



InnoMatch

Powered by EIC Innovation Procurement Programme



Open call 1 for EIC Awardee + Buyer (wave 2)

Guidelines for Applicants

November 2025



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GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Open Call 1 EIC Awardee + Buyer	An open call (OC) where an EIC Awardee (single entity) applies together with a committed Buyer (public or private entity), presenting an innovative solution, addressing a specific innovation challenge of the Buyer.
EIC Awardee	As per the general definition in the EIC Work Programme 2023, EIC Awardees are the entities “named in a Horizon Europe EIC grant agreement (for EIC Pathfinder, EIC Transition) or Horizon Europe EIC contract or investment agreement for EIC Accelerator, as well as winners of Horizon Europe EIC Prizes”. In the context of this open call, only Horizon Europe EIC Awardees who are single entities are eligible to apply.
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise as defined by the European Commission .
Applicant	An EIC Awardee (single entity) responsible for filling the open call application form and attaching the proposal(s) for the pair of EIC Awardee + Buyer.
Application	Submission of an online form to apply for the InnoMatch Call for EIC Awardee + Buyer through the F6S platform .
Proposal	A .PDF file detailing a solution (proof of concept demonstrator or a pilot), following the template provided in Annex 2 of this document. It is part of the online application.
Committed Buyer	A public or private legal entity that faces a specific innovation challenge and seeks to develop a solution that is not yet available—or not widely available—on the market. The entity’s top-level management is fully informed about and supports its participation in the InnoMatch Programme, recognizing the initiative’s strategic relevance to the

	organization's responsibilities. This commitment typically includes, but is not limited to, preliminary planning for innovation procurement, allocation of budget to potentially purchase solutions in the domain of the Proof-of-Concept (PoC) or pilot testing etc.
Innovation challenge	A refined unmet innovation need of the Buyers that represents a clear and appealing business opportunity for the EIC Awardees to propose innovative solutions for. An unmet innovation need is a specific innovation need for which a solution is not yet available or widely available on the market.
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.
Sub-Grant Agreement	A contract signed between the InnoMatch Consortium and the EIC Awardee, defining the framework of rights and obligations of the contracting parties, including but not limited to, ground rules for receiving financial support and a description of the work to be carried out.
Subgrantee	An EIC Awardee that has been selected to receive funding under the InnoMatch open call 1 EIC Awardee + Buyer.
Lump sum	The lump sum involves a predefined payment arrangement that encompasses the entire budget for a project. Lump sums are determined in advance and fixed within the Sub-Grant Agreement. Since the granting of a lump sum does not foresee the delivery of detailed financial reporting and timesheets, the use of the granted budget will be controlled by considering the completion of specified

	activities / milestones, and approved reports, related to those milestones.
Open call Manager	The InnoMatch partner responsible for organising and leading the OC1 EIC Awardee + Buyer evaluation and selection process. For this call it is F6S.
InnoMatch consortium	A group of 4 organisations who manage the InnoMatch project, financed by the European Commission (GA Nr. 101165966.), and under which the current open call for EIC Awardee + Buyer is launched and operated.

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of this document

The InnoMatch Guidelines for applicants explain the InnoMatch open call 1 for EIC Awardee + Buyer. It defines the terms and conditions to apply, including the eligibility and evaluation criteria, the financial support available, 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 5 of this document. The InnoMatch Guidelines for applicants, along with all additional application documents, must be considered by the applicants when submitting their application for the InnoMatch open call for EIC Awardee + Buyer.

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.

Finding first customers is one of the main barriers that is hampering access to 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 – development of a commercialisation strategy.
- For the buyers – development of a strategy for the adoption of the results. However, this does not necessarily mean the direct acquisition of the developed solution.

If proved successful, the same legal entity who deployed the pilot or PoC, within the InnoMatch Programme, must be able to commercialise the innovative solution.



Fig. 1: InnoMatch concept

1.3. Benefits and involvement

1.3.1. Benefits for EIC awardees and Buyers

Benefits for the EIC Awardees: InnoMatch provides funding for innovative companies, and access to early customers and financial support to pilot their solutions, helping them overcome market entry barriers and scale up.

Expected involvement from the EIC Awardees: participate in the 12-month InnoMatch Programme to deploy an innovative solution (pilot) with a committed Buyer.

Benefits for the Buyers: InnoMatch enables the committed Buyers to test free of charge cutting-edge solutions tailored to their innovation challenges, fostering efficient innovation adoption and reducing procurement risks.

Expected involvement from Buyers: support the EIC Awardee to deploy the pilot by providing in-kind contribution, and an engaged and qualified team.

1.3.2. EIC Innovation Procurement Programme

In addition to the direct InnoMatch support, the companies can benefit from the different activities and initiatives of the [EIC Innovation Procurement Programme](#), which provides opportunities for both the EIC Awardees and the Buyers. The [European Innovation Council](#)

[\(EIC\)](#) stimulates strong collaboration between EIC top-notch innovators and public or private buyers, investors, technology giants and industrial leaders to spur new partnerships, and to modernize their services for the benefit of the EU economy. Its main goal is to facilitate access of the EIC Awardees to procurement markets in Europe and at global level, ensuring increased market opportunities for these innovative SMEs and start-ups and contributing, at the same time, to their scaling up.

