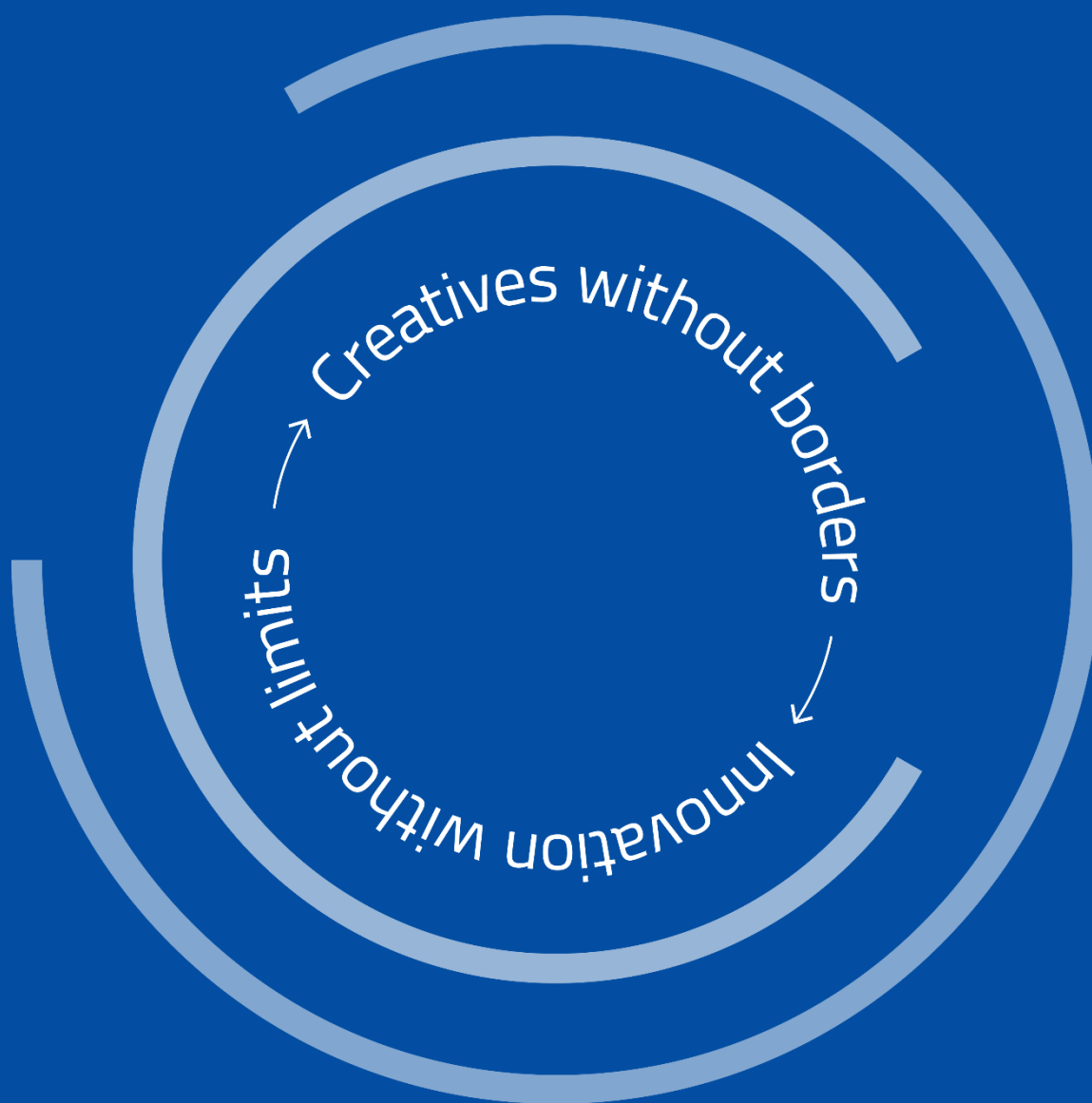# Call for application for start-ups, scale-ups and SMEs to participate in the EIT Culture & Creativity Acceleration and Post-Acceleration Programmes 2025

Call Guidelines

Creatives without borders

Innovation without limits

Call for application for start-ups, scale-ups and SMEs to participate in the EIT Culture & Creativity Acceleration and Post-Acceleration Programmes 2025

Version 1.0 (2025)

History of Changes

Version	Date	Changes
1.0	04/04/2025	Initial version.

This Call may be subject to corrections, modifications and clarifications. Applicants are encouraged to regularly check the Call pages of the EIT Culture & Creativity website for updates.

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FACTSHEET

1. Who is this call for?

This call for applications is open to **start-ups, scale-ups, and SMEs** operating within the **Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI)**, including **Fashion, Architecture, Cultural Heritage, Audio-Visual Media, and Gaming**. Eligible companies must:

- Have a **tested business model or product** (minimum **2 years old**) with **proven product-market fit**.
- Be **legally established** in an **EU Member State or a third country associated with Horizon Europe**.

2. What does the programme offer?

Selected companies will receive **tailored acceleration and post-acceleration support**, mentorship, access to an extensive **innovation network**, the opportunity to **compete for financial prizes and to join EIT Culture & Creativity's** *"100 To Watch" list* **which includes post-programme services**.

3. Programme Segments:

- **Shape Programme (Acceleration):** For **start-ups** looking to refine their business models, enhance market strategies, and secure investment.
- **Scale Programme (Post-Acceleration):** For **scale-ups** seeking to expand their business operations, **raise capital**, and establish a strong presence in international markets.

4. Why participate?

- **Expert Mentorship & Coaching** – Gain insights from **top industry experts** and strategic advisors.
- **Market Readiness & Business Development** – Receive hands-on support to refine strategies and accelerate growth.
- **Investor & Funding Opportunities** – Connect with potential **investors and partners** in the CCSI ecosystem.
- **Recognition & Visibility** – Selected ventures may be included in the **EIT CC "100 To Watch" List**, gaining long-term support and visibility.
- **Participation in Key Programme Events** – Engage in the **Kick-off and Demo Day**, with **logistical support** provided.

5. Prizes

In addition to programme participation, entities **meeting specific performance criteria** will have the opportunity to **compete for financial prizes**. The prize selection process and requirements are outlined in **Annex I of the Call Guidelines**.

6. How to apply?

Applications must be submitted via the **EIT Culture & Creativity application platform** before the designated cohort deadlines.

Step 1: Read the **full call guidelines** & check the eligibility criteria.

Step 2: Complete the **online application** & submit the required documents.

Step 3: If selected, actively participate in the programme and **meet performance criteria** to be eligible for the prize contest.

7. Where to get more information?

📌 **Visit our website:** https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/calls-funding/

📌 **Attend our info sessions:** Please register yourself using the following **Registration form**

📌 **Submit inquiries via our Contact Form**

Field Title	SHAPE – Acceleration	SCALE – Post acceleration
Groups	Two cohorts (groups) per each of the segments: - 2 groups starting in July (1 for Shape and 1 for Scale) - 2 groups starting in September (1 for Shape and 1 for Scale)	
Application opening	TBD in the final guidelines: 9 April 2025	
Application deadline (cut-off dates)	Cut off dates per each of the cohorts: Cohort 1: 23 May 2025 at 17.00 CET Cohort 2: 11 July 2025 at 17.00 CET	
Communication of final results to applicants	Cohort 1: Second-half June 2025 Cohort 2: Second-half August 2025	
Max. number of Applicants admitted	July cohort: 20 September cohort: 20	July cohort: 25 September cohort: 25
Start of the programme	For each cohort: Cohort 1: Mid July 2025 Cohort 2: Mid September 2025	
Duration of the programme	8-10 weeks	
Demo Day – Prize pitch (date and place)	Two Demo-Days (Shape and Scale jointly) for each cohort, in an EU country to be defined at a later stage Cohort 1: October 2025 Cohort 2: December 2025	
Who can apply	Start-ups with at least 2 years of operations and a tested business model in one of EIT CC five priority areas. Only legal entities from EU Member States or Horizon Europe-associated countries that meet the SME definition are eligible.	Scale-ups with a demonstrated growth trajectory, actively seeking investment and market expansion. Only legal entities from EU Member States or Horizon Europe-associated countries that meet the SME definition are eligible.
Key Priority Areas	Architecture Audio-Visual Media Cultural Heritage Fashion Gaming	
Programme support	Weekly online sessions Group mentor sessions Networking opportunities Demo Day Pitching opportunities Free membership for the duration of the programme Possibility to access *100 to watch* list with post-programme services	

Field Title	SHAPE – Acceleration	SCALE – Post acceleration
Demo Day prizes	10 prizes per cohort distributed as follows: • 3 prizes of €30,000 • 3 prizes of €15,000 • 4 prizes of €7,500 **Total prize budget:** €330,000	10 prizes per cohort distributed as follows: • 3 prizes of €60,000 • 3 prizes of €30,000 • 4 prizes of €15,000 **Total prize budget:** €660,000
Total EIT Financial Support Provided	Maximum EIT Funding in Prizes in this call: 990,000 EUR	
Application platform	Please submit your applications here: Application form: Accessible in the EIT CC website	

INTRODUCTION

EIT CULTURE & CREATIVITY

As the ninth Knowledge & Innovation Community (KIC), **EIT Culture & Creativity (EIT CC)** is dedicated to transforming the **Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI)** across Europe. Our mission is to **empower and nurture a sustainable innovation ecosystem**, integrating education, research, business, and public organisations to address sector-specific societal and economic challenges. By fostering interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration, EIT Culture & Creativity aims to unlock the innovative potential of CCSI, contributing to Europe's **green, digital, and social transitions**.

Vision and Mission

Vision:
EIT Culture & Creativity aims to fundamentally change the CCSI towards new understandings of competitiveness, resilience, and sustainable economic growth.

Mission:
Empowering and nurturing a sustainable innovation ecosystem, including all actors of the knowledge triangle in the CCSI, EIT Culture & Creativity and its partners provide interventions to CCSI and sector-specific challenges in education, innovation, and business creation, and foster interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration. In this way, EIT Culture & Creativity unlocks the innovative potential of its fragmented ecosystem, contributing to Europe's triple transition and accelerating competitive and resilient cultural and creative entrepreneurship.

Strategic Objectives

To achieve our mission, **EIT Culture & Creativity** focuses on three core **strategic objectives**:

- **Future-proofing CCSI Students and Professionals** – Equipping students and professionals with **entrepreneurial and cross-disciplinary skills** to navigate the **green and digital transitions**, emerging technologies, market disruptions, and globalization.

- **Deploying and Scaling CCSI Innovations** – Supporting collaborative innovations with **commercial potential** and **societal benefits**, emphasizing **green and digital technologies** and **new business models**.

- **Accelerating and Scaling CCSI Market Opportunities** – Enabling **start-ups and SMEs** to **compete globally**, secure investment, and **expand into new markets and audiences**.

These strategic objectives **contribute to job creation, economic resilience, and the sustainable growth of CCSI across Europe**.

