Regular Open Call

FAQ

Call supporting document

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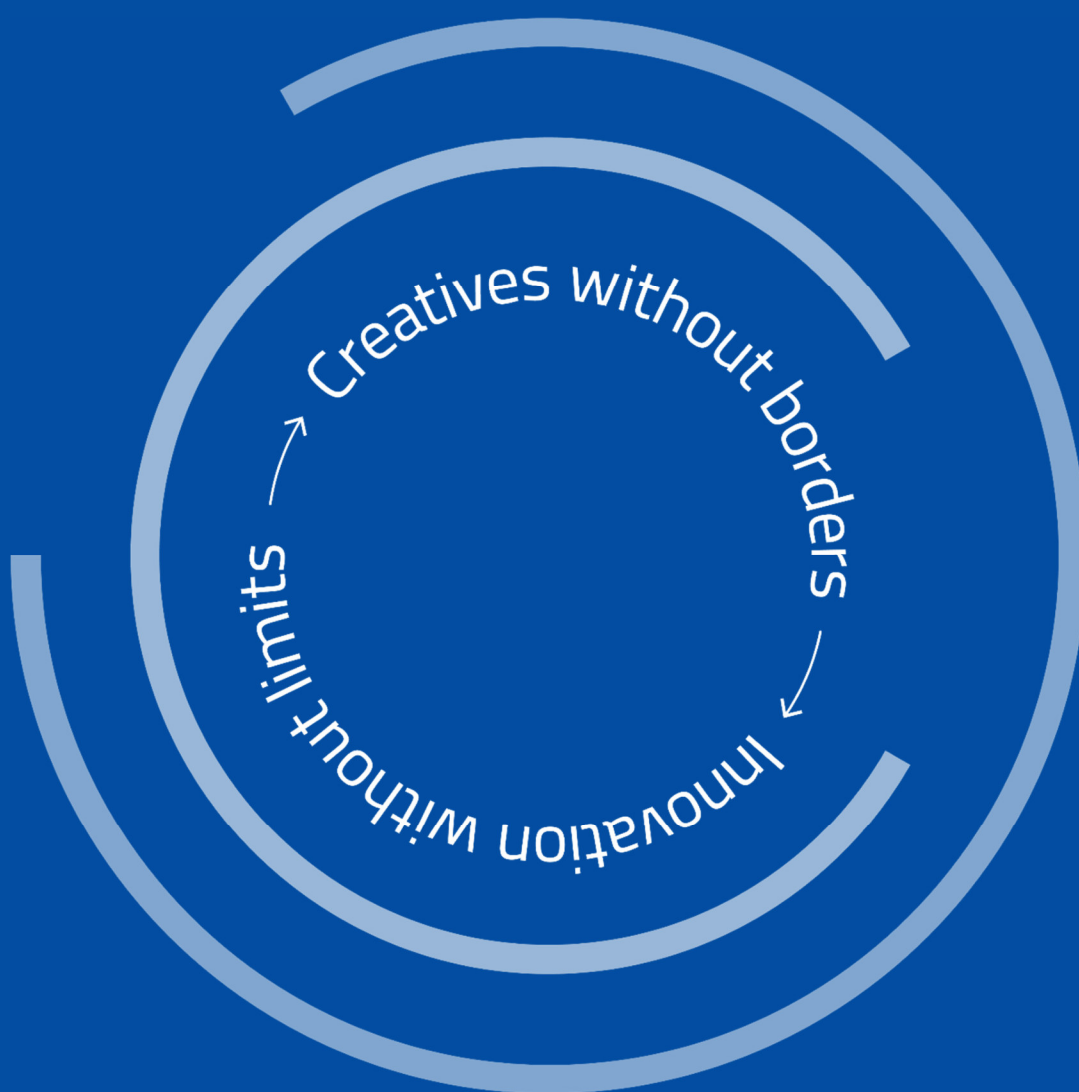
Open Call: Acceleration and Post-Acceleration programmes

FAQ

Version 1.0 (2025)

History of Changes

Version	Date	Changes
1.0	23/04/2025	Initial version.

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1. QUESTIONS FOR BUSINESS CREATION CALL: ACCELERATION AND POST-ACCELERATION PROGRAMMES

Q1. GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q1.1. What is the difference between the Shape and Scale Programmes ?

- **Shape Programme (Acceleration)**
  Tailored for start-ups and SMEs with a refining their business model, preparing for market expansion and future investment.

- **Scale Programme (Post-Acceleration)**
  Designed for scale-ups with a proven market presence aiming to expand internationally and attract new investment.

Q1.2. What does the programme offer?

The programme offers:
- Expert mentorship and coaching from seasoned entrepreneurs and industry experts.

- Hands-on support for market readiness and business development.

- Access to the EIT Culture & Creativity innovation network.

- Exposure to potential investors through Demo Days and community events.

Entry into the EIT CC "100 To Watch" list with post-programme support.

Q1.3. How many start-ups and scale-ups are selected per cohort?

For each programme and cohort:

Programme	Cohort	Max. Participants
Shape (Acceleration)	July 2025	Up to 20
Shape (Acceleration)	September 2025	Up to 20
Scale (Post-Acceleration)	July 2025	Up to 25
Scale (Post-Acceleration)	September 2025	Up to 25

Q1.4. How long is the programme and when does it start?

The programme's duration is 8-10 weeks.

Each cohort begins either:
- Mid-July 2025 (Cohort 1)
- Mid-September 2025 (Cohort 2)

Q1.5. What are the Demo Days and when are they taking place?

