report covering implementation of the Venture Scaling Plan;
- Final actual-cost report covering the actual eligible costs incurred;
- Updated Pitch Deck;
- Completed impact survey;
- Final KPI and output evidence;
- Explanation of any deviations from the approved plan and budget.

The final actual cost report must cover eligible costs incurred up to the approved maximum financial support. Ventures are not required to demonstrate expenditure equal to the full maximum grant where the corresponding activities or costs were not incurred.

The final balance will be calculated on the basis of the actual eligible costs accepted, capped at the maximum EIT Culture & Creativity contribution awarded under the relevant Subgrant Agreement, less all prefinancing amounts already paid.

Final reports are submitted at M12 and reviewed afterwards. Following acceptance of the final deliverables and actual eligible costs and completion of the annual reporting review, the final settlement will be processed during the April payment window of the following year.

Project implementation and methods for continuous programme validation and evaluation will be shared after the selection of activities. During the Kick-off meeting, a complete overview of the specific steps to follow will be provided to selected ventures.

EIT Culture & Creativity is committed to **gender equality, diversity and inclusion (GEDI)**. Applicants must demonstrate how GEDI considerations are meaningfully embedded throughout the design, development and implementation of project outputs, using an **intersectional perspective** where relevant. Projects must comply with the principles set out in **Annex 5 (Specific Rules, Values) of the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement** and the EIT Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan 2025-2027.

2.3.3. DELIVERABLES

Financial support under this call is provided in the form of an actual-cost reimbursement model. Financial support will be calculated on the basis of actual eligible costs incurred, reported and accepted, up to the maximum amount awarded under the relevant Subgrant Agreement.

Ventures must provide evidence that the financial support has been used for the activities and purposes approved in the relevant Subgrant Agreement, Venture Execution Plan or Venture Scaling Plan and detailed budget, in accordance with the eligibility conditions set out in Annex IV.

2.3.3.1. Shape Acceleration Programme (EUR 100,000 + additional EUR 100,000)

Mandatory deliverables (initial EUR 100,000)

During the implementation of the Programme, each selected venture must address following deliverables:

Timeline[14]	Deliverable package	Description / Requirements	Payment
Month 0	DEL1	• Kick-off participation, minimum one C-level rep • Submission of the validated Venture Execution Plan • Submission of the updated Pitch Deck • Signature of the Participation Agreement • Signature of the Subgrant Agreement • Signature of the FSM - Call Option Agreement	**50% of the approved initial financial support as initial prefinancing** paid upon internal verification and approval of DEL1.
Month 6	DEL2	• Approved pitch deck for participation in Demo Day submission of updated Pitch Deck (inc. appendix detailing M0-M6 grant expenses, plan for use of the remaining funds and plan for the use of	**Up to an additional 30% of the approved initial financial support as second prefinancing,** paid following internal verification and approval of DEL2, including verification that the applicable M6 programme and monitoring requirements have been

[14] EIT Culture & Creativity intends to execute this programme from January-December 2027. EIT Culture & Creativity reserves the right to adjust the programme dates if necessary and will provide beneficiaries with the relevant information if so.

Timeline[14]	Deliverable package	Description / Requirements	Payment
		additional financial support, where the venture wishes to be considered for the additional award) • Demo Day participation	completed. This payment does not constitute reimbursement or settlement of the expenditure presented for the M0-M6 period.
Month 12	DEL3	• Submission of the Final technical/performance report on Venture Execution Plan implementation • Submission of the final actual-cost report • Submission of the updated Pitch Deck • Completion of the provided Impact survey • Submission of the final KPI/output evidence	No immediate payment is made at M12. Following acceptance of DEL3, the final deliverables and the actual eligible costs, and completion of the annual reporting review, **the venture may receive a final settlement of up to the remaining 20% of the approved initial financial support.** The final amount will be calculated on the basis of the actual eligible costs accepted, less all prefinancing already paid. The payment will be processed in April 2028.

Mandatory deliverables for EUR 100,000 additional funding

Ventures selected during the Demo Day for additional financial support must also address following deliverables:

Timeline[15]	Deliverable package	Description / Requirements	Payment
Month 6	DEL4	• Selection for additional funding during the Demo Day as described in Award Criteria (see Section 4.5) • Completion of internal verification, signature of additional Subgrant Agreement or amendment • Submission and acceptance of the updated Venture Execution Plan and	**50% of approved prefinancing** for the additional financial support granted, paid upon internal verification and approval of DEL4.

[15] EIT Culture & Creativity intends to execute this programme from January-December 2027. EIT Culture & Creativity reserves the right to adjust the programme dates if necessary and will provide beneficiaries with the relevant information if so.

Timeline[15]	Deliverable package	Description / Requirements	Payment
		corresponding detailed budget covering the additional activities	
Month 12	DEL5	• Submission of the Final technical/performance report on Venture Execution Plan implementation • Submission of the final actual-cost report • Submission of the updated Pitch Deck • Completion of the provided Impact survey • Submission of the final KPI/output evidence	No immediate payment is made at M12. Following acceptance of DEL5, the final deliverables and the actual eligible costs related to the additional financial support, and completion of the annual reporting review, **the venture may receive a final settlement of up to the remaining 50% of the approved additional financial support.** The final amount will be calculated on the basis of the actual eligible costs accepted under the additional support, less the prefinancing already paid. The payment will be processed in April 2028.

2.3.3.2. Scale Post-Acceleration Programme (EUR 200,000-500,000)

Mandatory Deliverables

Each project proposal must include the following mandatory deliverables:

Timeline[16]	Deliverable package	Description / Requirements	Payment
Month 0	DEL1	• Kick-off participation, minimum one C-level rep • Submission of the validated Venture Scaling Plan • Submission of the updated Pitch Deck • Signature of the Participation Agreement	**40% of approved prefinancing** paid upon internal verification and approval of DEL1.

[16] EIT Culture & Creativity intends to execute this programme from January-December 2027. EIT Culture & Creativity reserves the right to adjust the programme dates if necessary and will provide beneficiaries with the relevant information if so.

Timeline[16]	Deliverable package	Description / Requirements	Payment
		• Signature of the Subgrant Agreement • Signature of the FSM – Call Option Agreement	
Month 6	DEL2	Submission and acceptance of an updated Pitch Deck, prepared using the applicable template and including an appendix covering: • Progress achieved in the implementation of the Venture Scaling Plan • Fundraising progress and investor engagement • The expenditure incurred during M0-M6 • The planned use of the remaining financial support and • Any supporting information required for the applicable monitoring and internal verification • Participation in the Demo Day	**Up to an additional 30% of the approved EIT Culture & Creativity contribution as second prefinancing,** paid following internal verification and approval of DEL2, including verification that the applicable M6 programme and monitoring requirements have been completed. This payment does not constitute reimbursement or settlement of the expenditure presented for the M0-M6 period.
Month 12	DEL3	• Submission of the Final technical/performance report on Venture Scaling Plan implementation • Submission of the final actual-cost report • Submission of the updated Pitch Deck • Completion of the provided Impact survey • Submission of the final KPI/output evidence	No immediate payment is made at M12. Following acceptance of DEL3, the final deliverables and the actual eligible costs, and completion of the annual reporting review, **the venture may receive a final settlement of up to the remaining 30% of the approved EIT Culture & Creativity contribution.** The final amount will be calculated on the basis of the actual eligible costs accepted, less all prefinancing already paid. The payment will be processed in April 2028.

2.3.4. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIS)

All selected ventures' activities and achievements will support the accomplishment of the following KPIs[17] as part of EIT Culture & Creativity Business Plan 2026-2028:

Mandatory KPIs

KPI Code	KPI description
EITHE03.1	Number of startups and scale-ups supported by the KIC for at least two months in the reporting year.
EITHE04.1	Number of startups established in the reporting year.
EITHE04.4	Start-ups created having a financial transaction of at least 10,000 EUR for a service/product (result of the KIC KAVA) sold to customers.
EITHE06.1	Total euro amount of private and public capital attracted within year N by supported startups and scale-up.

Formal KPI ownership, consolidation and reporting to the EIT remain the responsibility of EIT Culture & Creativity. EIT Culture & Creativity reserves the right to ask evidence and documentation to selected applicants for reporting purposes.

[17] EIT Impact Framework (2022-2027) with codes.pdf

3. Financial aspects of the call

3.1. KIC funding

The total maximum EIT Culture & Creativity financial support available for this call is **EUR 8,600,000 expected from the Business Plan 2026-2028,** conditional and subject to formal approval by the EIT.

Scope of activities	Maximum KIC funding	Indicative number of projects to be funded[18]	Max. EIT funding per project
Shape Acceleration	EUR 3,000,000	30	EUR 100,000 for each venture selected to participate into the Shape Acceleration Programme.
	EUR 400,000	4	EUR 100,000 additional follow-on financial support for top-ranked Shape ventures that applied for and were selected for additional support.
Scale Post-Acceleration	EUR 2,800,000	14	EUR 200,000 for each non-RIS venture selected to participate into the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme.
	EUR 2,000,000	4	EUR 500,000 for each RIS venture selected to participate into the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme.
	EUR 400,000	2	EUR 200,000 for each 100-to-Watch venture selected to participate into the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme.

The funding model for this call is the **actual costs model**. Such model reimburses real expenses backed by detailed financial records (e.g., timesheets, invoices).

[18] Indicative figure. Additional ventures may be selected, in ranking order, where sufficient funding remains within the relevant programme allocation and all applicable requirements are met.

3.2. Reimbursement rate

EIT Culture & Creativity financial support under this call may reimburse up to 100% of the total eligible project costs within the maximum funding ceilings defined in this call.

Costs, activities or outputs already funded by other EU programmes or other EU sources cannot be supported by EIT Culture & Creativity, in order to avoid double funding.

3.3. Payment arrangements

Entities receiving financial support under this call become sub-grantees of EIT Culture & Creativity under the Grant Agreement between EIT Culture & Creativity and the EIT. All selected entities must sign a subgrant agreement and comply with programme participation activities required as part of the deliverables before any financial support can be released.

Financial support under this call is provided through an **actual-cost reimbursement model**. The payments made at M0 and M6 constitute prefinancing and do not represent reimbursement or acceptance of the costs incurred up to those dates. The final settlement will be calculated on the basis of the actual eligible costs incurred, reported and accepted, capped at the maximum amount awarded under the relevant Subgrant Agreement, less all prefinancing already paid.

Payment is conditional upon the approval of the relevant milestone deliverables. Failure to demonstrate appropriate use of financial support may result in partial or full recovery of the financial support, in accordance with the subgrant agreement.

EIT Culture & Creativity will provide financial support through the following payment instalments:

3.3.1. PAYMENT INSTALMENTS - SHAPE ACCELERATION PROGRAMME

The initial financial support of up to **EUR 100,000** is paid as follows:

- **Month 0 (DEL1):** up to **50% prefinancing**, following acceptance of DEL1;
- **Month 6 (DEL2):** up to an additional **30% prefinancing**, following acceptance of DEL2;
- **April 2028, following submission of DEL3 at M12:** final settlement of up to the remaining 20%, based on the actual eligible costs accepted and completion of the annual reporting review carried out between January and March 2028.

For ventures selected to receive the **additional financial support of up to EUR 100,000**, payments are made as follows:

- **Month 6 (DEL4):** up to **50% prefinancing**, following acceptance of DEL4 and completion of the applicable contractual requirements;

- **April 2028, following submission of DEL5 at M12:** final settlement of up to the remaining 50%, based on the actual eligible costs accepted under the additional support and completion of the annual reporting review.

3.3.2. PAYMENT INSTALMENTS - SCALE POST-ACCELERATION PROGRAMME

Financial support under the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme is paid as follows:

- **Month 0 (DEL1):** up to **40% prefinancing**, following acceptance of DEL1;
- **Month 6 (DEL2):** up to an additional **30% prefinancing**, following acceptance of DEL2;
- **April 2028, following submission of DEL3 at M12:** final settlement of up to the remaining 30%, based on the actual eligible costs accepted and completion of the annual reporting review carried out between January and March 2028.

EIT Culture & Creativity shall be under no obligation to distribute EIT funding as financial support unless the eligibility requirements of the Grant Agreement, as transposed into the relevant Subgrant Agreement, are fulfilled and accepted by EIT Culture & Creativity and, where applicable, the EIT.

3.4. Financial sustainability requirements

EIT Culture & Creativity, as a Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), is required to implement Financial Sustainability Mechanisms (FSMs) in line with EIT regulations.

These mechanisms are intended to support the long-term sustainability of the KIC by enabling part of the value generated through supported ventures and innovation activities to be reinvested into future programmes, ecosystem development, and innovation support across Europe's cultural and creative sectors. FSMs are therefore designed as long-term alignment and reinvestment instruments rather than short-term financial return mechanisms.

Under this call, FSMs take the form of contractual arrangements between EIT Culture & Creativity and selected beneficiaries, defining the conditions under which EIT Culture & Creativity may participate in the future value creation of supported ventures. All FSM arrangements are implemented in compliance with EIT rules, Horizon Europe requirements, and applicable legal and state-aid frameworks.

The FSM instrument applied under this call is a **Call Option Agreement**. Under this agreement, EIT Culture & Creativity is granted:

- The right to acquire a fixed percentage of shares at nominal value at a later stage; and
- The right to participate in future financing rounds under preferential conditions, as further specified in the agreement.

Further details regarding the applicable instruments, terms, and conditions are provided in Annex V.

Participation in the Shape Acceleration Programme and the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme is conditional upon signature of the applicable FSM agreement. The FSM forms part of the contractual framework governing participation in EIT Culture & Creativity's venture support programmes and reflects the long-term partnership established between EIT Culture & Creativity and the selected venture.

Ventures that have previously entered into an FSM agreement with EIT Culture & Creativity, including ventures already included in the 100-to-Watch portfolio, will be required to enter an additional new FSM (Call Option Agreement) or amended FSM agreement where appropriate under the terms of this call.

The requirement to sign an FSM agreement is communicated to beneficiaries in advance and forms part of the programme participation conditions including attendance to the programme Kick-off, Demo Day and equivalent activities.

3.5. Cost eligibility

For details on which project budget costs are eligible, please refer to Annex IV, the relevant Project Agreement, the applicable provisions of Article 6 of the EIT Culture & Creativity Grant Agreement document “eligibility of expenditure” available on the call website.

4. Call criteria

Following the deadline for submission, the admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria checks will be performed for each proposal in line with the following criteria.

Proposals failing to meet one or more criteria will receive an official communication from EIT Culture & Creativity, informing the applicant of the outcome of the admissibility and eligibility check and explaining why the proposal failed to meet the criteria.

4.1. Admissibility Criteria

- **Deadline:** The application is submitted before the call deadline (see Overview). Any proposals submitted after the deadline will be inadmissible.
- **Submission format:** The application is submitted using the forms provided inside the electronic submission system (see Overview), including all mandatory templates.
- **Completeness:** The application is complete and contains all required sections, mandatory annexes and supporting documents as specified in the call/topic conditions and in the electronic submission system. In particular the **financial section** is completed using the EIT Culture & Creativity funding template provided.
- **Language:** The application and all mandatory annexes and supporting documents are written entirely in English.
- **Accessibility:** The application is readable, accessible and printable.
- **Character limit:** The application respects the maximum character limits defined for each section of the application form. If any section exceeds the specified character limit, the application will not be admissible.

Only proposals satisfying all the admissibility criteria shall pass on to the eligibility criteria assessment stage.

4.2. Eligibility Criteria

Following the admissibility check, only proposals meeting all eligibility conditions below (and any additional call/topic-specific conditions) will be considered for evaluation:

- **Applicant type:** The application must be submitted by a single for-profit legal entity that meets all mandatory applicant requirements set out in Section 2.2 for the programme selected. Individuals, informal teams and ventures that are not legally incorporated by the call deadline are not eligible.
- **Registration (PIC):** The applicant must be registered in the EU Funding & tender opportunities portal and have a nine-digit Participant Identification Code (PIC number).
- **Legal status & eligibility:** The applicant(s) are legal entity(ies) and comply with the applicable Horizon Europe eligibility rules (including not being subject to EU restrictive measures under Article

29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)[19] as well as Article 75 TFEU[20]).

- **Country eligibility:** The applicant must be legally established in an EU Member State or in a country associated with the Horizon Europe pillar under which the EIT operates, subject to the conditions and restrictions set out in Section 2.2.2.
- **Associated partners:** Associated partners are not permitted under this call.
- **Programme-specific eligibility:** The applicant must meet all mandatory eligibility conditions applicable to the programme and funding category selected, as set out in Section 2.2. This includes the applicable priority-area scope, venture maturity, commercial traction, fundraising or investment conditions and, where applicable, EIT RIS or 100-to-Watch status.
- **Additional EU restrictions:** Applicants (including all the co-founders), affiliated entities, associated partners and any other relevant participants must not be subject to EU restrictive measures, exclusion situations or other restrictions that prevent their participation or the award of EU funding under the applicable Horizon Europe and EU financial rules. Additional country-, entity- or security-related restrictions may apply, as set out in the call/topic conditions and the applicable legal framework.
- **Reimbursement rate:** The proposal must comply with the maximum reimbursement rate defined in the call/topic conditions.

4.3. Exclusion criteria

Applicants will be excluded from participation in the call and from funding if they are subject to EU administrative sanctions or fall under any exclusion grounds set out in Article 138(1) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union. This includes situations such as:

- Insolvency, bankruptcy, or similar legal proceedings;
- Breach of social security or tax obligations;
- Grave professional misconduct;
- Fraud, corruption, criminal activity, terrorism-related crimes, child labour or human trafficking;
- Serious non-compliance with obligations under previous EU contracts or grants;
- EU law irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No 2988/9534;
- Creating entities to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations;
- Misrepresentation or failure to provide required information;
- Conflict of interest or unfair advantage in the award procedure.

[19] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map
[20] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map

As evidence, selected applicants will have to submit a **declaration of honour on exclusion criteria and absence of conflict of interest**. Failure to provide adequate documentation may result in the exclusion of the applicants concerned.

