



InnoMatch

Powered by EIC Innovation Procurement Programme

Open Call for Public and Private Buyers

Guidelines for Applicants

February 2025



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Guidelines for Applicants

OPEN CALL FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BUYERS

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GLOSSARY

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Application	Online submission for the Open Call for Public and Private Buyers.
Open Call for Public and Private Buyers	Open call inviting public and private organisations to submit applications describing their unmet need(s) and if selected join the InnoMatch programme.
Open Call for EIC Awardees	An Open Call (OC) where an EIC Awardee presents an innovative solution, addressing a specific innovation challenge of the Buyer selected in the Open Call for Public and Private Buyers.
Buyer	Public or private organisation, that has a specific unmet innovation need for which it is important to develop a solution, not yet available or widely available on the market. Its top-level management is aware of and agrees to the participation of the organisation in the InnoMatch Programme with great interest due to its relevance for the organisation. This might include preliminary plans for innovation procurement, expected availability of funds from the impacted departments or any other form that confirms the willingness to keep a continued engagement with the tested solution.
EIC Awardee	<p>As per the general definition in the EIC Work Programme 2023, EIC Awardees are the entities “named in an EIC grant agreement (for EIC Pathfinder, EIC Transition) or EIC contract or investment agreement for EIC Accelerator, as well as winners of EIC Prizes”.</p> <p>In the context of this open call, only EIC Awardees who are single entities are eligible to apply.</p>
Lead Buyer	Principal participant in the solution's deployment. This public or private sector buyer will be responsible for signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the main

	accountable party from the demand-side during the InnoMatch programme.
Observing Buyer	Buyers who have the same or a similar need to the Lead Buyer and would like to learn more about the solution and pilot results. They help the Lead Buyer to develop the challenge for the Open Call for EIC Awardees, with specific solution requirements. During the pilot, they provide feedback on the solution, but they do not necessarily pilot it on their premises.
Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)	An agreement signed between the EIC Awardee and Lead Buyer which establishes the terms and conditions of the collaboration, specifying the roles and responsibilities of each party, as well as the declaration of compliance with legal provisions from both parties.
Letter of Commitment	A document that explains the in-kind contributions that demonstrate the commitment from the buyer to fulfil the whole process, such as the team and capacity assigned to the project and the foreseen activities to ensure a further involvement.
Unmet innovation need	A preliminary description of a real and specific user or organisational need, that is currently not met and for which a solution is not yet available or widely available on the market.
Innovation challenge	A well-defined and structured statement that translates an unmet need into a specific opportunity for innovation. It serves as a call to action for EIC Awardees to develop novel solutions in the context of the Open Call for EIC Awardees.
Pilot	Pilot is the deployment of a solution on the services of the buyer, in real conditions. It aims to evaluate the performance, scalability and user experience, demonstrate value and monitor pre-established metrics. It might require more resources than a Proof-of-concept (PoC), see the description below.
Proof-of-concept (PoC)	Proof of Concept (PoC) aims to demonstrate the feasibility of the solution, and to verify that it has practical potential. The

	proof of concept is smaller than the pilot, and might require a smaller budget.
InnoMatch consortium	A group of 4 organisations managing the InnoMatch project, financed by the European Commission (GA Nr. 101165966), and under which the current Open Call for Public and Private Buyers is launched and operated.
Open Call Manager	The InnoMatch partner responsible for organising and leading the OC2 Open Call for Buyers. For this call it is ICLEI Europe.

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of this document

The InnoMatch Guidelines for applicants explain the InnoMatch Open Call for Public and Private Buyers. It defines the terms and conditions to apply, including the eligibility and evaluation criteria, as well as the application and selection process. This document is complemented by a set of additional application documents, which are available on the [InnoMatch website](#), and are listed in [Section 11](#) of this document.

The InnoMatch Guidelines for applicants, along with the application documents, must be considered by the applicants when submitting their application for the InnoMatch Open Call for Buyers.

1.2. InnoMatch concept

InnoMatch is powered by the [EIC Innovation Procurement Programme](#), an initiative of the [European Innovation Council \(EIC\)](#), that aims to facilitate access to procurement markets in Europe and at the global level, ensuring increased market opportunities for innovative SMEs and start-ups and contributing, at the same time, to their scaling up. This programme targets the strengthening of the demand with the supply side, and contains a variety of services tailored to the needs of each respective stakeholder, with projects such as the SPIN4EIC Strategic Innovation Procurement Programme, InnoBuyer and the recently launched InnoMatch.

Finding first customers is one of the main barriers that is hampering access to the market and commercialisation of innovative solutions developed by innovative SMEs. To facilitate the uptake of innovation procurement, **InnoMatch will support the pilot testing of innovative solutions provided by the EIC Awardees for public and private procurement customers (Buyers). In total, €2.28M will be offered in the context of the InnoMatch to support at least 38 pilots, covering up to €60,000 per pilot.**

The success rate of the pilots will be increased by the tailored InnoMatch “Prepare, Deploy & Assess” Programme, which aims to guide and monitor the project deployment. Additional supporting activities for the EIC Awardees and the Buyers are foreseen to maximise impact and growth. For the EIC awardees, this means the development of a commercialisation strategy. For the buyers, this means the development of a strategy for the adoption of results. This does not necessarily mean the direct acquisition of the developed solution.

Besides a successful deployment, InnoMatch envisions the adoption and replication of innovative solutions. Therefore, additional supporting activities with EIC Awardees & Buyers are foreseen to maximise impact and growth.

1.2.1. Thematic areas

The Open Call for Public and Private Buyers aims to select a minimum of five unmet needs and to turn them into publishable challenges, according to the established selection criteria described in [Section 6.2](#), **in the five thematic areas** of the EIC BAS Innovation Procurement Programme, as follows:

1. Agriculture, Food & Beverages.

The unmet need selected under this area will be focused on innovations needed in agriculture, food production and beverage industries. Some examples of these needs include (but are not limited to) smart farming technologies, sustainable food production, alternative protein sources and innovations to reduce food waste.