The EIC IPP is a crucial component of the European Innovation Council's strategy to foster European innovation. **What does this flagship initiative offer?**

- A [Community of public](#) & private buyers interested in the solutions offered by the EIC Beneficiaries.
- Assistance to enhance the capacity of public buyers to purchase innovative solutions to tackle public challenges, by providing technical support from need identification to the drafting of tender documentation, opening at the same time their procurement markets to SMEs and startups (as part of the SPIN4EIC Assistance).
- Assistance to EIC Beneficiaries to submit tenders in public and private sector procurement opportunities in Europe and at a global level (as part of the SPIN4EIC Academy).
- Access to practical insights related to innovation procurement - [EIC IPP Innovation Procurement Toolkit](#).
- A dedicated [social media group](#) for all EIC awardees and buyers interested in innovation procurement.

2. Open Call 1 EIC Awardee + Buyer: Summary (wave 2)

2.1. Objectives of OC1 EIC Awardee + Buyer

The objective of this open call is to fund the pilot testing or proof-of-concept (PoC) demonstration of innovative solutions, tailored to the buyer's needs. It will facilitate the deployment of pilots or PoCs, **pairing EIC Awardees with committed Buyers to test and validate innovative solutions in the Buyers' premises, with the aim of optimising the potential post-pilot adoption of the innovative solutions.**

The EIC Awardee applies on behalf of the pair, presenting an innovative solution that tackles a specific innovation challenge of the Buyer, identified and agreed in advance between the two parties.

- The EIC Awardee is responsible for identifying and securing a committed Buyer who is prepared to collaborate on this pilot project.
- The committed Buyer should be an organisation with a specific innovation challenge that can be addressed and solved by the EIC Awardee.

- The Buyer must be committed to hosting the pilot and actively participating in the testing and validation process.

If the proposal is selected for funding, each pair of EIC Awardee + Buyer will enter the InnoMatch “Prepare, Deploy and Assess” Programme – see Fig. 2 below. The pair is expected to collaborate for a period of up to 12 months to demonstrate or test the solution proposed by the EIC Awardee to address the innovation challenge of the Buyer. The solution will be tested in a real environment to assess its functionality and effectiveness. **There is no restriction in regard to the industry sectors of the EIC Awardees and/or the Buyers.**

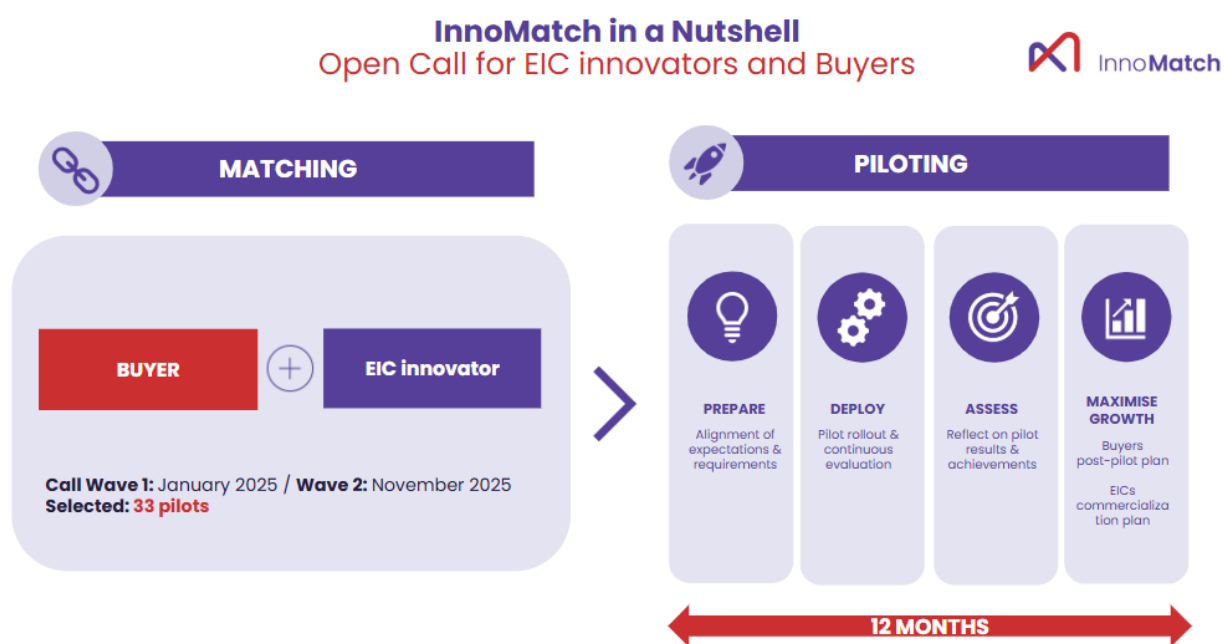


Fig. 2: InnoMatch open call for EIC Awardee + Buyer in a nutshell

2.2. Summary of OC1 EIC Awardee + Buyer

The table below presents a summary of the most important components of the current open call OC1: EIC Awardee + Buyer.

Table 1. Open call 1: EIC Awardee + Buyer wave 2 summary

Open call details	Description
Open call Application form	The InnoMatch Application form can only be filled in and submitted online here. The EIC Awardee is the applicant, and is responsible for filling

	the application and attaching the proposal for the pair of EIC Awardee + committed Buyer.
Open call concept	An EIC Awardee applies, and if selected, receives funding to deploy a pilot or proof-of-concept, presenting an innovative solution, answering a specific innovation challenge, while being supported by the owner of the innovation challenge – a committed Buyer.
Open call sectors	Applications from any industry sector are welcomed and eligible for funding.
Activities to be funded	Pilot testing or proof-of-concept demonstration implemented by the selected EIC Awardee, supported by, and in the premises of the committed Buyer (public or private entity).
Funding available	Up to 60.000 Euro per Subgrantee (EIC Awardee). If selected, the EIC Awardee receives the grant to implement the pilot or proof of concept demonstration.
Type of funding	Lump sum grant (equity-free).
Number of applicants to be selected	This open call will select up to 12 applicants .
Eligible candidates	EIC Awardees who are single entities, funded by any of the Horizon Europe Programme initiatives: EIC Transition, EIC Pathfinder, EIC Accelerator, EIC Prizes.
Duration of the funded activities & implementation phases	The pilots or proof of concept demonstrations must be implemented for a period 6 months , within the scope of the 12-month InnoMatch Programme.
Payment schedule	Payments will be made following a lump sum scheme and against the achievement of specific milestones, and the approval of related reports.