Successful applicants will undergo legal entity validation process of the **EIT Onboarding Service (a shared service led by EIT Urban Mobility KIC)**, including possible checks in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) of the European Commission.

4.4. Selection criteria[21]

4.4.1. FINANCIAL CAPACITY CRITERIA

Applicants must have stable and sufficient financial resources to successfully implement the proposed activities and cover any costs, cash-flow needs or resources required for implementation that are not covered by EIT Culture & Creativity financial support.

By submitting an application, applicants declare that they have the financial capacity required to implement the proposal, including where they participate in several projects or activities in parallel. This declaration will be included in the application form and/or in the Declaration of Honour submitted as part of the application package.

In line with Horizon Europe practice, the financial capacity check will normally be carried out for the applicant where the requested EIT Culture & Creativity financial support is equal to or higher than **EUR 500,000**, except for public bodies, international organisations and low-value grants where the individual requested amount does not exceed **EUR 60,000**.

EIT Culture & Creativity may also verify the financial capacity of the applicant, including affiliated entities where applicable, whenever there are grounds to doubt their financial capacity, regardless of the requested funding amount. If the financial capacity is structurally guaranteed by another legal entity, the financial capacity of that legal entity may also be verified.

Where requested by EIT Culture & Creativity, applicants must provide the documents needed to verify their financial capacity, which may include, among others:

- Profit and loss accounts;
- Balance sheets;
- Business plans;
- Audit reports or certified accounts for the last closed financial year;
- Information on dependency on EU funding;
- Information on deficit, revenue or financial performance in previous years;
- Any other document reasonably required to assess financial capacity.

[21] Financial and operational capacity are assessed as pass/fail selection conditions and do not generate points. This assessment is separate from the qualitative assessment of the team and implementation plan under the award criteria.

Successful applicants may also be required to go through the financial capacity check process of the EIT Community Onboarding Service or any other verification process designated by EIT Culture & Creativity.

If the financial capacity of an applicant is considered not satisfactory, EIT Culture & Creativity may request additional information and/or apply appropriate measures, including:

- Adjustment of payment instalments;
- Reduction, delay or withholding of payment instalments;
- Additional monitoring and reporting requirements;
- Requirement for a financial guarantee or equivalent assurance, where applicable;
- Rejection of the proposal or termination of the contracting process, where the issue cannot be resolved.

Failure to provide requested information, or the submission of false, incomplete or misleading information, may result in rejection of the proposal, withdrawal of the award decision, termination of the agreement and/or recovery of funds, where applicable.

4.4.2. OPERATIONAL CAPACITY CRITERIA

Applicants must have the necessary experience, know-how, qualifications, staff, organisational capacity and operational resources to successfully implement the proposed activities and fulfil their role in the project.

By submitting an application, applicants declare that they have the operational capacity required to implement the proposal, including where they participate in several projects or activities in parallel. This declaration will be included in the application form and/or in the Declaration of Honour submitted as part of the application package.

The operational capacity assessment may take into account whether the applicant(s) have the appropriate resources, experience and internal arrangements to deliver the proposed work plan within the expected timeframe, budget and quality requirements. This may include the ability to manage the project, coordinate the proposed activities, allocate sufficient staff, provide the necessary technical or thematic input, manage risks, and comply with the reporting, monitoring and contractual obligations of the call.

Where requested by EIT Culture & Creativity, applicants must provide evidence to demonstrate their operational capacity, which may include, among others:

- Description of the applicant's relevant experience and role in the proposal;
- Information on the proposed team and allocation of responsibilities;
- Profiles, qualifications and experience of the team members involved;
- Information on staffing, technical resources and organisational arrangements;
- References to previous or ongoing activities of comparable nature, where relevant;
- List of other ongoing projects or commitments, where relevant;
- Any other document reasonably required to assess operational capacity.

If the operational capacity of an applicant is considered not satisfactory, EIT Culture & Creativity may request additional information and/or apply appropriate measures, including additional monitoring, adjustment of the applicant's role, rejection of the proposal or termination of the contracting process.

Failure to provide requested information, or the submission of false, incomplete or misleading information, may result in rejection of the proposal, withdrawal of the award decision, termination of the agreement and/or recovery of funds, where applicable.

4.5. Award criteria

This section defines the evaluation and selection framework applicable to applications submitted under this call. The evaluation process differs according to the Programme (Shape Acceleration or Scale Post-Acceleration) applicants apply for and must therefore be applied using distinct assessment logics.

Eligible proposals will be assessed by three independent external expert evaluators through an external quality evaluation against the **mandatory Horizon Europe award criteria: (a) Excellence, (b) Impact, and (c) Quality and efficiency of the implementation.** The following EIT-specific criteria, as applicable to this call: (d) KIC portfolio strategic fit and contribution to financial sustainability objectives will be assessed during the portfolio selection.

4.5.1. EXTERNAL QUALITY EVALUATION IN SHAPE ACCELERATION PROGRAMME: AWARD CRITERIA, SUB-CRITERIA AND MAXIMUM SCORES

Proposals requesting initial financial support of up to EUR 100,000 and participation in the Shape Acceleration Programme will be evaluated through a two-step process. The potential additional financial support of up to EUR 100,000 is subject to the separate Demo Day evaluation described in Section 4.5.1.3 and does not form part of the initial call evaluation.

Step 1: External quality evaluation

Proposals passing the admissibility and eligibility checks will proceed to an external quality evaluation. Each eligible proposal will be independently assessed by three external expert evaluators against the following criteria:

- Excellence — maximum score: 20 points;
- Impact — maximum score: 10 points;
- Quality and efficiency of the implementation – maximum score: 20 points.

Each external evaluator will prepare an individual assessment, including provisional scores and written justifications.

Following completion of the individual assessments, a consensus meeting will be held involving the three external expert evaluators and a designated rapporteur. During the consensus meeting, the external

evaluators will discuss their individual assessments and agree on the final consensus scores and consolidated comments for the proposal.

The rapporteur will support and document the consensus process and prepare the Evaluation Summary Report reflecting the final scores, the proposal's main strengths and weaknesses, and the conclusions agreed during the consensus meeting. The rapporteur will not assign an additional independent score.

The maximum score available under the external quality evaluation is 50 points.

Following completion of the external quality evaluation, Shape proposals will be ranked in descending order based on their final external quality evaluation score. Up to the 45 highest-ranked Shape proposals will proceed to the portfolio selection stage.

Step 2: Portfolio selection

Proposals proceeding to portfolio selection will be assessed against the following criterion:

- KIC portfolio strategic fit and compliance with the financial sustainability objectives — maximum score: 20 points.

The portfolio selection process, applicable sub-criteria and scoring methodology are described in Section 4.5.1.2.

The final score for each proposal will be calculated as the sum of:

- the **final external quality evaluation score**, with a **maximum of 50 points**; and
- the **portfolio selection score,** with a **maximum of 20 points**.

The maximum final score is therefore **70 points**.

Financial support will be awarded following the final ranking and subject to the available Shape Programme budget, the applicable maximum financial support per venture and completion of the required verification and contracting procedures.

4.5.1.1. Step 1: External quality evaluation in Shape Acceleration programme

Eligible proposals will be assessed by three independent external expert evaluators against the **mandatory Horizon Europe award criteria**: **(a) Excellence**, **(b) Impact**, and **(c) Quality and efficiency of the implementation**.

Given the mono-beneficiary nature of the Shape Acceleration Programme, **the EIT-specific criterion on EU dimension for multi-beneficiary projects is not applicable under this call.** The KIC portfolio strategic fit criterion is not assessed during the external quality evaluation and will be assessed separately during the portfolio selection stage described in Section 4.5.1.2.

Scoring will follow a **1-5 scale** using whole points only. Each evaluator will independently assign provisional scores and provide a written justification for each applicable sub-criterion. Following the individual

assessments, the three external evaluators will agree on the final scores and consolidated comments during the consensus meeting described in Section 4.5.1. Where a weighting factor of ×2 applies, the final consensus score will be multiplied by two.

Scoring framework:

- Excellence (maximum score: 20 points)
    - Sub-criteria 1: Product & Competitive Advantage [maximum score: 5]
    - Sub-criteria 2: Product-market fit (customer traction) [maximum score: 5]
    - Sub-criteria 3: Sales and revenues [maximum score: 5]
    - Sub-criteria 4: Gender mainstreaming [maximum score: 5]
- Impact (maximum score: 10 points)
    - Sub-criteria 1: Relevance to EIT Culture & Creativity Priority Areas [maximum score: 5]
    - Sub-criteria 2: Fundraising Readiness and Investment Potential [maximum score: 5]
- Quality and efficiency of the implementation (maximum score: 20 points)
    - Sub-criteria 1: Team Quality and Capability [maximum score: 5 points x 2]
    - Sub-criteria 2: Execution plan & Use of funds [maximum score: 5 points x 2]

The final external quality evaluation score will be calculated as the sum of the final consensus scores obtained under all applicable sub-criteria, with a maximum total score of 50 points. Following completion of the external quality evaluation, Shape proposals will be ranked in descending order based on their final external quality evaluation score. Up to the 45 highest-ranked Shape proposals will proceed to the portfolio selection stage described in Section 4.5.1.2.

a) Excellence This category assesses the overall strength of the venture proposition, including the quality of the solution, the degree of innovation, and evidence of commercial validation.	**Maximum score: 20**
Sub-criteria 1. Product & Competitive Advantage Quality, relevance, and differentiation of the product or service, including clarity of the value proposition and innovation compared to existing solutions (technology, business model, materials, UX, or operations).	5 points
Sub-criteria 2. Product-Market Fit (Customer Traction) Evidence that the market values the solution, demonstrated through users, customers, pilots, partnerships, or validation metrics.	5 points
Sub-criteria 3. Sales & Revenues Commercial maturity and ability to generate or credibly plan revenues, including pricing logic and pipeline.	5 points
Sub-criteria 4. Gender mainstreaming	5 points

a) Excellence This category assesses the overall strength of the venture proposition, including the quality of the solution, the degree of innovation, and evidence of commercial validation.	Maximum score: 20
Integration of relevant gender equality, diversity and inclusion considerations into the venture's product or service, target users, business activities and proposed implementation.	

Excellence sub-criteria 1: Product & Competitive Advantage

Score	Explanation
1	Solution is unclear, incremental, or poorly articulated; no credible differentiation from existing alternatives.
2	Limited differentiation; value proposition partially defined but weak or generic; innovation claims not well supported.
3	Clear value proposition with some differentiation; innovation is plausible but not yet compelling or defensible.
4	Strong differentiation with clear innovation drivers; product shows credible potential to stand out in the market.
5	Highly compelling, well-defined solution with clear innovation and strong long-term competitive potential.

Excellence sub-criteria 2: Product-Market Fit (Customer Traction)

Score	Explanation
1	No evidence of market demand or validation; assumptions remain untested.
2	Very limited or anecdotal validation; weak signals of market interest.
3	Early but credible validation signals (e.g. pilots, first users, LOIs, initial traction).
4	Clear and consistent validation showing repeat interest or early customer adoption.
5	Strong, well-documented market traction clearly demonstrating demand and relevance.

Excellence sub-criteria 3: Sales & Revenues

Score	Explanation
1	No revenue logic or commercialisation pathway; monetisation unclear or unrealistic. Structured as non-profit. Poorly articulated, weak or unrealistic financial metrics.
2	Revenue model defined but untested; no or negligible revenues or unrealistic model. Financial metrics show limited traction.
3	Early revenues or clear commercial proof points; pricing and pipeline are plausible. Financial metrics are reasonable and realistic.

Score	Explanation
4	Growing or repeat revenues with a credible commercial pipeline and monetisation strategy. Strong financial metrics showing potential for growth.
5	Strong early revenue performance with clear growth momentum and scalable commercial logic supported by strong financial metrics showing sustained growth.

Excellence sub-criteria 4: Gender Mainstreaming

Score	Explanation
1	No gender mainstreaming or integration. No strategies, data, or commitment.
2	Superficial mention of gender mainstreaming. Generic statements, no concrete actions.
3	Basic gender strategies (e.g., gender-balanced teams, data collection). Limited integration.
4	Clear gender strategies with targets (e.g., gender-smart investment, inclusive design). Aligns with EIT Gender Equality Action Plan.
5	Exemplary gender mainstreaming: innovative, measurable strategies (e.g., intersectional approaches). Strong alignment with EIT Gender Equality Action Plan.

b) Impact This category assesses the strategic relevance of the venture to EIT Culture and Creativity priorities and the extent to which the financial support can unlock meaningful business and investment outcomes.	Maximum score: 10
Sub-criteria 1. Relevance to EIT Culture & Creativity Priority Areas Alignment with one or more EIT Culture & Creativity priority areas and relevance of the solution to sector needs, including the role of technology.	5 points
Sub-criteria 2. Fundraising Readiness and Investment Potential Credibility of the venture's pathway to attract future private investment and the catalytic role of the support requested.	5 points

Impact sub-criteria 1: Relevance to EIT Culture & Creativity Priority Areas

Score	Explanation
1	No clear alignment with priority areas; relevance is weak or superficial.
2	Limited or indirect relevance; technology plays a marginal role.
3	Clear relevance to at least one priority area with a meaningful use of technology.
4	Strong alignment with priority areas and clear potential to modernise value chains or practices.

Score	Explanation
5	Highly relevant solution with strong potential to transform or significantly advance priority areas.

Impact sub-criteria 2: Fundraising Readiness and Investment Potential

Score	Explanation
1	No clear fundraising strategy or investment rationale. No rational potential for investibility.
2	Fundraising intentions stated but poorly defined or unrealistic.
3	Credible fundraising plan with clear milestones and logic.
4	Well-defined, realistic investment strategy with identified targets and clear use of funds.
5	Strong investment readiness with concrete investor interest and a compelling funding narrative.

c) Quality & Efficiency of Implementation This category assesses whether the venture has the people, discipline, and execution capacity to deliver results during the programme period.	Maximum score: 20
Sub-criteria 1. Team Quality and Capability Balance, experience, and execution capacity of the founding and management team, including commitment and openness to external input.	5 points x 2
Sub-criteria 2. Execution Plan and Use of Funds Quality, realism, and coherence of the execution plan, including milestones, timelines, and proposed use of funds.	5 points x 2

Quality & Efficiency of Implementation sub-criteria 1: Team Quality and Capability

Score	Explanation
1	Team lacks key skills or commitment or expertise on focused domain; major capability gaps.
2	Team has limited experience or imbalance; execution risks evident.
3	Team covers core needs with adequate experience and learning capacity.
4	Strong, well-balanced team with relevant experience and clear execution capability.
5	Highly capable and complementary team with strong leadership and execution track record.

Quality & Efficiency of Implementation sub-criteria 2: Execution Plan and Use of Funds

Score	Explanation
1	Execution plan and fund allocation is unclear, unbalanced, unrealistic, or poorly linked to outcomes.
2	Plan is partially defined but lacks credibility or coherence. The budget allocation is not fitting with the maturity or reality of the venture.
3	Clear and feasible plan with reasonable milestones and use of funds.
4	Well-structured plan with strong alignment between activities, milestones, and expected outcomes.
5	Highly convincing execution plan with clear prioritisation, discipline, and strong likelihood of delivery. Use of funds is clear and aligned with milestones.

4.5.1.2. Step 2: Portfolio selection in Shape Acceleration programme

Following the external quality evaluation, the Shape proposals proceeding to this stage will undergo a portfolio selection and final ranking process conducted by the EIT Culture & Creativity Selection Committee. This portfolio selection stage will include an online interview with the applicant.

The interview forms part of the portfolio selection stage and will be used to assess the proposals against the portfolio selection criterion and sub-criteria defined below. It will not introduce new award criteria. The interview will allow the Selection Committee to clarify, test and further assess the applicant's strategic fit, product-market fit, investment potential, team capacity, financial sustainability potential, and alignment with EIT Culture & Creativity's portfolio objectives.

Applicants invited to the portfolio selection interview will be informed in writing of the date, format, duration, presentation requirements, and practical arrangements. The interview will normally last up to 20 minutes and will include:

- A short presentation by the applicant, up to 10 minutes; and
- A question-and-answer session with the Selection Committee, up to 10 minutes.

Applicants will be requested to prepare a short presentation to support the interview. The presentation must be based on the submitted proposal and may not be used to introduce a substantially different proposal, scope of activities, funding request or business model.

The Selection Committee members will assess each proposal on the basis of the submitted application and the interview against the Strategic Fit criterion and sub-criteria set out below. The final portfolio selection score and written justification will be documented as part of the evaluation process.

Scoring framework:

- **KIC portfolio strategic fit and contribution to financial sustainability objectives** (**maximum score: 20 points**)
    - Sub-criteria 1: Product-Market Fit & Market Validation [maximum score: 5 points x 2]
    - Sub-criteria 2: Growth Potential & Follow-On Investment Outlook [maximum score: 5 points x 2]

The final score will be calculated as the sum of the external quality evaluation score, with a maximum of 50 points, and the portfolio selection score, with a maximum of 20 points. The maximum final score is therefore 70 points. Proposals will be ranked in descending order of their final score, and financial support will be awarded following the final ranking until the available Shape Programme budget is exhausted.