2. Construction, Infrastructure, Manufacturing.

This thematic group will include unmet needs related to building, repairing, and renovating infrastructures, as well as needs from sectors such as industrial manufacturing, automotive manufacturing, and chemical manufacturing, among others.

3. Digital Transformation, Next Generation Computing, AI, Blockchain, Security, Firefighting and First Responders.

The third area will select an unmet need related to the integration of digital technology across private and public organisations. The needs presented in this area might range from innovative management database systems to AI-driven document management, as well as solutions from the security sector such as risk management and crisis response.

4. Energy, Environment, Sustainability, Mobility.

This area aims to collect unmet needs related to the energy sector, water services, environmental initiatives, sustainability projects, and mobility solutions.

5. Health and Life Sciences.

The needs related to Health and Life Sciences will include all those applications related to medical services or equipment, as well as groundbreaking medicines, pioneering medical insurance or revolutionary biotechnology, among others.

More information about the thematic areas and the EIC BAS Innovation Procurement Programme can be found [here](#).

1.2.2. Unmet needs and innovation challenges

Under the scope of InnoMatch, an **unmet innovation need** is considered the preliminary description of a real and specific user or organisational need, that is currently not met and for which a solution is not yet available or widely available on the market. The unmet needs will be presented by either public or private buyers in the present Open Call for Public and Private Buyers regulated by this document.

After the selection process, a total of five unmet needs will be selected and will undergo a mentorship process offered by the InnoMatch Consortium. Through this process, the unmet need will be transformed into a polished, publishable innovation challenge.

As a result, an **innovation challenge** is a well-defined and structured statement that translates an unmet need into a specific opportunity for innovation. It serves as a call to action for EIC Awardees to develop novel solutions addressing the defined need.

The innovation challenge is designed to be clear, actionable, and solution-oriented, outlining the desired outcomes and context within which the solution should operate. It enables potential solution providers to understand the problem thoroughly, align their efforts with the buyer's requirements, and propose innovative approaches that meet the specific goals of the challenge.

1.3. Benefits for Buyers

For private and public buyers, InnoMatch is an opportunity to:

- Address, **free of charge**, a relevant challenge in collaboration with a top-notch supplier. **InnoMatch will fund the supplier with up to €60,000 to deploy the solution for you.**
- **De-risk the innovation procurement**, by developing proofs of concepts or pilot testing before the actual procurement – test before invest.
- Learn about demand-driven innovation following a lean approach with **limited overhead.**

Key benefits for selected buyers include:

- **Tailored matchmaking opportunities.** Buyers may be matched with other organisations facing similar challenges, fostering collaboration and shared learning to address common needs more effectively. Five groups will be created according to 5 areas or themes.
- **Challenge refinement and expert support.** Buyers will undergo both collective training and individualised mentorship to evolve their initially submitted unmet need into an

advanced challenge statement. This is a refined version of their initial unmet need that can be understood by an EIC innovator. Resources include online training, sharing of examples and tailored recommendations to improve their initial submission, as well as direct mentoring within buyers' groups.

- **Access to innovation procurement resources.** Buyers will have exclusive access to a comprehensive repository of innovation procurement tools, best practices, and resources, enabling them to make informed decisions throughout the process.
- **Solutions tailored to their specific needs.** InnoMatch will help buyers identify and engage the right suppliers (specifically EIC Awardees) to develop tailored solutions that address their challenges.
- **Expert support** to implement the [InnoMatch Programme: Prepare, Deploy and Assess](#).
- **Support to maximise impact & growth.** InnoMatch will guide buyers and EIC Awardees to plan for sustainability after the project, increasing the chances that successful pilots are adopted.

2. InnoMatch: how does it work?

InnoMatch has been developed as a tool for public and private buyers, allowing them to define their needs and engage with innovative suppliers more efficiently. This presents an opportunity for buyers to access new technologies and solutions rapidly.

This document pertains to the InnoMatch Open Call for Public and Private Buyers, part of the broader InnoMatch Open Call 2 (OC2). OC2 includes two distinct Open Calls:

1. InnoMatch **Open Call for Public and Private Buyers** (covered in this document).
2. InnoMatch **Open Call for EIC Awardees** (scheduled for publication in January 2026).

InnoMatch OC2 in a Nutshell

OC for Buyers & OC for EIC innovators

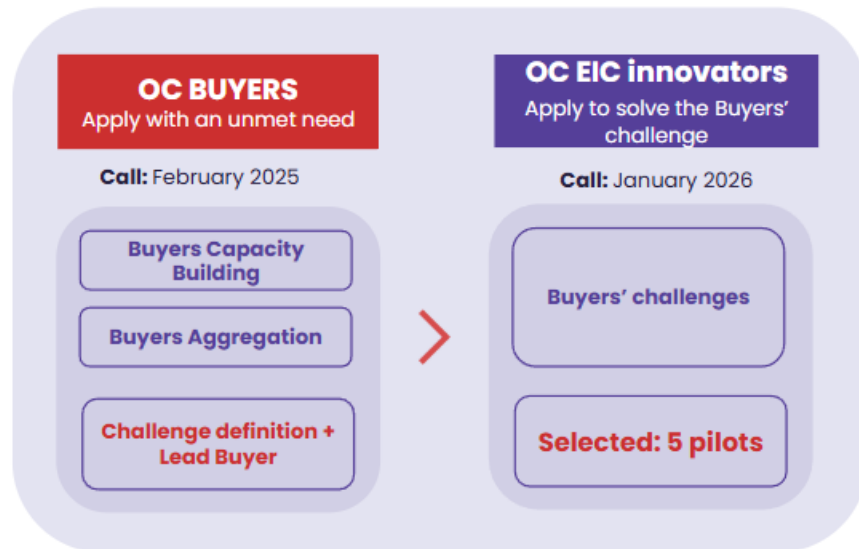


FIGURE 1. INNOMATCH OC2 IN A NUTSHELL.

