EIT Community Supernovas Rocket Up 2025 Call

Call Opens: Monday, 10th February 2025

Deadline: Monday, 31th March 2025, 12:00 CEST

Publication Date: 10th February 2025

Contents

1. Introduction to the EIT Strategic Synergies Cluster

The EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021-2027 sets the strategic direction, priorities and objectives of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (EIT KICs).

One specific objective in the new EIT SIA 2021-2027 is to establish and foster appropriate synergies and complementarities between EIT activities and other relevant Union, national and regional initiatives, instruments, and programmes. This will help ensure consistency with Union priorities and commitments, including the European Green Deal, the Recovery Plan for Europe, the European Strategy for data, the SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe, and the New Industrial Strategy for Europe.

To realise such ambitions, the EIT and the EIT KICs have established the Strategic Synergies Cluster of activities, to strengthen EU's innovation and entrepreneurial capacity and integrate into and engage with innovation ecosystems. By doing so, the EIT KICs aim at becoming real engines of impact and support the realisation of a carbon-neutral, digital, circular, and inclusive European society.

The EIT Strategic Synergies Cluster includes four key initiatives co-designed and co-created by the EIT KICs with their innovation ecosystems: EIT Community Artificial Intelligence for Europe, EIT Community Circular Economy Collaboration, EIT Community New European Bauhaus, and EIT Community Women Entrepreneurship.

The call for proposals below sits within EIT Community Women Entrepreneurship, so called EIT Community Supernovas.

2. EIT Community Supernovas

Strengthening sustainable innovation ecosystems across Europe and beyond is also a main objectives of the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027 (EIT SIA). However, deep tech start-ups in Europe are not utilizing all available talent, as female presence is very limited: only 15% of them are founded or cofounded by women, and only 6% have an all-female founding team. Furthermore, female entrepreneurs raise less funding: across Europe only around 5% of venture capital goes to mixed teams and only 2% to all-female teams. Not surprisingly, female presence in investment committees is very small too, with 85% of them being all-male.

In this context, EIT must step up its contribution to the mission of the EU and involve all talents, increase the participation of women, and foster a swift transfer of the results of research and innovation activities to the market and society, with the aim of increasing innovation capacity across the EU.

With this goal, EIT Community Supernovas aims at:
- Increasing the presence and role of women in the EU deep tech ecosystem, both on the entrepreneurial and the early-stage investment sides.
- Empower women-led deep tech start-ups to maximize their business growth potential.
- Connect women investors to increase their deal flow and boost their role.
- Inspire role models (both entrepreneurial and investor) in the ecosystem, enhancing female visibility.

In the business plan of 2023-2025, Supernovas comprises 5 key activities:

1. <u>Rocket Up</u>: support female-led start-ups grow international through training and mentoring (from market identification to entry).
2. **<u>Women 2 Invest</u>**: support and access to women in the early stage of their careers to early-stage investment funds, by training recent STEAM graduates in the fundamentals of venture investment to help them get an internship on this industry.
3. <u>EIT-EIC Women Leadership Programme</u>: upscale leadership and growth skills to empower women-led high-tech and deep tech start-ups through training, mentoring, and coaching.
4. <u>EIT Women Community of Investors</u>: connect women investors, both with each other to increase their deal flow and boost their role, and with female entrepreneurs where start-ups can have direct access to investment professionals and gender bias can be reduced.
5. <u>Data Room</u>: gather, organize, and showcase data on women-led start-ups supported by the EIT Community. To inspire, monitor and showcase role models across the ecosystem

The aim of this Call for proposals is to identify and work with Start-ups in the **Rocket Up programme** in their operations, products and services for a successful definition and implementation of an entry strategy to a new European market.

3. Rocket Up programme - Activity description

International growth is one key challenge for any start-up, particularly those female-led as they, in general and as for today, have less access to funding and network than their counterparts. Additionally, in Europe, start-ups must go through an internationalisation process earlier than in other regions of the world, as countries are relatively small in terms of population and land extension. Each market launch requires a specific path according not only to the start-up history, characteristics, needs and goals, but also the target country culture, operational and legal framework, among others.