Demo Days are days where selected ventures pitch to investors and compete for prizes:
- October 2025 (Cohort 1)
- December 2025 (Cohort 2)

The location will be in an EU country and will be announced before the Demo Day.

Q1.6. What are the expected outcomes and impact of the programmes?

The Shape Programme aims to help early-stage ventures:
- Strengthen business models and improve strategic positioning.

- Become investment-ready and competitive in the European market.

- Adopt circular, digital and sustainable practices.

- Validate market entry and customer acquisition strategies.

- Foster long-term growth, resilience, and visibility within the CCSI ecosystem.

The Scale Programme is designed to help mature ventures:
- Scale operations beyond local markets, targeting international expansion.

- Secure pre-seed/seed or growth-stage funding.

- Build strong partnerships with investors, industry players, and academic experts.

- Position themselves as innovation leaders in their sector.

- Prepare exit strategies and improve financial sustainability.

- Strengthen their long-term impact on Europe's creative economy

Q1.7. Are there financial prizes?

Yes! Participants who meet programme criteria and deliver strong pitches at Demo Day can compete for:

Programme	Prize Categories	Amount

Shape	1st Prize (3 per cohort)	€30,000 each
	2nd Prize (3 per cohort)	€15,000 each
	3rd Prize (4 per cohort)	€7,500 each
Scale	1st Prize (3 per cohort)	€60,000 each
	2nd Prize (3 per cohort)	€30,000 each
	3rd Prize (4 per cohort)	€15,000 each

Total available funding for prizes: **€990,000**.

Q1.8. How do I apply?

1. Carefully read the **Call Guidelines**.

2. Apply online via the **EIT Culture & Creativity application platform**.

3. Submit all required documents before your selected cohort deadline.

Q1.9. **What are the KPIs of the programmes?**

All ventures must commit to clear performance indicators to demonstrate impact:

KPI	Description	Minimum Target
EITHE06.1	Investment attracted by EIT-supported ventures	Shape: €50,000 / Scale: €100,000

KPI performance is monitored during and after the programme, up to **6 months post-completion**.

Q1.10. Where can I get help preparing my application?

In order to prepare your application, you can:

- Attend the official **Info Sessions** (registration required).

- Use the **Contact Form** on the EIT Culture & Creativity website.

- Check the dedicated **FAQ page** for updates.

Q1.11. Can I update my application after submission?

You can save a draft, but after submission, applications cannot be modified. It is recommended that applicants carefully review their proposals before final submission.

Q1.12. The online application form specifies a maximum character limit for each question/topic (e.g. 1000 characters). However, in some cases, the answer box allows input beyond this limit (up to 2000 characters). Which character limit should applicants follow?

Please match the character count specified in the description; the form does not allow adjustments and is automatically set at 2,000 characters.

Q2. ELIGIBILITY

Q2.1. Who can apply for the EIT Culture & Creativity Acceleration and Post-Acceleration Programmes

The programmes are open to **start-ups, scale-ups, and SMEs** active in the Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSI), including:

- Fashion

- Architecture

- Cultural Heritage

- Audio-Visual Media

- Gaming

Eligible applicants must:

- Be legally registered in an EU Member State or a Horizon Europe-associated country.

- Have a tested business model or product (minimum 2 years old) with proven market fit.

- Comply with the European Commission SME definition (fewer than 250 employees, turnover ≤ €50 million or balance sheet total ≤ €43 million).

Q3. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Q3.1. How are applications evaluated ?

Projects impact is measure based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) outlined in the call guidelines.

Applications are evaluated on three main criteria:

1. **Excellence**
   (Clarity and feasibility of business model and innovation potential.)

2. **Impact**
   (Expected contribution to the CCSI ecosystem and investment-readiness.)

3. **Quality and Efficiency of Implementation**
   (Team capabilities and execution plan.)

Each criterion is scored from **1 to 5 points**. Applications need at least **13 points out of 25** to be considered for selection.

Top-ranked ventures are admitted until each cohort's capacity is reached. Others may be placed on a **reserve list** or rejected.

Q4. BUDGET & FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Q4.1. What is the Financial Sustainability Mechanism (FSM) and what are Virtual Shares?

Selected ventures must sign a **Financial Sustainability Mechanism (FSM)** agreement, the core of which is a commitment to **Virtual Shares**.

What are Virtual Shares?
Virtual Shares represent a future commitment to transfer an equivalent of a **5-10% stake (virtual, non-voting)** to EIT Culture & Creativity. They do not give EIT CC ownership or control but entitle it to a financial return if the company succeeds (e.g., during a future investment round, acquisition, or IPO).

Benefits for Ventures:
- Continued access to the **EIT CC "100 To Watch" list**, enabling post-programme support.

- Access to **market-entry services**, investor introductions, and mentorship long after the programme ends.

- Alignment of EIT CC's success with the venture's success — creating a genuine **long-term partnership** rather than just a short-term grant relationship.

Q5. DEFINITIONS

Q5.1. What is the definition of a SME in this call?
- SME – Small and medium enterprise: Defined by EU recommendation 2003/361 based on staff headcount and either turnover or balance sheet total: Medium enterprise: <250 staff, ≤€50 million turnover or ≤€43 million balance sheet; Small enterprise: <50 staff, ≤€10 million turnover or balance sheet.

Notice: If you cannot find the answer to your question here, please send us your query through the Contact form.