Priority areas

EIT Culture & Creativity prioritizes five key **sectors within the CCSI**, each facing unique challenges but collectively representing a substantial portion of the EU's creative economy. Our focus is on addressing **innovation gaps, sustainability, and market opportunities** across these industries:

Priority Area	Objective	Key Challenges
Fashion	Promote **circular innovations**, new textile processing and recycling technologies, and sustainable business models.	High reliance on raw materials, environmental impact, waste generation, and market competition for SMEs.
Architecture	Foster **circular innovation**, **affordable climate adaptation**, and social cohesion through new materials and sustainable design.	Lack of entrepreneurial skills, financial bottlenecks, and limited capacity for scaling innovations.
Cultural Heritage	**Integrate emerging technologies** and new business models to **commercialize** scalable cultural heritage solutions.	Limited digital transformation, financial sustainability challenges, and preservation and conservation issues.
Audio-Visual Media	Promote **responsible and trustworthy technology use**, including **generative AI** and audience data analytics.	Stagnant revenues, business model disruptions, data privacy concerns, and limited investment access.
Gaming	Foster **digital ethics**, cross-sector collaboration, and innovation in **game development and business models**.	Access to talent, restrictive market platforms, and competition with dominant global players.

Additionally, **EIT Culture & Creativity supports innovations** aligned with **The New European Bauhaus (NEB)**, focusing on **beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive solutions**. This includes **accessible living spaces, environmentally respectful building methods, circular design, and smart infrastructure**.

Compliance and transparency

EIT Culture & Creativity operates in full compliance with the **Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (HE MGA)** regulations. We uphold the principles of **transparency, non-discrimination, sound financial management, and conflict-of-interest prevention** across all programme selection, evaluation, and implementation processes.

All applications must demonstrate **not only alignment but active contribution** to the **EIT Culture & Creativity Strategic Agenda 2021-2027**, ensuring impact-driven innovation that supports **Europe's creative economy, sustainability goals, and market resilience**.

Co-location centres (clcs)

To ensure broad accessibility and regional engagement, **EIT Culture & Creativity operates through a network of six Co-Location Centres (CLCs)** across Europe. These centres **support local innovation ecosystems**, facilitating cross-border collaboration and sectoral growth.

- **CLC Northwest:** Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- **CLC North:** Helsinki, Finland
- **CLC South:** Bologna, Italy
- **CLC Southwest:** Barcelona, Spain
- **CLC Southeast Europe & Alps:** Vienna, Austria
- **CLC East:** Košice, Slovakia

With **over 60 partners across 20 countries**, EIT Culture & Creativity is establishing **Europe's first dedicated innovation community for CCSI**, fostering an inclusive and interconnected network to **drive impact at local, national, and international levels**.

EIT CULTURE & CREATIVITY'S ACCELERATION AND POST-ACCELERATION PROGRAMMES 2025

Building on its mission to transform the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI), EIT Culture & Creativity is launching two tailored programmes to support start-ups and scale-ups in their growth journey. These initiatives align with the strategic priorities outlined in EIT CC's Strategic Agenda 2024-2027, fostering circularity, sustainability, and competitiveness across Fashion, Architecture, Cultural Heritage, Audiovisual Media, and Gaming:

- **Segment 1: Shape Programme (Acceleration)** – Designed to support up to 40 start-ups and SMEs in CCSI that have been in the market for at least two years and have ambitions for future growth including raising funds from public and/or private investors within the next two years. This programme provides tailored support, mentorship, and strategic guidance to help companies refine business models, enhance market strategies, and achieve growth milestones.

- **Segment 2: Scale Programme (Post-Acceleration)** – Designated to support up to 50 scale-ups and SMEs with at least three years of commercial success, presence in at least two EU member states or Horizon-associated countries and with plans to raise capital imminently or in the near future. This programme supports companies undergoing pre-seed/seed funding or preparing for it within the next six to twelve months. The programme offers advanced mentorship, strategic guidance, and access to industry networks to strengthen market position, scale operations, and expand into new international markets.

Through these programmes, EIT Culture & Creativity is actively empowering creative entrepreneurs, helping them refine business strategies, expand into new markets, and establish long-term partnerships with the EIT CC ecosystem.

Prize Competition for Top-Performing Ventures

In In addition to programme participation, selected ventures will have the opportunity to compete for financial prizes, awarded upon successful completion of the programme based on performance criteria. These prizes aim to recognize outstanding achievements and support ventures in their business development and fundraising efforts.

Shape Programme (Acceleration) – Up to 20 prizes (10 per cohort), distributed as follows:

- Up to **Three first-place prizes**: €30,000 each
- Up to **Three second-place prizes**: €15,000 each
- Up to **Four third-place prizes**: €7,500 each

Total prize budget per cohort: €165,000

Scale Programme (Post-Acceleration) – Up to 20 prizes (10 per cohort), distributed as follows:

- Up to **Three first-place prizes**: €60,000 each
- Up to **Three second-place prizes**: €30,000 each
- Up to **Four third-place prizes**: €15,000 each

Total prize budget per cohort: €330,000

1. REQUIREMENTS

1.1. WHO CAN APPLY

1.1.1. Who can apply?

This call for applications is specifically designed for start-ups, scale-ups and SMEs in pre-seed and seed stage within the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI) seeking to participate in EIT Culture & Creativity's Shape (Acceleration) or Scale (Post Acceleration) programmes. Eligible applicants are entities that meet the following criteria:

- **Company Status:** The applicant must be a **start-up, scale-up, or SME[1]** that has tested its business model or product (**minimum 2-year-old company with proven product-market fit**) and is actively operating within at least one of the EIT CC five priority areas: **fashion, architecture, cultural heritage, audiovisual media, and gaming**. Ventures operating at the intersection of these sectors are also encouraged to apply.
- **Legal Entity: The applicant must be a legally established entity in an** EU Member State **or in a** third country associated with Horizon Europe**.**
- **Innovation Focus:** The company should be developing **innovative solutions** that align with the **priority areas of EIT Culture & Creativity**, aiming to address specific challenges within the CCSI.
- **Stage of Development:** Applicants must be **mature ventures** with at least **one product in the market** and a **minimum of two years of operational activity**. Ventures that have completed an incubation or (regional) acceleration programme are encouraged to apply.
- **Single applicant:** Applications must be submitted by a **single legal entity**.
- **Documentation:** Applicants need to provide **relevant documentation** demonstrating their status, legal founding, and innovation focus. Detailed guidelines on the required documentation will be provided later.

By applying, companies will receive the necessary support and resources to accelerate their growth, enhance their market presence, and contribute significantly to the CCSI innovation landscape.

1.2. MEMBERSHIP

Selected ventures will automatically receive **free Cooperation Partner membership** for the duration of their participation in the Shape (Acceleration) or Scale (Post-Acceleration) Programme. This membership grants access to EIT Culture & Creativity's ecosystem, including strategic networking opportunities, industry insights, and community resources.

After completing the programme:

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[1] The entity must comply with the European Commission's SME definition, meaning it has fewer than 250 employees and an annual turnover of no more than €50 million, or a balance sheet total not exceeding €43 million. Start-ups are considered newly established companies in their early growth phase, while scale-ups are high-growth companies expanding beyond their initial market.

- Ventures that **sign a Financial Sustainability Mechanism (FSM) agreement** with EIT CC will retain their **Cooperation Partner** status for the duration of the agreement, with **no membership fee required**.
- Ventures that **do not sign an FSM agreement** will have the option to **continue their engagement** by selecting a membership category that aligns with their needs.

For full details on EIT Culture & Creativity's membership categories and benefits, please visit: **Join the Community**.

1.3. STRATEGIC FOCUS

The primary objective of this call for applications is to identify and support start-ups, scale-ups and SMEs in the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI) to participate in EIT Culture & Creativity's Shape (Acceleration) or Scale (Post-Acceleration) programmes.

The service of these programmes is designed to enhance the capabilities of these companies, providing them with the necessary resources, extensive mentorship, coaching and strategic guidance to transition from early-stage ventures to successful scale-ups and preparing them to raise capital from public and private markets.

EIT Culture & Creativity's Shape (Acceleration) and Scale (Post-Acceleration) programmes aims to:

- Foster innovation and creativity within the CCSI by supporting SMEs and scale-ups that address sector-specific challenges.
- Enhance the market readiness of innovative solutions with focus on building resilient CCSI, incorporating circular practices that reduce carbon emissions or fostering digital transition.
- Boost innovative business models in the CCSI including, amongst others, the use of latest digital technologies, circular practices, etc.
- Provide tailored support through mentoring and coaching from a network of universities, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and expert partners.
- Enhance investment-readiness of start-ups, scale-ups and SMEs in the CCSI by preparing them for or supporting them during on-going investment rounds.
- Facilitate growth and sustainability of start-ups, scale-ups and SMEs by offering access to strategic resources, industry connections, and potential investors.

1.4. SEGMENTS

This call for applications is divided into two segments to accommodate different maturity levels of each company and its proposed solutions: Segment 1: Shape (Acceleration) programme, Segment 2: Scale (Post Acceleration) programme

1.4.1. Segment 1: Shape (Acceleration) Programmes

The Shape Programme for 2025 will run in two cohorts:

Shape 2 – expected to start in July 2025 including up to 20 ventures
Shape 3 – expected to start in September 2025 including up to 20 ventures

EIT CC reserves the right to accept more ventures per cohort depending on the volume of applications received.

Programme Structure & Key Activities

Component	Description
Shape Kick-off	**2–3-day immersive event** held at one of EIT CC's regional hubs. Includes: • Introduction to the **EIT CC network**, key stakeholders, and industry experts. • **Entrepreneurial Mindset** & foundational knowledge. • Sessions on **design thinking, market access**, and **business expansion strategies**. • Structured **networking opportunities** with peers, mentors, and potential collaborators.
Weekly Online Sessions & Workshops	Conducted over **8-10 weeks**, covering key topics: • **Entrepreneurial Mindset** – Cultivating the skills and attitudes for successful entrepreneurship. • **Design Thinking for Product-Market Fit** – Ensuring alignment with market needs. • **Access to Markets & Regulations** – Navigating market entry strategies. • **Market Expansion Plans** – Developing strategies for scaling up. • **Financial Planning** – Building robust financial models. • **Pitching to Investors** – Creating and delivering compelling investment pitches.
Group Mentor Sessions	Participants will benefit from **2-3 mentor sessions**, designed to provide: • Expert guidance **from mentors with deep industry knowledge.** • Personalized feedback **on specific challenges and opportunities.** • Peer learning **through collaborative discussions.**
Demo Day	A **pitching event** where participants present their business ideas to **a jury of experts, investors, and potential partners**. *For full participation conditions, see Section 1.5.4.*

All selected participants receive coverage for participation in the Shape Kick-Off and Demo Day, including logistical support (travel, accommodation..etc.).

In addition to these highlights, by joining an EIT CC programme you gain access to a unique pan-European network of industry experts, mentors, researchers, academia and fellow entrepreneurs.

Creating a Long-term Partnership with Purpose: EIT CC is dedicated to supporting ventures in their growth journey, ensuring that the support doesn't stop when participants graduate from the programme. By becoming part of the EIT CC community, participants can build long-term partnerships with purpose, benefiting from continuous access to resources, expertise, and networking opportunities. This ongoing support helps ventures navigate challenges, seize opportunities, and achieve sustainable growth well beyond the duration of the programme.

