OPEN CALL ANALYSIS

EUROPEAN PRIZE FOR WOMEN INNOVATORS 2027

Women Innovators, Rising Innovators and EIT Women Leadership: nine recognition prizes of €20,000 to €100,000 paid to women founders as natural persons

EUnita strategic translation

The European Prize for Women Innovators pays nine prizes, three in each of three categories, to women who founded or co-founded a company and apply in their own name. It is a recognition prize, not a grant: the money goes to the winner as a person after the award ceremony; there is no project to carry out. Women Innovators pays €100,000, €70,000 and €50,000; Rising Innovators (born on or after 1 January 1991) and EIT Women Leadership (a direct link to the EIT Community) pay €50,000, €30,000 and €20,000 each. A jury scores each application from 0 to 10 on breakthrough innovation, impact and inspiration, using a Part B of up to 15 pages and a video of up to 90 seconds. The deadline is 1 December 2026, 17:00 CET. A company registered during 2025 may be eligible for the next edition; one registered in 2026 would not.

WOMEN INNOVATORS PRIZE ANALYSIS

Fit assessment | Sources | What it funds | Boundaries | Budget & competition | Funded before | Who should apply | Eligibility | Money | Evaluation | Application & timeline | Risks | Recommendations

Deadline: 1 December 2026, 17:00 CET (18:00 in Romania) | Award ceremony planned for June 2027 | Next edition: Rules of Contest not published

Call budget: €420,000 for nine prizes (Derived estimate) | Women Innovators: €100,000, €70,000, €50,000 | Rising Innovators and EIT Women Leadership: €50,000, €30,000, €20,000 each | A prize paid to a person, not a grant

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Analysis date: 18 November 2026

*This analysis interprets the official call documentation for applicants. It is not legal advice. The official texts are the Rules of Contest (V1.0, 2 September 2026) for the calls HORIZON-EIC-2026-PRIZE-WIP and HORIZON-EIT-2026-PRIZE-WIP, the Funding & Tenders Portal topic pages, the EIC Work Programme 2026 (version of 17 June 2026) and the EIC Work Programme 2027, the EIC prize page and its FAQ, checked on 18 November 2026; where this analysis and an official text differ, the official text prevails. Labels used: **Confirmed** (stated in an official source), **EUnita interpretation** (our reading or recommendation), **Derived estimate** (our arithmetic on official figures).*

1. Decision summary: is this call for you?

The European Prize for Women Innovators 2027 is a set of nine recognition prizes, three in each of three categories, awarded to women who founded or co-founded a company and who apply in their own name. It is organised by the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) in coordination with the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT), which funds and manages the EIT Women Leadership category. The call is open on the Funding & Tenders Portal and closes on 1 December 2026 at 17:00 CET (18:00 in Romania). The Rules of Contest say that call deadlines cannot be extended. Three Portal topics share one set of Rules of Contest, one set of award criteria and one deadline; each has its own prizes and budget. The prize is paid to the winner as a natural person, not to her company, and it is not a grant: there is no project to carry out and no consortium, because joint applications are rejected.