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.

2.3. Timeline of OC1: EIC Awardee + Buyer

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.

Table 2. Timeline of the open call 1: EIC Awardee + Buyer wave 2

Description	Tentative dates
Open call duration	This open call will be opened to receive applications from pairs (EIC Awardee + Buyer) for 3 (three) months, starting on November 3rd, 2025.
Open call deadline	This open call closes on xxxxxx, 17.00 CEST (Brussels time).
Eligibility check	February 2026.
Evaluation and selection	April 2026.
Contracting phase	May/June 2026.

3. Financial support and origin of funds

3.1. Origin of funds

All selected applicants (EIC Awardees) will sign a Sub-Grant Agreement with InnoMatch. The funds attached to the Sub-Grant Agreement come directly from the funds of the European Project InnoMatch, funded by the European Innovation Council (EIC) and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA), and remain, therefore, property of the EU until the payment of the balance, whose management rights have been transferred to the project partners in InnoMatch via European Commission Grant Agreement Number 101165966. As it can be seen in the Sub-Grant Agreement template (Annex 4), this relationship between the selected applicants and the European Commission through the InnoMatch project carries a set of obligations to the Subgrantees with the European Commission. It is the task of the Subgrantees to accomplish them, and of InnoMatch to inform about them.

3.2. Type of financial support & funding limit

3.2.1. Financial support

The InnoMatch funding is results-driven, provided as a lump sum. As such, there is no need for a traditional administrative justification system. You will be asked to provide cost estimations per activity. The cost estimations must be an approximation of your actual costs:

- They are subject to the same eligibility rules as in actual costs grants;
- They must be in line with your normal practices;
- They must be reasonable / non-excessive;
- They must be in line with and necessary for your proposed activities.

Be aware that the selected applicant (EIC Awardee) still needs to comply with financial record-keeping obligations outside the InnoMatch Sub-Grant Agreement, if any (e.g., under national law or internal procedures).

3.2.2. Funding limit

- **The maximum InnoMatch grant available is up to €60,000.** If selected, an EIC Awardee can receive up to this amount, based on the budget requested in the Proposal Template (Annex 2).
- **Additional Funding:** applicants may indicate in their Proposal, and co-finance, any additional costs related to the pilot implementation, that is beyond the maximum InnoMatch grant available (up to €60,000). However, the timeplan of the co-funded / additionally funded activities must comply with the timeline of the InnoMatch

Programme. The origin of the additional funding must be described in detail in the Proposal (Annex 2).

Applicants must focus on detailing the pilot budget that will be assessed and scored by evaluators on the basis of its sound distribution and alignment with the proposed activities, and value for money. Additional guidance is provided in the Proposal template (Annex 2).

Applicants must ensure, and will be asked to provide their consent, that no part of the activities covered by the InnoMatch grant is financed by other EU funding programs.

3.3. Type of expenses that qualify for the financial support

The total amount requested by the applicant must not exceed €60.000, and can cover different types of costs needed to implement the foreseen activities. For example:

- Direct personnel costs (work performed according to the presented Action Plan for the pilot / PoC deployment).
- Participation in external events and training.
- Direct purchase costs (for example, travel for meetings with the InnoMatch team, buyers and events/conferences).
- Direct subcontracting costs in line with the project objectives (for example, legal services, market surveys, renting space for meetings, etc.).
- Equipment, software, hardware and data justified for the needs of the project implementation.
- Other goods, works and services justified for the needs of the project.
- Audio & visual materials for promotion of the activities and the InnoMatch project.

4. Eligibility

All applicants must comply with the requirements described in this section and subsections to be considered eligible for the InnoMatch open call 1 EIC Awardee + Buyer, wave 2.

4.1. Eligible entities

The eligible applicants under this open call must be:

- Single legal entities who are EIC Awardees, as per the definition in the [EIC Work Programme 2023](#), namely **Horizon Europe “beneficiaries of the EIC Pathfinder, EIC Transition or EIC contract or investment agreement for EIC Accelerator, as well as winners of EIC Prizes”**.

- Entities that are able to facilitate the commercial exploitation of the solution, in case the pilot is successful, and to bring the innovation to the market.

4.2. Eligible sectors

EIC Awardees must team up with public or private Buyers, and can apply with a solution to be piloted in any sector.

4.3. Buyers' eligibility

In order for the application to be eligible, the Buyers that the EIC Awardee applies in pair with, must be:

- Public body (according to the definition given in Directive 2014/24/EU) or private body (SME or large corporation).
- **At least 40% of all committed buyers involved in the programme must be public¹. Therefore, this open call (OC1 wave2) will be selecting with preference applications of EIC awardees paired with public buyers. At least 60% (or at least 7 applications) of all applications to be selected in this open call will be of an EIC awardee paired with a public buyer.**
- Buyers from any country are eligible.
- One Buyer can commit to up to two (2) proposals, with different EIC Awardees. Each proposal must be addressing a different innovation challenge of the Buyer.
- The Buyer has to present a **Letter of commitment in English (Annex 3)**, signed by its official representative (top management), and declaring its commitment to support the applicant (EIC Awardee) in case the proposal is selected. It must be attached to the application form by the applicant (EIC Awardee) at application stage.