The Rocket Up programme provides a custom-made programme, mixing insightful and inspiring group sessions with hand-picked and exceptional mentors to support the company achieve its objectives in the prioritized destination and achieve faster growth.

The start-up acquires:
- An academic perspective on how to expand internationally,
- Tailored made mentoring with hand-picked business and regional experts,
- Access to respective KIC network and other financial opportunities,
- A network of women founders,
- Contacts at the company's destination,
- Visibility though EIT communication channels.

4. Content and methodology

Rocket-up is a **six-month programme** that focus on the expansion stages identified as critical to differentiating a successful entry strategy. Three parts of the program will follow the structure outlined below:

- **Part 1: Choose your market.** Month 1-3
  Participants work on identifying success factors in their home market, translating them into parameters to measure the potential for new markets, to finally understand their opportunities. This is done taking into account their customer needs, pricing, culture, regulation, competition, among others. Additionally, participants define and execute a validation strategy to corroborate their geographical markets expansion priorities.

- **Part 2: Plan your strategy.** Month 3-6
  The programme reviews important factors for a successful expansion planning, such as product localisation, communication and marketing needs, distribution channels, differences in business cultures, talent recruitment and fundraising for international expansion.

  Start-ups learn how to define their successful entry strategy, understanding best practices in relation with partnerships in target market and defining an implementation path. Finally, the programme also reviews how to repeat the process in future expansions.

The program delivers the support in forms of group sessions, individualized mentoring, and connection to the respective EIT.

- **Lessons**
  Online group sessions to set the academic base on how to expand a company beyond its home borders. The lessons provide a structured perspective, offering valuable insights and real-world examples. These are delivered by growth experts who bring their extensive knowledge and experience to the table.

- **Invited speakers**
  Invited speakers in the fields of entrepreneurship, investment, and technology are invited to bring a wealth of knowledge and practical insights to the programme. The speakers contribute by sharing their expertise, offering real-world case studies, and providing a broader perspective on the challenges and opportunities in the startup ecosystem.

- **Peer-to-peer learning**
  The programme incorporates modules that specifically encourage peer-to-peer learning, where participants can learn from each other. Beyond structured modules, participants have the chance to network and connect with other entrepreneurial women during the sessions. This creates a supportive community where experiences can be shared, and valuable connections can be formed.

- **1:1 mentoring**
  Through a needs and expectation assessment to the selected start-ups, the programme connects the companies with mentors and networking opportunities all around EU. Industry experts are scouted and identified inside and outside the EIT community, so they can fulfil the needs of the selected start-ups, with the aim of providing expert advice on

the selection of the target market, strategy to land, insights on the new ecosystem, connections to potential customers and soft-landing resources.

A total of two mentors are personally matched, as described below:

- **Business expert**: participants are carefully matched with a business expert based on the specific expertise required to address their key needs and challenges. The business mentor, drawing on their extensive experience, provides a customized business perspective (international expansion, finance, strategy, operations, deep tech validation, and venture business).
  This complements and extends what participants have gained from the lessons, offering personalized guidance and support.

- **Regional advisor**: The regional advisor is thoughtfully selected to have expertise on the European region where the startup aims to expand. The advisor provides insights into the local market, helping startups understand the regional dynamics. They assist in identifying potential stakeholders, helping the startup navigate the regional landscape effectively and potentially in establishing connections with relevant contacts.

Additionally, the start-up gets a personalized session with our internationalization experts, to support their go-to-market strategy definition.

5. Operations & financials

The Programme will be held on from September to December 2024. It is organized around the following dates:

Programme activities	Date
Kick-off	May 20th 2025
Group sessions	May – Nov. 2024
Individualized mentoring – Business expert	May – Aug. 2024
Individualized mentoring – Regional expert	Aug. – Nov. 2024
Demo Day	Nov. 18th 2024

The "**Kick-off**" session and the final session, "**Demo Day**," will be held **in person**. All other lessons, invited speaker sessions, peer-to-peer group sessions, as well as both business and regional individualized mentoring sessions, will be conducted **online**.