The Open Call for Public and Private Buyers is directly connected to the upcoming Open Call for EIC Awardees, which will be launched in January 2026.

Below are presented the main steps related to the two interrelated open calls, as well as the involvement of the Buyers and the EIC Awardees:

1. In the Open Call for Buyers, private and public buyers will be invited to submit their unmet innovation needs.
2. The top-scored 5 unmet innovation needs (at least 1 per thematic area – see [Section 1.2.1](#)) will be selected by external experts.
3. With the support of the InnoMatch Consortium, the owners of the 5 selected unmet needs will be invited to group with other Buyers, sharing the same or similar innovation need (Observing Buyers), where and if this is possible, and will be supported by the InnoMatch consortium to polish their unmet needs into 5 specific innovation challenges – 1 per thematic area.
4. These five (5) innovation challenges will feed into the follow-up open call for EIC Awardees, where EIC Awardees will be invited to apply, presenting innovative solutions aiming to solve the identified Buyers' challenges.
5. Finally, the selected solutions will enter the 12-month InnoMatch Programme (explained in [Section 7](#) below).

This process is further detailed in [Section 2.1](#) below, and follows the stages shown in Figure 2 below.

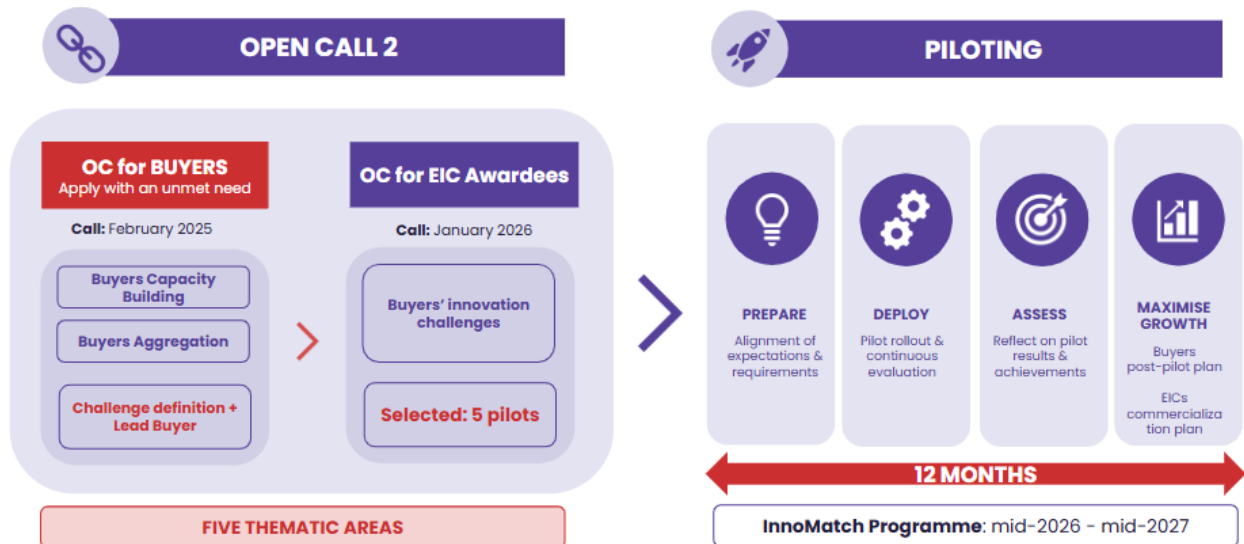


FIGURE 2: INNO MATCH PROCESS: STAGES AND TIMELINE.

2.1. Involvement of selected buyers

Following the OC2 for Public and Private Buyers selection process, the Buyers of the five (5) top-scored unmet innovation needs will be invited to join a collaborative process, where they will receive a grouping proposal with other selected buyers to begin the identification of shared unmet needs. In Figure 3 below is presented the indicative timeline after the selection of the best 5 unmet innovation needs of the Buyers.

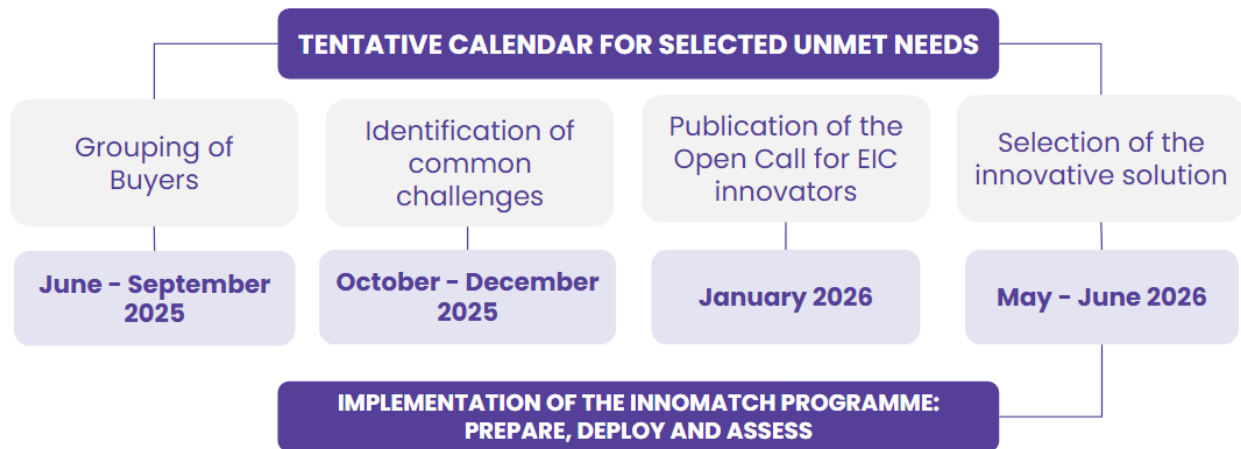


FIGURE 3: TIMELINE FOR SELECTED UNMET NEEDS.