EIT CC strives to continuously improve the content of its programmes. Therefore, these may be subject to change

Expected Outcomes and Impact

Shape Programme to achieve several key outcomes and impacts within the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI):

- **Enhanced Capabilities**: Participants will gain skills and knowledge to drive growth, refine their business models, improve market strategies, and achieve significant growth milestones.

  o *Example*: A fashion scale-up transforms its sales with new digital marketing and sales techniques to go global, while an audio-visual media company could enhance its storytelling methods or TV programme format development to attract a larger audience in new territories.

- **Increased Investment Prospects**: start-ups, SMEs and scaleups will be positioned to attract private and public investments, enabling them to scale and expand their market presence.

  o *Example*: An architecture firm developing sustainable building materials could secure funding quicker and cheaper through EIT CC networks to bring its innovative products to a wider market.

- **Innovation and Sustainability**: Companies will experiment with and adopt new circular technologies and business models, contributing to sustainable growth within the CCSI.

  o *Example*: A cultural heritage organisation using cutting-edge digital preservation technologies to maintain and share historical artifacts in a more sustainable way.

- **Market Readiness**: Participants will be prepared for a validated commercial deployment, with a strategy for market entry and expansion based on effective actions and skills.

  o *Example*: A game development start-up may develop a go-to-market strategy for their new prototyped game concept that includes partnerships with major gaming platforms, ensuring a successful product launch.

The programme is designed to provide comprehensive support, mentorship, and strategic guidance, ensuring that the selected companies can thrive and expand in the competitive landscape of the CCSI.

1.4.2. Segment 2: Scale (Post-Acceleration) Programmes

The Scale Programme for 2025 will run in two cohorts:

Scale 1 – expected to start in July 2025 including 25 ventures
Scale 2 – expected to start in September 2025 including 25 ventures

EIT CC reserves the right to accept more ventures per cohort depending on the volume of applications received.

Programme Structure & Key Activities

Component	Description
Scale Kick-off	**2–3-day immersive event** held at one of EIT CC's regional hubs. Includes: • Introduction to the **EIT CC network**, key stakeholders, and industry experts. • **Advanced knowledge** sessions on **IP management, leadership for growth, and investor relations**. • **High-level networking** with investors, industry leaders, and potential collaborators.

Component	Description
Weekly Online Sessions & Workshops	Conducted over **8-10 weeks**, covering key topics: • **IP Management** – Strategies for protecting and leveraging intellectual property. • **Leadership for Growth** – Developing leadership skills for scaling businesses. • **Investor Relations** – Building strong relationships with investors. • **Exit Strategies** – Planning successful exits and maximizing company value. • **Negotiation Skills** – Mastering negotiation techniques for investment and partnerships.
Group Mentor Sessions	Participants will benefit from **3-5 mentor sessions**, designed to provide: • **Expert guidance from mentors with deep industry knowledge.** • **Personalized feedback on strategic challenges and opportunities.** • **Peer learning through collaborative discussions.**
Demo Day	A **high-stakes pitching event** where participants present their scale-up to **a jury of experts, investors, and industry leaders**. *For full participation conditions, see Section 1.5.4.*

All selected participants receive coverage for participation in the Scale Kick-Off and Demo Day, including logistical support.

In addition to these highlights, by joining an EIT CC programme you gain access to a unique pan-European network of industry experts, mentors, researchers, academia, and fellow entrepreneurs.

Creating a Long-term Partnership with Purpose: EIT CC is dedicated to supporting ventures in their growth journey, ensuring that the support doesn't stop when participants graduate from the programme. By becoming part of the EIT CC community, participants can build long-term partnerships with purpose, benefiting from continuous access to resources, expertise, and networking opportunities. This ongoing support helps ventures navigate challenges, seize opportunities, and achieve sustainable growth well beyond the duration of the programme.

EIT CC strives to continuously improve the content of its programmes. Therefore, these may be subject to change

Expected Outcomes and Impact

The Scale Programme aims to achieve several key outcomes and impacts within the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI):

- **Strategic Growth:** Participants will develop strategies to scale their operations beyond average growth rates, enhance their market presence, and achieve significant growth milestones.

  o *Example: A fashion SME expands its global footprint by leveraging strategic partnerships and advanced digital marketing techniques, while an audiovisual media company scales its innovative content distribution platform to new international markets.*

- **Secured Funding:** Scale-ups and SMEs will be better positioned to secure pre-seed/seed/early-stage funding from private and public investors, benefit from

preferred access to pitching events and activities within the context of EIT Culture & Creativity network which will enable substantial growth and market expansion.

- o *Example: An architecture firm specializing in sustainable building materials secures significant investment to scale production and enter new markets.*

- **Innovation Leadership:** Companies will lead in adopting and integrating cutting-edge technologies and innovative business models protected through forward-looking IP strategies, driving sustainable growth within the CCSI.

  - o *Example: A cultural heritage organisation pioneers the use of AR/VR for immersive experiences, setting new standards for digital preservation and engagement.*

- **Market Dominance:** Participants will be equipped with strategies for achieving market dominance, including a clear path to profitability, effective exit strategies and investor relations.

  - o *Example: A gaming studio develops a robust exit strategy, positioning itself for acquisition by a major industry player, while enhancing user experience through innovative game development processes.*

The programme is designed to provide advanced support, mentorship, and strategic guidance, ensuring that the selected companies can thrive, secure funding, and achieve significant market impact in the competitive landscape of the CCSI.

1.5. PROGRAMME FEATURES COMMON TO BOTH SEGMENTS

1.5.1. Programme duration

The **Shape Programme (Acceleration Programme) 2025** and the **Scale Programme (Post-Acceleration Programme) 2025** will have **two cohort dates**, with selected start-ups beginning their acceleration journey in two separate intakes:

- **First Cohort (start on Mid July 2025)**
- **Second Cohort (start on Mid September 2025)**

Each **Acceleration Programme** will run for **8-10 weeks**, followed by a **Demo Day**, which will be scheduled at a later stage.

This structure ensures continuous opportunities for start-ups to apply and benefit from tailored acceleration support while maintaining flexibility in programme scheduling.

1.5.2. GENDER AND DIVERSITY

EIT Culture & Creativity is committed to promoting gender equality and diversity in line with Horizon Europe principles and the EIT's impact framework. This includes supporting ventures that foster inclusive work environments and reflect diversity in leadership, teams, and innovation approaches.

Applicants are encouraged to describe measures they have taken — or plan to take — to promote gender balance and inclusivity in their organisation or innovation process.

1.5.3. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

All participants must include the mandatory KPI in their application, committing to achieving the minimum target by 31 December 2025 (or no later than 6 months after programme completion).

Failure to meet the expected KPI target may trigger increased monitoring and additional support from EIT CC to help ventures achieve their financial and market goals.

Mandatory KPI

EITHE Code	KPI Title	Minimum Target
EITHE06.1	Investment Attracted by KIC-supported Start-ups/Scale-ups	Shape: **€50,000** Scale: **€100,000**

Additional KPIs (Positively Assessed in Evaluation)

EITHE Code	KPI Title	Description
EITHE01.1	Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)	Number of innovative products, processes, and IPR applications resulting from the programme.
EITHE02.4	Innovations Launched on the Market (€10K Revenue)	Number of innovations introduced to the market during or after programme completion, generating at least €10,000 in revenue.

For full KPI descriptions, evidence requirements, and reporting guidelines, refer to Annex III – Key Performance Indicators.

1.5.4. Demo Day & Conditions for Participation

The Demo Day serves as a culminating event for both Shape (Acceleration) and Scale (Post-Acceleration) Programmes, offering participating ventures an opportunity to present their business ideas to an audience of industry experts, potential investors, customers, and strategic partners.

Objectives of the Demo Day

- Showcase the progress and potential of participating ventures.
- Provide direct exposure to investors, potential partners, and the broader innovation ecosystem.
- Offer start-ups and scale-ups the opportunity to **compete for financial prizes** (see Annex I – Prize Awarding Process & Eligibility).

Conditions to Participate in the Demo Day

To **qualify for the Demo Day**, ventures must meet the following participation criteria:

Criteria	Description
Face-to-Face Kick-Off	Participants must attend the **Kick-off event** of their corresponding programme.
Attendance	Attend at least **75% of weekly online sessions** and **100% of group mentoring sessions**. Participants will be required to complete assignments or assessments.
Completion of Mandatory Deliverables	All required programme deliverables must be **submitted and approved** by EIT CC before the Demo Day.
Signing of the Financial Sustainability Mechanism (FSM) Agreement	Ventures must sign the **FSM Agreement with EIT CC** (structured as virtual shares).

Only ventures that meet these conditions will be allowed to pitch at the Demo Day.

1.5.5. Prize Opportunity for Top-Performing Ventures

In addition to the benefits of participating in the Shape (Acceleration) and Scale (Post-Acceleration) programmes, selected ventures will have the opportunity to compete for **financial prizes**. These prizes are designed to **reward outstanding performance and accelerate business development** beyond the programme's duration.

While programme participation does not automatically guarantee a prize, **ventures that successfully complete the programme and meet certain criteria** will be eligible to participate in the **prize competition**.

The key features of the prize competition include:

Programme Segment	Total Number of Prizes	Prize Amounts
Shape (Acceleration) Programme	Up to 20 prizes (10 per cohort)	Per cohort: • 3 prizes of €30,000 • 3 prizes of €15,000 • 4 prizes of €7,500
Scale (Post-Acceleration) Programme	Up to 20 prizes (10 per cohort)	Per cohort: • 3 prizes of €60,000 • 3 prizes of €30,000 • 4 prizes of €15,000

The full details on eligibility criteria, competition structure, selection methodology, and disbursement conditions are provided in **Annex I – Prize Awarding Process & Eligibility.**

1.6. SPECIFIC MONITORING REQUIREMENTS

EIT Culture & Creativity will monitor both the Shape Programme (Acceleration Programme) and the Scale Programme (Post-Acceleration Programme) to ensure that participating start-ups effectively engage in the activities, leverage mentorship and support, and make tangible progress in their business growth and market strategies.

The monitoring process is designed to be lightweight yet effective, focusing on engagement, business development, and measurable impact rather than complex administrative

reporting. Both programmes share the same monitoring structure, with specific tracking mechanisms adapted to their respective objectives.

Monitoring During the Programme (Acceleration & Post-Acceleration)

The monitoring process during the programme will focus on engagement, progress tracking, and preparation for the **Demo Day (Acceleration) or Investment Readiness Assessment (Post-Acceleration)**. The following key elements will be assessed:

- **Mentorship & Coaching Feedback**: Feedback from mentors and coaches will be collected to assess participant engagement, progress, and areas needing further support. Ventures must actively participate in scheduled mentorship and coaching sessions.

- **Impact Assessment**: Through periodic surveys and interviews EIT CC will assess companies' progress with regards to market entry plans, customer acquisition, revenue generation, and investor relations. This will help measure early-stage commercialization success and define next steps for growth and scaling.

- **Growth & Investment Roadmap Submission – Mandatory for Demo Day/Investment Readiness**: All participants must submit a Growth & Investment Roadmap before the end of the programme to be eligible for the Demo Day. The roadmap must outline their future funding plans, market expansion strategy, and scalability efforts. A template for such Growth & Investment Roadmap will be provided during the programme.