No minimum threshold applies specifically to the portfolio selection stage. Proposals not selected due to budget limitations may, where applicable, be placed on a reserve list in accordance with this call. Non-selected applicants must submit a new application under a future call to be considered again.

d) KIC portfolio strategic fit and contribution to financial sustainability objectives This category assesses the extent to which a proposal strengthens the overall EIT Culture & Creativity portfolio and contributes to the KIC's strategic, financial, and ecosystem objectives beyond the merits of the individual venture.	**Maximum score: 20**
Sub-criteria 1. Product-Market Fit & Market Validation Evidence that the solution addresses a clearly identified customer or market need, demonstrated through credible validation activities such as customer interviews, pilot projects, early users, partnerships, letters of intent, or other market feedback. The venture shows promising potential to achieve product-market fit and relevance to EIT Culture & Creativity priority areas.	5 points x 2
Sub-criteria 2. Growth Potential & Follow-On Investment Outlook Potential of the venture to become investment-ready during the programme demonstrated through the ability to clearly articulate its value proposition, growth strategy, competitive advantage, and investment rationale. This includes the founders' ability to engage effectively with investors and international stakeholders and to contribute to a balanced, investable, and high-quality EIT Culture & Creativity portfolio.	5 points x 2

KIC portfolio strategic fit and contribution to financial sustainability objectives sub-criteria 1: Product-Market Fit & Market Validation

Score	Explanation
1	No convincing evidence of product-market fit; demand assumptions remain unproven and traction is absent or anecdotal.
2	Limited or fragmented traction; early validation signals exist but are weak, inconsistent, or not repeatable.
3	Demonstrated customer demand with repeat usage, pilots, or sales in a limited scope, indicating early but credible market validation.
4	Strong evidence of repeatable demand across customers or markets, supported by consistent traction metrics and clear relevance to priority areas.
5	Clear, well-documented product-market fit with strong customer adoption, scalable demand across markets or segments, and readiness for rapid expansion.

KIC portfolio strategic fit and contribution to financial sustainability objectives sub-criteria 2: Growth Potential & Follow-On Investment Outlook

Score	Explanation
1	Limited growth ambition and scalability; unlikely to attract follow-on investment and adds little value to portfolio maturity or financial sustainability. The growth and fundraising strategies are poorly articulated, conveyed and lack credibility.
2	Some growth potential exists, but scalability and investment attractiveness are uncertain; limited contribution to portfolio progression in terms of maturity or financial leverage. The venture presents or is unable to convey a complete or sufficiently convincing case for future growth and portfolio contribution.
3	Credible growth trajectory with plausible follow-on investment potential, contributing positively to portfolio balance across risk, maturity, or sector representation. The venture presents and conveys a coherent and credible growth and fundraising strategy.
4	Strong high-growth potential with clear scalability and high likelihood of attracting investment, meaningfully strengthening the portfolio from a financial and maturity standpoint. The venture presents and conveys a compelling growth and fundraising case and would meaningfully strengthen the portfolio from a financial and maturity perspective.
5	Exceptional growth outlook with a compelling trajectory, very strong prospects for attracting investment and a playing strategic role in elevating the overall quality, resilience, and financial sustainability of the EIT Culture & Creativity portfolio. The venture communicates its growth and fundraising strategy with exceptional clarity, evidence, credibility, and strategic alignment.

4.5.1.3. Demo Day evaluation

This section sets out the evaluation and selection criteria applicable to ventures applying for additional financial support of up to EUR 100,000.

All eligible startups participating in the Shape Acceleration Programme applying for an additional funding will be assessed during the Demo Day by a **jury composed of two independent external experts and one internal expert**, against the evaluation criteria set out in the scorecard below. Proposals will be scored across three criteria: **(a) Excellence**, **(b) Impact**, and **(c) Quality and Efficiency of Implementation.**

Each assessment sub-criterion carries a maximum score of 10 points, with a total maximum score of 60 points. Based on the final ranking, up to four of the highest-scoring ventures under this call may be selected to receive additional financial support of up to EUR 100,000, subject to the availability of funding and compliance with all applicable programme, eligibility, budget, verification and contracting conditions.

The evaluation is designed to assess both venture performance throughout the programme and the credibility of the proposed next-stage growth plan, including the strategic use of the requested additional funding.

Criteria	Description	Sub-criteria	Maximum Score: 60
Excellence	The quality, differentiation, and commercial strength of the venture, including the value proposition, innovation edge, and business model.	**1. Business Model Robustness & Value Proposition**: Is the venture solving a clear market need with a compelling and differentiated solution? Is the revenue model credible, scalable, and showing increasing strength?	10 points
		2. Innovation & Defensibility: Does the venture demonstrate meaningful innovation, defensibility, or competitive advantage (technology, IP, business model, data, network effects, or creative edge)?	10 points
Impact	The venture's progress, market traction, and potential for scale.	**1. Traction & Progress & Use of Initial Financial Support:** Has the venture demonstrated meaningful progress during the programme (customers, revenue, pilots, partnerships, product maturity, or market validation) to advance its growth?	10 points
		2. Scalability & Growth Potential: Does the venture show credible potential to scale across markets or sectors? Will this funding unlock concrete outcomes (market expansion, hires, product development, commercial traction, investment readiness)?	10 points

Criteria	Description	Sub-criteria	Maximum Score: 60
Quality & Efficiency of Implementation	The team's capacity and readiness to execute growth plans and convert opportunity into results. Assessment of the strategic rationale and feasibility of the proposed use of additional funding.	**1. Investment Readiness**: Is the venture prepared to engage investors, with a credible growth strategy, financial understanding, and fundraising readiness? Does the team have the leadership, expertise, and commitment to execute the next stage of growth?	10 points
		2. Use of Funds: Is there a clear and credible plan for how the EUR 100,000 will accelerate growth? Can the team realistically deliver the proposed plan with the additional funding within the available timeframe?	10 points

Up to four ventures may be selected for additional financial support under this call. The selected ventures will be required to submit and obtain acceptance of the updated Venture Execution Plan and corresponding detailed budget, complete the applicable checks, and sign an additional Subgrant Agreement or amendment with EIT Culture & Creativity before any payment can be made.

4.5.2. EXTERNAL QUALITY EVALUATION FOR SCALE POST-ACCELERATION PROGRAMME: AWARD CRITERIA, SUB-CRITERIA AND MAXIMUM SCORES

Proposals requesting financial support of up to EUR 200,000, or up to EUR 500,000 for eligible RIS-based ventures, and participation in the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme will be evaluated through a two-step process.

Step 1 - External quality evaluation

Proposals passing the admissibility and eligibility checks will proceed to an external quality evaluation. Each eligible proposal will be independently assessed by three external expert evaluators against the following criteria:

- Excellence — maximum score: 15 points;
- Impact — maximum score: 20 points;
- Quality and efficiency of the implementation — maximum score: 15 points.

Each external evaluator will prepare an individual assessment, including provisional scores and written justifications.

Following completion of the individual assessments, a consensus meeting will be held involving the three external expert evaluators and a designated rapporteur. During the consensus meeting, the external evaluators will discuss their individual assessments and agree on the final consensus scores and consolidated comments for the proposal.

The rapporteur will support and document the consensus process and prepare the Evaluation Summary Report reflecting the final scores, the proposal's main strengths and weaknesses, and the conclusions agreed during the consensus meeting. The rapporteur will not assign an additional independent score.

The maximum score available under the external quality evaluation is 50 points.

Following completion of the external quality evaluation, Scale proposals will be ranked in descending order based on their final external quality evaluation score. Up to the 30 highest-ranked Scale proposals will proceed to the portfolio selection stage described in Section 4.5.2.2.

Step 2 - Portfolio selection

Proposals proceeding to portfolio selection will be assessed against the following criterion:

- KIC portfolio strategic fit and contribution to financial sustainability objectives — maximum score: 20 points.

The portfolio selection process, applicable sub-criteria and scoring methodology are described in Section 4.5.2.2.

Given the mono-beneficiary nature of the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme, the EIT-specific criterion on EU dimension for multi-beneficiary projects is not applicable under this call.

The final score for each proposal will be calculated as the sum of:

- the **final external quality evaluation** score, with a **maximum of 50 points**; and
- the **portfolio selection** score, with **a maximum of 20 points**.

The maximum final score is therefore **70 points.**

Financial support will be awarded following the final ranking and subject to the available Scale Programme budget, the applicable funding category and maximum financial support per venture, and completion of the required verification and contracting procedures.

4.5.2.1. External quality evaluation in Scale Post-Acceleration programme

Eligible proposals will be assessed by three independent external expert evaluators through an external quality evaluation against the **mandatory Horizon Europe award criteria**: **(a) Excellence**, **(b) Impact**, and **(c) Quality and efficiency of the implementation**.

Scoring will follow a 1-5 scale using whole points only. Each evaluator will independently assign provisional scores and provide a written justification for each applicable sub-criterion. Following the individual assessments, the three external evaluators will agree on the final scores and consolidated comments during the consensus meeting described in Section 4.5.2. Where a weighting factor of ×2 applies, the final consensus score will be multiplied by two. The final external quality evaluation score will be calculated as the sum of the final consensus scores obtained under all applicable sub-criteria, with a maximum total **score of 50 points**.

Scoring framework:

- Excellence (maximum score: 15 points)
    - Sub-criteria 1: Product & Competitive Advantage [maximum score: 5]
    - Sub-criteria 2: Sales and revenues [maximum score: 5]
    - Sub-criteria 3: Gender mainstreaming [maximum score: 5]
- Impact (maximum score: 20 points)
    - Sub-criteria 1: Strategic Alignment & Portfolio Contribution [maximum score: 5 points x 2]
    - Sub-criteria 2: Fundraising Readiness & Investment Potential [maximum score: 5 points x 2]
- Quality and efficiency of the implementation (maximum score: 15 points)
    - Sub-criteria 1: Team & Organisational Capacity [maximum score: 5]
    - Sub-criteria 2: Execution plan and Use of Funds [maximum score: 5 points x 2]

a) Excellence This category assesses the overall strength of the venture proposition, including the quality of the solution, the degree of innovation, and evidence of commercial validation.	Maximum score: 15
Sub-criteria 1. Product & Competitive Advantage Strength, differentiation, and defensibility of the product or service, including technology, business model, IP, data, network effects, or operational advantages that support scaling.	5 points
Sub-criteria 2. Sales & Revenues Revenue performance, growth dynamics, quality of revenue streams, pricing logic, and commercial pipeline.	5 points
Sub-criteria 3. Gender mainstreaming Integration of relevant gender equality, diversity and inclusion considerations into the venture's product or service, target users, business activities and proposed implementation.	5 points

Excellence sub-criteria 1: Product & Competitive Advantage

Score	Explanation
1	Product is undifferentiated or easily replicable; no clear competitive advantage.
2	Some differentiation claimed but weakly defended or not sustainable at scale.
3	Clear differentiation with some defensibility, but competitive advantage remains moderate or partially proven.

Score	Explanation
4	Strong, well-articulated competitive advantage with credible barriers to entry and scalability.
5	Highly differentiated, defensible solution with strong long-term competitive advantage and clear leadership potential in its market.

Excellence sub-criteria 2: Sales & Revenues

Score	Explanation
1	No revenues or unclear monetisation strategy. Poorly articulated, weak or unrealistic financial metrics.
2	Early revenues but weak growth signals or unclear scalability. Financial metrics show limited traction or traction below maturity level expected for scaling ventures.
3	Consistent revenues with plausible growth trajectory and defined pipeline. Financial metrics are reasonable and realistic.
4	Strong revenue momentum with accelerating growth and a credible scaleup plan. Strong financial metrics showing potential for international growth.
5	Significant and fast-growing revenues, strong pipeline, and clear path to large-scale commercial expansion supported by strong financial metrics showing sustained growth.

Excellence sub-criteria 3: Gender Mainstreaming

Score	Explanation
1	No gender mainstreaming or integration. No strategies, data, or commitment.
2	Superficial mention of gender mainstreaming. Generic statements, no concrete actions.
3	Basic gender strategies (e.g., gender-balanced teams, data collection). Limited integration.
4	Clear gender strategies with targets (e.g., gender-smart investment, inclusive design). Aligns with EIT Gender Equality Action Plan.
5	Exemplary gender mainstreaming: innovative, measurable strategies (e.g., intersectional approaches). Strong alignment with EIT Gender Equality Action Plan.

b) Impact This category assesses the strategic relevance of the venture to EIT Culture and Creativity priorities and the extent to which the financial support can unlock meaningful business and investment outcomes.	Maximum score: 20
Sub-criteria 1. Strategic Alignment & Scaling Impact Extent to which the proposal aligns with EIT Culture & Creativity strategic priorities and applicable priority areas and demonstrates credible potential to generate significant commercial, sectoral and international scaling impact.	5 points x 2
Sub-criteria 2. Fundraising Readiness & Investment Potential Credibility of the fundraising strategy and readiness for institutional or growth investment.	5 points x 2

Impact sub-criteria 1: Strategic Alignment & Scaling Impact

Score	Explanation
1	No clear alignment with EIT Culture & Creativity strategic priorities or priority areas; the expected scaling impact is unclear or unsupported.
2	Limited or partial alignment; the potential commercial, sectoral or international scaling impact is weak.
3	Clear alignment with at least one priority area and credible potential to generate meaningful scaling impact.
4	Strong alignment with strategic priorities and clear potential to support international growth, value-chain modernisation or market transformation.
5	Highly strategic alignment with EIT Culture & Creativity priorities and strong potential to generate significant transformative and systemic impact at European level.

Impact sub-criteria 2: Fundraising Readiness and Investment Potential

Score	Explanation
1	No credible fundraising strategy or investor readiness. The proposed fundraising approach is unclear, unrealistic or poorly connected to the venture's scaling objectives.
2	Basic or unclear fundraising intent with limited structure. Investor targets, financing milestones or the proposed pathway towards closing or leveraging the financing round are insufficiently developed.
3	Credible fundraising strategy with defined milestones, supported by the qualifying term sheet or recent investment evidence submitted for eligibility purposes, but with limited evidence of broader investor traction.
4	Meets and credibly demonstrates the required fundraising maturity threshold. Evidence may include:

Score	Explanation
	• An active fundraising process; • Signed or negotiated investment documentation (e.g. term sheet, SAFE, convertible instrument, or equivalent); • Defined funding strategy aligned with the company's growth and scaling plans; and • Credible pathway towards closing the financing round. Assessment focuses on the maturity, structure, and credibility of the fundraising process.
5	Demonstrates strong external validation and high investment attractiveness. Evidence may include: • Participation of a lead investor anchoring the round; • Recently secured investment; • Participation from reputable institutional, strategic, or sector-relevant investors; • Strong investor interest or competitive dynamics around the round; and • Clear ability to leverage EIT support to accelerate international scaling and unlock follow-on capital. Assessment focuses on the quality of investor validation, market confidence, and the venture's scaling potential.

c) Quality & Efficiency of Implementation This category assesses whether the venture has the people, discipline, and execution capacity to deliver results during the programme.	Maximum score: 15
Sub-criteria 1. Team & Organisational Capacity Depth, experience, and scalability of the founding and management team, including leadership, governance, and execution capacity.	5 points
Sub-criteria 2. Execution Plan and Use of Funds Quality, realism, and discipline of the scaleup plan, including milestones, use of funds, timelines, and alignment with growth and fundraising objectives.	5 points x 2

Quality & Efficiency of Implementation sub-criteria 1: Team & Organisational Capacity

Score	Explanation
1	Team lacks key scale-up capabilities; major execution risks evident.
2	Team has gaps in leadership or scale-up experience.
3	Team covers core scale-up needs with adequate experience.
4	Strong management team with relevant scale-up and leadership/tech experience.
5	Highly experienced, well-structured leadership and tech team with proven ability to scale organisations and manage growth.

Quality & Efficiency of Implementation sub-criteria 2: Execution Plan and Use of Funds

Score	Explanation
1	Execution plan is unclear, unrealistic, or poorly structured. The proposed use of funds is vague, unjustified, or misaligned with scale-up objectives.
2	Plan exists but lacks coherence, prioritisation, or feasibility. Milestones and timelines are weakly defined, and the proposed use of funds lacks strategic focus or clear linkage to growth objectives.
3	Clear and feasible execution plan addressing key scale-up challenges, with reasonable milestones and timelines. The proposed use of funds is broadly aligned with the stated growth and scaling objectives.
4	Well-structured and coherent execution plan with clear milestones, realistic timelines, and a disciplined, well-justified use of funds. Strong alignment between planned activities, allocated resources, and growth objectives.
5	Highly robust and convincing execution plan with clear prioritisation, risk awareness, and internal coherence. The proposed use of funds is highly strategic and efficient, clearly linked to execution priorities and demonstrating a high likelihood of successful scale-up.

4.5.2.2. Portfolio selection in Scale Post-Acceleration Programme

Following the external quality evaluation, the Scale proposals proceeding to this stage will undergo a portfolio selection and final ranking process conducted by the EIT Culture & Creativity Selection Committee. This portfolio selection stage will include an online interview with the applicant.

The interview forms part of the portfolio selection stage and will be used to assess the proposals against the portfolio selection criterion and sub-criteria defined below. It will not introduce new award criteria. The interview will allow the Selection Committee to clarify, test and further assess the applicant's strategic fit, product-market fit, growth potential, follow-on investment outlook, financial sustainability potential, and alignment with EIT Culture & Creativity's portfolio objectives.

Applicants invited to the portfolio selection interview will be informed in writing of the date, format, duration, presentation requirements and practical arrangements. The interview will normally last up to 20 minutes and will include:

- A short presentation by the applicant, up to 10 minutes; and
- A question-and-answer session with the Selection Committee, up to 10 minutes.

Applicants will be requested to prepare a short presentation to support the interview. The presentation must be based on the submitted proposal and may not be used to introduce a substantially different proposal, scope of activities, funding request or business model.

The Selection Committee members will assess each proposal on the basis of the submitted application and the interview against the Strategic Fit criterion and sub-criteria set out below. The final portfolio selection score and written justification will be documented as part of the evaluation process. This stage ensures the strategic coherence of the final portfolio and alignment with investment, market, financial sustainability and programme objectives.

Scoring framework:

- KIC portfolio strategic fit and contribution to financial sustainability objectives (maximum score: 20 points)
    - Sub-criteria 1: Product-Market Fit & Market Validation [maximum score: 5 points x 2]
    - Sub-criteria 2: Growth Potential & Follow-On Investment Outlook [maximum score: 5 points x 2]

The final score will be calculated as the sum of the external quality evaluation score, with a maximum of 50 points, and the portfolio selection score, with a maximum of 20 points. The maximum final score is therefore 70 points.