2.1.1. Grouping of Buyers

Tentative timeline: June – September 2025.

With the support of the InnoMatch mentors, the single and group applications will be aggregated into five groups, sharing the same or similar innovation need.

A final group will be identified for each of the 5 thematic areas, as listed in [Section 1.2.1](#). Each group will be assigned one Lead Buyer, and a number of Observing Buyers through the guidance of the InnoMatch Consortium and based on their final rankings. The rights and obligations of each type of buyer can be consulted in [Section 8](#).

- While the primary objective is to form groups consisting of at least one Lead Buyer and one Observing Buyer, the InnoMatch Consortium reserves the right to establish a group consisting solely of a Lead Buyer if the number or nature of applications requires it.
- It is also important to note that applying as the representative of a group does not guarantee being designated as the Lead Buyer if stronger applications from individual buyers with the same unmet need are identified. In such cases, the main applicant will have the option to either take part in the observers group formed by InnoMatch or withdraw from the process if preferred.

2.1.1.1. Reserve lists¹

¹ For all these replacements the ranking and scores of the buyers proposals in this call will be taken into account.

Reserve list of unmet needs. A reserve list of unmet needs will be established for applications that meet or exceed the threshold score but that cannot be selected due to the project budget limitations (only 5 pilots can be financially supported).

Reserve list of Buyers after the Grouping phase:

- **Observing Buyers** who are allocated to a group of Buyers sharing the same or similar unmet innovation need, will be given the chance to replace the Lead Buyer if for any reason the Lead Buyer withdraws during the aggregation phase or later during the implementation of actions. Thus, the Observing Buyer(s) in the same group will be invited to assume the Lead Buyer role, if needed. They will address the unmet need and collaborate with the EIC Awardee to implement the InnoMatch Programme.
- **Buyers single applicants** who do not want to be part of a group of Buyers (for various reasons), and who have not been amongst the selected 5 applicants, will have the chance to replace a selected single Lead Buyer, if for any reason the selected one drops off.
- **Non-selected Buyers.** All Buyers, no matter if their unmet innovation need was or not selected, will be invited to join the *InnoMatch Learning Network* – to explore opportunities to connect and collaborate with other InnoMatch participants, and deep dive into the innovation procurement process through the various capacity building activities organized within InnoMatch.

2.1.2. Identification of challenges

Tentative timeline: October – December 2025.

After buyers have been aggregated under the guidance of the InnoMatch Consortium, they will start an interactive process to collect the description of the need, the common functional requirements, the targeted assessment KPIs, IT landscapes and legal considerations, among others. This will consist of a collective training and individualised mentorship to evolve the initially submitted unmet need into an advanced, public-facing challenge statement. A more detailed explanation of unmet need and innovation challenge can be found in [Section 1.2.1](#).

This will result in five (5) challenges, one per thematic area. Those 5 challenges will be published through the Open Call for EIC Awardees, where EIC companies will submit their innovative solutions to solve the Buyers' needs.

2.1.3. Selection of the innovative solution

Tentative timeline: April – May 2026.

After the closing of the Open Call for EIC Awardees, a final selection process will take place to select the most appropriate innovative solution for each of the identified 5 Buyers' challenges. The Lead Buyer will participate in the final selection of the solution as part of the Selection Committee².

The Buyer will then start the implementation of the InnoMatch "Prepare, Deploy and Assess" Programme together with the selected EIC Awardee.

To maximise the successful implementation of the pilots, the InnoMatch Consortium will guide, structure, and monitor the pilots throughout the three main phases of the pilot implementation, as described in more detail in [Section 7](#).

2.1.3.1. Memorandum of Understanding

The Lead Buyers selected to deploy the solution proposed by the EIC Awardees will have to prepare and submit a signed Memorandum of Understanding, together with the selected EIC Awardee.

The objective of the MoU preparation is to establish the terms and conditions of the InnoMatch Programme, specifying the roles and responsibilities of each party involved. The MoU will be signed between each Lead Buyer (of the challenge) and the selected EIC Awardee (proposing a solution to the Buyers' challenge).

In general, the negotiation of the MoU will start during the identification of the Buyers' innovation challenges, and right after a Lead Buyer is selected for each challenge.

After the solutions to each challenge are selected (in OC for EIC Awardees), the MoU should be concluded and signed by both parties within 4 weeks. In case the MoU has not been concluded and signed within the above period, a new Lead Buyer will be assigned (as per the reserve list rule in [Section 2.1.1.1](#)) to sign the MoU and to continue the InnoMatch Programme.

² The Selection Committee will include members of the InnoMatch Consortium, external evaluators with expertise in innovation procurement and the Lead Buyer.

3. Open Call for Public and Private Buyers

3.1. Open Call for Public and Private Buyers: Summary

The table below presents a summary of the most important components of the Open Call for Public and Private Buyers:

Open call details	Description
Application	The InnoMatch Application form can only be filled in and submitted online through the F6S Platform .
Who can apply?	Public and private entities as described in Section 4.1 .
Five (5) thematic areas	Buyers (public or private) can submit their unmet innovation needs in 5 thematic areas, as described in Section 1.2.1 .
Number of unmet needs to be selected	One unmet need per thematic area (see Section 1.2.1) will be selected, transformed into a challenge, published and promoted by the InnoMatch Consortium. During the aggregation exercise, non-awarded applicants can join the selected unmet needs as observing buyers.
Funding	No funding is available in this open call. However, selected applications in the open call for EIC Awardees, will receive funding to develop and implement a solution to the 5 identified Buyers' challenges. The amount (up to 60,000€) will be fully granted to the selected EIC Awardees.
Open Call language	The official language of the open call, as well as of the open call documentation is English. All related to this open call application documents need to be submitted in English.