Post-Programme Monitoring Requirements

The monitoring process after the programme will focus on assessing the **real impact of the (post) acceleration support** and tracking the **business growth and financial sustainability** of participating ventures.

- **Performance Tracking**: Companies must submit a Progress Report in 2026, detailing key achievements, challenges, and milestones aligned with the KPIs set during the programme. This report will evaluate how companies have implemented their Growth & Investment Roadmap and progressed towards their stated market and funding goals.

- **Financial Monitoring**: Companies will be required to submit a Financial Report in 2026, tracking their funding status, investment rounds, revenue growth, and financial health. This ensures that ventures are effectively utilizing the resources provided and advancing towards financial sustainability.

Project implementation and innovative methods for continuous programme validation and evaluation will be shared after the selection of activities, and the kick-off meeting will provide a complete overview of the specific steps to follow.

1.6.1. Deliverables

All selected start-ups must submit the following mandatory deliverables:

Deliverable	Description	Due Date
Impact Assessment Survey	A structured survey detailing how the programme has influenced business strategy, operations, and growth potential.	End of programme

Deliverable	Description	Due Date
Growth & Investment Roadmap	A detailed roadmap presenting business growth strategies, funding plans, and market expansion pathways. This document is required for participation in the **Demo Day.**	End of programme

1.7. CONTRIBUTION TO EIT CC'S FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

As part of its long-term strategy, **EIT Culture & Creativity (EIT CC)** is committed to becoming financially independent from European Union funding. To support this goal, a **Financial Sustainability Mechanism (FSM)** has been implemented, ensuring that supported ventures contribute to the sustainability of EIT CC

1.7.1. Financial Sustainability Mechanism (FSM)

EIT CC's preferred FSM is for this call is Virtual Shares

What are Virtual Shares?

Virtual Shares represent a commitment from the supported ventures to allocate an equivalent of a percentage of their future equity (target between 5-10%) to EIT CC. This percentage is negotiable based on the maturity stage of the company and whether they already have a valuation. Virtual Shares do not confer actual ownership but provide a financial benefit equivalent to the value of the shares.

- **For ventures with an existing valuation:** The percentage of future equity will be determined based on the current valuation and the stage of the company.

- **For ventures without an existing valuation:** The percentage will be negotiated considering the company's growth potential and market position.

EIT CC reserves the right to conduct additional assessments to determine the basis for negotiations.

The Virtual Shares will convert to cash at a later stage, typically during a liquidity event such as a future investment round, acquisition, merger, or initial public offering (IPO). This mechanism ensures that EIT CC has a vested interest in the success of the ventures it supports, aligning the interests of both parties.

While Virtual Shares are the preferred mechanism, EIT CC reserves the right to negotiate alternative financial sustainability mechanisms on a case-by-case basis. These may include equity participation, convertible instruments, or other structured contributions that ensure a sustainable partnership model. Any such alternative mechanism will be determined in alignment with the venture's growth stage, financial strategy, and potential impact.

EIT CC implements this FSM to establish a long-term partnership and actively support the growth and success of the ventures. By aligning its financial interests with those of the supported ventures, EIT CC is committed to providing ongoing support and resources to help these ventures thrive.

Benefits for Ventures

In exchange for participating in the FSM, ventures will join the prestigious **100-to-Watch** list and gain access to the following services after the programme is over:

- **Access to Markets:** Support for accessing markets across Europe, including activities like soft landing programmes to facilitate market entry, expansion, facilitating access to members of the EIT CC network and dissemination of the project and activities.

- **Access to Finance:** Leverage the EIT CC investment network to connect with potential investors and access additional funding opportunities.

- **Access to Skills:** Continuous training on key topics such as intellectual property (IP) management, leadership, and other essential skills for business growth.

- **Access to Talent:** Support with attracting top talent needed for the growth and success of the company.

By participating in the EIT CC programme and the FSM, ventures not only contribute to the sustainability of EIT CC but also benefit from a comprehensive support system designed to accelerate their growth and success.

1.7.2.   Financial Sustainability Process

Application Submission: All selected ventures must acknowledge their participation in EIT CC's Financial Sustainability Mechanism (FSM). The proposed terms of the Virtual Shares agreement will be discussed with the selected ventures as part of the financial sustainability framework.

Financial Clearing and Agreement Formalization: The specific terms of the Virtual Shares participation will be formally agreed upon with the participants before the conclusion of the programme. A complete signed Financial Support Mechanism (FSM) will be required to attend the Demo Day. The FSM will outline the details of the Virtual Shares arrangement, ensuring a transparent and structured framework for the financial sustainability contribution.

Post-Programme Monitoring & Support: EIT CC will continue to support and monitor selected companies beyond the (post) acceleration period, ensuring they benefit from strategic post-programme services. Virtual Shares arrangements will be structured in line with market norms, ensuring a fair and growth-oriented partnership between EIT CC and the supported start-ups.

By implementing this financial sustainability model, EIT Culture & Creativity ensures that all supported ventures contribute to the long-term sustainability of the organisation, enabling reinvestment into future creative and cultural innovation.

1.8.   LEGAL ASPECTS AND DOCUMENTATION[2]

All applicants will be required to sign a Declaration of Honour in the format provided for under the Financial Support Agreement.

Applicants which are subject to an EU exclusion decision or in one of the exclusion situations referred to in the Declaration of Honour that ban them from receiving EU funding cannot participate.

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[2] For this call for applications, only the prize component (to be launched at a later stage) will be considered financial support under these rules. The programme participation itself does not constitute financial support.

EIT CC financially supported activities are part of Horizon Europe, general funding rules and cost eligibility rules are governed by the Horizon Europe Annotated Model Grant Agreement (AGA).

The participation in this EIT Culture and Creativity call for applications takes place entirely at the applicants' own costs and risk. Any actions taken by the selected entities to start the implementation of the programmes selected before the Participation Agreement is signed, equally happens at their own costs and risk. EIT Culture and Creativity can in no circumstances held liable for any actions or costs incurred by the applications selected entities before signature of the Participation Agreement.

1.8.1.   Exclusion Criteria

Start-ups or scale-ups applying to or participating in a programme may be **excluded at any stage**—during assessment, contracting, or implementation—if they meet any of the following conditions:

- **Financial and Legal Status:**
    - Bankrupt, in liquidation, under court administration, or subject to similar legal proceedings.
    - Declared in breach of social security or tax obligations by a final judgment or decision.
- **Legal and Professional Misconduct:**
    - Found guilty of grave professional misconduct by a final judgment or decision.
    - Subject to an administrative sanction (e.g., exclusion from EU funding).
    - Convicted of fraud, corruption, money laundering, involvement in a criminal organisation, terrorism-related crimes (including financing), child labour, or human trafficking.
- **Past Compliance and Integrity Issues:**
    - Demonstrated significant deficiencies in fulfilling obligations under an EU or Euratom-funded contract.
    - Misrepresented information or failed to submit required documentation for participation in the EIT Culture & Creativity funding scheme.
- **Conflict of Interest:**
    - Were involved in preparing documentation for this application or the evaluation process, leading to a distortion of competition.

Any entity found to be in violation of these exclusion criteria will be **immediately disqualified** and may face further consequences as per EIT Culture & Creativity's regulations.

1.8.2.   Special cases

To ensure compliance with EU funding regulations, applicants must confirm that they:

- **Are not** directly or indirectly owned or controlled by entities based in **Russia or Belarus**.
- **Are not** affiliated with or majority-owned by **Hungarian universities excluded from EU funding**.

EIT Culture & Creativity reserves the right to **verify ownership structures** and may request supporting documentation during the evaluation process. Entities failing to meet these conditions will be deemed ineligible.

1.8.3.   Funding limitations for Business Plan 2024-2025

Under the 2-year Grant Agreement (GA 101159520), participants from EU Member States and Horizon Europe Associated Countries have a €6 million funding cap for the entire Business Plan 24-25 period. Legal entities from non-

Horizon Europe Associated Countries can participate but are limited to €60,000 over two years. These limits apply to all EIT funding, including activities and awards.

2. PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION TO THE PROGRAMME

2.1. SUPPORT GIVEN TO APPLICANTS PREPARING AN APPLICATION

2.1.1. Application guidelines

EIT Culture & Creativity has developed the Call for Application Guidelines to assist all potential applicants during the application preparation and submission processes. This document is available on the applications webpage as part of the applications package and provides detailed information and instructions for the use of the application system and preparing your application for submission.

2.1.2. Applications information sessions

To help applicants with the preparation and submission of their applications, EIT Culture & Creativity will host information sessions after the publication of the call for applications. These online information events will focus on the call for applications content, topics, and requirements, and on general procedures, such as the submission and evaluation process, financial aspects, and monitoring and reporting activities.

Registration is mandatory. Please register in advance via the following link: Register here

Type of Event	Topic Covered	Date and Time (CET)	Access to Platform
Webinar	EIT Culture & Creativity Shape & Scale Programmes Call for applications 2025 Information Session: Introduction to the call for applications, strategic focus, scope, call for applications requirements, and the evaluation process.	22 April, 15.00 – 16.30 CET	Microsoft Teams
Webinar	Guidelines for Applicants: Hands-on demonstration of the applications preparation and submission process.	22 April, 16.30 – 17.30 CET	Microsoft Teams

2.1.3. Contacts points

All applicants may submit their inquiries via the official **EIT Culture & Creativity Contact Form**.

This form should be used for all questions related to **applications 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.

2.1.4. FAQ

A repository of common queries and troubleshooting guides will be created and maintained on the EIT CC website.

2.1.5.   Submission of an application

The application process will be done through the EIT Culture & Creativity application platform, Monday.com.

More information on the use of the platform may be found in the Application guidelines and will be also provided during the info sessions organised by the EIT CC.

All required documents must be submitted via the EIT Culture & Creativity application platform by the deadline of the chosen cohort date and no later than the final cohort date of the call for applications.

- **Application form**

Any applications submitted after the deadline will be ineligible.

3. EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

3.1. ADMISSIBILITY AND ELIGIBILITY CHECK

To be able to participate in any of these programmes, the applications submitted must meet the following admissibility and eligibility criteria:

3.1.1. Admissibility criteria

Criteria	Description
Time	The application must be submitted by the specified deadline.
Language	The application – and its supporting documents if any- must be written entirely in English with the only exception of the certificate of incorporation which can be in an official language of the country where the venture has been created (EU Member State or Horizon-associated country)
Submission Platform	The application must be submitted through the designated application platform.
Completeness	The application must include all required documents, completed form sections, and annexes.
Applicant admissibility	All applicant organizations must be legal entities established in an EU Member State or a third country associated with Horizon Europe. Applicant organizations must also meet the company type criteria stated in Section 1.1.1 (compliance with the European Commission's SME definition - fewer than 250 employees and an annual turnover ≤ €50M or balance sheet total ≤ €43M).

Applications containing one or more inadmissible elements will be rejected and will receive an official communication from EIT CC setting out the outcome of the admissibility check.

3.1.2. Eligibility criteria

Criteria	Description
KPIs Addressed	Applicants must contribute to the **mandatory KPI** outlined in **Section 1.5.3.**: • **EITHE06.1 – Investment Attracted by KIC-supported Start-ups/Scale-ups** year.

