

European Institute of Innovation and Technology

Invitation to submit a proposal for the European Hydrogen Academy

Single Market Programme (SMP COSME)

SMP-COSME-2026-EIT-EUHYDROGENACADEMY

Version 1.0
29 January 2026

HISTORY OF CHANGES			
Version	Publication Date	Change	Page
1.0	29.01.2026	Initial version	

Table of Contents

Introduction 5
1 Background 6
1.1 Relevance of the Action 7
2 Objectives, Scope and Activities 8
2.1 Objectives 8
2.2 Activities that can be funded (scope) 9
3 Expected results (impact, outcome, output) 14
4 Available budget 15
5 Timetable and deadlines 15
6 Admissibility and documents 15
7 Eligibility 16
7.1 Eligible participants 16
7.2 Eligible activities 18
8 Ethics and values 18
9 Financial and operational capacity and exclusion 19
9.1 Financial and operational capacity 19
9.2 Exclusion 19
10 Evaluation and award procedure 21
11 Award criteria 22
12 Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreement 23
12.1 Starting date and project duration 24
12.2 Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount 24
12.3 Budget categories and cost eligibility rules 24
12.4 Eligibility of direct and indirect costs 26
12.5 Financial support to third parties 26
12.6 No double funding 27
12.7 Reporting and payment arrangements 27
12.8 Prefinancing guarantees 29
12.9 Certificates 30
12.10 Liability regime for recoveries 30
12.11 Provisions concerning the project implementation 30

12.12 Non-compliance and breach of contract 31
13 How to submit an application 31
13.1 Submit the proposal (using PIC number) 31
13.2 Contact 32
14 Transparency 32
15 Processing of personal data 32
Annex – Logical Framework and KPIs 34
Important Information 42

Introduction

This is an **invitation to submit a proposal for an EU action grant** in the field of hydrogen energy under the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs strand of the **Single Market Programme (SMP COSME)**, which will be managed by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in the:

- Regulation (EU) 2024/2509[1] (EU Financial Regulation);
- the Single Market Programme Regulation 2021/690[2].

The regulatory and contractual framework for the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) in the 2021-2027 period is set out in the:

- EIT Regulation (recast)[3];
- EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027[4];
- the Partnership Agreements (PA)[5] which were signed by the EIT and six Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) in 2021;
- the Memoranda of Cooperation (MoC)[6] which were signed by the EIT and the three first-wave KICs for the period of 2025-2027.

The Invitation is launched in accordance with the **EIT's 2026 Work Programme**[7] and will be managed by the EIT, following the signature of the **Contribution Agreement**[8] between the European Commission (DG EMPL) and the EIT on 12 December 2025.

This Invitation concerns the **direct award** to **one or more KIC Legal Entities** for the **European Hydrogen Academy** (the topic of the 'action') in order to support the upskilling and reskilling by education and training providers in EU Member States, of the workforce required in the EU for, among others, prospecting, extracting, developing, producing, installing, maintaining, repairing, re-using and recycling hydrogen technologies, with a strong focus on employees in EU SMEs.

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[1] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast)

[2] Regulation (EU) 2021/690 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing a programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics (Single Market Programme) (OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 1).

[3] Regulation (EU) 2021/819 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 on the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (recast) (OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 61)

[4] Decision (EU) 2021/820 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 on the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) 2021-2027: Boosting the Innovation Talent and Capacity of Europe and repealing decision No 1312/2013/EU (OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 91)

[5] https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eit_kic_partnership_agreement_v1.0_final_14-03-2021.pdf

[6] https://www.eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-07/Consolidated%20MoC.pdf

[7] Decision 29/2025 of the EIT Governing Board on the Final Single Programming Document (2026-2028) of the EIT (ref. Ares(2025)11282234).

[8] Ref. Ares(2025)11079878

We invite you to read the **Invitation documentation** carefully, and in particular this Invitation, the Model Grant Agreement, the EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual and the EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement.

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the Invitation outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1, 2 and 3);
  - timetable and available budget (section 4 and 5);
  - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; section 6 and 7);
  - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (section 9);
  - evaluation and award procedure (section 10);
  - award criteria (section 11);
  - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreement (section 12);
  - how to submit an application (section 13).

- the Online Manual outlines the:
  - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal');
  - recommendations for the preparation of the application.

- the AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement contains:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant *(including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc)*.

1 Background

Following the European Parliament's adoption on 25 April 2024, on 27 May 2024 the Council adopted the Commission's legislative proposal for a Net-Zero Industry Act (NZIA) with the objective to support the scale-up of EU industrial manufacturing capacities of key net-zero technologies. The Act puts forward a simplified regulatory framework to meet the EU climate neutrality goals in technologies such as batteries, windmills, heat-pumps, solar photovoltaic, electrolysers, carbon capture and storage. The Act includes a Chapter on "Enhancing Skills for quality job creation" to support the re-skilling and upskilling of workers required for the upscaling of EU industrial manufacturing capacities. Article 30 of the Act states that "the Commission shall support, including through the provision of seed-funding, the launch of European Net Zero Industry Academies" to develop education and training content to upskill and reskill workers required for key net-zero technology value chains, including the raw materials needed for these value chains.

More recently, in a joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council on a "European Economic Security Strategy", the Commission listed among the priorities promoting our own competitiveness by, inter alia, investing in human capital including by upskilling the

European workforce, as well as protecting ourselves from economic security risks. Linked to that is the Commission Recommendation on critical technology areas for the EU's economic security for further risk assessment with Member States.

In the current mandate, the European Commission introduced the Union of Skills Communication[9], as a plan to improve high quality education, training, and lifelong learning. This overarching initiative aims to deliver higher levels of basic and advanced skills; provide opportunities for people to regularly update and learn new skills; facilitate recruitment by businesses across the EU and attract, develop and retain top talent in Europe.

Seed funding for the European Net Zero Hydrogen Academy is made available under the Single Market Programme SME Pillar under its 2025 work programme to be implemented via indirect management by the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT).

1.1 Relevance of the Action

The Electrolyser Joint Declaration of the Commission and the European Clean Hydrogen Alliance envisage not only a technology leadership of EU manufacturers in this area, but also their commercial leadership. It means that EU electrolyser producers need to boost their manufacturing capacity, such that they provide the technology needed to produce 10 million tonnes of domestic renewable hydrogen by 2030 as envisaged in the REPowerEU plan. Such a production capacity would imply the creation of roughly 440 000 jobs, of which the majority (roughly 70%) will be linked with renewable electricity generation.

A learner is considered to be trained when the learner has met the specific goals set out at the beginning of the training (e.g., passing assessments, completing projects, etc.). Article 31 of the Net-Zero Industry Act (NZIA) Regulation sets out a framework to link the learning outcomes of the European Net-Zero Industry Academies with national systems for the recognition of professional qualifications.