Scale proposals will be ranked in descending order of their final score within the applicable Scale funding category. Financial support will be awarded following the applicable final ranking and until the available budget for the relevant Scale funding category is exhausted.

Where the remaining budget within the applicable Scale funding category is insufficient to award the full amount requested by the next-ranked proposal, EIT Culture & Creativity may offer a lower financial contribution. A reduced award may only be made where the proposal remains viable, the activities and budget are adjusted accordingly, and the applicant accepts the revised financial contribution and conditions before signature of the Subgrant Agreement.

No minimum threshold applies specifically to the portfolio selection stage. Proposals not selected due to budget limitations may, where applicable, be placed on a reserve list in accordance with this call. Non-selected applicants must submit a new application under a future call to be considered again.

d) KIC portfolio strategic fit and contribution to financial sustainability objectives This category assesses the extent to which a proposal strengthens the overall EIT Culture & Creativity portfolio and contributes to the KIC's strategic, financial, and ecosystem objectives beyond the merits of the individual venture.	**Maximum score: 20**
Sub-criteria 1. Product-Market Fit & Market Validation Evidence that the solution meets a real and repeatable market demand across customers or segments, demonstrated through credible traction indicators (e.g. users, revenues, pilots, partnerships), and by proving market validation, showing relevance to EIT Culture & Creativity priority areas.	5 points x 2
Sub-criteria 2. Growth Potential & Follow-On Investment Outlook	5 points x 2

d) KIC portfolio strategic fit and contribution to financial sustainability objectives This category assesses the extent to which a proposal strengthens the overall EIT Culture & Creativity portfolio and contributes to the KIC's strategic, financial, and ecosystem objectives beyond the merits of the individual venture.	Maximum score: 20
Potential of the venture to deliver high-growth outcomes and attract follow-on institutional investment, including the ability to clearly articulate its value proposition, growth strategy, competitive advantage, and investment rationale. This includes the founders' ability to engage effectively with investors and international stakeholders and to contribute to a balanced, investable, and high-quality EIT Culture & Creativity portfolio.	

KIC portfolio strategic fit and contribution to financial sustainability objectives sub-criteria 1: Product-Market Fit & Market Validation

Score	Explanation
1	No convincing evidence of product-market fit; demand assumptions remain unproven and traction is absent or anecdotal.
2	Limited or fragmented traction; early validation signals exist but are weak, inconsistent, or not repeatable.
3	Demonstrated customer demand with repeat usage, pilots, or sales in a limited scope, indicating early but credible market validation.
4	Strong evidence of repeatable demand across customers or markets, supported by consistent traction metrics and clear relevance to priority areas.
5	Clear, well-documented product-market fit with strong customer adoption, scalable demand across markets or segments, and readiness for rapid expansion.

KIC portfolio strategic fit and contribution to financial sustainability objectives sub-criteria 2: Growth Potential & Follow-On Investment Outlook

Score	Explanation
1	Limited growth ambition and scalability; unlikely to attract follow-on investment and adds little value to portfolio maturity or financial sustainability. The growth strategy and investment rationale are poorly articulated, conveyed and lack credibility.
2	Some growth potential exists, but scalability and investment attractiveness are uncertain; limited contribution to portfolio progression in terms of maturity or financial leverage. The venture presents or is unable to convey a complete or sufficiently convincing case for future growth and portfolio contribution.
3	Credible growth trajectory with plausible follow-on investment potential, contributing positively to portfolio balance across risk, maturity, or sector representation. The venture presents and conveys a coherent and credible growth and investment case.

Score	Explanation
4	Strong high-growth potential with clear scalability and high likelihood of follow-on investment, meaningfully strengthening the portfolio from a financial and maturity standpoint. The venture presents and conveys a compelling growth and investment case and would meaningfully strengthen the portfolio from a financial and maturity perspective.
5	Exceptional growth outlook with a compelling scale-up trajectory, very strong prospects for significant follow-on investment, and a strategic role in elevating the overall quality, resilience, and financial sustainability of the EIT Culture & Creativity portfolio. The venture communicates its growth and investment case with exceptional clarity, evidence, credibility, and strategic alignment.

4.5.2.3. Specific arrangements for Scale - 100-to-Watch proposals

Applicants under the Scale - 100-to-Watch category must meet the same admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection requirements applicable to all other Scale applicants. Their proposals will undergo the same external quality evaluation, against the same criteria and using the same scoring methodology described in Section 4.5.2.1.

Following completion of the external quality evaluation, all Scale proposals, including Scale - 100-to-Watch proposals, will be included in a single ranking in descending order of their final external quality evaluation score. Up to the 30 highest-ranked Scale proposals will proceed to the portfolio selection stage. Status as a 100-to-Watch venture does not provide preferential access to the portfolio selection stage.

Scale - 100-to-Watch proposals proceeding to portfolio selection will be assessed through an online interview by a dedicated panel composed of three independent external experts appointed by EIT Culture & Creativity.

EIT Culture & Creativity representatives may attend the interviews as observers and may provide factual or procedural clarifications where required. They will not participate in the assessment, scoring, ranking, voting or award decision-making.

The dedicated panel will apply the same portfolio selection criterion, sub-criteria and scoring methodology applicable to the other Scale proposals, with a maximum portfolio selection score of 20 points. Following the interviews, the panel will agree on the final portfolio selection scores and written comments for each proposal.

The final score for each Scale - 100-to-Watch proposal will be calculated as the sum of:

- The **external quality evaluation** score, with a **maximum of 50 points**; and
- The **portfolio selection** score, with a **maximum of 20 points**.

The maximum final score is therefore 70 points.

Following completion of the portfolio selection stage, all Scale proposals will be included in a single final ranking in descending order of their final score.

Within this final ranking, up to two financial support awards will be reserved for the two highest-ranked Scale - 100-to-Watch proposals. These reserved awards remain subject to the available budget and completion of all applicable verification and contracting requirements.

The remaining Scale awards will be allocated in descending order of the overall final ranking, excluding proposals already selected under the reserved Scale - 100-to-Watch allocation. Scale - 100-to-Watch proposals not selected under the two reserved awards will remain fully eligible for selection under the remaining Scale Programme allocation according to their position in the overall final ranking.

The reservation of up to two awards does not limit the total number of Scale - 100-to-Watch ventures that may be selected under this call. More than two Scale - 100-to-Watch ventures may therefore receive financial support where their position in the overall final ranking allows them to be selected within the remaining Scale Programme allocation.

All Scale - 100-to-Watch ventures selected under either the reserved allocation or the overall final ranking may receive financial support of up to EUR 200,000 each, irrespective of whether they are headquartered in an EIT RIS country.

If fewer than two Scale - 100-to-Watch proposals proceed to portfolio selection or successfully complete the evaluation, verification and contracting requirements, fewer than two reserved awards may be made. Any unused budget reserved for this category may be reallocated to other Scale proposals in descending order of the overall final ranking.

If a selected Scale - 100-to-Watch proposal withdraws or fails to complete the applicable verification or contracting requirements, EIT Culture & Creativity may invite the next highest-ranked Scale - 100-to-Watch proposal to receive the reserved award. All ventures selected under this Section form part of the total number of ventures and the total budget allocated to the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme.

4.5.3. RANKING AND AWARDING IN A NUTSHELL

Proposals will be evaluated and ranked on the basis of their comparative merit, in accordance with the evaluation procedure set out in this call. No minimum score thresholds apply at any stage of the evaluation process.

Following the external quality evaluation, proposals will be ranked in descending order of their final external quality evaluation score. Up to the 45 highest-ranked Shape proposals and up to the 30 highest-ranked Scale proposals will proceed to the respective portfolio selection stage.

For proposals submitted under either the Shape Acceleration Programme or the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme, the final score will be calculated as the sum of the external quality evaluation score, with a

maximum of 50 points, and the portfolio selection score, with a maximum of 20 points. The maximum final score is therefore 70 points.

Shape and Scale proposals will be ranked separately in descending order of their final score. Scale proposals will additionally be ranked within the applicable Scale funding category.

Financial support will be awarded following the applicable final ranking until the available budget for the relevant Programme and, where applicable, Scale funding category is exhausted. A reduced financial contribution may be offered to a Scale proposal under the conditions set out in Section 4.5.2.2.

Proposals that cannot be funded due to budget limitations may be placed on a reserve list, valid for up to one year from the date of adoption of the relevant ranking.

5. Evaluation procedure

5.1. Admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection stages

After the submission deadline, EIT Culture & Creativity conducts a structured, multi-step verification and evaluation process to ensure full compliance with the admissibility, eligibility, exclusion, and selection criteria.

1. Admissibility and eligibility check

EIT Culture & Creativity will verify compliance with the applicable admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria defined in Section 4. Proposals failing to meet one or more applicable criteria will not proceed to the external quality evaluation, and applicants will be formally notified of the outcome and the reasons for rejection.

2. External quality evaluation

Proposals passing the admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection checks will proceed to an external quality evaluation. Each eligible proposal will be independently assessed by three external expert evaluators against the award criteria defined in Sections 4.5.1.1 and 4.5.2.1.

Each external evaluator will prepare an individual assessment containing provisional scores and written justifications. Following completion of the individual assessments, a consensus meeting will be held with the three external evaluators and a designated rapporteur. During the consensus meeting, the evaluators will agree on the final scores and consolidated comments.

The rapporteur will support and document the consensus process and prepare the Evaluation Summary Report. The rapporteur will not assign an additional independent score..

3. Internal portfolio selection / online interview stage

Where portfolio selection is applied as separate assessment stage, the highest-ranked proposals proceeding to portfolio selection in accordance with Sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 will be invited to a interview with the EIT Culture & Creativity Selection Committee. The online interview will form part of the portfolio selection stage and will be assessed against the portfolio selection criteria defined in Section 4.5.1.2 for Shape Accelerator Programme and section 4.5.2.2 for Scale Post-Accelerator Programme.

The Selection Committee will be formally appointed by EIT Culture & Creativity and will normally be composed of:

- One representative from EIT Culture & Creativity with relevant Business Creation expertise;
- One additional EIT Culture & Creativity management, programme or portfolio representative;
- One independent external expert with relevant investment, venture-building, scale-up, financial sustainability or sector expertise; and

- One external observer, where applicable, who will not participate in the scoring or ranking.

All voting members will be subject to the applicable independence, conflict-of-interest and confidentiality requirements.

For Scale - 100-to-Watch proposals, the dedicated panel composition, independence arrangements and specific ranking and selection procedure set out in Section 4.5.2.3 will apply.

The interview will last up to 20 minutes and may include:

- A short presentation by the applicant, up to 10 minutes;
- A question-and-answer session with the Selection Committee, up to 10 minutes;
- Clarification of the proposed growth strategy, scaling plan, fundraising readiness, product-market fit, market validation, use of funds, team capacity, strategic fit, and contribution to EIT Culture & Creativity's portfolio objectives.

Applicants invited to interview will receive written instructions, including the interview date, format, duration, presentation requirements and submission deadline for any presentation material. Unless otherwise specified, the presentation should be based on the submitted proposal and should not exceed 10 slides.

Failure to attend the interview without duly justified reasons may result in the proposal not being considered further for portfolio selection and final ranking.

The final ranking will be calculated as set out in sections 4.5.2.1. and 4.5.2.2. above.

4. Final ranking list

The final ranking will be established separately for the Shape Acceleration Programme and the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme. Scale proposals will additionally be ranked within the applicable Scale funding category.

For proposals proceeding to portfolio selection, the final score will be calculated as the sum of the external quality evaluation score and the portfolio selection score, as set out in Section 4.5.

Financial support will be awarded in descending order of the applicable final ranking until the available Programme and, where applicable, Scale funding-category budget is exhausted.

5.2. Evaluation of proposals

All eligible proposals will be independently evaluated by three external experts selected on the basis of their expertise in the subject matter of the call. Each expert will provide provisional scores and written justifications. The final external quality evaluation scores and comments will be agreed through the consensus process described in Section 5.1 and documented in an Evaluation Summary Report.

Based on the final external quality evaluation scores, up to the 45 highest-ranked Shape proposals and up to the 30 highest-ranked Scale proposals will proceed to portfolio selection. The final selection will be based on the combined external quality evaluation and portfolio selection scores, subject to the applicable ranking and available budget.

5.2.1. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Each proposal is evaluated against the award criteria in Section 4 using a numerical scoring system with defined maximum scores. No minimum thresholds apply under this call.

For all the proposals submitted the final ranking is based on the combined score obtained in the external quality evaluation and the portfolio selection interview (for those passing to portfolio selection). The portfolio selection interview is assessed only against the portfolio selection criterion and sub-criteria defined in Sections 4.5.1.2 and 4.5.2.2.

Final rankings are based on total scores, with ties resolved using the rules in Section 5.2.3.

5.2.2. RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION: AWARD, RESERVE LIST, REJECTION

Following completion of the evaluation procedure, EIT Culture & Creativity will establish a proposed final ranking and proposed award list based on the results of the external quality evaluation and, where applicable, the portfolio selection stage.

The proposed final ranking and proposed award list remain provisional and subject to completion of the applicable internal governance and procedural steps, including, where applicable, completion of the call report review process and confirmation that the evaluation procedure has been concluded and the results may be communicated to applicants.

Proposals may be identified for funding in strict descending order of ranking, subject to the availability of the allocated budget, compliance with all call requirements, completion of the applicable procedural checks and the conditions set out in these call guidelines.

Proposals that cannot be funded due to budget limitations may be placed on a reserve list in ranked order. The reserve list may be used to award funding to additional proposals in case selected projects withdraw, fail to complete contractual requirements, or if additional budget becomes available. The reserve list is valid for up to one year from the date of the award decision, unless otherwise specified in the call. For Scale proposals, EIT Culture & Creativity may offer a reduced financial contribution under the conditions set out in Section 4.5.2.2.

Proposals that do not meet the applicable admissibility, eligibility, exclusion or selection criteria will be rejected. Proposals completing the evaluation procedure but not selected for funding or inclusion on the reserve list will be notified accordingly on the basis of their final ranking and the available budget.

Any notification indicating that a proposal has been identified as selected for funding does not constitute an award decision, contractual commitment or entitlement to receive financial support. Funding remains

conditional upon: (i) expiry of the applicable stand-still period; (ii) completion of any appeal or evaluation review process; (iii) successful completion of validation and contracting requirements; (iv) continued availability of the allocated budget; and (v) signature of the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement.

The final ranking, funding line, reserve list and rejection decisions may be revised only to the extent necessary as a result of: (a) an appeal or evaluation review outcome; (b) correction of a manifest procedural or clerical error; (c) withdrawal or ineligibility of a selected applicant; (d) failure to complete contracting requirements; or (e) changes to the available call budget occurring before signature of the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement. Any such revision will be made in accordance with the published call conditions and the principles of equal treatment and transparency and will be communicated to the applicants concerned.

5.2.3. TIE-BREAKING RULES

In the event of tied scores, proposals will be prioritised in the following order:

For all the applicants

- Proposals scored higher in the **KIC portfolio strategic fit and contribution to financial sustainability objectives** criteria;
- Proposals scored higher in the **Excellence** criteria.

5.3. Communication of evaluation results to applicants

Following completion of the evaluation and selection procedure, and once EIT has completed its review of the call report and confirmed that the results may be communicated, EIT Culture & Creativity will inform all applicants of the evaluation results in writing.

Applicants will receive a formal notification by email from EIT Culture & Creativity at pmo@eit-culture-creativity.eu, indicating whether the proposal has been selected for funding, placed on the reserve list, or rejected. This notification will include the relevant assessment and score and, where applicable, the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) and/or other relevant evaluation information in accordance with the evaluation model described in this call.

This communication constitutes the official outcome notification of the evaluation process and will be sent to the email address provided by the applicant. The applicable stand-still period will start on the day following the dispatch of this communication.

The notification of results does not create an unconditional entitlement to EIT Culture & Creativity financial support. Any proposal indicated as selected for funding remains subject to the expiry of the applicable stand-still period, the outcome of any appeal or evaluation review procedure, the successful completion of the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement preparation process, and the availability of the allocated call

budget. No financial support shall be considered granted until the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement has been duly signed by all required parties.

If an applicant requests further clarification regarding the evaluation result, they may contact EIT Culture & Creativity by email.

Selected proposals may be invited to the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement preparation and onboarding stage. However, no Subgrant agreement - Project agreement will be signed before the end of the applicable stand-still period and completion of the procedural and contracting checks required before signature.

5.4. Standstill period

Following the written communication of the evaluation results to applicant, EIT Culture & Creativity will apply the standstill period applicable to this call, counted from the day after the dispatch of the communication of results.

The standard standstill period is 30 calendar days, unless a shorter period has been agreed with EIT as part of the applicable approval or procedural review of the call. During this period, applicants are not permitted to publicly announce the outcome - even if they have already received written notification.

During the standstill period, applicants may submit an appeal in accordance with the appeal procedure described in Annex I of these call guidelines. EIT Culture & Creativity may suspend or adjust the contracting process for proposals whose funding position may be affected by an appeal or evaluation review.

Where an appeal or evaluation review results in a correction, full or partial re-evaluation, or revised ranking, EIT Culture & Creativity may update the list of selected proposals, the reserve list and/or the list of rejected proposals accordingly, before any Subgrant agreement - Project agreement is signed.

No Subgrant agreement - Project agreement will be signed before the end of the applicable stand-still period and completion of the procedural and contracting checks required before signature.

5.5. Publication of selected proposals and annual publication of recipients of funds

EIT Culture & Creativity may publish the list of selected proposals once the applicable procedural checks have been completed and the results may be communicated. The publication may include the name of the selected recipient(s), the country of establishment, the amount of EIT funding committed, and the subject of the grant or contract, taking into account confidentiality, security and personal data protection requirements.

5.6. Appeal process

EIT Culture & Creativity will address requests for review concerning the procedural aspects of the evaluation process, in line with the Appeal Process set out in **Annex I** of these Call Guidelines.