Item	Position	Source
Scheme	European Prize for Women Innovators 2027, a recognition prize. Organised by EISMEA in coordination with the EIT; the winners are chosen by an independent expert jury	Rules of Contest pp. 4–6; Work Programme 2026, section IX.1
Portal topics and status	Three topics: HORIZON-EIC-2026-PRIZE-WIP (Women Innovators), HORIZON-EIC-2026-PRIZE-WIP-RisingInnovators (Rising Innovators) and HORIZON-EIT-2026-PRIZE-WIP-LEADERSHIP (EIT Women Leadership). Status “Open For Submission” on 18 November 2026; opened 2 September 2026; single-stage	Portal topic pages and data files
Deadline	1 December 2026, 17:00 CET (Brussels). Derived estimate: 16:00 UTC, 18:00 in Romania. Call deadlines cannot be extended	Rules of Contest s. 4 p. 6, s. 13 p. 17
Prizes	Women Innovators: €100,000, €70,000 and €50,000. Rising Innovators: €50,000, €30,000 and €20,000. EIT Women Leadership: €50,000, €30,000 and €20,000. Three prizes in each category	Rules of Contest s. 3 p. 6
Budget	Portal lines of €220,000, €100,000 and €100,000. Derived estimate: €420,000 for nine prizes	Portal topic pages
Who can apply	A woman, as a natural person with her own PIC, legally residing in an EU Member State or a country associated to Horizon Europe, founder or co-founder of a company registered before 1 January 2025 and established in such a country. One category only; no joint applications. Countries negotiating association: only if the agreement applies before the award (fn 19)	Rules of Contest s. 6 pp. 8–9
Category conditions	Women Innovators: no age limit. Rising Innovators: aged under 35 at the start of the call year; footnote 16 says born on or after 1 January 1991 (1 January 1991 itself: see section 2). EIT Women Leadership: a direct link to the EIT Community	Rules of Contest s. 6 p. 8, fn 16–17
Application	Part A online; Part B of at most 15 pages; a video of at most 90 seconds; a proof of age (Rising Innovators) or of the EIT link (EIT Women Leadership), all through the Portal Submission System	Rules of Contest s. 5 p. 7, s. 11
Evaluation	A jury scores three criteria from 0 to 10 each (at least 6 on each and 18 in total). Pre-selection to 500 applications if a category has more; up to six applicants per category are heard in Brussels	Rules of Contest ss. 8–9 pp. 11–13
After the deadline (planned)	Rules of Contest: evaluation December 2026 to April 2027; information on results and award April to June 2027. Prize page: evaluation January 2027, hearings February to March, finalists March, award ceremony June 2027	Rules of Contest s. 4; EIC prize page

Item	Position	Source
Romania	An EU Member State. A woman legally resident in Romania, with a company registered there before 1 January 2025, meets the country conditions. The Rules, the FAQ and the prize page set no national route or national funder for this prize	Rules of Contest s. 6; List of participating countries V4.2
Next edition	The Work Programme 2027 plans a “2028 European Prize for Women Innovators”: opening Q1–Q3 2027, deadline Q3–Q4 2027, award Q1–Q2 2028 (indicative). Rules of Contest, exact dates and Portal topics: not published	Work Programme 2027, section IX.1, pp. 137–141

Good fit

- ✓ A woman who founded or co-founded a company registered with the statutory authority before 1 January 2025 and who lives legally in an EU Member State or an associated country, with the proofs ready
- ✓ A founder whose company develops a breakthrough innovation and can show how it differs from existing solutions; deep tech and STEM are examples, not a requirement
- ✓ A founder who can show that current performance and growth drive a positive socio-economic or environmental impact
- ✓ A founder who is a role model for women and girls and has promoted gender balance in the company or beyond
- ✓ For Rising Innovators: a woman born on or after 1 January 1991, with a proof of age
- ✓ For EIT Women Leadership: a woman with a direct link to the EIT Community and a certificate, agreement or diploma to show it
- ✓ A founder who can finish the whole application by 1 December 2026, 17:00 CET

Not a fit

- ✗ A company registered or incorporated on or after 1 January 2025: not eligible in this edition
- ✗ A self-employed professional or freelancer, or a woman who joined a company after it was founded
- ✗ A non-profit organisation that is not registered as a “company or corporation” (FAQ)
- ✗ A group or team applying jointly, or an application made under a company's PIC
- ✗ A team looking for money to run a project: the prize is paid to a person and funds no project
- ✗ A woman who already received an EU or Euratom prize for the same activities
- ✗ An applicant who wants eligibility confirmed before submitting: the FAQ says EISMEA cannot do this

EUnita verdict (interpretation)

