

EIT and Xjenza Malta launch the EIT Regional Innovation Booster in Malta to scale startups internationally

Valletta, Malta – 14.05.2026 The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), together with Xjenza Malta, has launched the EIT Regional Innovation Booster in Malta. The programme is designed to support high-potential startups in expanding into international markets, helping to strengthen innovation in emerging and moderate innovator countries across Europe. Malta is the second country to join the initiative, following a successful pilot in Poland in 2025.

The [EIT Regional Innovation Booster](#) is a flagship pilot initiative addressing Europe's innovation gap by providing tailored, place-based support to emerging and moderate innovator countries. The Malta edition focuses on startups with solutions at Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 7 or higher, meaning technologies that have been validated in the intended environment, from the following sectors: climate, culture and creativity, digital, energy, food and agritech, healthcare, energy and renewables, raw materials and urban mobility. These startups are expected to be ready for commercialisation and international growth.

Adam Rottenbacher, Head of Operations at the EIT, said: *'This is not just another accelerator, but a scheme co-created with national partners to tackle the real needs of local innovation ecosystems. Europe doesn't lack innovation – it lacks scale. With the EIT Regional Innovation Booster, we help startups move faster from strong ideas to real market presence. Malta shows how smaller ecosystems can play a big role when given the right tools, connections and locally grounded support to grow internationally.'*

Dr. Melchior Cini, Director R&I at Xjenza Malta, said: *'Malta is actively shaping its future as a hub for innovation, entrepreneurship and talent-driven growth. Achieving this requires more than simply supporting research in isolation. It requires creating the right pathways for researchers, innovators and idea holders to transform knowledge into applicable solutions, sustainable enterprises and scalable opportunities.'*

Scale-up support provided in three stages

The programme is structured in three stages, with a competitive selection process at each step.

Up to twelve startups will be selected in the first evaluation round to participate in Stage 1 and its bootcamps, focused on market readiness and strategy. This stage combines on-site and online sessions to help startups refine their value proposition for one of three targeted markets – Italy, Germany or France, prepare for international scaling, and develop a clear go-to-market roadmap. This is supported by expert mentoring and peer feedback. The selection of the three markets, following an analysis of Malta's ecosystem, is designed to equip high-potential ventures with tailored insights and practical tools for effective market entry aligned with their thematic innovations.

Following this first step, up to six startups will advance to Stage 2, which centres on market entry and commercial execution. Participants gain mentoring and access to industry connections, potential clients, and partners, alongside dedicated guidance, and become eligible for a subgrant of €50 000 subject to the submission of required deliverables and the signing of a financial support agreement.

Finally, up to four startups will be selected for Stage 3, focused on international exposure and investor scouting. Through targeted matchmaking, participants benefit from the vast Europe-wide EIT network and connect with key EU ecosystem players and receive feedback to support efficient expansion. At this stage, startups may receive a subgrant of €40,000 under the same conditions. These ventures may also have the opportunity to access an additional market with tailored support from EIT and Xjenza Malta.

How to apply

Eligible applicants must be [SMEs, as defined in EU Recommendation 2003/361](#), legally registered and operating in Malta before the call launch, applying as a single entity, with a solution at TRL 7 or higher, and holding ownership of, or full rights to exploit, the intellectual property. The call for applications opens on 14 May 2026 and closes on 15 July 2026 at 23:59 CEST. Applications must be submitted in English through the online [application form](#). More information about the programme [is available here](#).

[About the European Institute of Innovation and Technology \(EIT\)](#)

The [EIT](#) strengthens Europe's ability to innovate by powering solutions to pressing global challenges and by nurturing entrepreneurial talent to create sustainable growth and skilled jobs in Europe. The EIT is an EU body and an integral part of Horizon Europe, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. The Institute supports dynamic pan-European partnerships, EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), among leading companies, research labs and universities. These KICs are dedicated to driving systemic change in Europe and beyond, focusing on climate change, culture and creativity, digitalization, energy, health, food, manufacturing, raw materials, urban mobility and water. Together with their leading partners, the EIT Community offers a wide range of innovation activities across Europe: entrepreneurial education courses, business creation and acceleration services and innovation-driven research projects.

[About Xjenza Malta](#)

[Xjenza Malta](#) is Malta's national public agency responsible for promoting and supporting scientific research, technological development, and innovation. It plays a central role in strengthening the country's research ecosystem by funding projects, facilitating collaboration between academia and industry, and aligning national priorities with European research and innovation strategies. Through a range of funding programmes, support mechanisms, and practical tools, Xjenza Malta actively drives projects from concept to market, helping innovators and researchers translate ideas into viable products and services. By fostering innovation uptake and commercialisation, the agency enhances Malta's competitiveness, addresses societal challenges, and contributes to sustainable economic growth, while also ensuring strong participation in European research and innovation initiatives.



What is the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (EIT RIS)?

The EIT Regional Innovation Booster is part of [the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme \(EIT RIS\)](#), launched in 2014 to enhance innovation performance in countries with 'emerging' or 'modest' innovation scores according to the [European Innovation Scoreboard](#). The RIS is managed by the EIT and implemented through its KICs.

Press Contact:

Olga Kozlitina, EIT Community Communications Manager, olga.kozlitina@eithealth.eu, +48576018901