4.4. Number of proposals and multiple submission

Only one proposal per legal entity (EIC Awardee) can be funded within the entire duration of InnoMatch.

4.4.1. Number of proposals

¹ Horizon Europe, Support to test EIC innovations for public and private procurers ([HORIZON-EIC-2023-INNOVPRO-01](https://ec.europa.eu/horizon-europe/en/horizon-eic-2023-innovpro-01))

- **An EIC Awardee can submit up to 2 proposals** (within one online application form) for this open call, paired with different committed Buyers, subject to addressing different innovation challenges of the Buyers and/or in different sectors.
- However, only one of them, the best-scored proposal, can be funded.

4.4.2. Multiple submission

- An applicant can attach up to two (2) separate proposals in the online application form on the F6S platform.
- If the applicant plans to submit two (2) proposals, both of them must be attached in the same online application form, and not in two different online application forms. If the proposals are submitted separately, in two different online application forms, only the proposal in the application submitted last (timestamp of the system) will enter into the evaluation process.
- In the case of more than 1 submission of the same online application form, only the last submission received (timestamp of the system) will enter into the evaluation process, the rest being declared as non-eligible without the right for an appeal.
- If any of the up to 2 proposals attached to the online application form, is declared non-eligible or fails to reach the thresholds of the evaluation, the other versions of the proposal submitted earlier will not be considered for evaluation in any case.

4.5. Documentation format & requisites

Any document requested in any of the phases must be submitted by the applicant (the EIC Awardee) electronically in **.PDF format without restrictions for printing**.

All applicants (EIC Awardees) must use qualified digital signatures exclusively in all documents where this is required. .

- A qualified electronic signature is an advanced electronic signature which is additionally: created by a qualified signature creation device (QSCD); and is based on a qualified certificate for electronic signatures.
- Applicants may use any Digital Signature Services that support qualified digital signatures. The [European Commission proposes a demo of DSS \(Digital Signature Services\)](#), a tool enabling, among other features, the signature of documents. More information about qualified digital signatures, and how to use it, is available [here](#).
- Images (photographs and/or digital scans) of physical signatures will not be accepted.

4.6. Language of the open call

English is the official language for the InnoMatch open call 1 EIC Awardee + Buyer. Proposals submitted in any other language will be deemed ineligible and will not be evaluated.

English is also the official language to be used to communicate with the InnoMatch consortium during the whole execution of the InnoMatch programme, for example in meetings, for preparing the related reports, and other administrative documents.

4.8. Additional conditions

In addition, the following conditions apply:

- The applicants should not:
 - have convictions for fraudulent behaviour, other financial irregularities, unethical or illegal business practices.
 - have been declared bankrupt or have initiated bankruptcy procedures.
 - be under liquidation or an enterprise under difficulty according to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18
 - be excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law, or by a decision of both national or EU authority
- Proposals from Linked SMEs must demonstrate that there is no risk of double funding. The fundamental principle underpinning the rules for public expenditure in the EU states that no costs for the same activity can be funded twice from the EU budget, as defined in the Article 111 of Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation.
- Applicants who do not accept the InnoMatch open call terms and conditions listed in the online application form will be declared non-eligible.

5. Application preparation & submission

The EIC Awardee is the applicant and is responsible to fill the application form on behalf of the pair of EIC Awardee + committed Buyer. The EIC Awardee is the leader of the process and their paired committed Buyer does not need to be registered on the F6S platform.

5.1. Application preparation

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

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

- [Guidelines for applicants – this document](#)
- Annex 1 – Application Form (read only document)
- Annex 2 – Proposal template
- Annex 3 – Letter of commitment from the Buyer (template)

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

- Annex 4 – Sub-Grant Agreement template
- Annex 5 – Action Plan template
- Annex 6– Memorandum of understanding (template)
- Annex 7 – Declaration of Honour (DoH)
- Annex 8 – Bank Account Information
- Annex 9 – SME Declaration

Step 2: Fill in the application form on the [F6S platform](#).

- Answer all mandatory questions, attach the required documents (attachments), and submit the application.
- Be concrete and concise. Each proposal shall not exceed the page limits indicated in the Proposal Template (Annex 2).
- 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 submission

- Only proposals submitted through the official open call submission tool – the F6S platform, and within the Call duration will be accepted. Proposals submitted by any other means will not be evaluated:
 1. Go to the F6S platform at f6s.com.
 2. Choose an option to register – via Google, via LinkedIn, via Facebook, via Email.
 3. Start using the F6S platform and fill-in your [InnoMatch application form](#).
 4. You can delete your profile anytime you want, after the end of the InnoMatch project.
- Only the requested documentation included in the online application will be considered by the evaluators. It will be composed by an online form (set of questions) to be completed directly in the platform, and attachments – up to two (2) Proposal

template(s) (Annex 2), and any other additional documents that might be required in the process. The information provided should be actual, true and complete and should allow the assessment of the proposal.

- 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

6. Evaluation and selection

The evaluation process has two main stages:

1. **Eligibility verification** – performed internally, by the InnoMatch consortium.
2. **Remote (external) evaluation** – performed by external experts, outside the InnoMatch consortium.

6.1. Eligibility verification

An eligibility verification will be performed by the InnoMatch consortium. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the accuracy of all fields within the online form and the attached proposal. Any inclusion of erroneous information may result in the rejection of the proposal on the grounds of ineligibility. In cases where a proposal is deemed ineligible, applicants will be promptly notified of its status, and can submit a complaint as described in Section 7 below.