In the context of the European Green Deal, the Clean Hydrogen Joint Undertaking was established as a public-private partnership, funded by Horizon Europe, to support research and innovation activities in hydrogen technologies by fostering cooperation between the European Commission, Member State authorities, energy companies, research institutions and universities. As part of its work, the Clean Hydrogen Joint Undertaking set up a European Hydrogen Academy in January 2024, with an EU contribution of EUR 3 million, to build a network of universities offering qualifications, specializations, and degrees in hydrogen technologies and schools integrating hydrogen topics in their science teaching. This Hydrogen Academy also provides free training materials across European languages to foster education in this field. Building on this groundwork and in line with Net-Zero Industry Act provisions, the Net-Zero Hydrogen Academy will support the education and training of workers in the hydrogen value chain addressing critical needs of the sector. To this end, it will develop targeted learning programmes, content and training materials; promote their use by education and training providers in the Member States and develop and deploy associated learning credentials. In this way, the action promotes the competitiveness of the sector, the development of the hydrogen value chain and the modernisation of its industry.

[9] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0090

The Academy will actively seek to benefit from synergies with the other Net Zero Industry Act Academies, both in terms of good practices and success factors as well as in terms of infrastructure where possible. The aim is to up- and reskill up to 100.000 learners within three years of the establishment of the Academy, and thereby to help meeting the anticipated demand for skilled workers in the hydrogen industry highlighted above.

Skills intelligence related to the needs

Skills requirements for occupational profiles across the hydrogen value chain include both technical and support activities. They range from production, operation, and maintenance, to storage, transport and distribution. The European Hydrogen Skills Strategy designed by the Green Skills for Hydrogen Project (GreenSkills4H2) Blueprint determined that around 200 distinct job roles are required within the hydrogen value chain. The Hydrogen Centres of Vocational Excellence (H2CoVE) project, funded by Erasmus+, aims to develop a skilled workforce in the partner regions and across Europe to enable a successful transition to a hydrogen-based economy. Their programmes are designed to meet the needs of individuals at various stages of their careers, whether you're entering the workforce, upskilling for industry changes, or teaching the next generation of professionals. This indicates how diverse the range of occupations in the hydrogen sector is. The subcategories proposed by the ESCO classification are used to consider different occupational groups. Technical profiles, such as engineers and technicians, are in high demand in the hydrogen sector as evidenced by their higher occurrence counts. The Academy will focus on the trainings aimed specifically at the hydrogen sector value chain.

2 Objectives, Scope and Activities

2.1 Objectives

Overall objective:

The overall objective of the action is to launch the European Net Zero Hydrogen Academy ('the Academy' or 'European Hydrogen Academy') to support upskilling and reskilling (including in the field of vocational education and training) by education and training providers in EU Member States of the workforce required in the EU for, among others, developing, producing, installing, maintaining, repairing, re-using and recycling hydrogen technologies, with a strong focus on employees in EU SMEs.

Main objectives:

I. Support the education and training of workers in the hydrogen technology value chain and competent public authorities in Europe, addressing critical needs of the sector consistent with the objectives of the Net-Zero Industry Act.

II. Develop learning programmes, content and learning and training materials for the hydrogen technologies' value chain; promote the use of the learning programmes, content and materials by education and training providers in the Member States; develop and deploy learning credentials.

III. Provide direct support to SMEs to access the learning content to up and reskill the workforce for the hydrogen value chain in the EU. The action would focus in particular on SMEs, whose access to the learning programmes, content and learning and training materials should be promoted by the design of the terms and conditions of their use. Large businesses would also be entitled to participate but subject to conditions that take into account their larger education and training resources.

Specific objectives:

1. In support of the main objective I, and with a particular focus on SMEs, develop learning programmes, content and learning and training materials for training and education, among others, on prospecting, extracting, developing, producing, installing, commissioning, operating, maintaining and recycling hydrogen technologies, as well as support the capacities of public authorities competent to issue permits and authorisations and contracting authorities. To this end, and to ensure consistency with related EU-funded projects, the Academy must work closely with the relevant Large-Scale Partnerships in the EU Pact for Skills of which the Academy, or the legal entity hosting it, must also become a member. The Academy should invite any entity collaborating with it to become member of the Pact for Skills. It must, moreover, take into account input from Member States and stakeholders. It will also build upon and demonstrate synergies with the Joint Undertaking Hydrogen Academy for pupils and students, the European Battery Alliance Academy, the European Wind Academy, the European Solar Academy, the European Raw Materials Academy, the European Advanced Materials Academy and ensure alignment with the objectives of the Net-Zero Industry Act – while ensuring coherence with EU education and training initiatives

2. In support of Main objective II, facilitate the deployment of the learning programmes, content and materials developed by the Academy, among others by setting up a network of education and training providers in Member States. This network must be sufficient to provide a significant contribution to the training of the workforce in Member States, including in SMEs.

3. In support of main objectives I and II, put in place credentials, including micro-credentials (designed in accordance with the Council Recommendation on micro-credentials), for the learning programmes that it develops. The credentials will be issued to learners who have completed a relevant learning programme. These credentials will facilitate the transparency of skills acquired and enhance the transferability between jobs and the cross-border mobility of the workforce, and promote matching with relevant jobs.

2.2 Activities that can be funded (scope)

The Academy shall carry out the following activities directly linked to the training of workers in the hydrogen value chain:

1) Specific objective:

a) Develop learning programmes, content and learning and training materials and ensure their continuous update and improvement.

b) Make available a learning platform (or re-use an existing platform in use for similar actions) to serve as a repository for all learning content developed and track down learners' progress.

2) Specific objective:
   a) Build a network of education and training providers in the Member States to deploy the learning programmes, content and learning and training materials developed
   b) Support the deployment of learning programmes, content and learning and training materials by education and training providers in the EU Member States
   c) Ensure certification of education and training providers

3) Specific objective:
   a) Develop strong quality assurance and engagement systems[10] for course delivery and learner certification model
   b) Ensure certification of learning and training programmes, develop learning credentials, including micro-credentials

4) In support of all objectives:
   a) Perform continuous skills intelligence actions building on and integrating the data and the insights gathered in the context of the Blueprint and the Centre of Vocational Excellence projects referred to above
   b) Perform continuous promotion and communication support
   c) Develop a system to monitor the impact of the delivered trainings on the employability of the participants

All these services are intended to secure a comprehensive service package for local education and training multipliers, across Member States, by three years from signature of agreement.

#1.a Develop learning programmes, content and learning and training materials and ensure their continuous update and improvement:

The Academy shall, with particular focus on SMEs, develop learning programmes, content and learning and training materials for training and education on the entire value chain of hydrogen technologies including prospecting, extracting, developing, producing, installing, commissioning, operating, maintaining and recycling hydrogen technologies, as well as to support the capacities of public authorities competent to issue permits and authorisations. The developed learning programmes must meet the EIT

[10] EQAVET - European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training - Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

minimum standards of quality and length and be equivalent to at least level 3 of the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

To ensure access of SMEs and their workers to the learning programmes, content and learning and training materials, any fees that the Academy may charge to access these learning programmes, content and learning and training materials shall take into consideration the resources available to SMEs for the provision of education and training and shall not impede their access to them. The beneficiary shall be invited to offer access to SMEs and their workers to learning programmes, content and learning and training materials at reduced fee rates. The EIT shall monitor compliance with these principles and the access of SMEs and their workers to the learning programmes, content and learning and training materials developed by the Academy and, if appropriate invite the beneficiary to review its fee structure.