TABLE 1: OPEN CALL SUMMARY.

3.2. Open Call for Public and Private Buyers: Timeline

This section presents the tentative dates for the different phases of the Open Call timeline. The dates can be subject to change in case of any modifications in the InnoMatch schedule.

Description	Tentative dates
Open Call duration	This Open Call will be opened to receive applications from buyers for 4 (four) months, starting on 06.02.2025.
Open Call deadline	This Open Call closes on 07.05.2025, 17.00 CET (Brussels time).
Eligibility check	Until the end of May.
Evaluation and selection of unmet needs	Until the end of June.

TABLE 2: TIMELINE OF THE OPEN CALL FOR BUYERS.

4. Eligibility

4.1. Type of Buyers

This call is targeted at public and private buyers.

Eligible private Buyers: InnoMatch refers to private buyers as organisations that are privately owned and constituted either for profit or non-profit purposes, which can be SMEs³ or large corporations.

Eligible public Buyers for InnoMatch include all those bodies included in Article 2 of Directive 2014/24 on Public Procurement:

- Contracting authorities

³ According to the definition of the [European Commission](#).

- Central government authorities
- Sub-central contracting authorities
- Bodies governed by public law⁴.
- Associations formed by one or more such authorities or one or more such bodies governed by public law.

4.2. Eligible countries

Only applicants legally established in any of the following countries (hereafter collectively identified as the “Eligible Countries”) are eligible:

- The Member States of the European Union including their outermost regions;
- Horizon Europe associated countries,
- As described in the [List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe](#) according to the latest list published by the European Commission.

4.3. Thematic areas

This Open Call for Public and Private Buyers aims to select at least one unmet need for each of the five thematic areas as described in [Section 1.2.1](#) above. Unmet innovation needs that do not fit into one of the five categories will be considered not eligible.

4.4. Submission – individual or as group of Buyers

Buyers can submit to this call their unmet innovation need(s) individually or as part of a group with other buyers if they share the same or similar unmet needs, and where it is possible .

- Group applications are encouraged and can be formed by at least two buyers – **a main applicant and supporting Buyer(s).**

⁴ According to the requirements established in Article 2 par. 4 in Directive 2014/24/EC and article 3 par. 4 in Directive 2014/25/EC: (1) they are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character; and (2) they have legal personality, and (3) Either they are (a) financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law; or (b) subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or (c) have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law.

- The main applicant (public or private Buyer) submits the application on behalf of the group of Buyers (where this is the case).
- All applications, whether individual or group-based, will be reviewed by the InnoMatch Consortium and if selected, will proceed to the step-by-step process of grouping phase and identification of challenges as described in [Section 2.1](#).

4.5. Multiple submission

Buyers can participate in multiple submissions within the Open Call process.

- Each buyer is allowed to submit **up to one (1) group application** (unmet innovation need), where they take the principal role in the application, submitting it on behalf of a group of buyers.
- Can submit up to one application (unmet innovation need) as a single applicant.
- There are no restrictions on the number of applications where the buyer is part of a group application where the buyer is not the one submitting the application on behalf of the group.

4.6. Language

English is the official language of InnoMatch - Open Call for Public and Private Buyers. Submissions done in any other language will not be evaluated. English is also the only official language during the whole execution of the InnoMatch programme. This means any requested submission of deliverables will be done in English in order to be eligible.

4.7. Other conditions

4.7.1. Letter of Commitment

The Buyer submitting an application on behalf of a group of buyers, as well as single applicants, are required to submit a **Letter of Commitment** when submitting their application. This document will explain the in-kind contributions that demonstrate the commitment from the buyer to fulfil the whole process, in particular:

- The team assigned to the project and its estimated capacity during the implementation of the pilot.
- The foreseen activities or initiatives to ensure a further involvement from the buyer, especially in terms of adoption of the solution in case the pilot is successful.

Only in case of selection, an additional Letter of Commitment will be requested from the Observing Buyers of each group, in order to guarantee their participation during the whole process (Annex 5).

4.7.2. Absence of conflict

Applicants shall not have any actual or/and potential conflict of interest with the InnoMatch selection process which may compromise the impartiality and transparency of the selection process. All cases of conflict of interest will be assessed on a case by case basis. In particular, applicants cannot be InnoMatch Consortium partners or affiliated entities nor their employees under a contractual agreement. Any omission or false declaration regarding the absence of conflicts of interest may result in exclusion from participation in the project.

5. Application submission

5.1. Application preparation

To submit an application Buyers should follow these steps:

Step 1: Go to the [InnoMatch website](#) and carefully read the open call documents composed of the:

Documents to be considered and filled in at the application stage:

- Guidelines for Applicants (this document)
- **Annex 1.** Application form (read-only file)
- **Annex 2.** Letter of Commitment (template)

Documents to be filled in only in case that the application is selected:

- **Annex 3.** Memorandum of Understanding (template)
- **Annex 4.** Action Plan (template)
- **Annex 5.** Letter of Commitment for Observing Buyers (template proposal)

Step 2: Register and fill in the application form on the F6S platform, answering all mandatory questions, and attaching a signed Letter of Commitment (based on the template provided, but open to modifications).

- Go to the F6S platform at f6s.com.
- Choose an option to register – via Google, via LinkedIn, via Facebook, via Email.
- Start using the F6S platform and fill-in your [InnoMatch application form](#).
- You can delete your profile anytime you want, after the end of the InnoMatch project.