The eligibility check will verify whether:

- The Applicant is an EIC Awardee, as described in Section 4.
- The applicant has a PIC number.
- The applicant has a legal VAT number or equivalent.
- The applicant declares to not have received funding for this or very similar activity.
- The applicant accepts the InnoMatch open call Terms and conditions.
- All required attachments are submitted:
 - Proposal template(s) (Annex 2)
 - Letter of commitment from the Buyer for each proposal (Annex 3)
 - Any other document(s) that might be required in the process.

- Applicants used the InnoMatch Proposal template (Annex 2). Other template/ document structure will be automatically disqualified.
- The submitted application, and all relevant attachments, are filled in English.
- The application form is submitted within the required deadline of the open call.
- The total requested funding from InnoMatch does not exceed €60.000.

After an eligibility check, the shortlisted applications will proceed to external (remote) evaluation.

6.2. Remote evaluation

Each of the proposals 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 proposals will be evaluated according to the 4 main evaluation criteria described in Table 3 below. These criteria provide a balanced assessment framework for both applicants and evaluators. At the end of this phase, the proposals will be ranked based on their overall weighted score.

Table 3. InnoMatch evaluation criteria

Criterion	Description	Weight of the criterion
1.Alignment & Impact	Applications must align with the open call objectives. Solutions must be focused on solving the targeted innovation challenge of the Buyer. The applicant must explain how well the proposed solution addresses the identified innovation challenge of the committed Buyer in a tailored and effective manner. The expected impact of the solution must be assessed, including how it impacts societal challenges.	20%
2.Excellence	Applications must demonstrate the technical soundness of the proposed solution related to the concrete challenge of the buyer it aims to solve. The applicants must elaborate on its feasibility, scalability, and present an overall measurement model.	20%

3. Commitment	The applicant has to explain how the challenge aligns with their business strategy and their interest in pursuing commercialization after pilot end. Additionally, the application must show the strong commitment of the Buyer to a potential post-pilot adoption, in case the solution is successful. <i>This commitment typically includes, but is not limited to:</i> • <i>preliminary planning for innovation procurement: for example need identification and the launch of an open market consultation to explore possible innovative solutions available on the market</i> • <i>allocation of budget to potentially purchase solutions in the domain of the Proof-of-Concept (PoC) or pilot testing etc.</i> The applicant, and their committed Buyer, must demonstrate a credible commitment to full participation throughout the project to prevent any drop-outs. Moreover, the Buyer should provide evidence of the in-kind contribution through the involvement of staff from the procurement department in the pilot IM programme. <i>Complementarity and synergies through the participation in other activities of the EIC Innovation Procurement Programme (e.g. assistance to EIC Awardees, matchmaking events etc.) or other relevant EIC BAS services (either of the Buyer or the EIC Awardee, or both) will be considered as an advantage.</i>	40%
4. Team & Implementation	Applicants must show evidence that the team has the necessary skills, infrastructure and management experience to implement the pilot in the defined timescale and budget, and to further facilitate the commercial exploitation of the solution.	20%

The percentage included in the criteria definition corresponds to the weight of each item in the overall score. The overall score per evaluation criterion will be between 0 and 5, with up to two decimal places allowed (standard rounding rules apply, i.e. if the third decimal place is 1-4, the number will be rounded down, but if it is 5-9, it will be rounded up). The minimum score is 3 (out of 5) in each criterion. The overall default threshold, considering the sum of the individual scores is 15 (out of 20 points) in order for the proposal to be considered for funding. That means if a proposal receives less than 3 in one criterion or less than 15 in the overall score, it is automatically rejected. **All proposals over the threshold will be then ranked based on their overall weighted score.**

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

Table 4. InnoMatch scores description

Score rate	Meaning	Description
0	Proposal fails	Proposal 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 proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
3	Good	The proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present.
4	Very good	The proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
5	Excellent	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

6.3. Quality review, Consensus & Interviews

6.3.1. Quality review (from the IM Selection Committee)

At the end of the evaluation, the scores and the justifications, provided by the external evaluators, will be reviewed by the open call manager (F6S).

EIC officials might be invited to follow the work as observers at any stage of the process if requested by any of the participants.

6.3.2. Consensus process

The applications that are scored above the threshold, and for which there is a significant divergence in the scores provided by the two evaluators, will be identified. Consensus meetings will be organised to ensure scores and comments are agreed upon by the two evaluators.

In case of doubts, need for additional clarifications, or ties the InnoMatch Selection Committee will have the option to interview the applicants. The interview aims to better understand the project concept, team skills & competence, capacity and willingness to exploit the results. If during the interview applicants do not commit to what has been presented in the application form, these will be declassified.

The scores, as revised based on the consensus and/or the interviews, will be the ones used for the final ranking of the applications.

6.4. Ranking and selection

At the end of the evaluation process, the proposals will be ranked taking into account the revised scores from the consensus process. The criteria for the ranking of the proposals will follow the rules below:

- **Rule 1:** The proposals will be ranked based on their overall score.
- **Rule 2:** In case following Rule 1 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score on the Commitment criterion, with priority given to proposals where the pilot / PoC is co-funded (over the available InnoMatch grant of up to €60,000) by the applicant and/or other sources.
- **Rule 3:** In case following Rule 2 there are proposals in the same position, priority will be given to proposals that have a higher score on the Team & Implementation criterion.

6.5. Reserve list

At the end of the evaluation phase, up to twelve (12) top-ranked proposals will be selected for funding, as long as they are above the threshold fixed in Sub-section 6.2.