To ensure that the learning content developed by the Academy reflects the latest technological developments in the sector at all times, the Academy shall continuously update and improve this content with feedback collected from the Net-Zero Industry Platform sub-group on skills and the education and training providers, VET providers, industry, social partners, stakeholders and trainers participating in the Academy (who in turn shall collect it from learners/trainees in order to adapt the learning content).To this end, the Academy shall make a proposal for the composition of a high-level Advisory Board to be validated by the Commission. The board shall consist at minimum of representatives from relevant European Commission DGs, representatives of relevant EC Alliances, including industry experts and other relevant stakeholders, where the content developments are presented and endorsed.

#1.b Make available a learning platform to serve as a repository for any learning content developed and track down learners' progress

The Academy shall make available a learning platform (or re-use an existing platform in use for similar actions) in which it will store all learning resources for distribution and/or re-use by the network of education and training providers. This will allow the Academy to offer shared learning resources such as online courses, case studies, training programmes and other learning formats, also accessible by individual learners.

For this purpose, the Academy shall actively seek synergies with existing similar structures made available in the framework of the other Net Zero Industry Act Academies.

#2.a Build the network of Education and training providers for the roll-out of the training programmes

Meeting the Academy objectives requires a network of education and training providers, including with proven SME outreach, rolling out the learning programmes, content and learning and training materials developed by the Academy. One key activity shall thus be the creation of a network of education and training providers in the Member States, ensuring appropriate geographical spread, by engaging with relevant stakeholders. Special attention shall be paid to education and training providers targeting SMEs.

#2.b Support the deployment of learning programmes, content and learning and training materials by education and training providers in the EU Member States

The Academy shall offer training to the trainers at the education and training providers that are members of the network mentioned under activity 3. In doing so, it shall particularly focus on trainers targeting workers for SMEs. This will further support their deployment of the learning programmes, content and learning and training materials developed by the Academy.

The Academy will make learning programmes, learning content and learning and training materials available in the national languages of Member States whose education and training providers would like to use these in their national languages.

Many training formats require significant investments in education technology (EdTech) such as a learning repository, a digital learning platform, VR/AR solutions, virtual hybrid classrooms, remote labs, serious gaming platforms and digital certificates. It is often not efficient or even possible for small Education and training providers and SMEs to invest in state-of-the-art EdTech solutions. The Academy shall offer a number of shared EdTech solutions as a service to those in the network that might need these. This should also include access (remote or on site) to lab equipment.

#2.c Certify education and training providers

The Academy shall certify the education and training providers in Member States for the roll-out of its courses, to ensure that institutions which deliver the training uphold the integrity and quality of the learning activities and programmes. This could be based on criteria such as qualification of educators/trainers, teaching infrastructure, learner support, monitoring and feedback mechanisms and ethical practices.

#3.a Develop strong quality assurance and engagement systems for course delivery and learner certification model

The Academy shall set up quality assurance and engagement systems for course delivery that

- ensures meaningful learning outcomes (i.e. demonstrable build-up of knowledge and skills) and
- prevents superficial engagement

The system shall include elements such as engaging content, minimum time and effort, assessment and certification criteria, progress tracking and anti-click-through measures and reporting and quality assurance, etc.)

The Academy shall define minimum quality standards for its course, that must include minimum course content, with accreditation and industry validation, gathered through industry consultations and/or the Advisory Board composed of industry players. The Academy shall also define the individual direct learners counted under its overall target and shall implement a certification model that awards credentials only to learners who have achieved a defined level of skills in their relevant sector.

The Academy must ensure accurate systematic data collection and data analytics of all learners reached, in order to achieve its target of training 100.000 direct learners. Details on each trained person (age, country; region; city; classroom type; training provider; education level; attended course; skills gained, etc) shall be regularly tracked and reported by the Academy and closely monitored and validated by the EIT.

#3.b Ensure certification of learning and training programmes and develop learning credentials, including micro-credentials

The Academy shall ensure that the learning activities and programmes it develops meet defined standards of quality, relevance, and accuracy and cover necessary learning required to achieve a specific level of knowledge and skills in designated areas. To this end, it shall use a process of independent certification of these learning activities and programmes covering key criteria, such as content accuracy and relevance, pedagogical design, interactivity, assessment mechanisms and/or accessibility. Where possible, the Academy shall seek and use the EIT label, to ensure a high-level recognition and qualification of its learning activities and programmes.

The Academy shall develop a credentialing system consisting of both, comprehensive programme credentials and micro-credentials for specific skills or modules. The description of these credentials shall be based on the European Learning Model. Where relevant, the Europass Supplements shall be used to describe credentials. Credentials shall be issued by the education and training provider or adequate awarding body in the format of European Digital Credentials for Learning.

#4.a Perform continuous skills intelligence actions:

This activity shall combine market research, innovation trends and industry insights related to skills, skill gaps, new job profiles and talent needs for the hydrogen value chain. Skills intelligence shall be gathered in permanent contact with the key players and projects in the industry, and in particular SMEs, and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders listed in the Net-Zero Industry Act, as well as by consulting the Net-Zero Europe Platform. The results shall allow to anticipate the needs of the value chain, with specific focus on SMEs employees. The results of the skills intelligence should inform the development of the Academy's learning content. In addition, the Academy should explore opportunities for publishing/feeding back on skills intelligence results, e.g. into the European Skills Observatory.

The Academy should ensure alignment with standard EU skills and labour-market data models (ESCO, Skills Intelligence, European Skills Observatory) to ensure compatibility with existing datasets.

The results of the Academy's skills intelligence will feed the work of the European Skills Observatory, the classification of European Skills, Competencies, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) and Cedefop's Skills Intelligence. The Academy will collaborate with the service contractor of the Pact for Skills on the gathering of skills intelligence and to ensure synergies with other EU initiatives.

#4.b Perform continuous promotion and communication support:

The Academy shall promote itself and the results it achieves among relevant stakeholders such as:

- The relevant services of the European Commission: EMPL, GROW, EAC, and others if interested.
- The Pact for Skills

- ESF+ Managing Authorities to enable them to use the outcomes of the initiative in the implementation of EU funds in the area upskilling and re-skilling of workers in the hydrogen field.
- EIT events, EIT education and business creation panels, and other relevant EIT fora
- Relevant SME fora (e.g., Enterprise Europe Network, European Cluster Collaboration Platform and others)
- The Academy will be promoted in the EIT Campus

The Academy will develop a communication strategy and shall provide promotion and communication support for all education and training organisations in the network, which then will customize and adapt it to local needs. Widely spread information on the new training programmes should help to fill the trainings with learners.

The Academy actions must be in line with the objectives of the Net-Zero Industry Act, notably with respect to innovating and scaling up the manufacturing capacity of hydrogen technologies in the EU.

#4.c Develop a system to monitor the impact of the delivered trainings on the employability of the participants

The Academy will put in place components to effectively measure and analyse how the training programmes contribute to improving learners' job prospects. The system will help understanding how training enhances skills that increase employability, job retention and career advancement opportunities for participants. To this end, the Academy shall also collect data on participant experience and empowerment, employer's feedback and industry perception, recognition of credentials that can help to showcase industry recognition and ecosystem impact.