- Answer all mandatory questions in the [Application form](#).
- It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the application. Failure of the application to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays or working from multiple browsers or multiple browser windows, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the application as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

5.2. Application reception

Only applications submitted through the official [Open Call submission tool – the F6S platform](#), and within the Call duration will be accepted. Applications submitted by any other means will not be evaluated:

- Requests or inquiries about the submission process or the open call itself received after the closure of the open call will neither be considered nor answered.
- Additional materials and/or hyperlinks to additional information, which have not been specifically requested as part of the application documentation, will not be considered by the evaluators.
- If the applicant discovers an error in a submitted application form, and if the open call deadline has not passed, the applicant may request support to open again, and/ or re-submit at: support@f6s.com.

5.3. Data protection at the submission stage

In order to process and evaluate applications, the InnoMatch consortium will need to collect Personal and Industrial Data. F6S Network Ireland Limited will act as a Data Controller for data submitted through the F6S platform for these purposes. Please see the privacy policy [here](#).

A Data Protection Officer (DPO) has been appointed by F6S generally, to ensure compliance with data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and that personal data is collected, processed, and stored in a secure manner.

The F6S platform's system design and operational procedures ensure that data is managed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Each applicant will accept the F6S terms to ensure compliance. Please refer [here](#) to review the F6S platform's privacy policy and data security policy.

Apart from the F6S platform, data will also be stored in the F6S Google Drive.

The InnoMatch consortium must retain generated data until five years after the balance of the InnoMatch project is paid or longer if there are ongoing procedures (such as audits, investigations or litigation). In this case, the data must be kept until they end.

6. Evaluation and selection of Buyers' unmet needs

The evaluation process has two main stages:

1. **Eligibility check** - performed internally, by the InnoMatch Consortium.
2. **Remote (external) evaluation** - performed by external experts, outside the InnoMatch Consortium.

6.1. Eligibility check

An eligibility check will be performed by the InnoMatch consortium according to the criteria listed in [Section 4](#) of this document.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the accuracy of all fields within the [online form](#). Any inclusion of erroneous information may result in the rejection of the application on the grounds of ineligibility. In cases where an application is deemed ineligible, applicants will be promptly notified of its status.

6.2. Evaluation criteria & scoring

Each of the applications that pass the eligibility check will be evaluated by two (2) external expert evaluators with relevant expertise and experience, bound by a confidentiality agreement and non-conflict of interest declaration. The applications will be evaluated according to the 4 main evaluation criteria described in Table 3 below.

Criterion	Description	Weight of the criterion
Commitment & Team	This criterion will evaluate to what extent the top-level management is aware and agrees to the participation of the organisation in the InnoMatch Programme. It is focused on evaluating the interest and commitment of the top-level management to adopt the solution if it proves successful. This	40%

	<p>might include preliminary plans for innovation procurement, expected availability of funds from the impacted departments or any other form that confirms the willingness to uptake the solution.</p> <p>The criterion will also assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the specific in-kind contributions (such as team and its capacity, as well as infrastructure) that the applicant plans to provide to support the pilot deployment. the applicant's plans to ensure continuity and avoid drop-outs during the process. <p>Additionally, this criterion will take into account possible experiences from the buyer in other activities from the EIC Innovation Procurement Programme as well as in the context of the EIC Business Acceleration Services.</p>	
Impact & Business Opportunity	<p>It will be evaluated to which extent the current situation could improve over time if the unmet need is addressed, including the expected benefits of solving the problem for the organisation, employees, or citizens and creating new business opportunities or partnerships. The potential economic, social and environmental impact that the solving of the unmet need will have, will also be considered, as well as the alignment of the application with the European Union values, initiatives and already existing policies.</p>	20%
Alignment	<p>The criterion will assess whether the Buyer's unmet need aligns with the InnoMatch approach (see Section 1.2) and methodology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether the unmet need fits within the 12-month InnoMatch "Prepare, Deploy and Assess" Programme, within the 6-month pilot deployment stage and the maximum budget provided per pilot (€60.000). How flexible the Buyer is in deploying a pilot and designing a common challenge with other Buyers. 	20%
Innovation & Experience	<p>This criterion will evaluate the degree to which the unmet need requires an innovative solution that is not available or</p>	20%

	<p>widely available on the market yet. The buyer should demonstrate that the unmet need includes sufficient innovative elements to justify external support.</p> <p>It will also assess whether the Buyer has previous experience in participating in innovation pilots, particularly in collaboration with other Buyers.</p>	

TABLE 3: EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR THE INNOMATCH OPEN CALL FOR BUYERS.

The experts will score each award criterion on a scale from 0 to 5, as shown in the table below.

Score rate	Meaning	Description
0	Application fails	Application fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
1	Poor	The criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
2	Fair	The application broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
3	Good	The application addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
4	Very good	The application addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
5	Excellent	The application successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

TABLE 4: INNOMATCH SCORES DESCRIPTION.

For each criterion, the minimum threshold is 3 out of 5 points. The overall default threshold, considering the sum of the individual scores is 12. That means if an application receives less than 3 in one criterion or less than 12 in the overall score it is automatically rejected. **The applications will be scored per thematic area.**

6.3. Ranking and selection

At the end of the evaluation process, the applications will be ranked. The criteria for the ranking of the applications will follow the rules below:

- **Rule 1:** The applications will be ranked based on their overall score.
- **Rule 2:** In case following Rule 1 there are applications in the same position, priority will be given to applications that have a higher score on the Commitment criterion, with preference given to Buyers who have been part in any activities from the EIC Innovation Procurement Programme as well as in the context of the EIC Business Acceleration Services.
- **Rule 3:** In case following Rule 2 there are applications in the same position, priority will be given to applications that have a higher score on the Impact criterion.