The other proposals will remain in a reserve list in case a selected proposal fails to sign the Sub-grant Agreement, the Declaration of Honour, and/or due to any other reason cannot complete the contracting process successfully.

6.6. Changes in the open call

InnoMatch may conclude that there are not enough proposals 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 proposals than declared in this document. This conclusion is obligatory if not enough proposals score above the threshold fixed in Sub-section 6.2.

InnoMatch reserves the right to cancel the open call 1 EIC Awardee + Buyer 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.

6.7. 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 negotiation 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.

7. Appeal procedure

Within three (3) working days after receiving the results from the eligibility check and/or the evaluation (Evaluation Summary Reports), declaring the application as non-eligible and/or not applicable for funding, the applicant may submit a request for redress if they believe the results of the eligibility checks have not been correctly applied, or if they feel that there has been a shortcoming in the way their proposal has been evaluated that may have affected the final decision on whether to receive funding. A complaint should be drawn up in English and submitted by email at info@innomatchproject.eu

Any complaint made should include the following:

- Contact details.
- The subject of the complaint.
- Information and evidence regarding the alleged breach.
- Complaints must be submitted by the SME's legal representative that has also submitted the application.
- Anonymous complaints or those not providing the mentioned information will not be considered.

The InnoMatch Selection Committee will review the complaint and will recommend an appropriate course of action. If there is clear evidence of a shortcoming that could affect the eventual funding decision, it is possible that all or part of the proposal will be re-evaluated.

Please note:

- **This procedure only concerns the evaluation and/or eligibility checking process.** The InnoMatch Consortium will not call into question the scientific or technical judgement of appropriately qualified experts.
- A re-evaluation will only be carried out if there is evidence of a shortcoming that affects the final decision on whether to fund an applicant or not. This means, for example, that a problem relating to one evaluation criterion will not lead to a re-evaluation if a proposal has failed anyway on other criteria.
- The evaluation score following any re-evaluation will be regarded as definitive. It may be lower than the original score.
- Only one request for redress per application will be considered.

In case a proposal under the redress procedure is re-evaluated and the new evaluation score is higher, it will be compared with the lowest ranking of the funded proposals. The comparison will use the ranking rules as described in Sub-section 6.4. In case the proposal under the redress procedure ranks higher, it will be funded.

8. Contracting

8.1. Contract preparation

After the open call evaluation conclusion and application selection, the InnoMatch coordinator will start the contract preparation (Sub-Grant Agreement, and its respective annexes) with an administrative and financial checking (and potentially into technical or ethical/security negotiations, based on the evaluators' comments) in collaboration with each EIC Awardee, and the committed Buyer, where needed. Contract preparation will be conducted based on a case-by-case approach, a teleconference may be needed for clarification.

The objective of the contract preparation is fulfilling the legal requirements between the InnoMatch Consortium and the selected applicants (EIC Awardee) under this open call. The items covered will be:

1. Inclusion of the comments (if any) in the Evaluation Summary Report of the proposals and mapping to the Sub-Grant Agreement.
2. The following documents will be required from the EIC Awardee (when applicable):
 - **Legal existence:** Organisation Register, Official Gazette or another official document per country showing the name of the organisation, the legal address and registration number and a copy of a document proving VAT registration (in case the VAT number does not show on the registration extract or its equivalent).
 - **Declaration of honour:** Document that ensures that the sub-grantee complies with the rules and is not in a situation that would exclude it from receiving EU funding.
 - **Bank account information:** The account where the funds will be transferred will be indicated via a form signed by the Subgrantee representative and the bank representative. The account should be a business bank account.
 - **SME declaration:** A self-assessment document confirming that the EIC Awardee complies with the SME definition (if applicable).
 - **Know Your Customer (KYC) check: Proof of ID, and Proof of Residence** will be required for the director of the EIC Awardee (Subgrantee), a template is to be additionally provided, before to sign the Sub-Grant Agreement.

The request, by InnoMatch coordinator, for the above documentation will be done within the deadlines. In general, this phase should be concluded within 4 (four) weeks, covering the submission of all Know Your Customer (KYC) check related documents, and all documents related to the contracting (such as the SME declaration, Declaration of honour, etc). An additional week may be provided by the InnoMatch coordinator in case of significant

reasoning. **In case this phase has not been concluded within the above period, the proposal can be rejected and the next proposal in the ranking list can be invited.**

8.2. Contract signature

In the Preparation phase (see Section 9 below), a Sub-Grant Agreement (SGA), and its respective annexes must be completed and signed.

The SGA (Annex 4), must be signed between (1) the InnoMatch coordinator (F6S) on behalf of the InnoMatch consortium, and (2) the selected Subgrantee (the EIC Awardee).

The first payment (40%) will be done only after the Pilot Action Plan (annex to the SGA) is submitted by the EIC awardee, and approved by InnoMatch.

9. InnoMatch “Prepare, Deploy and Assess” Programme

The selected applicants will enter the InnoMatch “Prepare, Deploy and Assess” Programme. To maximise the successful implementation of the pilots, the InnoMatch consortium will guide, structure, and monitor the pilots / PoCs throughout the three main phases of the implementation, as shown in the table below.

Table 5. InnoMatch “Prepare, Deploy and Assess” Programme phases

Implementation Phase	Duration	Description of the main activities
Preparation	up to 2 months	• The Sub-Grant Agreement (SGA) will be signed upon the start of this phase. • In the next two months the selected company will finalise the Pilot Action Plan. together with their committed Buyer, specifying KPIs and the timeline for the solution deployment, among others. • During those first two months of the Programme the selected company and their committed Buyer will finalise as well the Memorandum of understanding (MoU), to be signed between the two parties.