The programme will kick off in person on **20th May 2025 in Rotterdam**, coinciding with the Upstream Festival, for which participants will receive complimentary tickets.

The final event, Demo Day, where participants will present their international expansion strategies, is scheduled for **18th November 2025 in Helsinki**, during Day 0 of the Slush conference, for which participants will also receive complimentary tickets.

The programme cost is **€16,000 per participant**. Startups based in a European Union country or in a country recognized under the Horizon Europe framework are eligible for sponsorship based on their evaluation scores:

- The top 10 European startups will receive **100% sponsorship (no cost).**
- European startups ranked below the top 10 will receive **75% sponsorship**, reducing the programme cost to **€4,000**.
- Startups based outside Europe are not eligible for EU funding and must cover the full programme fee of **€16,000**.

Attendance at the Kick-off in Rotterdam and Demo Day in Helsinki **is mandatory** for all participating startups. **Startups are responsible for covering their own travel expenses**, including flights and accommodation for both trips.

6. Call dates

The call for applications follows the dates mentioned below:

Stage of the call	Date
Call opens	19ᵗʰ February 2025
Call closes	31ˢᵗ March 2025
1st screening: evaluation of applications Announcement of phase 2 shortlist	14ᵗʰ April 2025
2nd screening: online interview	21ᵗʰ April – 28ᵗʰ April 2025
Communication of selected start-ups	29ᵗʰ April 2025
Formalise agreements	6ᵗʰ May 2025 – 17ᵗʰ May 2025

7. Eligibility criteria for applicants

This call is open to start-ups that meet the following criteria:
- Women-led, which means to have a woman as a founder or CEO;
- The applicant must be a private "legal entity" defined as [SME](#);
- The submitted application is in English language and the female representative has fluent spoken English;
- A team with at least 3 FTE. FTEs are not necessarily connected to monetary compensation;
- Company incorporation date posterior to 31/12/2015;
- With relation with the focus areas of EIT Urban Mobility, EIT Food and/or EIT Manufacturing. These are:
  - EIT Urban Mobility: Active mobility, City logistics, Public realm, Future mobility, Mobility and energy, Urban Air Mobility, Waterway transportation & Water logistics, Connected & Autonomous Vehicles, and Sensors & training data.
  - EIT Food: Alternative proteins, Sustainable agriculture, Targeted nutrition, Sustainable aquaculture, Digital traceability, and Circular food systems.
  - EIT Manufacturing: Flexible production systems, Low environmental footprint systems & circular economy, Digital & collaborative solutions, and Human machine co-working.
- Not involved (as a company) in another acceleration or scale-up programme in 2025 from either EIT Urban Mobility, Food or Manufacturing.
- A preferred (not mandatory) commercial track record of at least 100.000€ in revenues in 2024.

At any time, beneficiaries will be required to avoid any conflict of interest (Appendix A) and comply with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination, equal treatment, and sound financial management.

8. Application process

All applicants to the Call Rocket Up 2025 are required to complete the Application Form through the Rocket Up Awards Platform.

Start-up representatives must register and validate the account if they are accessing the platform for the first time. If the company representative has already created an account, he/she should proceed to log in. Once logged in, the steps are as follows:

1. Start a new application
2. Select Category Rocket Up 2025
3. Follow the application form

During the application all compulsory fields must be filled. Details about the application form, sections and required information are included in *Appendix D – Application form, sections and required information*. Only applications *submitted* before the call deadline will be evaluated.

9. Evaluation phases and criteria

The evaluation of proposals and fit with the programme will be conducted in **three steps**:

1st phase – Admissibility and eligibility check

The proposals will be eligible if they pass the following eligibility criteria explained in section 6. Applications meeting all the formal eligibility requirements will be selected for Phase 2 - Online evaluation.

2nd phase – Online evaluation

Applications are reviewed online by a **panel composed by at least 3 evaluators**, with same weighting of scores.