Criteria	Description
Market Presence (Post-Acceleration Programme only)	Applicants for the **Scale (Post-Acceleration) Programme** must demonstrate **active business operations in at least two EU Member States** or **Horizon Europe-associated countries**, showcasing a level of maturity and international market engagement.[3]

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

Correction process for incorrect eligibility information

Applicants with incorrect eligibility information (e.g., incorrect KPI target number or incorrect PIC number) will be given **5 calendar days** after receiving the official notification to address and correct identified issues. This ensures **procedural fairness**, particularly for minor technical or administrative errors.

During the verification and evaluation process, applicants may be asked to clarify factual information. However, these clarification requests must not allow modifications to the technical content of the application. Corrections are strictly limited to factual or administrative issues, such as confirming a clerical error (e.g., fixing an incorrect KPI figure).

If the applicant submits the corrected information within the specified timeframe, the application will proceed to the next evaluation stage.

If the applicant fails to respond or submits corrections after the deadline, the application will be deemed ineligible and will not proceed further.

This process follows the **principles outlined in the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (HE MGA), Annex V**.

3.1.3.   ASSESSMENT OF THE APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

Applications will be assessed based on three main criteria: **Excellence, Impact and Quality and Efficiency of Implementation**. Each criterion is scored based on assessment subcriteria , scored from **1 to 5 points**, with a **maximum total score of 25 points**. Only whole points will be awarded (no fractional scores).

The **minimum threshold** for an application to be considered for the ranking is **13 out of 25 points**.

Evaluation Process

- Each application is reviewed by **two external experts** and **one internal expert from the EIT CC**.
- The evaluation focuses on **strategic alignment, business viability, and growth potential** of the applicant ventures.

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[3] During the application process, applicants must check a box confirming their compliance with this requirement. EIT Culture & Creativity reserves the right to verify this information at any stage by requesting supporting evidence, such as company registration documents, tax records, commercial contracts, or other relevant documentation.

Evaluation Criteria – Shape (Acceleration) Programme

Criteria	Description	Assessment subcriteria	Max. Score
Excellence	The clarity, feasibility, and innovation of the business idea, and how well it responds to a market or sector-specific need.	**Business Potential** – Outlines a clear, realistic, and scalable business model with defined milestones and a commercialisation plan supported by relevant market data.	5
		Market Potential – Clearly identifies target markets and customer segments, presenting a strong and convincing value proposition.	5
Impact	The expected contribution to the innovation ecosystem, market readiness, and alignment with EIT CC's strategic objectives.	**Portfolio Potential** – Demonstrates presence in at least one European market and alignment with EIT CC priorities (sectors, impact goals, KPIs).	5
		Financial Potential – Presents a clear path to financial sustainability and a realistic plan for growth, including raising capital within the next 2–3 years.	5
Quality and Efficiency of Implementation	The applicant's ability to implement and scale the business, based on team structure, capabilities, and planning.	**Team Potential** – Demonstrates a capable management team with the skills, experience, and commitment required to implement the business model effectively.	5
Total Score			**25**
Threshold for Eligibility			*13*

Evaluation Criteria – Scale (Post-Acceleration) Programme

Evaluation Category	Criteria Description	Assessment Focus	Max. Points
Excellence	The clarity, originality, and relevance of the business model, demonstrating strong value creation, innovation, and commercial scalability.	**Business Potential** – Demonstrates a validated, realistic, and scalable business model backed by commercial success, milestones, or product-market fit.	5
		Market Potential – Shows deep understanding of the market landscape, strong customer base, and clear articulation of the value proposition.	5
Impact	The expected contribution to the CCSI ecosystem, EIT CC priorities, and broader European innovation and sustainability goals.	**Portfolio Potential** – Demonstrates active engagement in at least two EU or Horizon Europe countries and alignment with EIT CC strategic priorities (sectors, impact, KPIs).	5
		Financial Potential – Demonstrates investment-readiness, ambition for scaling, and a clear plan for	5

Evaluation Category	Criteria Description	Assessment Focus	Max. Points
		generating financial returns and contributing to EIT CC's long-term impact.	
Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation	The capacity of the team and company to execute the growth strategy effectively and deliver results.	**Team Potential** – Demonstrates a high-performing leadership team with relevant experience, strategic vision, and operational capacity to scale.	5
Total Score			**25**
Threshold for Eligibility			*13*

3.1.4.   Scoring Criteria

Score	Definition
1 - Very Poor	*Information is missing, unclear, or irrelevant.*
2 - Poor	*Weak information with major gaps or inconsistencies.*
3 - Fair	*Meets the basic requirements but lacks depth in some areas.*
4 - Good	*Solid, well-supported proposal with minor gaps.*
5 - Excellent	*Outstanding proposal with clear, strong evidence.*

3.2. FINAL RANKING AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

For each programme segment (**Shape – Acceleration and Scale – Post-Acceleration**), a **separate ranking list** will be established **per cohort** based on the total score obtained in the evaluation process. This means that there will be a **total of four ranking lists:**

1. **Shape Programme 2 – Cohort July**
2. **Shape Programme 3 – Cohort September**
3. **Scale Programme 1– Cohort July**
4. **Scale Programme 2 – Cohort September**

3.2.1.   Selection Process

Applications will be ranked in descending order according to their final score.

The **top-ranked applications per cohort** will be selected **until the maximum number of participants** for that cohort is reached:

- **Shape Programme:** Up to **20 ventures** in **Cohort 1** and up to **20 ventures** in **Cohort 2**.

- **Scale Programme:** Up to **25 ventures** in **Cohort 1** and up to **25 ventures** in **Cohort 2**.

3.2.2. Categories of Applications

After ranking, applications will be classified into the following categories:

1. **Selected** – Applications ranked within the **selection limit** for each programme and cohort will be admitted.

2. **Reserve List** – Applications **meeting the minimum threshold (13 out of 25 points)** but ranked **below the selection limit** will be placed on a reserve list.

3. **Rejected** – Applications **failing to meet the minimum threshold** will not proceed.

3.2.3. Mechanism in Case of a Tie

In the event of a **tie** between two or more applications competing for the final available spots, the following tiebreaker steps will be applied in order:

1. **Higher Score in Business Potential** – The venture with the higher score in the "Business Potential" criterion will be prioritized.

2. **Higher Score in Market Potential** – If the tie persists, the venture with the higher "Market Potential" score will be given priority.

3. **Higher Score in Financial Potential** – If the tie remains, preference will be given to the venture with the higher "Financial Potential" score.

4. **Deliberation by the Evaluation Panel** – If the tie is still unresolved, the evaluation panel will hold a **final discussion** and make a decision by **majority vote**.

3.2.4. Reserve List and Potential Re-Selection

EIT Culture & Creativity **may invite applicants from the reserve list** within one year if **additional EIT funding becomes available** under the current Business Plan.

3.2.5. Reassignment Between Programmes

Applicants placed on the **reserve list** from the **first cohort** will be **automatically considered in the ranking for the second cohort**, maintaining the **original score they obtained during the first cohort evaluation**. Their selection will be determined by:

- Their **original ranking and score from the first cohort**; and
- Their position in the **final ranking of the second cohort**, ensuring fair competition among all applicants.

Additionally, **EIT Culture & Creativity may invite reserve-listed applicants within one year** if additional **EIT funding becomes available under the current Business Plan**.

This approach ensures that **strong applications from the first cohort are not disadvantaged** and have another opportunity for selection without requiring a re-evaluation.

4. COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS TO APPLICANTS

4.1. SELECTED APPLICATIONS

The selected applicant will receive formal communication from EIT Culture & Creativity, including the Evaluation Summary Report and an evaluation letter.

4.2. RESERVE LIST AND REJECTED APPLICATIONS

Applicants placed on the reserve list or rejected will receive a notification upon request. Those on the reserve list may be contacted by EIT Culture & Creativity if additional spots become available.

5. APPEALING AGAINST EVALUATION RESULTS

In case applicants wish to appeal, please refer to Annex V for detailed guidance on the appeal procedure.

6. FAST-TRACK PROVISIONS

Disclaimer: The Fast-Track Mechanism described in this section is subject to approval by EIT Culture & Creativity in coordination with the EIT. Until formal guidelines are finalised and agreed upon, any Fast-Track Mechanism and additional financial or in-kind support are contingent upon EIT's approval.

The successful execution and completion of the activities implemented under the framework of these programmes may unlock the possibility of receiving additional EIT Culture & Creativity financial support for upscaling purposes after project completion. This process is regulated by the provisions included in EIT Culture & Creativity's fast-track mechanism.

ANNEX I: PRIZES AWARDING PROCESS & ELIGIBILITY

In addition to the core benefits of the Shape (Acceleration) and Scale (Post-Acceleration) Programmes, ventures will have the opportunity to compete for financial prizes, which recognize top-performing participants who successfully complete the programme and meet specific requirements.

PRIZES FOR SEGMENT 1: SHAPE PROGRAMME (ACCELERATION)

Start-ups participating in the Shape Programme will have the opportunity to compete for financial prizes upon successful completion of the programme. A total of **20 prizes (10 per cohort)** will be awarded, recognising the top-performing ventures based on predefined selection criteria.

Eligibility criteria and conditions

Only ventures that participate in the Demo Day – according to the conditions stated in Section 1.4.2 Conditions to attend the Demo Day – will be eligible to enter the prize contest.

Prize Structure & Budget

Prize Category	Number of Prizes per Cohort	Total Number of Prizes	Prize Amount per Winner (€)	Total Prize Fund per Cohort (€)
1st place – Top performers	3	6	30,000	90,000
2nd place – Runners-up	3	6	15,000	45,000
3rd place – Honourable mention	4	8	7,500	60,000
Total	**10**	**20**	–	**€165,000**

Note: The actual number of prizes awarded will depend on the number of eligible participants in the Demo Day, as detailed in the section "Prize Allocation Adjustment Based on Contestant Numbers" below.

Prize Selection and Evaluation Methodology

Selection and Scoring

The evaluation of start-ups competing for the Shape Programme prize will be conducted using a **scorecard system**. Each jury member will assess participants based on the criteria below, scoring from **1 (Very Poor) to 10 (Excellent)**, using only full points (not decimals allowed)**.** The final ranking will determine the winners of the financial prizes.

Criteria	Criteria description	Assessment	Max. Points
Excellence	*The clarity, originality, and relevance of the business idea in addressing a real market or societal need. This includes the strength of the value proposition and degree of innovation.*	*Value Proposition: Does the product or service address a clear need or gap in the market?*	*10*
		Innovation: How novel, creative, or distinctive is the solution? Does it offer a breakthrough, or significantly improve on existing solutions?	*10*
Impact	*The expected impact of the start-up's solution on its target sector, audience, or ecosystem — including market potential and scalability*	*Market Traction & Scalability: Is there clear evidence of traction (e.g. early users, revenue, pilots)? How scalable is the solution across markets or regions?*	*10*
Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation	*The capacity and readiness of the team to execute their business plan and bring the solution to market successfully.*	*Team Composition: Do the founders have the right combination of experience, expertise, and commitment to deliver on the business plan?*	*10*
		Feasibility: Is the implementation plan realistic and well thought-out? Are the resources in place or being actively pursued (funding, partnerships, etc.)?	*10*
Total score (threshold 26 points)			**50**

PRIZES FOR SEGMENT 2: SCALE PROGRAMME (POST-ACCELERATION)

Scale-ups participating in the Scale Programme (Post-Acceleration) will have the opportunity to compete for up to **€60,000** in financial prizes, granted upon successful completion of the programme.