Deployment	up to 6 months	• Official start of the pilot implementation: pilots to be conducted within the services or premises of the Buyer, and with the support from a dedicated team on the Buyer's side. • Monitoring of the pilot progress: bi-monthly check-ins on the progress. • Business support & mentoring. • Preparation of an interim report.
Assessment	up to 4 months	• Preparation of a Validation Report: evaluation of the success of each pilot, the KPI fulfillment. With the involvement of the Buyer. • Impact & sustainability survey. • Post – Pilot Adoption Plan by the Buyer. • Commercialisation Plan by the EIC Awardee.

Fig. 3. InnoMatch Pilot implementation

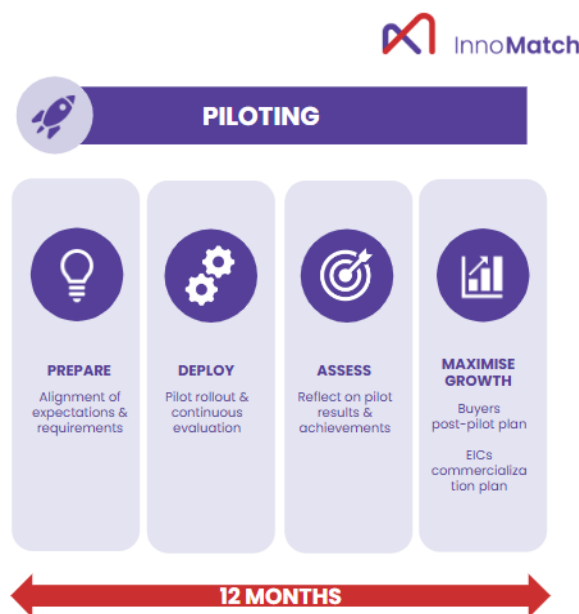


FIG InnoMatch Programme

9.1. Milestones & reporting

Each selected EIC Awardee is expected to achieve specific milestones. A report related to each milestone must be submitted by the selected EIC Awardee, supported by the committed Buyer and approved by the InnoMatch Assessment Committee, based on concrete results achieved (see the table with the tentative dates below).

The dates can be subject to change in case of any modifications in the InnoMatch project's schedule.

Table 6. Pilot implementation milestones tentative dates

Milestone	Due date	Description
Report: Preparation phase	June / July 2026	Report containing a defined Action Plan with clear KPIs and timeline for the Deployment phase.
Report: Deployment phase	January / February 2027	Report describing the implementation of the activities, including sessions held, the status of the pilot deployment and results achieved at this stage. It must indicate and justify any major deviations from the original plan and mitigation measures and suggested improvements. The report will also comprise a first version of the Post Pilot Adoption Plan.
Final report: Assessment phase	May / June 2027	Report presenting an overview of the implementation of the activities, including sessions held, pilot deployed status, and results achieved. It must include an evaluation by the Buyer team of whether the solution achieved the initial objectives and KPIs set, as per the Action Plan (approved Validation report). The report will comprise the final version of the Post Pilot Adoption Plan.

In case the applicant does not submit the requested documentation / reports within the agreed deadline, the payment can be rejected.

9.2. Assessment of successful completion of pilots / PoCs

InnoMatch Assessment Committee, consisting of InnoMatch project mentors, will evaluate the work and progress of the implemented pilot after each phase based on the reports that must be submitted within the defined deadlines.

Two weeks after the submission of each report, an online review meeting will take place via a teleconference platform (e.g. Zoom). Each EIC Awardee will make a presentation of the work done, analyse their progress and answer questions from the InnoMatch Assessment Committee. The committed Buyer, supporting each pilot deployment, will be invited to participate. EIC officials might be invited to follow the work as observers at any stage of the process. According to their observers role and ensuring fair treatment and transparency, the EIC officials will not have any influence on the decisions to be made during the process.

After each online review, the EIC Awardees will receive an assessment report, including comments and potential recommendations. The assessment report will also state if the reports are accepted or not.

9.3. Payment schedule

Open call 1 EIC Awardee + Buyer has established the maximum funding limit that a selected applicant (EIC Awardee) can receive, which is up to €60.000 in the form of a lump sum.

The funding is to be received in three installments. Getting the funding is associated with the successful completion of initially agreed milestones, and the submission of a report. Only after the report for each phase is approved by the InnoMatch Assessment Committee, the payment will be ordered.

A summary of funding support and indicative payment schedule is presented in the table below. The dates can be subject to change in case of any modifications in the InnoMatch project's schedule.

Table 7. InnoMatch indicative payment schedule

Action	Milestone	Payment trigger	Expected payment date	Amount
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Preparation phase	Signed SGA + completed and approved Action plan + (In the best case the MoU between the EIC Awardee and the Buyer is to be signed by that time as well)	Acceptance of the submitted deliverable by the InnoMatch Assessment Board	September 2026	40% of the total requested funding for the pilot
Deployment phase	Report after the Deployment phase	Acceptance of the submitted deliverable by the InnoMatch Assessment Board	April 2027	40% of the total requested funding for the pilot
Assessment phase	Final report	Acceptance of the submitted deliverable by the InnoMatch Assessment Board	August 2027	20% of the total requested funding for the pilot

On acceptance of the reports, the EIC Awardees will be requested to send a Financial Statement (template to be provided by InnoMatch) requesting the amount for the corresponding phase. Payments will be released no later than thirty (30) calendar days after the InnoMatch Consortium receives the financial statement.