Each evaluator will have to score each application based on **five standardised criteria** for a maximum of 25 points: **Product and Market** (5 points), **Team** (5 points), **Market** (5 points), **Impact and Sustainability** (5 points) and **Internationalization capacity** (5 points). The average of all scores will give the total score for a given applicant.

Evaluation criteria		Score
1	Product & Innovation	Cutting-edge technology and innovative business models that introduce a new and feasible service or product to the market. Creation of a patent or IP protection. Venture that addresses an EIT Urban Mobility, Food, Manufacturing or Culture and Creativity focus area.	0-5
2	Team	Motivated and diverse team, with background experience and leadership. Degree of women's leadership in the company. Stakeholders' relations: companies, investors, coaches and other partners.	0-5
3	Market	A realistic interpretation of market size, go to market strategies, competition, and differentiation of the product.	0-5

		Short- and long-term objectives, user attraction and retention and sound financial figures.	
4	Impact & Sustainability	Sustainable business models that generate long-term social and environmental benefits, tackling specific challenge areas of the Sustainable Development Goals	0-5
5	Internationalization capacity	Product or service scalability. International experience, diversity, and English level of the team. Potential clients outside home market or multinational. Level of clarity and efficiency of processes.	0-5

Each evaluator underlines the strengths and weaknesses of the start-up and to understand better the potential opportunities and risks. They will rank each criterion according to the following guidelines:

Score	Guidelines	
0	None	The information requested is missing or incomplete
1	Very poor	The information provided is considered irrelevant or inadequate compared to the specific call provisions
2	Poor	The information provided lacks relevant quality and contains significant weaknesses, compared to the specific call provisions
3	Fair	The overall information provided is adequate, however, some aspects are unclearly or insufficiently detailed, compared to the specific call provisions
4	Good	The information provided is adequate with sufficiently outlined details, compared to the specific call provisions
5	Excellent	The information provided is perfectly suitable and outstanding in its details, clarity and coherence, compared to the specific call provisions

Startups will be evaluated in **three different tracks** based on their scope of work: **mobility, food, and manufacturing**, aligning with the focus areas of EIT Urban Mobility, EIT Food, and EIT Manufacturing, as explained above. The **top nine startups** from each track - for a total of 27 companies - will qualify for **Phase 3 – Online Interview**.

Once the three evaluators have completed their assessments, a **Consensus Meeting** will be held to review final scores and produce a brief **evaluation report**. Applicants will be **notified via email** about the outcome of the evaluation.

3rd phase – Online interview

The candidates will pitch their candidacy to join the programme to a **panel composed by 4 jury members.**

Each evaluator will have to score each start-up application based on two standardised criteria for a maximum of 20 points: **Pitch** (10 points), **Overall fit to programme** (10 points). The average of all evaluators scores will give the total score for a given applicant.

Evaluation criteria			Score
1	Pitch	Evaluation of pitch clarity on: - Founding team - Problem and solution fit - Innovativeness - Market validation	0-10

| | | - Business model, pricing and go-to-market strategy
- Partners and traction
- Competition and USP
- Impact and sustainability | |
| 2 | Overall fit to the programme | Merits and fit of start-up to the programme call | 0-10 |

The format of the live pitch will be 5 minutes presentation by the startup and 15 minutes questions from the jury panel. Once the four evaluators have concluded their assessment, a Consensus Meeting is organised to review final scores and produce a final evaluation report.

The **top 16 ranked startups** will be conditionally accepted into the Rocket Up programme. Applicants will be notified via email about the evaluation outcome and must **confirm their participation** within three days of the announcement, in accordance with the conditions outlined in Point 5: Operations and Financials.

- The top 10 European startups will receive 100% EU sponsorship for the programme.
- For European startups ranked 11th to 16th, the programme cost is €4,000 (75% sponsorship).
- If non-European, the full programme cost is €16,000.

Additionally, a balanced distribution among verticals will be prioritized:

- In the top 10, there will be a minimum of three startups per vertical, selected based on their scores within their respective tracks.
- In the final 16, there will be a minimum of four startups per vertical.