Indicative Action Plan and Work Plan

The proposal shall contain a detailed Action Plan to meet the objectives defined above and in the Logical Framework in Annex, and implementing the actions set out therein. The Action Plan shall include a description of the Human Resources allocated by the beneficiary, including a proposal for a Head of the Academy with an appropriate seniority, background and experience.

Additionally, the proposal shall include a detailed Work Plan for the duration of the action, but in particular for the first year.

The beneficiary's proposed plan will be regularly checked, and progress vs the plan confirmed at each reporting milestone (see Section 12.7). Quarterly Project Management Meetings will be held between the EIT and the beneficiary, to which the European Commission will be invited.

Sustainability

The proposal shall explain how the results of the action will be sustained after the end of the action.

Following the Academy Kick-off Meeting, the beneficiary shall submit an "Action plan for financial sustainability" in the inception phase of implementation (as part of the Inception Report – see Section 12.7). In addition, the Academy shall create a strong Financial Sustainability Strategy to be submitted by M3 and include annual Financial Sustainability Reports under deliverables.

3 Expected results (impact, outcome, output)

The expected impact and result shall be in line with the EIT's Impact Framework 2021-2027 and EIT's Key Performance Indicators based on EIT Governing Board Decision 08/2022.

On the level of the European Hydrogen Academy activities, the overall and specific objectives, the expected results and activities are described in **Annex I – Logical Framework Matrix**.

4 Available budget

The available grant budget for this action is **EUR 4 900 000.00.**

We reserve the right not to award (all of) the available funds, depending on the proposal received and the results of the evaluation.

5 Timetable and deadlines

The indicative timeline of the submission and evaluation procedure is the following:

Key dates	Date and time or indicative period
Launch of Invitation to submit a proposal	29 January 2026
Call opening for proposal submission	12 February 2026
Deadline for submission of the proposal	**11 March 2026 (17.00 Brussels time)**
Evaluation period	11 March – 30 April 2026
Starting date of the action (fixed)	**1 May 2026**
Grant award decision by EIT Director	May 2026
Information on evaluation result to the applicant(s)	May 2026
Grant Agreement signature	**May 2026**

6 Admissibility and documents

The proposal must be submitted by one or more of the KIC Legal Entities, invited for this Invitation. For further information, please refer to Section 7.1.

The proposal must be submitted **within the Invitation deadline** (see timetable in Section 5 above).

The proposal must be submitted electronically via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (as an action by invitation (named Beneficiaries and GA)). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

The proposal (including the annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided inside the Submission System (NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

Please note that not using the correct template or not complying with the instructions therein (*e.g. font size limit, deletion of instructions, etc*) may lead to the inadmissibility of your proposal. Furthermore, to ensure a proper evaluation of your project the appropriate sections of the template must be filled in.

The proposal must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required annex and supporting document:

- **Application Form Part A:** contains administrative information about the participant(s) and the summarised budget for the project *(to be filled in directly on the Funding and Tender Portal)*
- **Application form Part B:** contains the technical description of the project, including a task allocation of the project team (template to be downloaded from the Funding and Tender Portal , completed, assembled and re-uploaded to the Funding and Tender Portal)
- **Mandatory annex and supporting documents** (templates available to be downloaded from the Funding and Tender Portal, completed, assembled and re-uploaded to the Funding and Tender Portal):
  - detailed budget table/calculator.

Please note that the amounts entered into the summarised budget table (filled in directly online) must correspond to the amounts calculated in the detailed budget table. In case of discrepancies, the amounts in the online summarised budget table will prevail.

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants (only in case the proposal is submitted by a consortium). Moreover, you will have to confirm that the information in the application is **correct and complete** and that the participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, exclusion, financial and operational capacity, etc). Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be **readable**, **accessible and printable**.

Proposal is limited to maximum **70 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc*).

Language: You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application.

For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the Online Manual.

7 Eligibility

7.1 Eligible participants

Article 198(f) of the EU Financial Regulation allows that a grant may be awarded without a call for proposals for activities with specific characteristics that require a particular type of body on account of its technical competence, its high degree of specialisation or its administrative powers (on condition that the activities concerned do not fall within the scope of a call for proposals).

In accordance with the Annual Work Programme 2026 of the EIT, **this invitation is therefore addressed to the Legal Entities of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th wave KICs**, as follows:

- KICLegal Entity of InnoEnergy,
- KICLegal Entity of 28Digital,
- KICLegal Entity of Climate KIC,
- KIC Legal Entity of EIT Health,
- KIC Legal Entity of EIT RawMaterials,
- KIC Legal Entity of EIT Food,
- KIC Legal Entity of EIT Manufacturing[11],
- KIC Legal Entity of EIT Urban Mobility,
- KIC Legal Entity of EIT Culture & Creativity.

Should the currently ongoing PA or MoC of one or more KICs expire during the implementation of the action, this does not prevent the awarded KIC(s) to finalise the activities in line with the Grant Agreement.

The EIT expects to receive only one proposal submitted

- **by more KIC Legal Entities in a consortium**[12]: in this case, besides the KIC Legal Entity acting as coordinator, other KIC Legal Entities may participate in the proposal as applicants (and will be co-beneficiaries in the grant agreement),
- **or by one KIC Legal Entity.**

In case more than one proposal is received from the KIC Legal Entities, all eligible proposals will be evaluated.

The proposal may also include affiliated entities (e.g. Co-Location Centres of KICs), associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions, etc *(see section 13 and see Model Grant Agreement provisions)*. Exceptionally, upon due justification, the proposal may include further beneficiaries whose participation is necessary for the action.

[11] The award of any grant to EIT Manufacturing is conditional upon the positive resolution of the ongoing legal procedures. Until that, EIT Manufacturing may participate in the proposal as an associated partner with no funding and no imminent activities.

[12] In this invitation, any reference to an "applicant" shall also mean a reference to "more applicants forming a consortium".

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must be registered in the Participant Register — before submitting the proposal — and have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, they will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible (with the exception of self-employed persons, i.e. sole traders, where the company does not have legal personality separate from that of the natural person).

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons.

EU bodies — EU bodies can NOT be part of the consortium.

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'[13]. Please note that if the action will be implemented by the members, they should also participate (either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities, otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (e.g. entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)[14]). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

For more information, see Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment.

7.2 Eligible activities

The application will only be considered eligible if its content corresponds to the activities described in Section 2 above.

8 Ethics and values

The project must comply with the highest ethical standards and integrity and with applicable EU, international and national law.

[13] For the definitions, see Articles 190(2) and 200(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.
[14] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map.

The beneficiaries must pay particular attention to the principle of proportionality, the right to privacy, the right to the protection of personal data, the right to non-discrimination, the need to ensure protection of the environment and high levels of human health protection.

They must respect human rights, environmental legislation applicable in the countries where the action is taking place and internationally agreed core labour standards (e.g. the ILO core labour standards, conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining, elimination of forced and compulsory labour, elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, and the abolition of child labour).

They must respect the right to the physical and mental integrity of a person (including no physical abuse or punishment, threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment and verbal abuse, as well as other forms of intimidation). Such incidents (if any) must be reported to the granting authority within 30 days of when the beneficiary learned about them.