- Who can still use the deadline of 1 December 2026, 17:00 CET: a woman who already meets every condition above and can complete the whole application by that hour, that is an EU Login, a natural-person PIC, Part A, a Part B of up to 15 pages, a video of up to 90 seconds and, for Rising Innovators or EIT Women Leadership, the proof as a PDF. Applications can be changed and re-submitted until the deadline, so an early complete version reduces the technical risk.
- Who should prepare for the next edition: a founder whose company was registered during 2025 (not eligible now; on the Work Programme 2027 text the next cut-off is “before 1 January 2026”, so a company registered in 2026 would miss it too), and a founder who needs more time for her evidence and proofs.
- What is officially known about the next edition: the Work Programme 2027 plans a 2028 prize with the same categories plus a quantum Challenge category, with an indicative opening in Q1–Q3 2027. Its Rules of Contest, exact dates and Portal topics are not published; its conditions stay unconfirmed until they are.

2. Source verification and document status

Every figure in this analysis was read in an official document or page of the funder on 18 November 2026. The Rules of Contest are the governing call document; the Portal topic pages and data files, the Work Programme and the EIC prize page agree with them except where the box below says otherwise.

Document	Version or date printed	Used for
Rules of Contest, calls HORIZON-EIC-2026-PRIZE-WIP and HORIZON-EIT-2026-PRIZE-WIP	V1.0, 02.09.2026; 17 pages; electronically signed 13 August 2026	The governing text: conditions, criteria, procedure, timetable
Portal topic pages and data files of the three topics	Read 18 November 2026; topic update of 2 September 2026	Status, opening and deadline, budget lines, submission links
EIC Work Programme 2026, section IX.1	Version of 17 June 2026 (Decision C(2025)7410, last amended by C(2026) 4080); 209 pages	Legal basis of this edition; indicative timetable and amounts
EIC Work Programme 2026, earlier versions	5 November 2025 (188 pages) and March 2026 (192 pages)	Comparison only: they carry the superseded cut-offs
EIC Work Programme 2027, section IX.1	Decision C(2026)7629; 211 pages	The next edition (2028 prize)
EIC prize page	Read 18 November 2026	Categories, how to apply, timetable by month, contacts
Information session of 17 September 2026: general presentation and tips for applicants	21 slides and 7 pages	Guidance by the organisers and an evaluator (listed on the slides as a jury member); not scoring rules
FAQ on the prize	Read 18 November 2026; partly written for the next call	Answers on eligibility and the form
List of participating countries in Horizon Europe	V4.2, 7 October 2026	Eligible countries
Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment	V6.0; 42 pages	Registration and validation background
Rules of Contest of the previous edition (2026 prize)	V1.0, 17 June 2025; 18 pages	What changed
News item “2027 European Prize for Women Innovators: apply now”; winners page of the 2026 edition	2 September 2026; read 18 November 2026	Dates, previous winners

Edition naming

The documents call this edition “2027”: the Rules of Contest cover, the Work Programme 2026 (section IX.1), the Portal text, the prize page, the news item and the banner “27”. The identifiers say 2026 because the call is launched under the 2026 EIC Work Programme and the 2026–2028 Single Programming Document of the EIT. EUnita interpretation: the “call year” used in the eligibility rules is 2026. The Rules do not define it, but they set the company cut-off “at least one year before the call year” and give it as 1 January 2025 (fn 15). The previous edition was the 2026 prize (HORIZON-EIC-2025-PRIZE-WIP); the next is the 2028 prize in the Work Programme 2027.