The 5 top-scored unmet innovation needs, one for each of the 5 thematic areas, will proceed further in the InnoMatch process.

6.4. Communication of results

The results of the eligibility check and the remote evaluation will be communicated to all applicants in an official email. This includes both the applicants who have passed and the ones who have failed to pass.

After the completion of the external evaluation phase, the results will be shared with the applicants, along with their individual Evaluation Summary Reports (ESR) and a letter informing of a rejection decision or invitation to enter the aggregation phase.

The emails to be used for communicating the results will be the ones provided by the applicants in the application form on the F6S Platform.

6.5. Changes in the Open Call

InnoMatch may conclude that there are not enough applications with adequate quality (indicated by their evaluation scores meeting or exceeding specific predefined thresholds), in which case it will make no selection or select fewer applications than declared in this

document. This conclusion is obligatory if not enough applications score above the threshold fixed in [Section 6.3](#).

InnoMatch reserves the right to cancel the open call for Buyers at any point due to any unforeseen circumstances beyond control.

InnoMatch reserves the right to make changes to this open call Guidelines and the open call rules, with prior notification to all interested parties at least 1 week in advance. This will be communicated via the official discussion board on the F6S platform. Information will also be available on the [InnoMatch website](#), and distributed through the InnoMatch social media channels, and other official communication channels, if applicable.

7. InnoMatch Programme

To maximise the successful implementation of the pilots, InnoMatch has designed the **Prepare, Deploy and Assess Programme**. This is a comprehensive framework to guide and monitor pilot projects between selected buyers and EIC Awardees.

○ Prepare

In the **Prepare** phase, a mentor is assigned to each pilot team to develop an Action Plan outlining objectives, KPIs, milestones, and deployment timelines. The Action Plan development will be a joint process between the Lead Buyer and the selected EIC Awardee.

A model of the Action Plan will be provided by the InnoMatch Consortium, in which general rules for pilot deployment common to all pilots will be established.

○ Deploy

During the **Deploy** phase, pilots are executed within the Lead Buyer's premises, supported by bi-monthly check-ins and interim reporting to track progress, address challenges, and ensure KPIs are met.

Alongside pilot implementation and considering their progress and requirements, the InnoMatch Team will support buyers in accessing additional funding sources to extend the pilots' scope or address relevant deployment situations throughout the project timeline.

○ Assess

The **Assess** phase involves evaluating pilot outcomes based on technological, societal, and ecological impact, alongside buyer satisfaction and market readiness of innovators. Final validation reports and sustainability plans will help ensure long-term success and scalability of solutions.

The InnoMatch consortium will continue to provide personalised support to Buyers and EIC Awardees, aiding in the adoption of the solutions and engagement with potential customers. This systematic approach aims to ensure the long-term effectiveness of EIC and Buyer collaborations.



FIGURE 4: INNOMATCH PILOT IMPLEMENTATION.

8. Responsibilities of the Buyers

If a Buyer is chosen to participate in one of the five final funded solutions, they will have specific responsibilities during the implementation of the InnoMatch Programme, which should be taken into account. The roles of Lead Buyer and Observing Buyer come with distinct responsibilities, detailed below.

8.1. Lead Buyer

As the principal participants in the pilot deployment, Lead Buyers hold key responsibilities for driving the project forward and ensuring its success. These responsibilities include:

STAGE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Identification of Challenge	<p>Lead Buyers are responsible for defining and refining their unmet needs, with the guidance of the InnoMatch Consortium, into a clear, actionable innovation challenge.</p> <p>They must ensure the challenge aligns with organisational priorities and is relevant to the thematic area selected.</p>
Selection of the EIC Awardee	<p>Lead Buyers participate in the evaluation and selection of the most suitable EIC Awardee (as part of the Selection Committee) based on the challenge requirements and proposed solutions.</p> <p>They sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the selected EIC Awardee.</p>
Preparation of the deployment	<p>Lead Buyers take the lead in ensuring their organisation / company is prepared for the deployment of the solution. This includes aligning internal stakeholders and securing necessary resources for implementation.</p>
Monitoring of the pilot	<p>Lead Buyers oversee the deployment of the pilot within their premises, ensuring compliance with the agreed timelines, objectives, and key performance indicators (KPIs).</p> <p>They engage in regular progress reviews and provide detailed feedback to the selected company (EIC Awardee).</p>
Results of the pilot	<p>Lead Buyers evaluate the pilot's outcomes, including its technological performance, scalability, and impact on their organisational processes.</p> <p>They contribute to the preparation of final validation reports and sustainability plans for broader adoption.</p>

Relation with Observing Buyers	Lead Buyers may maintain open and transparent communication with Observing Buyers, sharing key findings and feedback during the pilot process, where this is possible They may facilitate Observing Buyers' involvement in refining the solution to ensure scalability and alignment with broader needs.
Relation with the selected EIC Awardee	Lead Buyers support the selected EIC Awardee according to what is regulated in the Memorandum of Understanding and the Action Plan.

TABLE 5: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEAD BUYER.

8.2. Observing Buyer

The Observing Buyer(s) have the same or similar need to the Lead Buyer and would like to know more about the solution through a more limited role in the deployment. The activities to engage with the Observing Buyer(s) will be limited in number and scope, planned and agreed upon in advance.

They play a supporting role, offering valuable insights and ensuring the scalability of the developed solutions. Their responsibilities include:

STAGE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Identification of Challenge	Observing Buyers assist the Lead Buyer in defining and refining the challenge, contributing to the identification of functional requirements and potential deployment scenarios.
Selection of the EIC Awardee	Observing Buyers provide limited input during the selection process, focusing on the solution's scalability and relevance to similar unmet needs. They sign a simplified version of the Letter of Commitment in order to guarantee their presence and contribution throughout the duration of the project.