Communication of results

Results will be communicated to the email of the start-up representative registered at the AwardForce platform.

- Phase 1 results will be communicated with a rejection letter to non-qualified applicants;
- Phase 2 results will be communicated with a rejection letter and a brief evaluation report to non-qualified applicants; and an invitation to the live pitch for the qualified applicants;
- Phase 3 results will be communicated with a rejection letter and a final evaluation report to non-qualified applicants; and an announcement letter and a final evaluation report to selected start-ups.

Individual scores and comments made by evaluators will remain confidential.

The start-up point of contact for any application deemed inadmissible/ineligible who disputes the ineligibility decision, may appeal. This appeal must be sent to *celeste.regla@eiturbanmobility.eu* within 5 calendar days from the official notification of ineligibility, by identifying and describing the factual errors that according to the applicant invalidate the decision. A final decision on the appeal is taken by EIT Urban Mobility.

10. Successful applications

Successful candidates will receive the support outlined in section 4 and will be required to diligently collaborate to:

- Guarantee the availability of the **woman founder or CEO** to participate in the programme, following the operational set out explained in section 4 & 5
- Sign the legal agreement with EIT Urban Mobility (mandatory to provide when an applicant has been conditionally accepted and before the Rocket Up programme starting date)
- All activities funded by the EIT Community Supernovas must display the special logo of the EIT Community Supernovas in their website (mandatory when an applicant has been conditionally accepted and before the Rocket Up programme starting date);

All beneficiaries funded by the EIT Supernovas must respect the following conditions:

- Avoid any conflict of interest and comply with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and sound financial management (Appendix A).
- Comply with the IPR rules (Appendix B) and the confidentiality and data protection rules (Appendix C).
- Agree to systematic monitoring and review of supported activities by the EIT Communities.

The programme expects that each participant:
- Defines mentoring objectives and structure of sessions with assigned experts in the individualized sessions.
- Attends, be on time and participate actively in all group trainings and the one-to-one mentoring sessions. This includes following our policy of having the camera turned on during all sessions.
- Has prepared the mandatory homework and preparation before each session.
- Provides the documents required for reporting purposes of the activity towards EIT.
- Is a positive ambassador for the programme and participate in the follow up questionnaires proposed by EIT during the year following participation in the programme.
- Participate in person in the Kick-off on May 20th, 2025 in Rotterdam and in the Demo Day on November 18th, 2025 in Helsinki.

To maximize the benefits of the program, the recommended time dedication is of **4 hours per week.**

Accepted start-ups under the EIT Urban Mobility verticals may be granted additional EIT Urban Mobility funding. This process is regulated by the provisions included in the EIT Urban Mobility's Guidance on the fast-track mechanism.

11. Contact details

In case of any questions or inquiries please contact celeste.regla@eiturbanmobility.eu.

Appendix A. Conflict of Interest

The beneficiaries must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the Agreement could be compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life, political or national affinity, economic interest or any other direct or indirect interest ('conflict of interests').

They must formally notify the granting authority without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

The granting authority may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

If a beneficiary breach any of its obligations under this Appendix, the services given may be reduced.

Appendix B. Intellectual property rights

The granting authority does not obtain ownership of the results produced under the action.

'Results' means any tangible or intangible effect of the action, such as data, know-how or information, whatever its form or nature, whether or not it can be protected, as well as any rights attached to it, including intellectual property rights.

Applicants retain full and exclusive ownership of their intellectual property rights.

Appendix C. Confidentiality and personal data protection

The application submission and evaluation process will be done via an online submission management tool by Awards Platform. The sole purpose of the collection of data is to verify the eligibility of the submitted applications and to identify the best companies. Participants will provide name, postal address, and email address ("personal data") only for the purposes related to execution of the call. EIT Urban Mobility will process the submitted material according to the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), handled confidentially. Everybody that reads the applications during the review process is bound by confidentiality agreements.

Participants have the possibility to indicate that EIT Urban Mobility may grant access to parts of their submission to trusted investors and partners.

The organizers and their authorized representatives in the programme undertake to ensure the confidentiality of the ideas and projects presented throughout the programme.