Any form of conflict of interest, bribery or corruption is prohibited under this grant. Project tasks must be implemented in a transparent and objective way, in the sole interest of the project and avoiding any conflicts of interest. Beneficiaries must not give or receive (or promise or agree to) any gift, gratuity, commission or consideration of any kind as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from performing any act relating to the project or for showing favour or disfavour to any person in relation to the project. They must comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption.

A project involving ethics issues will have to undergo an ethics review to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific ethics rules (which become part of the Grant Agreement in the form of ethics deliverables, e.g. ethics committee opinions/notifications/authorisations required under national or EU law).

9 Financial and operational capacity and exclusion

9.1 Financial and operational capacity

As stated in Section 7.1, this invitation is addressed to KIC Legal Entities as particular type of bodies in accordance with Article 198(f) of the EU Financial Regulation, and they are, in principle, considered to have sufficient financial and operational capacity to carry out the action.

Financial capacity

By submitting the proposal(s), the KIC(s) confirm(s) that they have stable and sufficient financial resources to successfully implement the proposals in which they participate.

If a KIC is participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

In accordance with Article 27 of the Horizon Europe Regulation, the financial capacity shall be verified only for the Coordinator and only if the requested funding is equal or greater than EUR 500 000.

At the proposal submission stage, the Coordinator will be asked to confirm that the organisation has carried out a self-check of the financial capacity of the organisation through the financial self-check tool[15] or has been covered by a financial viability check for an EU project for the last closed financial year.

If, before the award decision, the beneficiary's financial viability is assessed as "weak" or "insufficient", further information may be required and further measure(s) may be applied:

- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities;
- the financial capacity of the applicant may be structurally guaranteed by another legal entity/ies;
- prefinancing paid in instalments;
- the granting authority may propose no prefinancing;
- the activities may be subject to additional monitoring and reporting based on an action plan;
- the granting authority may request that the applicant is replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

Evidence:

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents the applicant must upload in the Participant Register (*e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc).* The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years, etc. If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

Operational capacity

By submitting the proposal(s), the KIC(s) confirm(s) that they have the experience, know-how, qualifications and operational resources (human, technical and other) to successfully implement the proposal(s).

If a KIC is participating in several grant agreements, it must have sufficient operational capacity to implement them in parallel.

If, in case of doubt, it is necessary to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant, the granting authority may request supporting documents, such as:

- information on the staffing situation of the applicant;
- profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the activities,
- description of the participants in the grant agreement;
- activity reports of last year(s);
- information and list of other projects implemented.

[15] https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do

9.2 Exclusion

An applicant which is subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or is in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate[16]:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);

- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);

- guilty of grave professional misconduct [17] (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);

- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);

- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);

- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation 2988/95 (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);

- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);

[16] See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

[17] 'Professional misconduct' includes, in particular, the following: violation of ethical standards of the profession; wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility; breach of generally accepted professional ethical standards; false declarations/misrepresentation of information; participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition; violation of IPR; attempting to influence decision-making processes by taking advantage, through misrepresentation, of a conflict of interests, or to obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain an advantage; incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence or similar activities contrary to the EU values where negatively affecting or risking to affect the performance of a legal commitment.

– intentionally and without proper justification resisted[29][18] an investigation, check or audit carried out by an EU authorising officer (or their representative or auditor), OLAF, the EPPO, or the European Court of Auditors.

An applicant will also be rejected if it turns out that[19]:

– during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information;

– they were previously involved in the preparation of the invitation and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

Evidence:

- Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH)[20].

- Before the time of the signature of the grant agreement, the EIT may request **appropriate evidence that the beneficiary is not in one of the exclusion situations referred to in Article 138(1) of the EU Financial Regulation:** e.g. a recent extract from the judicial record for the KIC CEO and recent certificates issued by the competent authority/ies of the country of establishment of the KIC Legal Entity (KIC LE) (e.g. certificate from the registry in which the KIC LE is registered, tax certificate, social security certificate)[21]. (This obligation can be waived in the cases indicated in Article 139(4) of the EU Financial Regulation).

10 Evaluation and award procedure

The proposal will have to follow a single-stage submission procedure.

It will be checked against the formal requirements (admissibility) and then evaluated by an **evaluation committee (assisted by an independent external expert)** for eligibility, operational capacity and award criteria.

If successful, applicants will be invited for **grant agreement preparation**.

[18] Resisting an investigation, check or audit' means carrying out actions with the goal or effect of preventing, hindering or delaying the conduct of any of the activities needed to perform the investigation, check or audit, such as refusing to grant the necessary access to its premises or any other areas used for business purposes, concealing or refusing to disclose information or providing false information.

[19] See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.

[20] Except when such declarations have already been submitted for the purposes of another award procedure, provided that the situation has not changed and that the time that has elapsed since the issuing date of the declarations does not exceed one year (Article 139(1) of the EU Financial Regulation.

[21] Article 139(3) of the EU Financial Regulation

No commitment for funding — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding, as various legal checks need to be completed and confirmed before grant award: legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, etc.

Grant preparation will involve a dialogue in order to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information from the applicant side. It may also include adjustments to the proposal to address recommendations and/or conditions of the evaluation committee or other concerns. Compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant.

If the applicant believes that the evaluation procedure was flawed, a complaint can be submitted following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter. Please note that notifications which have not been opened within 10 days after sending will be considered to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from opening/access (see also Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions).

11 Award criteria

The award criteria for this invitation are as follows:

	Criteria	Maximum score
1. Relevance	- Adequacy, clarity and consistency of the proposal; - General objectives and the extent to which they address the objectives of the Invitation and the EIT; - Needs analysis and specific objectives; - Complementarity with other actions and innovation, synergies with other EU and Member States programmes, European added value	40
2. Quality	**Project design and implementation:** - Technical quality of the proposal; - Methodology for implementing the project (concept and methodology; project management, quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation; risk management); - Feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; cost effectiveness and financial management (value for money) - Quality of the work plan and work packages	20
	Project teams, staff and experts and cooperation arrangements: - Quality of the project team; - Quality of the outside resources; - Appropriate procedures and problem-solving mechanisms	20
3. Impact	- Ambition and expected long-term impact of results; - Impact for EU Member States and non-EU countries;	20

	- Appropriate communication and dissemination strategy for ensuring visibility, sustainability and long-term impact after EIT funding ends; - Coherence with the EIT Education agenda and the EIT Impact Framework	
Total		100

The following indicative scale will be used for the assessment:

1. RELEVANCE (max. 40 points):

- 0 - 8: Fail - Proposal does not comply with the European Hydrogen Academy objectives and is inadequate
- 9 - 16: Poor – Proposal properly implements some of the Invitation requirements, but there are inherent weaknesses requiring its full redesign
- 17 – 28: Fair – Proposal properly implements most of the Invitation requirements, but there are significant weaknesses that need to be addressed prior to granting the Award
- 29 - 36: Good – Proposal properly implements all the Invitation requirements with several minor weaknesses which are not critical for the European Hydrogen Academy implementation.
- 37 - 40: Excellent – Proposal properly implements all the Invitation requirements with no weaknesses identified

2. QUALITY (max. 20 points on Project design and implementation + 20 points on Project teams, staff and experts and cooperation arrangements):