A total of **20 prizes will be awarded (10 per cohort)**, with the following distribution **per cohort**:

- **Three (3) first-place prizes**: €60,000 each
- **Three (3) second-place prizes**: €30,000 each
- **Four (4) third-place prizes**: €15,000 each

Eligibility Criteria and Conditions

Only ventures that participate in the Demo Day – according to the conditions stated in Section 1.4.2 *Conditions to attend the Demo Day* – will be eligible to enter the prize contest.

Prize Structure & Budget

Prize Category	Number of Prizes per Cohort	Total Number of Prizes	Prize Amount per Winner (€)	Total Prize Fund (€)
1st Place	3	6	60,000	360,000
2nd Place	3	6	30,000	180,000
3rd Place	4	8	15,000	120,000
Total	**10**	**20**	–	**€660,000**

Note: The actual number of prizes awarded will depend on the number of eligible participants in the Demo Day, as detailed in the section "Prize Allocation Adjustment Based on Contestant Numbers" below.

Prize Selection and Evaluation Methodology – Scale Programme

Selection and Scoring

The evaluation of scale-ups competing for the Scale Programme prize will be conducted using a **scorecard system**. Each jury member will assess participants based on the criteria below, scoring from **1 (Very Poor) to 10 (Excellent)**. The final ranking will determine the winners of the financial prizes.

Criteria	Criteria Description	Assessment	Max. Points
Excellence	*The strategic soundness and originality of the business model and value proposition in a scaling context.*	*Business Model: Is the revenue model robust and sustainable? Is the value proposition clearly articulated and positioned in the market?*	10
		Market Potential: Is the target market large and growing? Is the market entry strategy convincing and well-defined?	10
Impact	*The scale-up's capacity to expand across European and international markets and generate systemic impact.*	*Scalability: Is there clear evidence of traction and readiness to scale (e.g. revenue growth, partnerships, market adoption)?*	10
		Investment Readiness: Is there a clear and realistic fundraising strategy? Has the team generated interest from investors or secured commitments?	10
Implementation	*The scale-up's financial health and operational readiness to implement its growth strategy.*	*Financial Viability: Are the financials solid and well-managed? Is there a clear path to sustainability or profitability?*	10
Total Score (threshold 26 points)			**50**

PRIZE ALLOCATION AND CONTINGENCIES

The number of awards allocated per cohort is designed for a full cohort of contestants. However, if the number of participating ventures is lower than expected, the allocation of prizes will be adjusted accordingly.

Minimum Number of Contestants

To ensure a competitive selection process, the minimum number of eligible contestants required for the prize contest to be valid is **5**. If fewer than 5 eligible ventures participate in the Demo Day, EIT Culture & Creativity reserves the right to withhold the awarding of prizes for that cohort. This applies to both segments, **Shape** and **Scale**.

Prize Allocation Adjustment Based on Contestant Numbers

If the number of eligible participants in the prize is below the originally planned full cohort, the number of prizes will be **adjusted as follows**:

SHAPE Programme (Acceleration)

Number of Participants in a Demo Day	Total Prizes Awarded per Cohort	Distribution of Prizes
6–9 participants	3 prizes	1 prize of €30,000 1 prize of €15,000 1 prize of €7,500
10–12 participants	5 prizes	2 prizes of €30,000 2 prizes of €15,000 1 prize of €7,500
13–15 participants	7 prizes	2 prizes of €30,000 2 prizes of €15,000 3 prizes of €7,500
More than 15	Full allocation	3 prizes of €30,000 3 prizes of €15,000 4 prizes of €7,500

SCALE Programme (Post-Acceleration)

Number of Participants in a Demo Day	Total Prizes Awarded per Cohort	Distribution of Prizes
6–10 participants	3 prizes	1 prize of €60,000 1 prize of €30,000 1 prize of €15,000
11–15 participants	6 prizes	2 prizes of €60,000 2 prizes of €30,000 2 prizes of €15,000
16–20 participants	8 prizes	2 prizes of €60,000 3 prizes of €30,000 3 prizes of €15,000
More than 20	Full allocation	3 prizes of €60,000 3 prizes of €30,000 4 prizes of €15,000

COMMON PRIZE EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURES

To ensure transparency and consistency, the **jury selection process, event structure, and tie resolution procedures** apply equally to both the **Shape (Acceleration) Programme** and the **Scale (Post-Acceleration) Programme**.

Jury Composition and Selection

The Prize Jury for both programmes will consist of a **three-member panel**, including **one internal expert from EIT CC and two external experts**. The jury is responsible for evaluating ventures based on predefined selection criteria to ensure a fair and transparent decision-making process.

Selection of Jury Members

- **Internal Jury Member**: A representative from EIT CC leadership or an expert with relevant experience in start-ups and venture development.
- **External Jury Members**: Two experts selected from a pre-approved pool of investors, industry leaders, and ecosystem stakeholders.

Additionally, **EIT CC may invite up to two external observers** to join the jury process. These observers, who will **not have voting rights**, may include representatives from **funding organisations, industry associations, or strategic partners**. Their role is to ensure transparency and provide sectoral insights without influencing the scoring or selection of winners.

Prize Selection: Event Structure and Timeline

1. **Number of Demo Days**
   o Each programme cohort will conclude with a Demo Day.
   o At least two Demo Days will be held per programme segment.
2. **Pitch Format and Jury Q&A**
   o Each participating venture will deliver a pitch to present their **business model, market potential, and growth strategy**
   o A **Q&A session** with the Jury of experts will follow each pitch, allowing further insights and evaluation.
3. **Pre-Submission of Deliverables**
   o All **mandatory deliverables, business plans, and pitch decks** must be submitted one week before the Demo Day to the **Business Creation (BC) team**.
   o Jury members will receive these materials in advance for evaluation.
4. **Scoring & Final Ranking**
   o Jury members will assess each pitch and Q&A performance using a structured **scorecard**.
   o Based on their scores, ventures will be ranked accordingly.
   o **Top-ranked ventures** will be awarded the financial prizes.
5. **Results Submission & Announcement**
   o Jury members will submit their **signed results (scores, rankings, and winners)** to the Internal Jury Member for final validation.
   o Winners will be **officially announced** at the end of the Demo Day.
6. **Prize Disbursement & Agreement Finalization**
   o To receive the prize, winners must sign the **Prize Agreement** and provide **verified payment details** to EIT CC.

o   Prize funds will be **disbursed upon completion** of the agreement formalities.

Resolving a Tie in Prize Selection

If two or more ventures receive the same final score, the following steps will be applied to determine the final ranking:

1. **Re-evaluation** – The jury will re-assess the tied ventures, focusing on the criteria where their scores were closest, ensuring a fair and objective reassessment.
2. **Additional Criterion** – If the tie persists, an additional factor will be introduced:
   o **Contribution to EIT CC's Impact Metrics** – The ventures will be evaluated on their alignment with **EIT CC's Strategic Agenda and impact goals**. This criterion will be **scored from 1-10** and added to the total score.
3. **Jury Deliberation & Final Decision** – If the tie remains after the additional criterion, the jury will **conduct a final discussion and make a decision through a majority vote** to establish the final ranking.

These adjustments ensure fairness and maintain the **competitive integrity** of the prize selection process.

ANNEX II: Examples of SMEs and scale-ups to be selected

To provide clarity on the types of SMEs and scale-ups that the accelerator programme seeks to support, here are some examples of companies from the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI) that align with our strategic focus:

1. **Fashion**

   o *Sustainable Fashion Brand*: A scale-up that creates eco-friendly clothing using recycled materials and sustainable production processes.
   o *Digital Fashion Platform*: An innovative platform that leverages virtual reality to offer customisable fashion experiences and virtual fittings.

2. **Architecture**

   o *Green Building Solutions*: A company developing innovative, sustainable building materials that reduce carbon footprints and enhance energy efficiency.
   o *Smart Home Design*: A scale-up focused on integrating IoT and smart technologies into home designs to improve energy efficiency and comfort.

3. **Cultural Heritage**

   o *Digital Preservation start-up*: A company using advanced digital technologies to preserve and share historical artifacts and cultural heritage sites.
   o *Cultural Tourism App*: An app that offers virtual tours of historical sites, enhancing the accessibility and engagement of cultural heritage for global audiences.

4. **Audiovisual Media**

   o *Independent Film Production*: A scale-up producing socially impactful cross-media concept for content that addresses critical societal issues and promote cultural diversity.
   o *Streaming Service for Niche Content*: A platform that curates and streams independent and niche audiovisual content, providing a unique space for underrepresented voices.

5. **Games**

   o *Educational Game Developer*: A company creating interactive and educational games and is about to leverage their business by taking an existing game to a new platform by finding partners to help in tech transformation and user acquisition.
   o *Virtual Reality Gaming Studio*: A scale-up developing and test marketing immersive VR game concept that offers unique and engaging experiences for gamers with new device or in a new space.

6. **Cross-Sector Innovation**

- *Creative Tech Integrator*: A start-up combining elements from various CCSI sectors, such as a platform that uses AI to generate fashion designs inspired by historical art.
- *Circular Economy Innovator*: A company developing business models that integrate circular economy principles, such as reusing and recycling materials across multiple creative industries.

ANNEX III: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

To ensure measurable impact, ventures selected for the **Shape** and **Scale** Programmes must meet the **mandatory KPI** outlined below. Additional KPIs are not compulsory but will contribute positively to evaluation scores.

MANDATORY KPI

This KPI is required for all programme participants and must be achieved no later than **31 December 2025**. Failure to meet the expected KPI target may trigger increased monitoring and additional support from EIT CC to help ventures achieve their financial and market goals.

.EITHE Code	KPI Title	KPI Description	Minimum Target	Deadline	Evidence Required
EITHE06.1	Investment Attracted by KIC-supported Start-ups/Scale-ups	Total EUR amount of private and public capital secured by ventures within one year after programme completion.	Shape: **€50,000** Scale: **€100,000**	31 December 2025	• A declaration filled in with the following information signed by the company's legal representative: o Title of the programme o Acronym o Program ID o Year when the programme has been received o Name of the company o Registration number o Country o CEO gender o Investment amount received Sources providing this investment support

ADDITIONAL KPIS (NOT MANDATORY, POSITIVELY ASSESSED IN EVALUATION)

While not required, these KPIs demonstrate additional impact and will be considered positively during proposal evaluation.