Complaints shall be addressed to EIT Culture & Creativity at pmo@eit-culture-creativity.eu **within 7 calendar days** from the date of dispatch of the communication of the evaluation results.

Annex I provides full details on:

- Who may appeal and on what grounds;
- The submission process and timeline;
- The internal appeal review mechanism and decision procedure.

Appeals that do not meet the specified criteria or are submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

6. Legal aspects, other terms and conditions

6.1. Acceptance of the call conditions

EIT Culture & Creativity reserves the right to make reasonable amendments and additions to the call conditions. Amendments and additions to the call conditions shall be valid only before the submission deadline, and if made available to all potential applicants at the same time on the call page of EIT Culture & Creativity.

EIT Culture & Creativity may declare the call unsuccessful in case no applications are received or if the applications do not meet the admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria.

By submitting the application form, the applicant agrees to the present call conditions. Applicants agree that they have no legal entitlement to funding. Submission of an application does not establish any entitlement to receive financial support from EIT Culture & Creativity.

6.2. Cancellation of the call

EIT Culture & Creativity reserves the right to cancel the call at any time before the signature of the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement(s) without the obligation to compensate applicants, in particular where its objectives can no longer be met, provided that the applicants are informed in a transparent manner in writing as follows:

- if the cancellation takes place before that award: on the call page of the EIT Culture & Creativity website: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu,
- if the cancellation takes place following the communication of the results to the applicants, during the standstill period, or any time before the signature of the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement: in writing directly to the selected applicants.

6.3. Data protection

EIT Culture & Creativity ensures that any processing of personal data shall be performed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016, on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (GDPR). Personal data submitted in the context of this procedure will be processed to the extent necessary for the administration, evaluation, and follow-up of the call. As a data subject, you have the right of access, the right to rectification, the right to erasure, the right to restrict processing, the right to data portability, the right to object, and the right not to be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing. If you have a question about personal data processing or want to exercise your data subject rights, you can contact our Data Protection Officer at dpo@eit-culture-creativity.eu.

The collected personal data will be used solely for the evaluation of the applications and the conduct of the call process.

Personal data will be deleted 5 years after the announcement of the results of the call in case of unsuccessful applications and 7 years for successful applicants.

By submitting your application to this call, applicants acknowledge that their personal data will be processed by EIT Culture & Creativity for the purposes of the management, evaluation, monitoring and administration of the call and any resulting financial support, in accordance with the applicable data protection rules..

For more information on the processing of your personal data, please consult the privacy statement of EIT Culture & Creativity at: Code of Conduct.

6.4. Confidentiality

EIT Culture & Creativity undertakes to use any confidential information shared by the applicants solely for the purposes of the evaluation process.

Confidential information shall mean data and/or information (in any form) that is proprietary to, or possessed by, the applicants and not generally known to the public, or that has not yet been revealed whether in tangible or intangible form, that is identified as confidential in writing or when disclosed orally.

Confidential information included in the application form must be expressly labelled by the applicant as such in the form. As regards confidential information expressly labelled as such in the call process, EIT Culture & Creativity undertakes to (i) not disclose them in any way and any form, without the prior written authorization of the applicant; and (ii) not to use them for purposes other than those strictly necessary for participation in the call.

Confidential information may be shared among EIT Culture & Creativity and its subsidiaries (e.g. KIC Co-Location Centres) solely for the purposes of the call process. EIT Culture & Creativity undertakes to impose this confidentiality obligation on its employees and the employees of its subsidiaries and its collaborators, as well as on independent experts and all subjects who, by virtue of participating in the conduct of the call, including as members of the Evaluation Committee, may have access to such confidential data and information.

The applicants agree that data and information regarding the selected projects' implementation (e.g. success stories) not labelled as confidential may be disclosed in connection with the activities of EIT Culture & Creativity.

6.5. Avoidance of conflict of interest

EIT Culture & Creativity is committed to ensure the avoidance of conflict of interest (regarding all actors) and comply with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and sound financial management.

Measures to avoid potential Conflict of Interest or unequal treatment of applicants are ensured including through appropriate conflict of interest declaration and assessment process, established written communication channels and independent and fair complaints/redress procedures.

In case an applicant becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest affecting the conduct of the call process, it shall notify the EIT Culture & Creativity of the conflict of interest without any delay.

6.6. Ethics and values

The proposal must comply with:

- ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity) and
- applicable EU, international and national law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Supplementary Protocols.

No financial support/EIT funding can be granted, within or outside the EU, for activities that are prohibited in all Member States. No financial support/EIT funding can be granted in a Member State for an activity which is forbidden in that Member State.

Please refer to the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement for further requirements.

6.7. Intellectual property rights

Applicants retain full and exclusive ownership of their prior information and intellectual property rights. By submitting their application, applicants affirm that they hold ownership or have legally secured the right to use all elements of the innovative product or service included in their application.

Applicants agree to indemnify and hold harmless EIT Culture & Creativity and/or any assignee or affiliate from any third-party allegations or claims of intellectual property rights infringement by the product or service of applicants. Applicants shall have the right to further develop, use and license their intellectual property rights for creating, making, marketing, and distributing products, services, and technology. Applicants agree to respect the IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) Rules (Article 16) of the General Model Grant Agreement and Article 10 of the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement (Common Subgrant Agreement Model).

6.8. Withdrawal of the funding - Recovery of undue amounts

EIT Culture & Creativity may withdraw the funding after its award and recover all payments made in line with the provisions of the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement, including in the following cases:

- In case the applicant committed substantial errors, irregularities or fraud;
- In case the applicant committed serious breach of obligations under the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement or during its award (including non-compliance with the call conditions, submission of false information, failure to provide required information, etc.);
- It is established that the awarded applicants were not eligible or should have been excluded.

6.9. Checks, reviews, audits and investigations

EIT Culture & Creativity retains the right to initiate checks, reviews and audit on an applicant that has been awarded funding, in order to verify compliance with the requirements of the call conditions and of the legal and contractual framework referred to above.

EIT Culture & Creativity may request any information and data from applicants that have been awarded funding for 5 years after completion for these purposes, as well as in relation to monitoring by the EIT.

In accordance with the Grant Agreement between the EIT and the KIC as well as the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement, the EIT and/or the Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the Court of Auditors may carry out checks, reviews, audits and investigations in relation to the call and the implementation of the projects.

6.10. Applicable law

The present call is governed by the applicable European Union legal framework (i.e. in particular the EIT Regulation[22], the EU Financial Regulation[23], the Horizon Europe Regulation[24]), supplemented if necessary by the national law of Belgium.

Applicants acknowledge that the present call is implemented within the framework of the Partnership Agreement and Grant Agreement concluded between the EIT and EIT Culture & Creativity, and that the applicable provisions of those agreements may be reflected in the Subgrant Agreement.

[22] Regulation (EU) 2021/819
[23] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509
[24] Regulation (EU) 2021/695

6.11. Settlement of disputes

All disputes arising out of or in connection with this Agreement, which cannot be solved amicably, shall be finally settled before the courts of Brussels.

6.12. Other

All applicants selected for funding will be required to sign a **Declaration of Honour** in the format provided under the **Subgrant agreement - Project agreement**. By signing the Declaration of Honour, applicants confirm that they are not in any of the exclusion situations and that all information provided is accurate and complete.

Participation in EIT Culture & Creativity calls takes place **entirely at the applicants' own cost and risk**. Any activities undertaken by applicants to start the implementation of a project **before the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement is signed** are carried out at their own cost and risk. EIT Culture & Creativity shall not be held liable for any actions or costs incurred prior to the signature of the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement.

EIT Culture & Creativity does **not undertake any commitment** regarding the provision of financial support until the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) has confirmed the eligibility of the selected projects and the **Subgrant agreement - Project agreement has been duly signed**. All financial support is subject to the **cost eligibility rules** laid down in the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement and to the **final confirmation of cost eligibility by the EIT**.

Entities that have never been part of projects financially supported by EIT Culture & Creativity and that do not yet have a **validated Participant Identification Code (PIC)** will be subject to a **PIC validation process**. This process is managed through the EIT Community Onboarding Service in cooperation with the European Commission's Research Executive Agency (REA), and successful validation is a precondition for the signature of the Subgrant agreement - Project agreement.

Annex I - Appeal process

EIT Culture & Creativity will address requests for review concerning the procedural aspects of the evaluation process, in accordance with the appeal procedure described in this Annex.

Complaints shall be addressed to pmo@eit-culture-creativity.eu **within 7 calendar days** from the date of communication of the results of the evaluation.

1. Right to appeal

Only the applicant of a submitted proposal is entitled to file an appeal.

2. Grounds for appeal

Only the procedural aspects of an evaluation may be the subject of a request for an evaluation review. The evaluation of the merits of a proposal shall not be subject to appeal.

Appeals may be lodged only where the applicant considers that the applicable evaluation procedure was not correctly applied to its proposal, including procedural errors, technical or administrative errors, or manifest factual errors that may have materially affected the evaluation outcome.

3. Appeal submission procedure

The appeal must be submitted via email to pmo@eit-culture-creativity.eu **within 7 calendar days** of receiving the official evaluation result notification. Late submissions will not be considered.

The appeal must include the following mandatory information:

- Name and address of the organisation of the applicant;
- Name, position, and contact details of the person submitting the appeal;
- Reference number and acronym of the proposal;
- Clearly stated grounds for appeal, as defined in Section 2;
- Any relevant supporting documents.

EIT Culture & Creativity will acknowledge receipt of the appeal in writing. Appeals submitted without the required information or based on ineligible grounds will be rejected.

4. Grounds for automatic rejection

An appeal will be automatically rejected if:

- It is submitted after the deadline;

- It is based on grounds not listed in Section 2;
- It does not include all mandatory information listed in Section 3.

In such cases, EIT Culture & Creativity will notify the applicant **within 15 calendar days** of receiving the appeal and inform the relevant Thematic Area.

5. Internal appeal evaluation process

EIT Culture & Creativity will coordinate the appeal process and conduct a technical examination of the appeal, assessing whether it falls within the admissible grounds and compiling the relevant documentation. This is forwarded to the Appeal Panel for review.

The Appeal Panel does not re-evaluate proposals. Its role is to assess the validity of the appeal, ensuring that procedures were correctly followed and no factual errors occurred that could have materially affected the evaluation outcome.

6. Composition and function of the Appeal Panel

The Appeal Panel shall be composed of two voting members appointed by the CEO of EIT Culture & Creativity:

- The COO of EIT Culture & Creativity, provided they were not involved in the evaluation or selection of the proposal concerned;
- One Legal Counsel or legal representative of EIT Culture & Creativity, provided they were not involved in the evaluation or selection of the proposal concerned.

The Appeal Panel shall be chaired by the COO of EIT Culture & Creativity, unless the COO is unavailable or has a conflict of interest, in which case the CEO may appoint another impartial chair.

The CEO may appoint additional voting or non-voting members where needed, taking into account the nature of the appeal, the need for additional procedural, legal, technical or thematic expertise, or the need to avoid a conflict of interest or deadlock.

All Appeal Panel members must be free from any conflict of interest and must not have been involved in the evaluation or selection of the proposal concerned. If a conflict arises, the member will not participate in the review and the CEO may appoint a replacement.

7. Appeal Panel process

The Appeal Panel will review the appeal and the relevant documentation to assess whether the appeal falls within the admissible grounds defined in this Annex and whether the identified issue may have materially affected the evaluation outcome.

The Appeal Panel will issue an internal opinion and recommendation to EIT Culture & Creativity. Based on this opinion and recommendation, EIT Culture & Creativity may confirm the initial evaluation or decide on a full or partial re-evaluation, primarily by evaluators who were not involved in the previous evaluation.

The outcome of the appeal will be communicated to the applicant in writing. Internal reports and deliberations will not be shared with applicants.

8. Timeline and outcome notification

The applicant will receive a formal reply to the appeal within **15 calendar days from the expiry of the appeal submission deadline**, provided that the appeal is admissible and contains all mandatory information required under Section 3.

If this timeline cannot be met due to exceptional circumstances, EIT Culture & Creativity will inform the applicant accordingly.

All appeal-related communication will be conducted exclusively with the applicant.

8. Non-suspensive effect of appeals

The submission of an appeal does not suspend, interrupt, or otherwise affect the evaluation, selection, or contracting process in respect of proposals not subject to that appeal. This approach is consistent with standard Horizon Europe review practice.

9. Finality of the appeal process

Based on the opinion and recommendation of the Appeal Panel, EIT Culture & Creativity will take the final decision on the appeal and notify the applicant in writing. The decision of EIT Culture & Creativity is final within the framework of this internal appeal procedure described in this Annex. No further appeals will be accepted on the same grounds for the same proposal. This is without prejudice to any external legal remedies that may be available under applicable law.

Annex II - Online application form

Thank you for your interest in our calls. We look forward to reviewing your application. Ready to begin? Click **"Start my application."**

Submission is via the online platform only.

Before starting, please make sure to read the **call guidelines** and all related documents.

A few things to note

- Please fill out all sections in English - incomplete applications can't be considered.
- Use templates where provided, e.g. budget file template.

Saving your draft application

- Draft mode: You can save your application as a draft and return later. Important: Save the link - we can't recover it for you!
- Submitted but not final? Don't worry. You can still edit your application after submission. Save the link - we can't recover it for you!

Which funding tier fits you?

Your eligibility depends on your fundraising stage and where your venture is registered.

- **Up to EUR 500 000** - Ventures in RIS countries that have secured investment in the last 18 months, are raising post-seed funding, or prepping for Series A+.
- **Up to EUR 200 000** - Ventures outside RIS countries that have secured investment in the last 18 months or are raising post-seed funding.
- **Fixed EUR 100 000** - Early-stage ventures that haven't secured investment in the last 18 months but meet all other requirements.

EIT Culture & Creativity has secured additional funding for ventures included in the EIT Culture & Creativity "100 to Watch" list.

PART A - ONLINE APPLICATION FORM

PROJECT INFORMATION

- Proposal title
  What's the name of your proposal? Give us the full title.
- Proposal acronym
  Give it a short name. This will be your project's ID throughout the process.
  Example: "GREENLAB" for "Green Solutions for Urban Laboratories".
- Priority area
  Select the priority area under which you are submitting your proposal. This helps us match your application with the right evaluators.
  ***Important**: Cohort 2027 is open only to solutions from Fashion, Architecture and Audio-Visual Media areas. Future cohorts will include other sectors. If you are uncertain about your sector fit, please see examples of potential solutions included in Annex VI of the call guidelines.*
    - *Architecture*
    - *Audio-Visual media*
    - *Fashion*

APPLICANT ORGANISATION INFORMATION

Filling this part helps us verify eligibility, connect you with the right programme, and ensure everything aligns with the call's requirements.

- Applicant organisation - Legal name
  What's the official name of your organisation? Exactly as registered.
- Applicant organisation - Short name
  How do people usually refer to your organisation?
  If your venture doesn't have short name, please write "Not applicable".
- Applicant organisation - Type of entity
  Please choose the type of entity of the organisation. For your guidance:
  Startup: A young, technology-driven enterprise focused on developing highly innovative, scalable business models.
  Scaleup: A mature startup expanding rapidly with an established product-market fit and high-growth revenue.
  SME: A company with under 250 employees and either ≤€50 million turnover or ≤€43 million balance sheet.
    - *Startup*
    - *Scale up*
    - *SME*
    - *Other*. If you have selected "*Other*", please specify.

☐ If you selected "*SME*" above. By ticking this box, I confirm that the organisation complies with the EU definition of an SME as indicated above.

- Applicant organisation - Country
- Applicant organisation - Country code
  Enter the two-letter country code corresponding to the country of legal establishment. For more information, see Country codes - Statistics Explained - Eurostat.
  For example: ES, DE, FR, IT
- Applicant organisation - City
- Applicant organisation - Postal code
- Applicant organisation - Street
- Applicant organisation - Street number
- Applicant organisation - PO Box, if applicable
  If not applicable, please write "Not applicable". A Post Office Box (PO Box) is a lockable mailbox located at a post office, used as an alternative delivery address.
- Applicant organisation - CEDEX, if applicable
  If not applicable, please write "Not applicable". CEDEX (Courrier d'Entreprise à Distribution Exceptionnelle) is a French postal designation used by organisations receiving large mail volumes.
- Applicant organisation - PIC number
  Enter the 9-digit Participant Identification Code (PIC). If you do not know if the organisation already has a PIC number, you can verify directly on the EU Portal (click here) whether your organisation is already registered.
- Applicant organisation - Legal entity VAT number
  Enter the venture's VAT number. If your venture is not VAT-registered, enter "Not applicable".
- Applicant organisation - Legal entity registration number
  Enter the venture's legal entity registration number as it appears on the official incorporation or registration documents.
- Applicant organisation - NACE code
  Enter the organisation's NACE code, corresponding to the organisation's main economic activity. For more information, see https://ec.europa.eu/competition/mergers/cases/index/nace_all.html.
- Applicant organisation - NUTS code
  Enter the organisation's NUTS code. For more information, see Overview - NUTS - Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics - Eurostat. If you do not know the NUTS code, please provide the full address and EIT Culture & Creativity may verify the code during the administrative checks.
- Applicant organisation - Latitude
- *Enter the latitude of the applicant's main legal or operational address, if known. You can find your coordinates via Google Maps: right-click your address and the lat will appear at the top of the menu. If not known, please write "To be verified".*
- Applicant organisation - Longitude

- *Enter the longitude of the applicant's main legal or operational address, if known. You can find your coordinates via Google Maps: right-click your address and the long will appear at the top of the menu. If not known, please write "To be verified".*
- Applicant organisation - Website
  Please provide link if applicable.

APPLICANT ORGANISATION - SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT (SPOC)

SPOC will be the main person for all official communication.