- 0 - 4: Fail - Proposal quality (Project design and implementation / Project teams, staff and experts and cooperation arrangements) is inadequate
- 5 - 8: Poor – Proposal quality (Project design and implementation / Project teams, staff and experts and cooperation arrangements) is somewhat adequate but contain inherent weaknesses requiring its full redesign
- 9 – 14: Fair – Proposal quality (Project design and implementation / Project teams, staff and experts and cooperation arrangements) is adequate but have significant weaknesses that need to be addressed prior to granting the Award
- 15 - 18: Good – Proposal quality (Project design and implementation / Project teams, staff and experts and cooperation arrangements) is fully adequate with a few minor weaknesses which are not critical for the implementation
- 19 - 20: Excellent – Proposal quality (Project design and implementation / Project teams, staff and experts and cooperation arrangements) is fully adequate with no weaknesses identified

3. IMPACT (max. 20 points):

- 0 - 4: Fail - Proposal impact is inadequate
- 5 - 8: Poor – Proposal impact is somewhat adequate but contain inherent weaknesses requiring its full redesign
- 9 – 14: Fair – Proposal impact is adequate but have significant weaknesses that need to be addressed prior to granting the Award
- 15 - 18: Good – Proposal impact is fully adequate with a few minor weaknesses which are not critical for the implementation
- 19 - 20: Excellent – Proposal quality is fully adequate with no weaknesses identified

12 Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreement

After passing the evaluation, the project will be invited for grant preparation, where the selected applicant will be asked to prepare the Grant Agreement together with the EIT Programme Officer.

The Grant Agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on Portal Reference Documents.

12.1 Starting date and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (Data Sheet, point 1).

Unless differently requested by the applicant and agreed by the granting authority, **the starting date of the action will be fixed to 1 May 2026.**

Project duration: 36 months

Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment.

12.2 Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters (maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc) will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (Data Sheet, point 3 and Article 5).

For the **maximum grant amount**, see Section 3 above. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The **project budget** will consist of the grant and the beneficiary's own contribution. The beneficiary of the grant shall contribute with its own financial resources to the launch of the Academy and the objectives and actions. **The contribution from the beneficiary should amount to at least 34% of the total project budget.**

The costs incurred will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement (up to 66%), which will be calculated based on the grant awarded and the project budget.

The grant will be a budget-based mixed actual cost grant (actual costs, with unit cost and flat-rate elements). This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and costs that

were *actually* incurred for your project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs and flat-rates, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement *(see Article 6 and Annex 2 and 2a)*.

The grant may produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs).

Moreover, please be aware that the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the Grant Agreement *(e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc)*.

12.3 Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 3, Article 6 and Annex 2)*.

Budget categories for this Invitation:

- A. Personnel costs
  - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
  - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
  - C.1 Travel and subsistence
  - C.2 Equipment
  - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- D. Other cost categories
  - D.1 Financial support to third parties
- E. Indirect costs

Specific cost eligibility conditions for this Invitation:

- personnel costs:
  - SME owner/natural person unit cost[22]: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit cost[23]: Yes
- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties: allowed for grants and prizes; maximum amount per third party is EUR 60 000, unless a higher amount is required because the objective of the action would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult to achieve and this is duly justified in the Application Form
- indirect cost flat-rate: **7%** of the total eligible direct costs, categories A-D, except volunteer costs and exempted specific cost categories if any.

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[22] Commission Decision of 30 July 2024 amending Decision C(2020)7115 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2024) 5328).

[23] Commission Decision of 26 July 2023 amending Commission Decision C(2021)35 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework.

- VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:
  - in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
  - kick off meeting: costs for kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
  - project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are eligible
  - other ineligible costs: No

12.4 Eligibility of direct and indirect costs

'Direct costs' are specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action as described under eligible activities in the relevant chapters of this invitation and as presented in the work packages of the proposals, and which can therefore be directly booked to it.

They are:

- either cost that have been caused in full by the activities of the action;
- or costs that have been caused in full by the activities of several actions (projects), the attribution of which to a single action can, and has been, directly measured (i.e., not attributed indirectly via an allocation key, a cost driver, or a proxy).

'Indirect costs' are costs that cannot be identified as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action. In practice, they are costs whose link to the action cannot be (or has not been) measured directly, but only by means of cost drivers or a proxy (i.e. parameters that apportion the total indirect costs (overheads) among the different activities of the beneficiary).

Notwithstanding the key importance for the operations of the KIC, the costs of top governance (Supervisory Board or equivalent) and KIC management (C-level staff) cannot be claimed as direct costs (regardless of the cost category), even if top governance and C-level staff perform activities directly linked to the performance of the action.

Similarly, the following costs of indirect nature cannot be claimed by the KIC LE and entities associated to the KIC LE (CLCs etc.) as direct costs: office costs (utilities, maintenance, telecommunication, licences, etc.), office supplies (furniture, stationery, etc.), corporate finance incl. bookkeeping, HR-related costs (incl. recruitment costs), IT equipment (laptops, computers, monitors, mobile phones, etc.), postage, etc.

12.5 Financial support to third parties

Financial support to third parties involves funding provided by the beneficiary (i.e. the KIC LE) to a recipient that is not a party to the grant agreement. Financial support to third parties includes sub-grants (financial support to third parties, Article 6.2.D.1 (a) of the GA); and financial support in the form of prizes (Article 6.2.D.1 (b) of the GA).

As a general rule, financial support should be awarded to entities established in SMP eligible countries[24].

Within this Invitation, the maximum amount of financial support to third parties should not exceed EUR 60,000.00 (unless a higher subgrant amount is needed, because otherwise the objective of the action would be impossible or overly difficult to achieve, and agreed with the granting authority).

Your project application must clearly specify why financial support to third parties is needed, how it will be managed and provide a list of the different types of activities for which a third party may receive financial support, incl. maximum support amount, criteria for calculating the amount of the support, type of entities that will be supported, criteria and procedures for giving the support, payment arrangements. The proposal must also clearly describe the results to be obtained.

12.6 No double funding

There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget. In accordance with Article 191 of the EU Financial Regulation concerning the principle of non-cumulative award and prohibition of double funding, **each action may give rise to the award of only one grant from the EU budget to any one beneficiary. In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the EU budget.**

12.7 Reporting and payment arrangements

The reporting and payment arrangements will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (Data Sheet, point 4 and Article 21 and 22).

Payment of the grant will be made in **one pre-financing payment, two interim payments** and a **final payment (the balance)**. The aim of the pre-financing is to provide the beneficiary with a float. The pre-financing remains the property of the EU until the payment of the balance.