EITHE Code	KPI Title	KPI Description	Deadline	Evidence Required
EITHE01.1	Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)	Number of innovative products, processes, methods, and IPR applications resulting from the programme.	Deadline 31 December 2025	• A declaration filled in with the following information signed by the company's legal representative: ο Title of the acceleration program ο Acronym ο Program ID ο Year when the program has been received ο Name of the company ο Registration number ο Country ο CEO gender ο Type of intellectual property right: patent, trademark, registered design, utility model, other ο Application title ο Application reference ο Application date ο IPR owner ο Country of the IPR owner ο Does the IPR owner take part in the HEI Capacity Building Initiative (HEI CBI) ο IPR status: has the IPR protection been awarded? ο IPR Award reference if any Technology Readiness Level
EITHE02.4	Innovations Launched on the Market (€10K Revenue)	Number of innovations introduced to the market generating at least €10,000 in revenue within three years after programme completion.	31 December 2025	• A declaration filled in with the following information signed by the company's legal representative: ο Title of the acceleration program ο Acronym ο Program ID ο Year when the program has been received ο Name of the company ο Registration number ο Country ο CEO gender ο Declaration demonstrating link with the start-up and financial proof of the start-

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					up investment in the innovation development
45					o Name of the innovation o Type of innovation (e.g. new product, new service) o Market (country) o Country of origin of the company commercialising the innovation o Was the innovation developed and launched on the market as a result of the capacity building activities delivered as part of the HEI CBI? o Was the innovation launched by learners/graduates from labelled programs (or with direct link to participating in the labelled activity)? o Description of product or process with specified performance characteristics/physical parameters/functionalities demonstrating novelty (new or significant improvement) of the product/process Documented proof such as an invoice or an online sales record demonstrating that the purchase has been made by a customer.

REPORTING AND COMPLIANCE

- Ventures must submit evidence of KPI achievement using the **official templates provided by EIT Culture & Creativity.**
- KPI verification may include audits or additional clarifications as required.

ANNEX IV. APPLICATION FORM

Section 1: Venture Snapshot

1. **Lead Applicant**

   - Organization Name
   - Legal Form
   - Address
   - Country
   - Date of Establishment
   - Number of Employees
   - Contact Person
   - Email
   - Phone Number
   - Website
   - VAT number

2. **Company Profile & Eligibility Confirmation**

   Please, confirm that your company meets the eligibility requirements:

   ☐ The applicant entity is a legally established company in an EU Member State or a third country associated with Horizon Europe.

   ☐ The applicant meets the company type criteria stated in Section 4.2.1 of the Call for applications guidelines, complying with the European Commission's SME definition (fewer than 250 employees and either an annual turnover ≤ €50M or a balance sheet total ≤ €43M).

3. **Application Title:**

   Max characters: 100

   Provide a title for your application.

4. **Application Acronym:**

   Max characters: 50

   Create a short acronym for your application.

5. **Executive Summary:**
   Max 750 characters

   Briefly describe your company, stage of maturity (start-up, scale-up, SME) business model and how your company generates revenue.

6. **Strategic Area:**

   Identify your focus area and choose between:

   - **Fashion**
   - **Architecture**
   - **Cultural Heritage**

- **Audio-Visual Media**
- **Gaming**
- **Combination of some of the above.** Please describe _____

7. **Programme:**

   Identify the programme you wish to apply for:

   - **Segment 1 – Shape (Acceleration) Programme**
   - **Segment 2 – Scale (Post-Acceleration) Programme**

8. **Motivation:**

   Indicate the top 3 goals you would like to achieve with this programme:
   1. _____
   2._____
   3._____

9. **Current Financials**:
   - Yearly Revenue
   - Forecasted Revenue for 2025
   - Funding Raised to Date (Include funding from public and private sources, including self-finance, business angels, public entities, etc.)
   - Current Valuation (if available)

   Upload your most recent financial statements.

10. **Financial Sustainability Mechanism**

    ☐ The applicant agrees to signing a Financial Sustainability Mechanism as described by EIT Culture & Creativity in section 1.7 of this call.

11. **CV:**
    Please upload the CV of the founder/owner and the key team members. Maximum 3 CVs allowed. We recommend CVs no longer than 2 pages.

12. **Company registration certificate**

    Please upload a copy of your company registration certificate.

13. **Additional information: (optional)**

    Provide links to any additional materials that you consider relevant to this application, for example business plan, pitching deck, investment roadmap, etc.

14. **Ethics and Compliance Declaration**

    Applicants must confirm that they have reviewed the EU Ethics Self-Assessment guidance and that their participation in this programme does not involve activities raising ethics issues as defined under Horizon Europe.

    ☐ I confirm that I have reviewed the EU Ethics Self-Assessment guidance and that, to the best of my knowledge, my participation in this programme does not involve ethics-sensitive activities. If any ethical concerns arise, I commit to notifying EIT Culture & Creativity and taking appropriate mitigation measures.

Section 2: Business

1. Business Potential

Max 1000 characters

Explain your business model and how you plan to/have achieved financial sustainability. You can include key milestones achieved and financial insights to prove your business potential.

2. Market Potential

Max 750 characters

Describe your target audience, how you reach them and what is your value proposition to them. Explain how you collect insights from them.

3. **Financial potential**

Max 1000 characters

Describe how you have financed your venture so far and your plans for raising funds (public and/or private) to continue your financial growth in the coming 3 years.

4. Portfolio Potential

Max 750 characters

Describe in which markets your company is active and how your company and your business model can contribute to EIT Culture & Creativity's priority areas, objectives and key challenges as outlined in section 3.1.3. of the call guidelines.

5. Team Potential

Max 750 characters

Describe how the composition of your team ensures the right skills for the growth strategy that you plan to follow. You can address any skill gaps that you are looking to address.

6. Company pitch:

Provide a link to a video of max 2 minutes presenting your company and describing your commercial relevance, investment fit and investment potential (see cohort selection evaluation for details) Please make sure that the link is accessible for external visitors.

By submitting this application, you agree to be contacted by EIT Culture & Creativity through email, phone, instant messaging, newsletter and other communication channels. If selected for a programme, the information submitted may also be shared with coaches and trainers of the respective programme to optimize your learning and growth journey.

ANNEX V. APPEAL PROCESS (ONLY APPLICABLE TO THE CALL FOR APPLICATION TO THE SHAPE AND SCALE PROGRAMMES)

The rules set out in this document are aimed at providing the applicants with a transparent appeal procedure concerning the decisions made by EIT CC during the eligibility and admissibility check as well as the evaluation process of an application submitted to a call for applications launched by EIT CC.

1. APPEAL REQUIREMENTS AND CONDITIONS

The Applicant is the only person entitled to file an appeal.

The right to appeal against a decision regarding the application selection applies to the applicant whose application was found ineligible during the admissibility and eligibility check or was rejected after the evaluation process.

The appeal is to be lodged against the communication issued by the EIT CC Program Management Office (PMO) based on the decision taken by the EIT CC Selection Committee.

The appeal can be lodged against the outcomes of the admissibility and eligibility check or the evaluation upon the following grounds **only**:

- Process errors by EIT CC
- Technical problems beyond the applicant's control
- Obvious human/mechanical errors by EIT CC
- Factual errors during the evaluation process

Appeals cannot be made based on other grounds than those indicated above.

If an appeal is accepted according to ground - *Factual errors during the evaluation process* mentioned above, it is possible that all, or part of the application, is re-evaluated by a new evaluation panel. Otherwise, there will be no follow-up or re-evaluation of the application unless there is clear evidence for appealing under the grounds provided above.

The applicant must formally submit the appeal, including all the mandatory information required below, by email to pmo@eit-culture-creativity.eu within **15 calendar days** of receiving the official notification of the outcomes. **Appeals received after 15 calendar days will not be considered.**

The appeal must contain:

Name and address of the organisation of the applicant;
- Name, position and contact details of the appellant;
- Reference number and acronym of the application that is the subject of the appeal;
- Clear reasons for the appeal, including all elements which are being appealed and/or failures in adherence with procedures limited to those criteria outlined in point 4.
- Any supporting documents. The applicant must provide relevant documentation in support of its appeal.

The relevant documentation included in the appeal shall be provided for the sole purpose of supporting it. It will not alter the quality or content of the evaluated application. The PMO will confirm the receipt of the appeal in writing to the applicant.

An appeal will be rejected if:

- It is submitted after the set deadline;
- It is based on other grounds than those set out in point 4;
- Any of the information requested at point 5 is missing.

In case the appeal is rejected under provisions set out in point 7, the PMO will convey this information within 5 calendar days (of receipt of the appeal) to the applicant and inform the responsible Thematic Area at EIT CC.

The appeal procedure will be published in the call for applications guidelines, providing applicants with clear details of the grounds for appeal, steps of the appeal process, timelines, and composition of the Appeal Panel. Applicants will also be informed of their right to appeal, including the limitations of this procedure, in the official notification of the evaluation results.

2. INTERNAL APPEAL EVALUATION PROCESS

The PMO acts as the secretariat and examines the appeal of an ineligible or rejected application duly submitted by the applicant within the set deadline and according to the appeal requirements. The PMO prepares a technical examination on the merit of the appeal and sends it to the Appeal Panel.

The appointed Appeal Panel evaluates all the available information provided by the applicant and the technical examination prepared by the PMO.

The role of the Appeal Panel is to ensure a coherent interpretation of the requests and equal treatment of applicants. The Appeal Panel itself, however, does not re-evaluate the application. Instead, the Appeal Panel evaluates the grounds of the appeal and ensures compliance with the announced evaluation criteria, EU Financial Regulation Article 61, and EIT legal framework. Decisions are made through consensus, ensuring equal treatment and adherence to the announced call for applications criteria. Any recommendation for re-evaluation must demonstrate clear procedural or factual errors impacting the application's assessment. In light of its review, the Appeal Panel recommends a course of action to be followed.

The Appeal Panel's evaluation follows these steps:

1. **Review of relevant documentation:** The panel examines the appeal submission, technical examination, original application, and supporting documents.

2. **Verification of grounds for appeal:** The panel assesses the appeal against set criteria, such as process errors, technical problems, and factual inaccuracies.

3. **Structured decision-making process:** The panel ensures each ground is addressed with clear rationale, referencing relevant policies or regulations.

4. **Documentation:** The panel consolidates its findings, recommendations, and binding decision into a standardized report template to ensure transparency and accountability.

The Appeal Panel consists of at least 3 members, to be appointed from among the following bodies:

- Two members of the EIT CC ELSI Board, ensuring independent ethical and legal oversight.

- One Thematic Area Director not involved in the cohort selection for the call for application under review, ensuring relevant expertise while maintaining impartiality.
- One Legal Counsel, serving in a legal advisory capacity only, without voting rights.

The members of the Appeal Panel (and their respective deputies) are appointed by the CEO of EIT CC at the beginning of each year. Impartiality of members of the Appeal Panel towards the case under review must be ensured. If this cannot be provided, the relevant member shall refrain from the relevant case's review and be replaced by another impartial member.

The PMO shall provide the members of the Appeal Panel with a copy of:

- The appeal and all the supporting documents provided by the applicant.
- The technical examination prepared by the PMO.
- The original application and all supporting documents that were taken into consideration by the relevant bodies during the application admissibility and eligibility check and the evaluation process.
- Any other document requested by the Appeal Panel members relevant to the appeal.

The Appeal Panel will have 5 calendar days to provide a binding decision after the receipt of the documentation provided by the PMO, through a written justification with explicit reference to the grounds mentioned in point 4.

The decision on the appeal is taken by the Appeal Panel by consensus and is communicated by the PMO in writing to the applicant within 5 calendar days of the receipt of the Appeal Panel decision.