- Applicant organisation - First name of SPOC
- Applicant organisation - Last name of SPOC
- Applicant organisation - Title or salutation of SPOC
  Select the title and/or salutation.
  - *Ms*
  - *Mr*
  - *Mx*
  - *Dr*
  - *Prof*
  - *Prefer not to say*
  - *Other*. If you have selected "Other", please specify.
- Applicant organisation - Gender of SPOC
  This information is for statistical and reporting purposes only.
  - *Female*
  - *Male*
  - *Non-binary*
  - *Prefer not to say*
- Applicant organisation - Email address of SPOC
  This email will be used for all official notifications including the evaluation result.
- Applicant organisation - Telephone number of SPOC
- Applicant organisation - Position / Job title of SPOC

APPLICANT ORGANISATION - LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ORGANISATION (LRO)

The Legal Representative / Legal Responsible Officer should be the person authorised to legally represent the applicant organisation or to coordinate the signature of the relevant contractual documents.

- Applicant organisation - First name of LRO
- Applicant organisation - Last name of LRO
- Applicant organisation - Title or salutation of LRO
  Select the title and/or salutation.
  - *Ms*
  - *Mr*

- *Mx*
- *Dr*
- *Prof*
- *Prefer not to say*
- *Other*. If you have selected "*Other*", please specify.

- Applicant organisation - Gender of LRO
  This information is for statistical and reporting purposes only.
  - *Female*
  - *Male*
  - *Non-binary*
  - *Prefer not to say*
- Applicant organisation - Position / Job title of LRO
- Applicant organisation - Email address of LRO
- Applicant organisation - Confirmation of LRO
  I confirm that the LRO identified above is authorised to represent the applicant organisation or to coordinate the signature of the relevant contractual documents.
  - *Yes*
  - *No*
  - *To be confirmed*

☐ SANCTIONS & JURISDICTION SCREENING

By ticking this box, I confirm that, in line with the call guidelines, no shareholders, UBOs, or controlling persons of the applicant are nationals of, resident in, or linked to any EU-sanctioned or non-compliant jurisdiction (including Russia, Belarus, or other sanctioned territories).

☐ LEGAL & DISPUTE HISTORY

I confirm that the company has not been involved in, and is not aware of, any legal, regulatory, arbitration, criminal, civil, or other dispute proceedings, investigations, or material claims.

☐ LEGAL DECLARATIONS

By ticking this box, I confirm that:

- *I am authorised to submit this application on behalf of the company.*
- *The applicant has read and accepts the rules and conditions of the call.*
- *The applicant will not receive double funding for the same activities.*
- *I understand that all programme activities are delivered in English, and I confirm that at least one of the founders is proficient in the language. I recognise that insufficient proficiency could limit our ability to fully benefit from the programme.*

☐ FINANCIAL CAPACITY

By ticking this box, I confirm that:

- *The applicant has the financial capacity required to implement the proposal.*
- *The applicant, including all company members, have stable and sufficient financial resources to implement the proposed activities and to cover the share of project costs not reimbursed by EIT Culture & Creativity.*
- *The applicant acknowledges that EIT Culture & Creativity may request information or supporting documents to verify financial capacity, including financial statements, business plans, audit reports, information on dependency on EU funding, previous financial performance or any other document reasonably required for this assessment.*
- *The applicant understands that failure to provide requested information, or the submission of false, incomplete or misleading information, may result in rejection of the proposal, withdrawal of the award decision, termination of the contracting process or agreement, and/or recovery of funds, where applicable.*

☐ OPERATIONAL CAPACITY

By ticking this box, I confirm that:

- *The applicant has the operational capacity required to implement the proposal.*
- *The applicant, including all company members, have the necessary experience, know-how, qualifications, staff, organisational capacity and operational resources to carry out the proposed activities, fulfil their role in the project, and comply with the reporting, monitoring and contractual obligations of the call.*
- *The applicant acknowledges that EIT Culture & Creativity may request information or supporting documents to verify operational capacity, including team profiles, allocation of responsibilities, staffing information, technical resources, relevant experience, ongoing commitments or any other document reasonably required for this assessment.*
- *The applicant understands that failure to provide requested information, or the submission of false, incomplete or misleading information, may result in rejection of the proposal, withdrawal of the award decision, termination of the contracting process or agreement, and/or recovery of funds, where applicable.*

☐ FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY MECHANISM (FSM)

By ticking this box, I confirm that:

- *The applicant has read and understands the Option Agreement rules and conditions.*
- *I acknowledge that signing the Option Agreement is a mandatory condition for participation in the programme, including attendance at the Kick-off.*
- *I understand that, if selected, I am required to sign the Option Agreement within two weeks of notification. Failure to do so will result in the withdrawal of my place, which will be offered to the next eligible applicant.*

The rules and conditions regarding the Option Agreement can be found in Section 3.4 of the call guidelines.

PART B - NARRATIVE PART OF THE APPLICATION

Part B is the technical part of your application. This section, together with all mandatory annexes, will allow the external evaluators and the internal Portfolio Selection Committee your application based on the evaluation criteria included in the call guidelines. ***The information provided in part B must be consistent with part A.*** *Keep your answers focused and evidence-based. Evaluators respond favourably to clarity and credibility, not length*!

Proposal abstract

Provide a short summary of the proposal, including:

- *The challenge, need or opportunity addressed.*
- *The proposed solution, activity, programme, service or intervention.*
- *The main objectives.*
- *The target groups, users, beneficiaries or markets.*
- *The expected outcomes and results.*
- *The expected contribution to EIT Culture & Creativity's objectives.*

Think of this as your elevator pitch. Clear, compelling, and easy for a non-specialist reader to understand.

Q1. Describe the challenge and opportunity your venture addresses within the selected EIT Culture & Creativity priority area.

Please explain briefly why it matters, how your solution creates value for the sector, and how technology is used to advance, modernise, or transform existing practices, products, services, or value chains.
Make sure you correspond to selected priority area in Part A - Architecture, Audio-Visual Media or Fashion.

Q2. Are you in the process of a fundraising (investment) round with at least EUR 200,000 secured from an institutional investor?

For example, signed term sheet or equivalent formal commitment.

- *Yes*
- *No*

  If **Q2.** "*Yes*" selected:
  - **Q2.1. Upload supporting evidence**
    Please provide one single pdf file including supporting evidence. This may be signed term sheet (including the amount) and/or *cap table.*
    You can upload only one file!
  - **Q2.2. Price per share and share capital - upload supporting evidence**
    If your price per share and share capital are not reflected in your incorporation documents, please provide one single pdf file that reflects these.
    This question is optional. Upload file only if applicable.
  - **Q2.3. Is your organisation incorporated in RIS country?**

Indicate whether the applicant is established in an EIT RIS-eligible country. For more information, see https://eit-ris.eu/about-eit-community/.

- *Yes*
- *No*

- Q2.4. Is your organisation part of the EIT Culture & Creativity "100 to Watch" list?
  If you're not sure, you may check our website: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/what-we-do/business-creation/100-to-Watch.
  - *Yes*
  - *No*

If Q2.3. "*Yes*" and Q2.4. "*Yes*":

Q2.5. Request grant amount

Please choose the type of requested grant amount. For your guidance:
- Up to EUR 500 000 - available only for Scale-stage ventures located in RIS countries;
- Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch - exclusive funding for ventures that are part of the EIT Culture & Creativity 100-To-Watch list.
***Note**: If you choose "Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch", you will be evaluated by a dedicated evaluation panel. Only two funding spots for such ventures are available under this call!*

- *Up to EUR 500 000*
- *Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch*

If Q2.5. "*Up to EUR 500 000*" selected:
[TEXT] Note to the applicant: *Based on your response, please proceed with the application for the financial support of up to EUR 500 000. While filling out the budget template, select programme "Scale - RIS".*

☐ *I confirm that the applicant is applying for Scale. The applicant will select the correct programme **"Scale - RIS"** in the provided budget template. Applicant acknowledges that failure to follow these guidelines will result in rejected application.*

If Q2.5. "*Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch*" selected:
[TEXT] Note to the applicant: *Based on your response, please proceed with the application for the financial support of up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch. While filling out the budget template, select programme "Scale - 100-To-Watch".*

☐ *I confirm that the applicant is applying for Scale. The applicant will select the correct programme **"Scale - 100-To-Watch"** in the provided budget template. Applicant acknowledges that failure to follow these guidelines will result in rejected application. By selecting the option "Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch", I confirm that applicant understands the application will be evaluated by a dedicated evaluation panel.*

If Q2.3. "*Yes*" and Q2.4. "*No*":
[TEXT] Note to the applicant: *Based on your response, please proceed with the application for the financial support of up to EUR 500 000. While filling out the budget template, select programme "**Scale - RIS**".*
☐ *I confirm that the applicant is applying for Scale. The applicant will select the correct programme **"Scale - RIS"** in the provided budget template. Applicant acknowledges that failure to follow these guidelines will result in rejected application.*

If Q2.3. "*No*" and Q2.4. "*Yes*":
Q2.5. Request grant amount
Please choose the type of requested grant amount. For your guidance:
- Up to EUR 200 000 - available to Scale-stage ventures located in countries not included under the EIT RIS scheme;
- Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch - exclusive funding for ventures that are part of the EIT Culture & Creativity 100-To-Watch list.
***Note**: If you choose "Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch", you will be evaluated by a dedicated evaluation panel. Only two funding spots for such ventures are available under this call!*

- *Up to EUR 200 000 non-RIS*
- *Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch*

If Q2.5. "*Up to EUR 200 000*" selected:
[TEXT] Note to the applicant: *Based on your response, please proceed with the application for the financial support of up to EUR 200 000. While filling out the budget template, select programme "**Scale - non-RIS**".*
☐ *I confirm that the applicant is applying for Scale. The applicant will select the correct programme **"Scale - non-RIS"** in the provided budget template. Applicant acknowledges that failure to follow these guidelines will result in rejected application.*

If Q2.5. "*Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch*" selected:
[TEXT] Note to the applicant: *Based on your response, please proceed with the application for the financial support of up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch. While filling out the budget template, select programme "**Scale - 100-To-Watch**".*
☐ *I confirm that the applicant is applying for Scale. The applicant will select the correct programme **"Scale - 100-To-Watch"** in the provided budget template. Applicant acknowledges that failure to follow these guidelines will result in rejected application. By selecting the option "Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch", I confirm that applicant understands the application will be evaluated by a dedicated evaluation panel.*

If Q2.3. "*No*" and Q2.4. "*No*":
[TEXT] Note to the applicant: *Based on your response, please proceed with the application for the financial support of up to EUR 200 000. While filling out the budget template, select programme "**Scale - non-RIS**".*

☐ *I confirm that the applicant is applying for Scale. The applicant will select the correct programme* ***"Scale - non-RIS"*** *in the provided budget template. Applicant acknowledges that failure to follow these guidelines will result in rejected application.*

If **Q2**. "*No*" selected:

Q3. Has your venture secured at least EUR 200,000 in private investment within the past 18 months?

- *Yes*
- *No*

If **Q3**. "*Yes*" selected:

- **Q3.1. Upload supporting evidence**
  Please provide one single pdf file including supporting evidence. This may be signed term sheet (including the amount) and/or cap table.
  You can upload only one file!
- **Q3.2. Price per share and share capital - upload supporting evidence**
  If your price per share and share capital are not reflected in your incorporation documents, please upload here one single pdf file that reflects these.
  This question is optional. Upload file only if applicable.
- **Q2.3. Is your organisation incorporated in RIS country?**
  Indicate whether the applicant is established in an EIT RIS-eligible country. For more information, see https://eit-ris.eu/about-eit-community/.
  - *Yes*
  - *No*
- **Q2.4. Is your organisation part of the EIT Culture & Creativity "100 to Watch" list?**
  If you're not sure, you may check our website: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/what-we-do/business-creation/100-to-Watch.
  - *Yes*
  - *No*

If **Q2.3.** "*Yes*" and **Q2.4**. "*Yes*":

Q2.5. Request grant amount

Please choose the type of requested grant amount. For your guidance:
- Up to EUR 500 000 - available only for Scale-stage ventures located in RIS countries;
- Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch - exclusive funding for ventures that are part of the EIT Culture & Creativity 100-To-Watch list.
***Note**: If you choose "Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch", you will be evaluated by a dedicated evaluation panel. Only two funding spots for such ventures are available under this call!*

- *Up to EUR 500 000*
- *Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch*

If Q2.5. "*Up to EUR 500 000*" selected:
[TEXT] Note to the applicant: *Based on your response, please proceed with the application for the financial support of up to EUR 500 000. While filling out the budget template, select programme "**Scale - RIS**".*
☐ *I confirm that the applicant is applying for Scale. The applicant will select the correct programme **"Scale - RIS"** in the provided budget template. Applicant acknowledges that failure to follow these guidelines will result in rejected application.*

If Q2.5. "*Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch*" selected:
[TEXT] Note to the applicant: *Based on your response, please proceed with the application for the financial support of up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch. While filling out the budget template, select programme "**Scale - 100-To-Watch**".*
☐ *I confirm that the applicant is applying for Scale. The applicant will select the correct programme **"Scale - 100-To-Watch"** in the provided budget template. Applicant acknowledges that failure to follow these guidelines will result in rejected application. By selecting the option "Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch", I confirm that applicant understands the application will be evaluated by a dedicated evaluation panel.*

If Q2.3. "*Yes*" and Q2.4. "*No*":
*[TEXT] Note to the applicant: Based on your response you are eligible to proceed with the application for the financial support of up to EUR 500 000 - **"Scale - RIS".** Please select this funding type option in provided budget template.*
☐ *I confirm that the applicant is applying for Scale. The applicant will select the correct funding type **"Scale - RIS"** in the provided budget template. Applicant acknowledges that failure to follow these guidelines will result in rejected application.*

If Q2.3. "*No*" and Q2.4. "*Yes*":
Q2.5. Request grant amount
Please choose the type of requested grant amount. For your guidance:
- Up to EUR 200 000 - available to Scale-stage ventures located in countries not included under the EIT RIS scheme;
- Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch - exclusive funding for ventures that are part of the EIT Culture & Creativity 100-To-Watch list.
***Note**: If you choose "Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch", you will be evaluated by a dedicated evaluation panel. Only two funding spots for such ventures are available under this call!*

- *Up to EUR 200 000 non-RIS*
- *Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch*

If Q2.5. "*Up to EUR 200 000*" selected:
[TEXT] Note to the applicant: *Based on your response, please proceed with the application for the financial support of up to EUR 200 000. While filling out the budget template, select programme "**Scale - non-RIS**".*
☐ *I confirm that the applicant is applying for Scale. The applicant will select the correct programme **"Scale - non-RIS"** in the provided budget template. Applicant acknowledges that failure to follow these guidelines will result in rejected application.*

If Q2.5. "*Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch*" selected:
[TEXT] Note to the applicant: *Based on your response, please proceed with the application for the financial support of up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch. While filling out the budget template, select programme "**Scale - 100-To-Watch**".*
☐ *I confirm that the applicant is applying for Scale. The applicant will select the correct programme **"Scale - 100-To-Watch"** in the provided budget template. Applicant acknowledges that failure to follow these guidelines will result in rejected application. By selecting the option "Up to EUR 200 000 100-To-Watch", I confirm that applicant understands the application will be evaluated by a dedicated evaluation panel.*

If Q2.3. "*No*" and Q2.4. "*No*":
*[TEXT] Note to the applicant: Based on your response you are eligible to proceed with the application for the financial support of up to EUR 200 000 - **"Scale - non-RIS".** Please select this funding type option in provided budget template.*
☐ *I confirm that the applicant is applying for Scale. The applicant will select the correct programme **"Scale - non-RIS"** in the provided budget template. Applicant acknowledges that failure to follow these guidelines will result in rejected application.*

If Q3. "*No*" selected:
*[TEXT] Note to the applicant: Based on your response you are eligible to proceed with the application for the financial support of up to EUR 100 000 - **"Shape - initial support".** Please select this funding type option in provided budget template.*
☐ *I confirm that the applicant is applying for Shape. The applicant will select the correct programme **"Shape - initial support"** in the provided budget template. Applicant acknowledges that failure to follow these guidelines will result in rejected application.*

Q4. *(Shape only)* Have you received external financial support for the solution you are applying with?
This includes any funding from public or private sources, such as angel investors, venture capital, corporate investors, public grants, innovation funds, or other institutional investors.

- *Yes*
- *No*

If Q4. "*Yes*" selected:

Q4.1. Upload supporting evidence

Please upload a high-level cap table summary or relevant investment agreements as one single pdf file. We also encourage you to provide supporting evidence from key investors, such as a letter of intent or other indications of investor interest or commitment.
Make sure all documents are merged in one file. You can upload only one file!

Q5. Describe your company in one sentence

Provide a description using the structure below:
"We help [Target Customer] who [Problem/Need] to [Desired Outcome] through our [Product/Service], which [Unique Benefit or Differentiation].
Example: We help cultural organisations who struggle to engage younger audiences to create immersive experiences through our XR platform, which transforms archives into interactive storytelling."

Q6. What is your core product or technology?

Share your solution's purpose, process, and significance clearly and avoid buzzwords.
This description will be seen by evaluators.

Q6. *(Scale only)* Can you provide at least one form of tangible evidence of your solution in action?

Select all that apply.

- *Product demo*
- *Product deck*
- *Tech architecture*

If Q6. "*Product demo*" selected:

Q6.1. Product demo - Upload supporting evidence

Please provide one link to recording (max 3 minutes) that may include: recording of your solution, screenshots of product demo or working demo. The link must be publicly accessible.

If Q6. "*Product deck*" selected:

Q6.1. Product deck - Upload supporting evidence

Please upload one single pdf file including product deck of your solution.
You can upload only one file!

If Q6. "*Tech architecture*" selected:

Q6.1. Tech architecture - Upload supporting evidence

Please upload one single pdf file including tech architecture of your solution.
You can upload only one file!

Q7. Do you own any proprietary technology or intellectual property (IP)?

Please select all that apply.

- *Patent granted*
- *Patent pending / patent application filed*
- *Trademark registered*
- *Trademark application filed*
- *Copyright (software, content, or creative works)*
- *Proprietary technology or software (not patented)*
- *Trade secrets or proprietary know-how*
- *Industrial design / design rights*
- *Licensed IP from another organisation*
- *No proprietary IP yet*
- *Other.*

If Q7. "*Other*" selected:

Q7.1. Could you please specify?