Where the official documents differ

- FAQ and cut-off: the FAQ example says the company must be registered “before 1 January 2026 for the HORIZON-EIC-2027-PRIZE-WIP call”. That is the next edition. For this edition the Rules of Contest say before 1 January 2025 (fn 15); the Work Programme 2026, the prize page and the info session agree. The Rules of Contest are followed.
- EIT link: the FAQ says “a direct link to the EIT Community or one of the existing Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs)”; the Rules of Contest of this edition say only “a direct link to the EIT Community” (the 2026 Rules had the KIC wording). The Rules of Contest are followed.
- “Legally established” or “legally residing”: the prize page and the FAQ say established; the Rules of Contest and the Portal text say “legally residing”, defined by national law. The Rules of Contest, which are the call document (section 13), are followed.
- Age: the main text of the Rules of Contest says “aged under 35 at the start of the call year”; footnote 16 of the same Rules says “born on or after 1 January 1991”; the info-session slide says “Born after 01/01/1991”. EUnita interpretation: with a call year of 2026, a woman born on 1 January 1991 turns 35 on 1 January 2026, so the main text and the slide would leave her out and the footnote would include her. No official text settles this case, and no document says which of the two texts in the Rules prevails. On asking in advance, the FAQ says: “EISMEA cannot validate the eligibility of potential applications prior to submission of the proposal.” The Rules of Contest (section 12) give EISMEA-WIP@ec.europa.eu for non-IT questions on the Rising Innovators category.
- Same activities: the Rules say a second prize is barred “for the same activities”; the slide says “same or very similar activity”. The Rules of Contest are followed.
- After-deadline calendar: the Rules of Contest give ranges (evaluation December 2026 to April 2027; results and award April to June 2027); the prize page gives months (evaluation January 2027; hearings February to March; finalists March; ceremony June 2027). Both are planned, not binding. No document says which prevails; the Rules of Contest ranges are followed and the page is read as the finer plan.
- Deadline hour: the Portal data files store 1 December 2026 as 00:00 UTC (a date value); the Rules of Contest and the rendered Portal pages say 17:00 (CET, Brussels). 17:00 CET is followed.
- EIT topic page: the Portal page of HORIZON-EIT-2026-PRIZE-WIP-LEADERSHIP carries older template wording and does not list the Rules of Contest among its documents; the Rules of Contest name HORIZON-EIT-2026-PRIZE-WIP on their cover and cover the EIT category. The Rules of Contest are followed.
- Earlier Work Programme versions: the version of 5 November 2025 still carried a company cut-off before 1 January 2023 and birth on or after 1 January 1990; the March and June 2026 versions carry 1 January 2025 and 1 January 1991. The June 2026 version is followed.
- Precedence: the Rules of Contest (section 13) say that applicants accept the call conditions set out in the Rules, which are the call document of this edition, so they are followed first. No document sets an order of precedence among the Work Programme, the Portal text, the prize page and the FAQ; this analysis follows them in that order.

3. What the call funds

The prize rewards a person, not a project. Its stated objective is to celebrate “the women entrepreneurs behind Europe's game-changing innovations” so that they may inspire other women and girls to realise their full potential as the EU's future scientists, innovators and tech leaders. It also aims to support a culture within research and innovation organisations and companies that allows women to become the innovators and entrepreneurs of tomorrow. It is awarded every year to women from across the EU and the countries associated to Horizon Europe who have transformed their ideas into disruptive innovations to benefit people and the planet and who are inspiring leaders (Rules of Contest, section 2). The expected result is greater public awareness of the potential, importance and

contribution of women to the EU innovation ecosystem, and strong role models.

The three categories

Category	Run by	Prizes	Extra condition	Portal topic
Women Innovators	EIC (EISMEA)	€100,000, €70,000, €50,000	No age limit	HORIZON-EIC-2026-PRIZE-WIP
Rising Innovators	EIC (EISMEA)	€50,000, €30,000, €20,000	Under 35 at the start of the call year; born on or after 1 January 1991	HORIZON-EIC-2026-PRIZE-WIP-RisingInnovators
EIT Women Leadership	EIT, in coordination with the EIC	€50,000, €30,000, €20,000	A direct link to the EIT Community	HORIZON-EIT-2026-PRIZE-WIP-LEADERSHIP

The two EIC categories are funded by the EIC; the Work Programme 2026 (section IX.1) says the EIT category is “funded and managed by the EIT in coordination with” them. The EIT Community means the EIT and the active community of individuals and legal entities that benefited or benefit from EIT support or financial contribution, for example support through an innovation or business acceleration procedure of an EIT Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC), or a completed EIT Labelled Educational Programme (Rules of Contest, fn 17).