YOUR CONSENT TO THE USE OF SUBMITTABLE AS SUBMISSION AND EVALUATION TOOL: By submitting your application within this challenge you implicitly state your consent to the Terms and Conditions as well as the Privacy policy of EIT Urban Mobility.

YOUR CONSENT TO THE USE OF PERSONAL DATA: By submitting your application within this call you consent that EIT Urban Mobility will collect, transfer, process, store and delete your data in accordance with the aforementioned conditions.

Appendix D. Application form, sections and required information.

Section 0: General information	
Item	**Description**
EIT Community	Select the community that best fits your start-up solution: Urban Mobility, Food, Manufacturing.
Start-up name	Enter the start-up name.
Country	Select the country where your start-up is from. Remember that an eligibility criteria is to be registered in a Member States (MS) of the European Union (EU) including their outermost regions and third countries associated to Horizon Europe (please follow this link for the full list of eligible countries);
Incorporation date	Indicate the incorporation date of your start-up. Remember that an eligibility criteria is to have the company incorporation date posterior to 31/12/2015;
Web	Enter the start-up website address
Pitch Deck	Upload your pitch deck. Pitch Decks are expected to cover the following content: • The problem you are solving (and for whom) • Your innovative solution (ideally with evidence of product-market-fit), its degree of innovativeness and stage of development (MVP, prototype, product launched) • Your market opportunity: market size, potential and scalability of your solution. • Business model, pricing, and go-to-market strategy • Partners and traction • Competition and USP (including IP & patents if any) • Financial projections • Funding needs and fit with the Call • Team PDF format is preferred. Max. 15 slides
Motivation	Explain why you want to enter in this programme and what do you expect to achieve.
Contact source	Select the how you found out about the programme.

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Section 1: Product & Innovation		
Item	Description	Score
Problem	Short description of the problem you are solving for your customers or potential customers.	5
Solution	Short description of your product/service.	
Innovativeness	Describe what makes you different. Incorporate here if you have any patent or IP protection.	

Section 2: Team		
Item	Description	Score
Nº of Full-time equivalent (FTE)	Select how many FTEs are in your team.	5
Skills and experience	Describe the skills and experience of your team and provide LinkedIn profiles.	
Stakeholders	Describe your relations with investors, coaches, other companies, and partners.	

Section 3: Market		
Item	Description	Score
Target customer	Describe your audience, different customer segments, and a specific use case.	5
Competition and Unique selling proposition (USP)	Identify your competitors and explain why your target customers choose you. Highlight the specific impact your solution has on them.	
Go-to-market strategy	Outline how you reach your customers, including the channels used and your pricing model.	
Revenue	Provide your start-up yearly revenues in EUR in 2024.	
Recurrence	Explain how much of your revenue comes from recurring customers and detail your churn rate.	
Received investments	Describe any investments received and indicate whether you have participated in a funding round.	

Section 4: Impact & Sustainability		
Item	Description	Score
Environmental	Describe how your start-up lowers the impact of human activity on the environment. You can consider air, water, soil and noise pollution, waste production, damage to ecosystems and loss of biodiversity, among others Sustainable Development Goals.	5

| Social | Describe any significant or positive changes that solve or at least address social injustice and challenges. You can consider no poverty, good health and well-being, gender equality, decent work, reduce inequality, among others Sustainable Development Goals. | |

Section 5: Internationalization Capacity		
Item	Description	Score
Motivation	Explain why you are looking to expand your startup internationally and why now is the right time.	
Scalability	Describe how your system is designed to handle growth and adapt to changing user needs or patterns.	
Preparation	Outline your startup's and team's past experience in international markets. Highlight how team diversity supports expansion (if applicable). Mention any multinational clients or customers outside your home market. Describe the efficiency and clarity of your internal processes. If you generate revenue from international clients, specify the total amount and percentage.	5
Resources	Detail your business development/sales team and the resources available to support your startup's international expansion once accepted into the programme	
Dedication	Indicate how much of your time is currently dedicated to actively working on international expansion.	