Q8. How does your product or service solve the core problem, and what makes it unique compared to existing solutions?

Describe briefly your key innovation, differentiation, and the elements that make your solution difficult to replicate.

Q9. Upload pitch video

Please provide a link to a 1-minute pitch video introducing yourself, your team, and your project.
The video should include English subtitles (AI-generated subtitles are acceptable). Uploaded pitch will be shared with evaluators to help them better understand your solution, goals, achievements, and team.
It should be a concise pitch, not a promotional or marketing video.
Make sure the link is publicly accessible.
This question is optional. Provide link only if applicable.

Q10. Paying customers and/or the commercial traction of your venture

Please describe the commercial traction achieved by your venture to date. Please provide information on:

- *Type of paying customers, users, commercial partners, or active pilots;*
- *Key contracts, commercial agreements, partnerships, or pilots signed during the last 12 months.*

Q10.1. Upload supporting evidence

Please upload one single pdf file to support your answer for Paying customers and/or the commercial traction of your venture. The file may include contracts, customer lists (anonymised versions accepted), invoices, commercial agreements, CRM screenshots, dashboards, or similar documents. Redacted versions are accepted.

If your venture is pre-revenue, please include a separate page in file describing the commercial agreements or commitments in place that demonstrate near-term revenue potential.

Q11. Financial Position

Please describe the current financial position of your venture. Provide information on:

- *Current monthly burn rate and a short explanation of how it is calculated;*
- *Current runway (in months) and the assumptions used to calculate it;*
- *Monthly Recurring Revenue (MRR) and Annual Recurring Revenue (ARR), where applicable;*
- *Current cash position.*

Note: Make sure all indicated amounts are in EUR!

Q11.1. Upload supporting evidence

Please upload one single pdf file to support your answer for Financial Position. The file may include management accounts, audited financial statements, profit and loss statements, MRR dashboards, revenue reports, or similar financial documentation. Redacted versions are accepted.

Q12. *(Scale only)* Share your customer retention, churn or engagement metrics

Please provide one single pdf file including concrete data such as retention rates, churn percentages, or engagement frequency, and where available include analytics screenshots, dashboards, or cohort analysis charts showing user activity and customer drop-off over time.
You can upload only one file!

Q13. *(Shape only)* Breakdown of income sources

Please share breakdown of income sources (%) using structure below:

- *Product sales;*
- *Services;*
- *Licensing;*
- *Subscriptions;*
- *Grants;*
- *Personal funds;*
- *Crowdfunding;*
- *Sponsorships;*
- *Investment;*
- *Other*

Q14. *(Shape only)* What percentage of your company income currently comes from this venture?

This helps us understand your venture's current level of commercial activity, focus, and market traction, especially in cases where founders may also generate income through other activities or freelance work. As our programmes are designed to support ventures with growth potential and commercial traction, we

would like to better understand the role this venture currently plays within your overall professional or business activity.

Q15. Are there external factors - regulatory changes, market shifts, emerging technologies - that are accelerating demand for your solution?
Example: New regulations or policy changes, shifts in customer behaviour or expectations, emerging technologies or platforms; industry or market trends, economic or structural changes or more.

Q16. Gender composition of your founding team
Please indicate gender composition using the structure below:
Number of women founders: ...
Number of men founders: ...
Number of non-binary founders: ...
This information is collected for diversity monitoring, and reporting purposes only.

Q17. How many people are currently in your team?
Please describe each core team member's role, area of responsibility and share their LinkedIn profiles using the structure below:
Team member 1: Full name, role, area of responsibility, LinkedIn profile;
Team member 2: Full name, role, area of responsibility, LinkedIn profile;
Team member 3: Full name, role, area of responsibility, LinkedIn profile;
…
Duplicate as many team members as needed.

Q18. Does your team include any founder or member with prior entrepreneurial experience, previous ventures, or exit history?

- *Yes*
- *No*

If Q18. "*Yes*" selected:
Q18.1 Share the relevant information.
Please provide name, LinkedIn profile and their current role in the company using the structure below:
Person 1: Full name, role, LinkedIn profile;
Person 2: Full name, role, LinkedIn profile;
Person 3: Full name, role, LinkedIn profile;
…
Duplicate as many as needed.

Q19. *(Shape only)* Why are you personally motivated to build this venture?
We want to hear your story! What drives you to solve this problem? What's your connection to the mission?

Q20. (Scale only) Does your venture have in-house technical leadership (CTO or equivalent)?

- *Yes*
- *No*

If Q20. "*Yes*" selected:

Q20.1. Share the relevant information.

Please provide full name, role, area of responsibility, LinkedIn profile;
If there is more than one, include the same information as above.

MANDATORY DOCUMENT UPLOADS

- Pitch deck
  Please upload your most recent pitch deck saved as pdf. Your pitch deck should be no longer than 20 slides and cover the following essentials described in the Pitch Deck Outline listed in the call guidelines.
  File name: Pitch deck_Proposal acronym.pdf
- Venture Execution Plan *(Shape only)*
  Please upload the Venture Execution Plan saved as pdf. Please structure your document according to the sections outlined in provided template listed in the call guidelines and ensure all requested information is included. This document helps us understand your company's growth priorities, what you aim to develop, validate, improve, or scale over the next 12 months, and how you plan to utilise the requested funding to support your venture's growth, investment readiness, or scaling journey. If selected, this document will also serve as a working roadmap during the programme and will be further refined together with your coach throughout the Kick-Off and the rest of the programme journey.
  File name: Execution plan_Proposal acronym.pdf
- Venture Scaling Plan *(Scale only)*
  Please upload the Venture Scaling Plan saved as pdf. Please structure your document according to the sections outlined in provided template listed in the call guidelines and ensure all requested information is included. This document helps us understand your company's scaling priorities, international growth ambitions, fundraising strategy, and how you plan to utilise the requested funding to accelerate expansion over the next 12 months. It should outline the key commercial, operational, product, and investment-related milestones required to achieve your next stage of growth. If selected, this document will also serve as a working roadmap during the programme and will be further refined together with your coach throughout the Kick-Off and the rest of the programme journey.
  File name: Scaling plan_Proposal acronym.pdf
- Proof of incorporation
  Please upload the certificate of incorporation or official registration document in pdf format.
  File name: Registration_Proposal acronym.pdf
- Company bank statement

Please upload the company bank statement **covering the previous six months and showing the current cash balance**. *Sensitive information such as account numbers, transaction references, and personal information may be redacted or anonymised. The document must be saved as one single pdf.*
File name: Bank statement_Proposal acronym.pdf

- Budget file

  Please upload the completed budget file in EIT Culture & Creativity provided funding template.
  Make sure you have selected the correct programme in the provided budget. The file must be in saved in excel format.
  Important: *If you fail to follow selected and confirmed funding type, this will result in rejected application!*
  File name: Budget_Proposal acronym.xlsx

OTHER

How did you hear about this call?

Please select all that apply.

- *EIT Culture and Creativity Email Newsletter*
- *Social Media (e.g. Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn)*
- *Media (e.g. news, websites, magazines)*
- *Referral by friend of EIT Culture and Creativity (e.g. alumni, mentor, investor, etc) (If you have selected "Referral by friend of EIT Culture and Creativity", please specify)*
- *Other (If you have selected "Other", please specify)*

SUBMISSION CONFIRMATION

- Name of person submitting
- Name of organisation of person submitting
- Position / Job title of person submitting
- Confirmation of completeness and accuracy

☐ *By ticking this box, I confirm that all information provided in Part B is true, complete, accurate and consistent with Part A and all mandatory annexes.*

- Confirmation of readiness for evaluation

☐ *By ticking this box, I confirm that the proposal is ready for evaluation and that all required sections and supporting documents have been completed and submitted.*

Annex III - Programmes Initiatives and Activities

1. Programme Initiatives and Activities

This Annex provides an overview of the main initiatives, support services, and activities delivered through the Shape Accelerator Programme and the Scale Post-Accelerator Programme. While both programmes combine financial support with tailored venture development services, each track is designed to respond to a different stage of company growth.

The Shape Accelerator Programme is focused on early-stage ventures seeking business validation, growth readiness, and investor preparedness. The Scale Post-Accelerator Programme is designed for more mature ventures that are actively fundraising and preparing for international expansion and follow on investment.

The activities described below are indicative and may be adapted based on cohort needs, market developments, and programme priorities.

Please note that the exact sequencing, delivery format, and content of activities may evolve over time. EIT Culture and Creativity reserves the right to adapt programme components in order to respond to participant needs, market developments, operational considerations, and strategic priorities.

2. Shape Accelerator Programme Design

Component	Description
Kick-off	A two- to three-day in-person kick-off event, potentially hosted at one of EIT Culture & Creativity's regional hubs, designed to establish strategic priorities, align expectations, and foster collaboration among participating ventures. The programme includes tailored workshops, founder strategy sessions, ecosystem insights, investor talks, and networking opportunities with peers, mentors, corporates, and partners.
Online Sessions	A structured series of practical working sessions and capability building workshops aligned with venture growth and investment readiness. Participants work directly on their business challenges and receive focused feedback for immediate implementation.
Designated Coach	Each venture is matched with a dedicated coach for one to one sessions throughout the programme. Coaches help ventures track progress, challenge assumptions, refine priorities, and maintain momentum.
Mentor Pool Access	Participants receive access to a curated international network of experts through one to one mentoring sessions on topics such as market expansion, branding, product development, fundraising, and growth strategy.

Component	Description
Community	A mix of expert led and peer to peer sessions designed to strengthen collaboration and shared learning. This includes founder talks, investor sessions, peer circles, and access to an online community for continuous exchange and support.
Pitching and Storytelling Training	Tailored support to strengthen investor pitching, sharpen messaging, and communicate the venture's value proposition with clarity and impact.
Visibility and Positioning	Ventures benefit from curated opportunities to strengthen market visibility and credibility across the European creative technology ecosystem. This may include participation in flagship events, showcases, speaking opportunities, and ecosystem communications.
Demo Day	A mid-programme pitching and assessment event where participants present their progress and updated plans to a panel of experts and investors. Up to four ventures may be selected for additional financial support under the conditions set out in the call guidelines.

3. Scale Post-Accelerator Programme Design

Component	Description
Kick-off	A two- to three-day in-person kick-off event, potentially hosted at one of EIT Culture & Creativity's regional hubs, designed to establish strategic priorities, align expectations, and foster collaboration among participating ventures. The programme includes tailored workshops, founder strategy sessions, ecosystem insights, investor talks, and networking opportunities with peers, mentors, corporates, and partners.
Upskilling Opportunities	A structured series of workshops and expert sessions focused on scaling capabilities. Topics may include growth strategy, market expansion, governance, legal and tax readiness, intellectual property, operational systems, and leadership development.
Designated Coach	Each venture is assigned a dedicated coach acting as an extended strategic sparring partner. Coaches hold regular one to one sessions focused on milestones, KPIs, fundraising readiness, governance, leadership, organisational growth, and execution priorities.
Mentor Pool Access	Ventures gain access to EIT Culture and Creativity's curated international mentor network, including founders, investors, operators, and subject matter experts. Mentoring may cover market entry, pricing, fundraising, branding, product strategy, and expansion planning.
Community	A mix of expert led and peer to peer sessions designed to strengthen collaboration and shared learning. This includes founder talks, investor sessions, peer circles, and access to an online community for continuous exchange and support.

Component	Description
Visibility and Positioning	Ventures benefit from curated opportunities to strengthen market visibility and credibility across the European creative technology ecosystem. This may include participation in flagship events, showcases, speaking opportunities, and ecosystem communications.
High Level Matchmaking	Curated introductions to investors, corporates, ecosystem leaders, and strategic partners. Matchmaking focuses on fundraising, commercial partnerships, pilot opportunities, and access to relevant industry events.
Demo Day	A high visibility pitching event where ventures present to investors, corporate partners, experts, and ecosystem representatives. Full participation conditions are set out in the relevant section of the Call. The Scale Demo Day forms part of the programme and monitoring process and it is not a competition for additional funding.

Annex IV - Eligibility of Expenditure

This Annex sets out the main principles governing the eligibility of expenditure financed through the financial support awarded under this call. It provides guidance to selected ventures on the acceptable use of funds and the conditions under which use of funds will be validated, in line with the actual-cost reimbursement model applied. Financial support under this call is provided in the form actual-cost reimbursement model. Financial support will be calculated on the basis of actual eligible costs incurred, reported and accepted, up to the maximum amount awarded under the relevant Subgrant Agreement. Beneficiaries are required to provide evidence that the financial support has been used for the purposes approved during the programme by deliverables listed in this call guidelines (one per cohort), in line with the eligibility principles and expenditure categories defined in this Annex.

In this context, EIT Culture & Creativity applies indicative eligibility benchmarks to guide the assessment of whether the proposed and implemented use of funds is reasonable, proportionate, and aligned with programme objectives.

1. General Principles of Eligibility

To be considered eligible, expenditure must meet all the following conditions:

- Be directly linked to the objectives, activities and execution plan approved during the programme Kick-off (during which the selected applicant will review the proposed execution plan with EIT Culture & Creativity team and designated coach);
- Be necessary and proportionate for the implementation of planned growth or scaling activities;
- Be incurred during the official eligibility period defined in the subgrant agreement;
- Be identifiable and verifiable, recorded in the beneficiary's accounts in accordance with the applicable accounting standards and supported by appropriate documentation;
- Be reasonable, justified, and compliant with sound financial management principles;
- Comply with applicable tax, labour, procurement, and legal obligations.

EIT Culture and Creativity reserves the right to assess whether expenditure is necessary, proportionate, and sufficiently linked to programme objectives.

2. Evidence and Use-of-Funds Validation

As financial support is provided under an actual-cost reimbursement model, beneficiaries must maintain complete, accurate and verifiable accounting records and supporting documentation for the costs declared.

Supporting documentation may include, as applicable, employment contracts, payroll records, timesheets or equivalent time-recording documents, invoices, contracts, procurement records, proof of payment,

travel documentation, accounting extracts and any other evidence required under the relevant Subgrant Agreement.

The information submitted at M6 is used for programme monitoring and internal verification and does not constitute an interim actual-cost claim or settlement. Actual eligible costs will be formally reported and assessed through the final actual-cost report submitted at M12.

EIT Culture & Creativity may request supporting documentation and carry out checks, reviews or audits to verify that the costs declared were actually incurred, are identifiable and verifiable in the beneficiary's accounts, relate to the approved activities and comply with the applicable eligibility conditions.

3. Eligible Expenditure

Eligible expenditure covers costs that are directly related to the approved activities and contribute to the achievement of the milestones and deliverables defined under the programmes.

3.1 CATEGORY-LEVEL ELIGIBILITY CAP CEILINGS

Financial support is structured according to three predefined funding tiers:

Programme	Funding Amount
Shape	EUR 100,000 (+ potential follow-on EUR 100,000 after Demo Day)
Scale (non-RIS)	EUR 200,000
Scale (RIS)	EUR 500,000

Each funding tier follows a set of high-level categories with allocation ceilings and defined eligible uses. The following eligibility ceilings apply per expenditure category. They constitute maximum eligible amounts per cost category and must be reflected in the approved detailed budget.

Ventures selected to participate in the Shape Acceleration Programme

Cost Category	Initial EUR 100,000	Follow-on EUR 100,000
Personnel	EUR 60,000	EUR 60,000
Travel and Subsistence	EUR 10,000	EUR 10,000
Subcontracting	EUR 20,000	EUR 20,000
Cost of other goods and services	EUR 10,000	EUR 10,000

Ventures selected to participate in the Scale Post-Acceleration Programme

Cost Category	EUR 200,000	EUR 500,000
Personnel	EUR 100,000	EUR 300,000
Travel and Subsistence	EUR 25,000	EUR 25,000
Subcontracting	EUR 60,000	EUR 150,000
Cost of other goods and services	EUR 15,000	EUR 25,000

The amounts indicated per category represent maximum cost allocations. Where the cost of the supported activity exceeds the amount available under a given category, the beneficiary may complement the funding with other non-EIT Culture & Creativity resources, provided that the activity remains in line with the objectives and conditions of the programme.

4. Non-Eligible Expenditure

The costs listed below are not eligible for financial support under this call and will not be accepted, irrespective of whether they were actually incurred or paid by the beneficiary:

- Deductible or refundable VAT;
- Costs incurred outside the eligibility period;
- Expenditure not supported by adequate documentation;
- Costs not directly linked to approved programme objectives;
- Dividends, profit distributions, or shareholder payments;
- Debt repayment, interest, or financial penalties;
- Fines, litigation costs, or sanctions;
- Entertainment expenses or non business hospitality;
- Personal expenses of founders or staff;
- Costs already financed through another public funding source;
- Speculative investments, crypto assets, or financial trading activities;
- Unreasonable or excessive expenditure not reflecting market prices;
- Expenses made for legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine.

Annex V - Financial Sustainability Mechanism

EIT Culture & Creativity supports ventures throughout their growth journey and is committed to their success beyond the duration of individual programmes and funding activities. As part of this long-term partnership, ventures participating in the **Shape Acceleration Programme** or the **Scale Post-Acceleration Programme** are required to enter into a **Financial Sustainability Mechanism (FSM)** with EIT Culture & Creativity.

The FSM enables EIT Culture & Creativity to participate in a limited way in the future value created by the ventures it supports, while avoiding unnecessary governance, operational, or fundraising burdens for founders. Through the **Call Option Agreement (COA)** set out in this Annex, EIT Culture & Creativity may acquire a minority equity position at a later stage and participate in future financing rounds under the conditions defined in the agreement.

Ventures entering into an FSM become part of the **100-to-Watch portfolio**, a curated group of Europe's most promising cultural and creative technology ventures. Membership provides enhanced visibility, credibility, and access to EIT Culture & Creativity's network of investors, corporates, partners, and ecosystem stakeholders.