In the event of rejection of reports or unsatisfactory review, the InnoMatch Consortium retains the prerogative to remove an EIC Awardee from the InnoMatch Programme without remittance of the corresponding payment and before proceeding to the subsequent phase. A solitary opportunity for resubmission of the rejected deliverable shall be granted within the timeframe delineated by the consortium. Thus, being granted advancement to the first phase does not inherently guarantee progression to the second phase if the executed work fails to meet the anticipated standards.

10. Responsibilities of the Subgrantees

The selected applicants are indirect beneficiaries of European Commission funding. As such, they are responsible for the proper use of the funding and ensure that the recipients comply with obligations under Horizon Europe. Please note that the obligations described here are not binding and may be modified, refined or additional obligations may be inserted during the negotiation phase if needed.

10.1. Conflict of interest

Applicants shall not have any actual or/and potential conflict of interest with the InnoMatch selection process and during the project implementation; and between the EIC companies/applicants and the committed Buyers.

The selected applicants 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 consortium 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 consortium may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

All cases of conflict of interest will be assessed case by case. In particular, applicants cannot be Innomatch consortium partners or affiliated entities nor their employees or co-operators 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.

10.2. Ethical issues

InnoMatch complies with the fundamental ethical issues particularly those outlined in the “European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity”.

- All applicants must submit a self-assessment ethics questionnaire, available in the Proposal Template.
- If the applicant confirms the existence of potential ethical issues, they must contact the InnoMatch Helpdesk for guidance, as required.

- The InnoMatch will verify the declaration's consistency with the application contents and may contact applicants to resolve any ethical issues.
- Applications that fail to properly address ethical issues or inadequately deal with privacy aspects will be rejected.

10.3. Data protection

In order to process and evaluate applications, and manage project implementation, the InnoMatch consortium will need to collect Personal and Industrial Data.

- F6S Network Ireland Limited, will act as Data Controller for data submitted through the F6S platform for these purposes. Please see our 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 to <https://www.f6s.com/privacy-policy> 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.
- Note that 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 their conclusion.

10.4. Confidentiality

Confidentiality obligations:

- Selected applicants are required to maintain confidential any project data, documents, invoices and other materials (in any form) during the implementation of the activities and for 5 years after project completion.
- This confidentiality period can be extended by agreement with the EC and the InnoMatch consortium.
- Information shared during the project, whether written or spoken, is only considered confidential if the InnoMatch agrees and confirms it in writing within 15 days.
- Confidential information must only be used for project implementation, unless otherwise agreed upon.

- Any information shared during the application stage will be treated as confidential.

10.5. Promotion of the action and visibility of the EU funding

The Subgrantee must promote the funded project (pilot), the InnoMatch project and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner and to highlight the financial support of the EC.

10.6. Financial audits and controls

The EC may, at any time during the implementation of the project (pilot) and up to five years after the end of the project (pilot), arrange for a check and review to be carried out, by external auditors, or by the EC services themselves, including the European Anti-Fraud office (OLAF). The procedure shall be deemed to be initiated on the date of receipt of the relevant letter sent by the EC.

There will be no financial checks, reviews, or audits to check costs, since beneficiaries have no obligation to document the costs incurred for the action. Checks, reviews, and audits will focus on the technical implementation of the action.

11. Intellectual Property Rights

11.1. 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).

11.2. EIC Awardee and Buyer

The ownership of the results between the EIC Awardee and the Buyer is regulated by the MoU, signed between the two parties.

The general rules are that 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.

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

Based on each individual case, the EIC Awardee and the Buyer will agree on additional certain conditions, related to the rights to use the results and licensing rights.

11.3. Originality of the proposals

It is required that proposals submitted are based on the original situations of the applicants and that their foreseen developments are free from third-party rights. InnoMatch consortium is not obliged to verify the authenticity of the ownership of the foreseen products/ services. Any issues delivered from third-party claims that arise as a result of the sub-granted projects/pilots are the sole responsibility of the Subgrantees.

11.4. Liability

The InnoMatch consortium and the European Commission (EISMEA) cannot be held liable for any acts or omissions of the applicant in relation to the selected sub-granted project/pilot implemented by the Subgrantees. The InnoMatch consortium and EISMEA shall not be liable for any defaults of any products, processes or services created in the sub-granted project/pilot. Including, for instance, anomalies in the functioning or performance thereof. In case any damage is caused to a third party by the Subgrantee, the Subgrantee will assume full responsibility for the damage caused. In no way will the InnoMatch consortium (or EISMEA) be responsible for any damages caused by the Subgrantee.

The European Commission (EISMEA) can not be held liable for any acts and omissions at any stage of this process (selecting the proposals and awarding the grants, signing the agreements with the EIC Awardees etc.) or at the stage of the PoCs/Pilot tests implementations by the selected EIC Awardees (including but not limited to the carrying out of the grants awarded by Innomatch).

12. Contact information

- InnoMatch will provide information to the applicants, in regard to this open call, via the [Discussion Board on the F6S platform](#), so that the information (question and answer) can be visible to all participants.
- Apply via the application tool - [F6S platform](#).
- For any issue concerning the F6S platform, please write to: support@f6s.com.
- More info at the [InnoMatch website](#).

- For extraordinary communication needs, please use the InnoMatch official email address: info@innomatchproject.eu.

Annexes

- Annex 1** – Application Form (read only document)
- Annex 2** – Proposal template
- Annex 3** – Letter of commitment from the Buyer (template)
- Annex 4** – Sub-Grant Agreement (template)
- Annex 5** – Action Plan (template)
- Annex 6** – Memorandum of understanding (template)
- Annex 7** – Declaration of Honour (template)
- Annex 8** – Bank Account Information (template)
- Annex 9** – SME Declaration (template)