The following preliminary payment and reporting scheme is foreseen under this grant:

	When	Requirements	Reporting period
Pre-financing payment (app. 50%)	Within 30 days from entry into force / financial guarantee (whichever is the latest).	No contribution to the Mutual Insurance Mechanism will be retained from the prefinancing payment. A pre-financing guarantee may be required from the beneficiary, based on the result of the financial capacity assessment.	
Inception Report	Within 15 days following the Academy Kick-off Meeting.	The **Inception Report** will include: - summary of the issues discussed at the Academy Kick-off meeting, - an updated Work Plan for the first year, and	

[24] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/smp/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_smp_en.pdf

		- an Action Plan for financial sustainability as attachment to the Inception Report.	
First Progress Report	Within 30 days after the end of the reporting period.	The **progress report** shall include a technical part only (template will be provided).	1-6 months
Second Progress Report	Within 30 days after the end of the reporting period.	The **progress report** shall include a technical part only (template will be provided).	7-12 months
First Interim Report	Within 60 days following the end of the reporting period.	The **Interim Report** shall include a technical part and a financial part (i.e. individual and consolidated financial statements, explanation on the use of resources, certificates on the financial statements (CFS) if required, etc).	1-12 months
First Interim payment	Within 90 days from receiving the First Interim Report.	Based on the declared actual costs, with a ceiling that the pre-financing and the interim payments together cannot be more than 90%.	
Third Progress Report	Within 30 days after the end of the reporting period	The **progress report** shall include a technical part only.	13-18 months
Fourth Progress Report	Within 30 days after the end of the reporting period	The **progress report** shall include a technical part only.	19-24 months
Second Interim Report	Within 60 days following the end of the reporting period.	The **Second Interim Report** shall include a technical part and a financial part (i.e. individual and consolidated financial statements, explanation on the use of resources, certificates on the financial statements (CFS) if required, etc).	13-24 months
Second Interim Payment	Within 90 days from receiving the Second Interim Report.	Based on the declared actual costs, with a ceiling that the pre-financing and the interim payments together cannot be more than 90%.	
Fifth Progress Report	Within 30 days after the end of the reporting period	The **progress report** shall include a technical part only.	25-30 months
Final report	Within 60 days following the end of the reporting period.	**Final Report** shall include a technical part and a financial part (i.e. individual and consolidated financial statements, explanation on the use of resources, certificates on the financial statements (CFS) if required, etc).	25-36 months
Final payment (app. 10%)	Within 90 days from receiving the Final Report.	The EIT will calculate the final EIT grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, EIT will	

		ask the beneficiary/ies to pay back the difference (recovery).	

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if one of the consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset — in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement (see Article 22).

Please also note that the coordinator is responsible for keeping records on all the work done and the costs declared.

12.8 Prefinancing guarantee

If a prefinancing guarantee is required, it will be set during grant preparation and will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (Data Sheet, point 4). In this case, the pre-financing guarantee will be required **for 5 % of the pre-financing**, unless the granting authority decides differently for justified reasons.

The guarantee should be in euro and issued by an approved bank/financial institution established in an EU Member State. If you are established in a non-EU country and would like to provide a guarantee from a bank/financial institution in your country, please contact us (this may be exceptionally accepted, if it offers equivalent security).

Amounts blocked in bank accounts will NOT be accepted as a financial guarantee.

In case of a multi-beneficiary grant, prefinancing guarantees are normally requested from the coordinator, for the consortium. They must be provided during grant preparation, in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a guarantee from a third party.

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement (Article 23).

12.9 Certificates

Depending on the type of action, size of grant amount and type of beneficiaries, the submission of different certificates might be requested. The types, schedules and thresholds for each certificate will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet, point 4 and Article 24)*.

12.10 Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be fixed in the Grant Agreement *(Data Sheet point 4.4 and Article 22).*

For **beneficiaries**, it is limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary (if any)*

up to their maximum grant amount.

The action may include **affiliated entities**. In that case, as a rule, declarations on joint and several liability will be requested by the EIT, if the budget of the affiliated entity is higher than the budget of the beneficiary concerned, with the following exceptions:

a. If the total budget of the affiliated entity is lower than EUR 100,000,
b. If the affiliated entity is a public body.

The beneficiary shall collect the Declaration on joint and several liability from the affiliated entities falling into the above situation and submit these to the EIT for the deadline indicated by the EIT.

12.11 Provisions concerning the project implementation

Ethics rules: see Model Grant Agreement (Article 14 and Annex 5)

IPR rules: *see Model Grant Agreement (Article 16 and Annex 5):*

- list of background: No
- rights of use on results: Yes
- access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations: No

Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding: *see Model Grant Agreement (Article 17 and Annex 5):*

- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

If the applicant considers that the communication, dissemination or visibility obligations under the Grant Agreement would harm the safety of persons involved in the action, please fill out the alternative arrangements section in the Application Form, making sure to NOT disclose the EU grant and source of funding to any third party (including final recipients).

Specific rules for carrying out the action: *see Model Grant Agreement (Article 18 and Annex 5):*

- specific rules for PPI Grants for Procurement: No
- EU restrictive measures: Yes
- specific rules for financial support to third parties: No
- specific rules for blending operations: No

12.12 Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (*Chapter 5*) provides for the measures we may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).

For more information, *see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement*.

13 How to submit an application

All proposals must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

13.1 Submit the proposal (using PIC number)

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the Search Funding & Tenders section.

Submit your proposal in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and the summarised budget for the proposal. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the proposal. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Annexes (see Section 6). Upload them as PDF file (single or multiple depending on the slots). Excel upload is sometimes possible, depending on the file type.

The proposal must keep to the page limits (see Section 6); excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the right category in the Submission System otherwise the proposal might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The proposal must be submitted before the invitation deadline (see Section 5). After this deadline, the system is closed and proposals can no longer be submitted.

Once the proposal is submitted, a confirmation e-mail (with date and time of your application) will be sent. If no confirmation e-mail is received, it means that the proposal has NOT been submitted. If this is believed to be a fault in the Submission System, a complaint via the IT Helpdesk webform should be immediately filed, explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the proposal (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the Online Manual. The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System. In case of questions and clarifications, applicants are encouraged to review the existing documents listed in the Introduction chapter or the guidance below.

13.2 Contact

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the IT Helpdesk.

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address at the latest 10 days before the submission deadline, indicate clearly the reference of the invitation and topic to which your question relates (see cover page): Diana.Holovacsko@eit.europa.eu

14 Transparency

In accordance with Article 38 of the EU Financial Regulation, information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the EIT website.

This includes:

- beneficiary names
- beneficiary addresses
- the purpose for which the grant was awarded
- the maximum amount awarded.

The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

15 Processing of personal data

The reply to the Invitation involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed by the EIT pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data[25]. Any personal data requested in accordance with the Invitation will be processed solely for that purpose by the EIT. The EIT privacy statement for the management of grants is available at:

https://eit.europa.eu/data-protection

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System by the Commission, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in Article 138 and 143 of the EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509 (for more information see the Privacy Statement on:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/data-protection-public-procurement-procedures_en.

[25] Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC

Annex:

Annex 1: Logical Framework template – see below.
Annex 2: Application Form Template (Part A and B) – link in Funding & Tenders portal.
Annex 3: Detailed Budget Table Template – link in Funding & Tenders portal.