The FSM and the associated Call Option Agreement are **standardised and non-negotiable**. By applying to and participating in the programme, beneficiaries acknowledge and accept that the FSM forms an integral part of EIT Culture & Creativity's programme framework.

EIT Culture & Creativity may adapt specific provisions of the agreement only where strictly necessary to ensure compliance with applicable national corporate, securities, tax, or other mandatory legal requirements. Any such adaptations shall be strictly limited to those necessary to ensure compliance with applicable law and shall neither create a basis for commercial negotiation nor alter the economic principles, intended effect, or strategic objectives of the FSM.

CALL OPTION AGREEMENT

between

EIT Culture & Creativity GmbH

and

[Project LE / Recipient]

and

[Shareholders of Project LE / Recipient]

regarding shares in

[Project LE / Recipient]

*[**Note:** This agreement may require notarization or may be subject to other formalities under the jurisdiction of the Project LE / Recipient]*

CALL OPTION AGREEMENT

between

(1) **EIT Culture & Creativity GmbH**, a limited liability company incorporated under the laws of Germany, having its registered office at Im Mediapark 5, 50670 Cologne and registered with the commercial register (*Handelsregister*) of the local court (*Amtsgericht*) of Cologne, Germany, under registration no. HRB 114847, represented by its CEO (*Geschäftsführer*) Ms. Anette Schäfer,

(hereinafter referred to as "**EIT CC**")

(2) **[Project LE / Recipient]**, a limited liability company incorporated under the laws of [●], having its registered office at [●], registered with the commercial register ([●]) of [●] (*[●]*), [●] under registration no. [●], represented by [●],

(hereinafter referred to as the "**Company**")

(3) [**Shareholder 1**], [●]

(4) [**Shareholder 2**], [●]

(5) [**Shareholder 3**], [●]

- the parties (3) to ([5]) hereinafter jointly the "**Shareholders**" -

(EIT CC, the Company and the Shareholders hereinafter referred to as a "**Party**" and collectively the "**Parties**")

WHEREAS:

(A) The Company was selected to receive funding by EIT CC after successfully completing the application and evaluation process in the EIT CC Acceleration/Post-Acceleration programme.

(B) The Shareholders are the sole shareholders of the Company, holding the shares as indicated in capitalization table attached to this Agreement as **Annex (B).**

(C) EIT CC and the Company have entered into or shall enter into a Financial Support Agreement dated [●] on project funding provided to the Company by EIT Culture & Creativity for [project description] (the "**Financial Support Agreement**" or "**FSA**"). Under the FSA, the Company undertakes to enter into this call option agreement (the "**Agreement**") with EIT CC to establish a financial sustainability mechanism in connection with the access granted to the Company by EIT CC to the Acceleration/Post-Acceleration programme, the related programme benefits and the broader pan-European EIT CC ecosystem.

(D) On the terms and subject to the conditions set forth in this Agreement, EIT CC is therefore granted the right to subscribe for or acquire a certain amount of shares in the Company.

NOW THEREFORE, the Parties, freely and in good faith, agree as follows:

1. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Agreement all words beginning with a capital letter shall have the following meaning:

"**Affiliate**"	any legal or natural person who directly or indirectly controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with the referred Party.
"Agreement"	has the meaning as defined in Recital (C).
"Business Day"	means a day on which banks are open to the general public for non-automated business transactions in Cologne, Germany, with the exception of Saturdays or Sundays or public holidays in Cologne, Germany.
"Company"	has the meaning as defined in Parties (2).
"EIT CC"	has the meaning as defined in Parties (1).
"EIT Culture & Creativity"	has the meaning as defined in Recital (A).
"Exercise Notice"	has the meaning as defined in Clause 3.2.
"Exercise Notice Confirmation"	has the meaning as defined in Clause 3.3.
"**Financial Support Agreement**" or "**FSA**"	refers to the agreement described in the Recital (C) above.
"**Financing Round**"	means a bona fide subscription for equity in form of new shares in the Company by one or more persons raising an aggregate of at least 500,000 EUR in cash (excluding any convertible securities or advanced subscriptions outstanding at the date of such capital raise).
"Call Option"	has the meaning as defined in Clause 2.1.
"Option Period"	has the meaning as defined in Clause 3.1.
"Option Price"	has the meaning as defined in Clause 2.1.
"Option Shares"	has the meaning as defined in Clause 2.1.
"Party"	has the meaning as defined in the Parties section.

"**Relevant Financing Round**"	has the meaning as defined in Clause 3.1.
"**Shareholders**"	has the meaning as defined in the Parties section.
"**Signing Date**"	has the meaning as defined in Clause 3.1.

2. OPTION RIGHT

2.1 Subject to the terms of this Agreement, the Company and the Shareholders hereby irrevocably grant to EIT CC a call option (the "**Call Option**") to subscribe for new shares or to acquire existing shares in the Company (the choice between subscription of new shares and transfer of existing shares being at the discretion of the Shareholders) in such number of shares of the Company which, at the time of exercise of the Call Option, represents three percent (3%) of all shares in the Company on a fully diluted basis (the "**Option Shares**") against payment of the nominal value of the Option Shares to the Company (in case of issuance of new shares) or to the relevant Shareholders (in case of transfer of existing shares) (the "**Option Price**"). The Option Shares shall be of the most senior class of shares in the Company at the time of exercise of the Call Option. In case the Call Option is exercised in connection with the Relevant Financing Round, the Option Shares shall amount to such number of shares in the Company which represent three percent (3%) of all shares in the Company on a fully diluted basis immediately prior to the Relevant Financing Round.

2.2 The Call Option constitutes a unilateral right of EIT CC, but not an obligation, to subscribe for or acquire the Option Shares. Nothing in this Agreement shall be construed as imposing any duty on EIT CC to exercise the Call Option.

2.3 Any value-added tax (VAT) payable by the Company under this Agreement will be invoiced by EIT CC to the Company as an amount in Euro and shall be paid in cash by the Company upon receipt of the respective invoice.

3. EXERCISE OF THE CALL OPTION

3.1 The Call Option may be exercised by EIT CC, at any time during the period commencing on the date of this Agreement (the "**Signing Date**") and ending with the consummation of the next Financing Round of the Company after the Signing Date (the "**Relevant Financing Round**", the period from the Signing Date until the Relevant Financing Round the "**Option Period**"). For the avoidance of doubt, the Call Option may be exercised at any time during the Option Period and is not conditional upon, or otherwise linked to, the occurrence of a Financing Round.

3.2 To exercise the Call Option, EIT CC shall deliver to the Company and to the Shareholders a notice at least in text form (*Textform*, Section 126b German Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*)) (the "**Exercise Notice**") within the Option Period, stating that EIT CC irrevocably exercises the Call Option.

3.3 Upon receipt of the Exercise Notice, the Company shall, within [10] Business Days, confirm in writing to EIT CC the number of Option Shares in accordance with Clause 2.1 as at the date of the Exercise Notice, together with an updated capitalization table evidencing the calculation of such number of Option Shares (the "**Exercise Notice Confirmation**").

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CALL OPTION

4.1 In the event of the valid exercise of the Call Option by EIT CC in accordance with this Agreement the Company and the Shareholders undertake to implement the Call Option within 30 Business Days, at the discretion of the Shareholders, either (i) by resolving on a capital increase of the Company and causing the Company to issue and allot the Option Shares to EIT CC or, if so directed by EIT CC, to an Affiliate of EIT CC, or (ii) by transferring, or procuring the transfer of, existing shares in the Company designated as the Option Shares to EIT CC or such Affiliate, in accordance with this Agreement, in each case against the payment of the Option Price by EIT CC.

4.2 The Company and the Shareholders undertake to pass all shareholder resolutions and take all actions required to implement either (i) any capital increase necessary for the issuance and allotment of the Option Shares or (ii) the transfer of existing shares designated as Option Shares, as applicable. The Company shall procure that such resolutions are validly passed without undue delay after receipt of a valid Exercise Notice and that all steps required under the applicable law for the implementation and, where relevant, registration of the issuance or the transfer of the Option Shares are duly taken. The Company and the Shareholders undertake to grant all consents, to declare all waivers and to give all declarations necessary (pursuant to the Company's articles of association, applicable law or otherwise) to enable the issuance or transfer of the Option Shares free of any pre-emption rights or other restrictions. The Company and the Shareholders further undertake to duly implement and give full effect to all provisions of this Agreement, including, in particular, the anti-dilution provisions set out in Clause 5.

4.3 The Company and the Shareholders must procure that any entities or persons that become new shareholders of the Company also comply with the provisions of this Agreement and, for this purpose, accede to this Agreement before or in connection with acquiring the shareholding in the Company.

5. ANTI-DILUTION SUBSCRIPTION RIGHT

5.1 As from the date on which EIT CC (or any Affiliate designated by EIT CC) becomes a shareholder of the Company and for so long as EIT CC (or such Affiliate) remains a shareholder of the Company, whenever the Company issues new shares, EIT CC has the right, but not the obligation, to subscribe for such number of new shares in the Company as is necessary to maintain its then existing percentage of shareholding in the Company on a fully diluted basis, on the same terms (including the share price) as the lead investor subscribing for such new shares. This subscription right reflects EIT CC's long-term

commitment to support the Company and to remain a stable partner in its future financing rounds.

6. NON-TRANSFERABILITY

Neither this Agreement nor any right or claim arising from it can be transferred or assigned without the prior written consent of the other Parties, provided however that this transfer restriction does not apply for any complete or partial transfer of this Agreement or any right or claim arising from it by EIT CC to an Affiliate of EIT CC. Thus, such a transfer by EIT CC does not require the consent of the Company or the Shareholders.

7. INFORMATION RIGHTS

7.1 The Company will give EIT CC no less than 30 days' notice of any proposed or upcoming issuance of new shares or transfer of shares in the Company.

7.2 The Company shall without undue delay provide EIT CC with a copy of the term sheet and any other documentation in relation to such issuance or transfer of shares within five (5) days of entering into such term sheet or receiving such other documentation. If it subsequently becomes clear that such proposed or upcoming issuance or transfer of shares will not take effect, the Company will promptly give the EIT CC notice to that effect.

7.3 As from the date on which EIT CC (or any Affiliate designated by EIT CC) becomes a shareholder of the Company and for as long as it remains a shareholder, the Company shall on a bi-annual basis provide EIT CC (or any Affiliate designated by EIT CC) with financial statements, updated cap table and, if relevant, any information regarding any upcoming financing events and exit events.

8 WARRANTIES AND REPRESENTATIONS

8.1 Warranties and representations of the Company and the Shareholders

The Company and the Shareholders hereby warrant and represent to EIT CC that the following representations and warranties are true and accurate as of Signing Date, and the Company shall indemnify and hold harmless EIT CC from and against all losses arising out of breach of any such representation, warranty or obligation of the Company:

8.1.1 The Company is a company duly formed and organized, validly existing and in good standing under the national laws that govern it, and has the power and authority to own, lease and operate its properties and carry on its business as now conducted, including the power and authority to enter into and perform its obligations under this Agreement.

8.1.2 The Company is not bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures, its assets are not being administered by a liquidator or by a court, it is not in an arrangement with creditors, its business activities are not suspended, and it is not in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under EU Law or national law

8.1.3 The capitalization table as provided by the Company and attached to this Agreement as Annex (B) reflects the correct fully diluted capitalization structure of the Company.

8.1.4 The execution, delivery and performance of this Agreement by the Company is within the power of the Company and the Shareholders and has been duly authorized by all Shareholders of the Company, all other persons who have to give their consent have done so, and all necessary actions on the part of the Company have been implemented. This Agreement constitutes a legal, valid and binding obligation of the Company and the Shareholders, enforceable against the Company and the Shareholders in accordance with its terms, except as limited by bankruptcy, insolvency or other mandatory laws of general application relating to or affecting the enforcement of creditors' rights.

8.1.5 The performance and consummation of the transactions contemplated by this Agreement do not and will not:

(i) violate any material judgment, legislation, rule or regulation applicable to the Company, including the Company's articles of association;

(ii) result in the acceleration of any material debt or contract to which the Company is a party or by which it is bound; or

(iii) result in the creation or imposition of any lien on any property, asset or revenue of the Company or the suspension, forfeiture, or nonrenewal of any material permit, license or authorization applicable to the Company, its business or operations.

8.1.6 No consents, authorizations or approvals of any kind of any governmental authority or other third party are required in connection with the execution or performance of this Agreement, other than:

(i) the Company's corporate approvals;

(ii) any qualifications or filings under applicable securities laws; and

(iii) necessary corporate approvals for the approval of the issuance of new shares following the application of Clause 4.

8.2 The Company and the Shareholders undertake that all representations and warranties set out in Clause 8.1

8.2.1 shall be included in any agreement to be entered into in connection with the implementation of the Call Option and shall be repeated as true and accurate on the date of issuance or, as applicable, transfer of the Option Shares, and

8.2.2 shall be included in any agreement to be entered into in connection with the subscription of new shares by EIT CC and shall be repeated as true and accurate on the date of issuance of new shares each time EIT CC exercises its subscription right pursuant to Clause 5 and the Company issues new shares to EIT CC.

8.3 For the term of this Agreement, the Company and the Shareholders will inform EIT CC as soon as possible after the Company or a Shareholder becomes aware of a breach of any of the warranties and representations set out in this Clause 8.

9 OTHER AGREEMENTS

The validity of this Agreement is independent from the effectiveness of the FSA. The Parties agree that the invalidity of the FSA or its termination - for whatever reason - shall neither lead to the invalidity or the right of termination of this Agreement. In particular, according to the consensual will of the Parties, the FSA and the granting of the financial support thereunder is also not the transaction basis for this Agreement.

10 MISCELLANEOUS

10.1 Entire Agreement

This Agreement constitutes the entire understanding and agreement between the Parties with respect to the subject matters contemplated herein and supersedes any and all prior or contemporaneous oral or written communications and understandings with respect to the subject matter hereof.

10.2 No Offset

The Company's right to offset against payment claims of EIT CC and/or to exercise a right of retention is expressly excluded, unless the Company's claims are undisputed or have been decided in favour of the Company by a final court decision.

10.3 Amendment

The terms of this Agreement may only be amended, waived or modified with the written consent of all Parties (excluding electronic mail), unless a stricter form (e.g. notarization) is required by the applicable law. For these purposes "written" also includes the use of electronic signature platforms such as DocuSign and AdobeSign using a simple electronic signature.

10.4 Severability

If at any time any provision of this Agreement is or becomes illegal, invalid or unenforceable in any respect under any law of any jurisdiction, neither the legality, validity or enforceability of the remaining provisions of this Agreement nor the legality, validity or enforceability of such provision under the laws of any other jurisdiction will in any way be affected or impaired.

The Parties shall make all reasonable efforts and take all necessary actions to replace any illegal, invalid or unenforceable provision of this Agreement with a valid, legal and enforceable provision having the same economic effect for the Parties and reflecting to the fullest extent admitted by law the provision so replaced.

This shall apply mutatis mutandis in the event of deficiencies or unintended omissions.

10.5 Costs and Expenses

The Company and the Shareholders shall pay and hold EIT CC harmless from all taxes, duties, fees (including legal fees) and other cost of whatsoever nature, including potential stamp duty and registration fees, arising out or in connection with of the issuance of the Option Shares. If this agreement requires notarization under the local law of the Company, the Company will bear the costs of the notarization.

10.6 Governing Law and Jurisdiction

This Agreement shall be governed and construed in accordance with the laws of Germany. Any dispute, controversy or claim arising out of or relating to this Agreement, or any breach, termination or invalidity thereof, shall be submitted to the exclusive jurisdiction of the competent court in Cologne.

10.7 Non-Waiver

No failure or delay or single or partial exercise by the EIT CC in exercising any of its rights or remedies under this Agreement shall be construed as a waiver of such right or remedy. The rights and remedies provided in this Agreement are cumulative and not exclusive of any rights or remedies provided by law.

10.8 Form of notices

Any notice or other communication pursuant to this Agreement shall be made in at least in text form (*Textform*, Section 126b German Civil Code (Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch)) and, unless otherwise expressly stipulated herein, shall be deemed duly given upon delivery by electronic mail.

10.9 Addresses

The address and electronic mail address of each party for any communication to be made or document to be delivered under or in connection with this Agreement is:

11 For EIT CC:
12 [●]
13 Attention: [●]
14 Address: [●]
15 Email address: [●]

16 For the Company:
17 [*Company name*]
18 Attention: [●]
19 Address: [●]
20 Email address: [●]

EIT CC and the Company shall promptly notify the other parties in writing of any change in their respective communication details.

10.10 English Language

Any notice or communication given under or in connection with this Agreement must be in English.

10.11 Disclosure and Publication

The Company acknowledges and agrees that:

a. the EIT CC may be obliged to communicate information relating to the Company and this Agreement to any competent institution or body of the European Union in accordance with the relevant mandatory provisions of European Union law or pursuant to the Horizon 2020 Legal Basis; and

b. EIT CC may publish on its website or produce press releases containing information related to this Agreement, including the name, address and country of establishment of the Company and the nature of the Company's business.

10.12 Confidential Information

Where the Company provides information to EIT CC in connection with this Agreement, it shall clearly indicate whether or not such information is already public.

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ANNEX (B)

Capitalization Table

Annex VI - Examples of potential solutions

Architecture

Circular construction materials, modular retrofit solutions, climate adaptation and urban resilience tools, prop tech platforms for renovation and building management, digital twins for sustainable buildings, community-led urban planning solutions, and business platforms supporting independent architects and creative studios.

Audio-Visual Media

Ethical AI tools for content production, audience analytics and engagement platforms, rights management and licensing solutions, innovative streaming and monetisation models, immersive storytelling technologies, privacy-compliant audience data systems, and creator financing platforms.

Fashion

Textile recycling and circular production systems, traceability and supply-chain transparency platforms, circular resale and recommerce models, bio-based and sustainable materials, waste-reduction technologies, and digital solutions supporting sustainable fashion ecosystems.