The appeal procedure, from the receipt of the appeal to the communication of the Appeal Panel's decision to the Applicant, should be resolved within a maximum of 20 calendar days.

The decision of the Appeal Panel is final, binding to all parties and not subject to any further appeal proceedings within EIT CC based on the same grounds.

ANNEX VI: GENERAL RULES FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS WITH RESPECT TO Horizon Europe's COMPLIANCE PRINCIPLES

This annex outlines the general rules and responsibilities for all stakeholders—Beneficiaries, Affiliated Entities, external evaluators, and other participants—regarding Conflict of Interests, Confidentiality and Security, Ethics and Values, Data Protection, and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) - in relation to the selection, evaluation, and implementation of programmes provided under this call for applications.

All stakeholders involved in the call for applications, including Beneficiaries, Affiliated Entities, external evaluators, Selection Committee members, and KIC staff, must act in full compliance with the **Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (HE MGA)** regulations and the principles enshrined in the **EU Financial Regulation (Article 61)**. These principles include:

- **Conflict of Interest Management**: Preventing and addressing any situation where impartiality or objectivity may be compromised due to personal, economic, or other interests.
- **Transparency and Openness**: Ensuring clear, open, and traceable decision-making processes throughout the applications and selection lifecycle.
- **Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity**: Providing equal access and impartial treatment to all applicants and stakeholders, regardless of nationality, gender, or other characteristics.
- **Confidentiality and Data Security**: Safeguarding sensitive information and ensuring the secure handling of all data related to the call for applications and its participants.
- **Ethics and Integrity**: Adhering to high ethical standards and values in all interactions, including respect for diversity and social responsibility.
- **Data Protection Compliance**: Ensuring the handling of personal data complies with relevant data protection regulations, including GDPR.
- **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Protection**: Respecting and securing intellectual property rights in line with EU regulations and the HE MGA.

Conflict of Interests	All stakeholders must comply with <u>Article 61 of the EU Financial Regulation</u> and adhere to the **EIT Culture & Creativity Code of Conduct** and **Anti-Fraud Policy**, which outline standards for impartiality, transparency, and ethical behavior in agreements or project participation. Conflicts of interest may arise from familial, emotional, political, economic, or other personal connections. **General Obligations:** - Stakeholders must promptly disclose any real or potential conflicts of interest to the granting authority and take immediate corrective action. - Measures will be implemented to prevent and address actual or perceived conflicts in all roles and responsibilities. **For External Evaluators:** - Conflict of interest obligations will be included in their evaluation contracts, requiring disclosure of any potential conflicts and prohibiting involvement in evaluations where impartiality may be compromised.

	• Non-compliance will result in removal and replacement to safeguard the integrity of the evaluation process. **For EIT CC and Selection Committee Members:** • Staff and committee members must declare any conflicts before engaging in evaluations or decisions and recuse themselves where impartiality is at risk. • A Conflict of Interest Register will document all disclosures and actions taken to ensure accountability. **Additional Measures:** • Transparent communication with applicants through designated channels, ensuring equal and fair treatment. • Dissemination of FAQs and consistent guidance to support applicants. These measures are designed to uphold the highest standards of integrity and fairness throughout the process. For further details, refer to the **EIT CC Code of Conduct** and **Anti-Fraud Policy** available on EIT CC website.
Transparency and Openness	These are key principles in the EIT Regulation, the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027, and are detailed in Article 7.2 of the Partnership Agreement. They shall apply at each stage of the calls for applications of KICs in order to ensure a fair and impartial selection of projects/programmes.
Non-discrimination	In accordance with Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, all stakeholder shall prove no discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.
Confidentiality and security	The parties must keep confidential any data, documents, or other material (in any form) that is identified as sensitive in writing ('sensitive information') — during the implementation of the action and for at least until the time-limit set out. The beneficiaries may disclose sensitive information to their personnel or other participants involved in the action only if they: (a) need to know it in order to implement the Agreement and (b) are bound by an obligation of confidentiality. The granting authority may disclose sensitive information to its staff and to other EU institutions and bodies. It may moreover disclose sensitive information to third parties, if: (a) this is necessary to implement the Agreement or safeguard the EU financial interests and (b) the recipients of the information are bound by an obligation of confidentiality.
Ethics and Values	Ethics: The action must be carried out in line with the highest ethical standards and the applicable EU, international and national law on ethical principles. Values: The beneficiaries must commit to and ensure the respect of basic EU values (such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities).
Data Protection	The beneficiaries must process personal data under the Agreement in compliance with the applicable EU, international and national law on data protection (in particular, Regulation 2016/6794*). They must ensure that personal data is: • processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subjects • collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes • adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date - kept in a form which

54	permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the data is processed and • processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the data. ** 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, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC ('GDPR') (OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1)*
Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)	<u>Ownership of results:</u> The granting authority does not obtain ownership of the results produced under the action. 'Results' means any tangible or intangible effect of the action, such as data, knowhow, or information, whatever its form or nature, whether it can be protected, as well as any rights attached to it, including intellectual property rights.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Term
CCSI	Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLC	Co-Location Centres
CLV	Customer Lifetime Value
CPD	Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses
EIT	European Institute of Technology and Innovation
EIT CC	EIT Culture & Creativity
ESR	Evaluation Summary Report
FS	Financial sustainability
FSA	Financial Support Agreement
FSM	Financial sustainability mechanism
HE	Horizon Europe
IP	Intellectual property
KIC	Knowledge and Innovation Community
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
KTI	Knowledge Triangle Integration
AGA	Annotated Model Grant Agreement
RIS	Regional Innovation Scheme
SA	Strategic Agenda
SAM	Serviceable Addressable Market
SME	Small and medium enterprise
TRL	Technology Readiness Level

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Applicant Representative	The main point of contact for EIT Culture & Creativity from the submission of the application until the completion of the programme.
Call for applications	The instrument used by EIT Culture & Creativity to select participants for its programmes in alignment with the Strategic Agenda.
Call for applications guidelines	The main document outlining the terms, conditions, and criteria for any call for applications launched by EIT Culture & Creativity, ensuring transparency, equal treatment, open competition, and sound procedural management.
CCSI	Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI) are based on cultural values, creativity, skills, and talent with the potential to generate innovation, wealth, and jobs through social and economic value creation, particularly from intellectual property. Sectors include architecture, archives, artistic crafts, audio-visual (film, TV, software, video games, multimedia, recorded music), cultural heritage, design, high-end industries and fashion, festivals, live music, performing arts, publishing, radio, visual arts, and advertising. (Source: European Parliament (2016/2072(INI)).
CLC	Co-Location Centres (CLCs) are operational units that bring together regional and local clusters and nodes of excellence. A CLC is a physical hub promoting links and collaboration among Knowledge Triangle actors, building on existing labs, offices, or campuses of KIC's core partners.
Deliverable	Key outputs of a project, such as analysis reports, feasibility studies, strategy documents, pilot action reports, and training documentation, demonstrating the project's achievements and judicious use of public funds.
EIT	The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is an EU body established in 2008 to strengthen Europe's innovation capacity. It is part of Horizon Europe, the EU's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and funds EIT Culture & Creativity (www.eit.europa.eu).
EIT Culture & Creativity	EIT Culture & Creativity, designated by the EIT in 2022, aims to fundamentally change the CCSI towards new understandings of competitiveness, resilience, and sustainable economic growth. Its primate impact goal is to create and maintains job in a resilient CCSI business ecosystem able to scale and compete in global markets. (www.eit-culture-creativity.eu)
Evaluation Panel	A group of expert evaluators, usually including independent external individuals and a Rapporteur, with expertise, at least, in the specific area of the call for applications which they are evaluating. The panel evaluates eligible applications based on predefined criteria, assisted by a Quality Controller from EIT Culture & Creativity to ensure compliance.
Evaluation Process	The process by which EIT Culture & Creativity, supported by external experts, examines the quality of the application to determine its suitability for EIT CC financial support.

Term	Definition
HE MGA	The Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement sets out the rights, obligations, terms, and conditions applicable to the grant awarded.
KAVA (Key Added Value Activity)	A strategic activity or project supported by an EIT Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) that contributes directly to achieving the KIC's objectives. KAVAs are designed to deliver measurable impact aligned with the KIC's Strategic Agenda, including innovation, education, and business creation activities, often involving collaborations across the Knowledge Triangle (industry, academia, and research organizations).
KIC	Knowledge Innovation Communities (KICs) are European Partnerships addressing global challenges and strengthening innovation ecosystems. They integrate education, research, and innovation, promoting entrepreneurship and the creation of innovative companies in synergy with the EIT.
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators defined by the EIT and EIT Culture & Creativity .
Large Company	A large company is a business that exceeds the thresholds of a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME). Specifically, it has 250 or more employees and an annual turnover greater than €50 million, or a balance sheet total exceeding €43 million. These entities typically possess significant resources, established market presence, and extensive networks, making them valuable partners for scaling innovations.
Priority Areas	Key focus areas for EIT Culture & Creativity, representing significant shares of the EU CCSI workforce and revenue, aimed at targeted innovation and development. • Fashion: Circular innovations, textile recycling, and sustainable business models. • Architecture: Circular biobased materials, climate adaptation, and social cohesion. • Cultural Heritage: Emerging tech, new business models, and heritage preservation. • Audio-visual Media: Responsible tech use, generative AI, and new business models. • Gaming: Digital ethics, cross-sector collaboration, and societal impact.
Prize	A financial reward granted to individuals or organizations that successfully address a specific challenge or objective defined by the European Commission. Prizes are designed to stimulate innovation and find solutions to societal challenges by encouraging a wide range of participants to compete. Unlike traditional grants, prizes are awarded upon the successful completion of the challenge, without prior funding for the development process. This approach incentivizes efficiency and effectiveness in reaching the desired outcomes.
RIS	The Regional Innovation Scheme boosts innovation performance in countries with moderate or modest innovation scores.
Scaleup	A scale-up is defined as a company that has been in operation for a minimum of 3 to 4 years and has demonstrated consistent growth. Specifically, it should have achieved an annual growth rate of at least 10% in either turnover or number of employees over three consecutive financial years.
SMEs and Micro Enterprises	Defined by EU recommendation 2003/361 based on staff headcount and either turnover or balance sheet total: Medium: <250 staff, ≤€50 million turnover or ≤€43 million balance

Term	Definition
	sheet; Small: <50 staff, ≤€10 million turnover or balance sheet; Micro: <10 staff, ≤€2 million turnover or balance sheet.
SO	Strategic Objective of EIT Culture & Creativity. Five SOs form the framework's main pillars.
Social Innovation	New ideas addressing unmet needs that are social in their ends and means, creating new social relationships or collaborations (European Social Innovation, 2010).
Triple Transition	EIT Culture & Creativity's term for driving green, digital, and social transformations in Europe, building on the European Twin Transition.
TRL	Technology Readiness Level (TRL) is a metric used by the EU and EIT to assess the maturity of a particular technology, from basic research (TRL 1) to full deployment in real-world applications (TRL 9). • TRL 1-4: Research and concept validation. • TRL 5-7: Prototype and demonstration in relevant environments. • TRL 8-9: System qualification and operational readiness.