Annex – Logical Framework and KPIs

	Intervention Logic	Interim targets	Targets	Means of Verification	Baseline	Assumptions
Overall Objective	The overall objective of the action is to launch and implement the European Net Zero Hydrogen Academy to support the upskilling and reskilling by education and training providers in EU Member States, of the workforce required in the EU for, among others, prospecting, extracting, developing, producing, installing, maintaining, repairing, re-using and recycling hydrogen technologies, with a strong focus on employees in EU SMEs.	Upskilling and reskilling 15.000 learners by M18 65.000 direct learners across the EU by M24	Upskilling and reskilling at least 100.000 individual direct learners across the EU hydrogen value chain and related industry within three years (M36) from the launch of the Academy (starting from the signature of the grant agreement)			

Specific Objectives	Activity #1.a: Develop learning courses, content and learning and training materials and ensure their continuous update and improvement The content and duration of the courses shall reflect the upskilling and reskilling demand of industry in the hydrogen value chain	Develop at least 13 learning courses fully operational for upscaling in volume by M12 Develop at least 26 learning courses fully operational for upscaling in volume by M24	Develop 40 learning courses within 3 years (M36) from the launch of the Academy (starting from the signature of the grant agreement) Out of these, at least 10 courses should be newly developed All courses will issue a certificate of course participation	
	Activity #1.b Make available a learning platform	Make available a reliable ICT platform (or make use of an adequate existing one) that can be scaled-up to meet the increased demand for these skills by M18	Fully fledge learning platform with all the courses	

	Activity #2.a and #2.b: Build a network of education and training providers in the Member States to deploy the learning programmes, content and learning and training materials developed Support the deployment of the learning programmes, content and materials developed by the Academy by the establishment of a network of education and training providers in Member States. This shall include training the trainers and establishing a learning platform	At least 18 trainers trained to roll-out the program to the targeted learners by M6 At least 36 trainers trained by M18 At least 75 trainers trained by M24	At least 110 trainers trained within 3 years (M36) from the launch of the Academy (starting from the signature of the grant agreement)	

	Activity # 2.c: Certification of education and training providers	A min of 33 education and training providers fully certified to train workers across the hydrogen value chain by M18 A min of 66 education and training providers fully certified to train workers across the hydrogen value chain by M24	At least 100 education and training providers fully certified to train workers within 3 years (M36) from the launch of the Academy (starting from the signature of the grant agreement), ensuring maximum relevant geographic spread	

	Activity #3.a: Set up quality assurance and engagement systems for course delivery and learner certification model Activity #3.b: Put in place certification of learning through digital credentials, including micro-credentials, for the Academy learning courses	Methodology for quality assurance and engagement systems for course delivery and learner certification model explained in the First Progress report At least 5 courses certified and able to issue credentials to learners by M24	Quality assurance and engagement systems for course delivery fully operational and delivering. Learner certification model fully applied. All courses will build and issue credentials	

	Activity #4.a: Perform Skills Intelligence actions, building on and integrating the data and the insights gathered in the context of the Blueprint and the Centre of Vocational Excellence projects referred to above	Include in the first progress report an explanation of the methodology used for skills intelligence Provide to the EC a PPT describing such methodology, by M12 Include a section of update on skills intelligence results in each subsequent progress report	Collaboration in place with European Skills Observatory and ESCO Thought leadership articles and a report based on the results of skills intelligence.	
	Activity #4.b: Promotion and communication	Communication strategy explained at First Progress report	Communication strategy fully implemented	

	Activity #4.c Monitor impact of trainings on employability	Methodology for the monitoring explained in the First Progress report	Monitoring report to be added to the Final report	

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- **Don't wait until the end —** Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute technical problems. Problems due to last minute submissions (e.g. congestion, etc) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult the Portal** Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call and topic updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all participants accept to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the Portal Terms & Conditions.
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners must be registered in the Participant Register. The participant identification code (PIC) (one per participant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Consortium roles** When setting up your consortium, you should think of organisations that help you reach objectives and solve problems.

  The roles should be attributed according to the level of participation in the project. Main participants should participate as **beneficiaries** or **affiliated entities**; other entities can participate as associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions. **Associated partners** and third parties giving in-kind contributions should bear their own costs (they will not become formal recipients of EU funding). **Subcontracting** should normally constitute a limited part and must be performed by third parties (not by one of the beneficiaries/affiliated entities). Subcontracting going beyond 30% of the total eligible costs must be justified in the application.
- **Coordinator —** In multi-beneficiary grants, the beneficiaries participate as consortium (group of beneficiaries). They will have to choose a coordinator, who will take care of the project management and coordination and will represent the consortium towards the granting authority. In mono-beneficiary grants, the single beneficiary will automatically be coordinator.
- **Affiliated entities** — Applicants may participate with affiliated entities (i.e. entities linked to a beneficiary which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries, but do not sign the grant and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves). They will get a part of the grant money and must therefore comply with all the call conditions and be validated (just like beneficiaries); but they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).
- **Associated partners** — Applicants may participate with associated partners (i.e. partner organisations which participate in the action but without the right to get grant money). They participate without funding and therefore do not need to be validated.
- **Consortium agreement** — For practical and legal reasons it is recommended to set up internal arrangements that allow you to deal with exceptional or unforeseen circumstances (in all cases, even if not mandatory under the Grant Agreement). The consortium agreement also gives you the possibility to redistribute the grant money according to your own consortium-internal principles and parameters (for instance, one beneficiary can reattribute its grant money to another beneficiary). The consortium agreement thus allows you to customise the EU grant to the needs inside your consortium and can also help to protect you in case of disputes.

- **Balanced project budget —** Grant applications must ensure a balanced project budget and sufficient other resources to implement the project successfully *(e.g. own contributions, income generated by the action, financial contributions from third parties, etc)*. You may be requested to lower your estimated costs, if they are ineligible (including excessive).

- **Completed/ongoing projects —** Proposals for projects that have already been completed will be rejected; proposals for projects that have already started will be assessed on a case-by-case basis (in this case, no costs can be reimbursed for activities that took place before the project starting date/proposal submission).

- **No-profit rule—** Grant may give a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs).

- **No cumulation of funding/no double funding—** It is strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget (except under 'EU Synergies actions'). Outside such Synergies actions, any given action may receive only ONE grant from the EU budget and cost items may under NO circumstances be declared under two EU grants. If you would like to nonetheless benefit from different EU funding opportunities, projects must be designed as different actions, clearly delineated and separated for each grant (without overlaps).

- **Combination with EU operating grants** Combination with EU operating grants is possible, if the project remains outside the operating grant work programme and you make sure that cost items are clearly separated in your accounting and NOT declared twice *(see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, art 6.2.E)*.

- **Multiple proposals —** Please note that there are restrictions on the number of proposals that can be submitted under this call *(see section 0)*.

  Moreover, if there are several proposals for *very similar* projects, only one application will be accepted and evaluated; the applicants will be asked to withdraw the others (or they will be rejected).

- **Resubmission —** Proposals may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission.

- **Rejection —** By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in this this Call Document (and the documents it refers to). Proposals that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire proposal will be rejected.

- **Cancellation —** There may be circumstances which may require the cancellation of the call. In this case, you will be informed via a call or topic update. Please note that cancellations are without entitlement to compensation.

- **Language —** The language of this call is English. The grant agreement will be in English (and, for parts submitted by you, in the language of the call). Proposals that are not submitted in the language of the call must be accompanied by a professional/certified translation in the language of the call. Full applications must be submitted in the same language as the concept notes.

Electronically signed on 29/01/2026 22:44 (UTC+01) in accordance with Article 11 of Commission Decision (EU) 2021/2121