Preparation of the deployment	Observing Buyers contribute insights to the preparation of deployment plans, ensuring their applicability to a broader range of organisations and contexts.
Monitoring of the pilot	<p>While Observing Buyers do not participate in the pilot's physical deployment, they may monitor its progress through regular updates from the Lead Buyer and the EIC Awardee.</p> <p>They provide feedback to ensure the solution is adaptable to a broader context.</p>
Results of the pilot	<p>Observing Buyers may have access to and review the pilot outcomes. Their input focuses on scalability, interoperability, as well as potential application within their own organisations.</p> <p>They may participate in discussions on sustainability and adoption plans, previously planned and agreed with the Lead Buyer.</p>
Relation with the Lead Buyer	<p>Observing Buyers may maintain close communication with the Lead Buyer in order to ensure alignment and that their insights to refine the solution are shared with the Lead Buyer.</p> <p>They provide feedback on progress updates and support the Lead Buyer in adapting the solution to meet shared unmet needs.</p>
Relation with the selected EIC Awardee	Observing Buyers are free to engage with the selected EIC Awardee by providing feedback about the pilot.

TABLE 6: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OBSERVING BUYER.

8.3. Conflict of interest

The selected applicants (either as Lead or Observing Buyer) must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the InnoMatch activities is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

They must formally notify the InnoMatch Open Call Manager (ICLEI Europe) 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 InnoMatch Open Call Manager (ICLEI Europe) may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

8.4. Data protection during implementation

During the implementation of the InnoMatch Programme and for five years after the end of the activities, the parties signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) must keep confidential any data, documents or other material (in any form) that is identified as confidential at the MoU signing time ('confidential information'). The selected applicants may disclose confidential information to the InnoMatch consortium and to the selected reviewers, who will be bound by a specific Non-Disclosure Agreement.

8.5. Promotion of the activities

If selected to implement a pilot with the EIC Awardee, the Buyer will be required to support the EIC Awardee in promoting the pilot. This includes providing any relevant information necessary for the promotional activities carried out by the EIC Awardee.

8.6. Liability

The InnoMatch consortium and the European Commission cannot be held liable for any acts or omissions of the applicant concerning the selected sub-granted pilot implemented by the subgrantee EIC Awardees. The InnoMatch consortium shall not be liable for any defaults of any products, processes or services created in the InnoMatch "Prepare, Deploy and Assess" Programme. Including, for instance, anomalies in the functioning or performance thereof. In case any damage is caused to a third party by the Buyers, the Buyers will assume full responsibility for the damage caused. In no way will the InnoMatch Consortium be responsible for any damages caused by the subgrantee.

9. Intellectual Property Rights

9.1. InnoMatch consortium

The InnoMatch consortium itself will not retain an equity stake in any applicant's organisation, nor will it retain any Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).

9.2. EIC Awardee and Lead Buyer

According to the IPR legislation each party retains ownership of the Intellectual Property Rights attached to their background (what they bring to the project), and, regarding the foreground (what is generated during the project), the results are owned by the party that generates them.

The ownership of the joint results between the EIC Awardee and the Buyer is regulated by the MoU signed by the buyers and EIC company. The specification of what was established in the MoU will be recalled in the Action Plan signed between the two parties. Specifically, the MoU will address the background and the foreground IPR, whose contents to be developed in the pilot phase can be further specified in the Pilot Action Plan. Also regarding the licence to use the developed solution, please refer to the MoU, which regulates this aspect in compliance with the IPR legislation.

Each EIC Awardee will own the foreground it generates and also the foreground jointly generated with the Lead Buyer in the context of the pilot implementation. This is to ensure that EIC Awardees can widely exploit the newly developed solutions commercially.

As part of the Action Plan and based on each individual case, the EIC Awardee and the Lead Buyer will agree on additional certain conditions, related to the rights to use the results and licensing rights.

9.3. Observing Buyer

Observer Buyers, while not directly involved in the development of the proof-of-concept demonstration or deployment of the pilot phase, may provide support by contributing to the background. This can include contextual information, data or technical insights that can enhance the overall project without engaging hands-on activities. In this case, Background Intellectual Property rights and responsibilities will be detailed in their Letter of Commitment . This formal agreement will ensure that the Observing Buyer(s) involved understand the scope of their involvement and contributions.

Similar to the Lead Buyers, Observing Buyers may access the aggregated results, insights, and key conclusions of the pilot, previously planned and agreed with the Lead Buyer.

Any use of the foreground results concerning the developed solution will need to be agreed separately with the holders of the foreground rights, so as to ensure that intellectual property is appropriately managed and that the rights of EIC Awardees are respected and upheld.

10. Contact information

InnoMatch will provide information to the applicants via the [InnoMatch website](#), so that the information (question and answer) can be visible to all participants.

- Online Q&A in the [F6S platform](#)
- Apply via: [F6S Platform – Open Call for Public and Private Buyers](#)
- If the applicant discovers an error in a submitted application form, and if the open call deadline has not passed, the applicant may request support to open again, and/ or re-submit at: support@f6s.com.
- More info at: <https://innomatchproject.eu/open-call-buyers/>.
- For extraordinary communication needs, please contact the InnoMatch Help Desk: opencallbuyers@innomatchproject.eu.

11. Annexes

This document is part of a the OC2 documentation package provided to the applicants and consists of the following Annexes:

To be used during the application stage

- **Guidelines for Applicants** (this document)
- **Annex 1.** Application form (read only)
- **Annex 2.** Letter of Commitment (template proposal)

To be used only in case of selected buyers:

- **Annex 3.** Memorandum of Understanding
- **Annex 4.** Action Plan
- **Annex 5.** Letter of Commitment for Observing Buyers (template proposal)