Policy anchors named in the Rules of Contest

- The Political Guidelines for the European Commission 2024–2029 and the renewal of the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025.
- The Competitiveness Compass, which promotes gender equality particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.
- The EU Roadmap for Women's Rights, with its objective of gender-equal access to finance and economic opportunities, including entrepreneurship.
- The New European Innovation Agenda (Flagship 4, deep-tech talent).

What the prize pays for

- Confirmed: a prize of €20,000 to €100,000 paid to the winner as a natural person after the award ceremony, provided all the requested documents have been submitted (Rules of Contest, section 10; FAQ).
- Confirmed: joint applications by a group are rejected, so there is no consortium; the applicant is one natural person. EUnita interpretation: the Rules set no project, project period, co-funding or reporting duty, and no rule on how the money is spent; their section 10 covers payment, promotion, EU acknowledgement, rights of use, checks and withdrawal.
- Confirmed: the award criteria look at the company the applicant founded or co-founded (breakthrough innovation, impact) and at the applicant herself (inspiration).

4. Boundaries: avoid the wrong door

The prize is narrow in who may apply and wide in subject. The points below are where applications fail or where another route fits better.

What the prize does not fund or accept

- A project, a product launch or a company's running costs: the prize goes to a person for what she and her company have achieved (award criteria, Rules of Contest section 9), not to fund planned work.

- An application by a company, an association or any legal entity, or one made with the PIC of a legal entity: it is ineligible. Only a natural person applies (Rules of Contest, fn 8).
- Joint applications by a group of women: rejected as ineligible. Applicants from the same organisation apply separately.
- Self-employment: “Self-employment is not acceptable”. The FAQ says a freelancer cannot apply.
- A non-profit organisation not registered as a “company or corporation”: the FAQ answers “No” for an innovative non-profit organisation, and “Yes” for a social innovation company registered as a company or corporation.
- A company registered or incorporated on or after 1 January 2025, however long it has been active in practice (FAQ).
- An applicant who has already received an EU or Euratom prize for the same activities.

Neighbouring routes

Route	What it is	When it fits better
Next edition of this prize (2028 prize)	Planned in the Work Programme 2027, section IX.1: Women Innovators, Rising Innovators, a new quantum Challenge category (one prize of €100,000) and the EIT category. Company registered before 1 January 2026; Rising Innovators born on or after 1 January 1992. Opening Q1–Q3 2027, deadline Q3–Q4 2027 (indicative)	The company was registered during 2025, the applicant cannot finish by 1 December 2026, or her company works on quantum computing, communication, sensing, metrology or simulation (the Challenge category is mutually exclusive with the other categories)
Women TechEU	An EIC scheme for early-stage women-led deep-tech start-ups, with financial support to third parties of EUR 150,000 per start-up (a fixed amount), run by a consortium selected under a call: opening 1 April 2027, deadline 1 September 2027 at 17:00 Brussels time (Work Programme 2027, section X.8)	The need is funding for de-risking work, not recognition. That consortium call is separate from this one
EIC Accelerator	A separate EIC scheme that funds a single SME or start-up with a grant, equity or both (Work Programme 2027)	The company needs investment capital. It is not a prize, and it funds the company rather than a person

Confirmed: a prize paid to a person and a grant paid to a company are different things. EUnita interpretation: whether a winner can also hold an EU grant for the same company is not settled in the documents. The Rules prohibit cumulating funding from the EU budget (section 13) and the award procedure includes a double-funding check (section 8); a founder should not count on holding both for the same activities.

5. Budget, competition and expected number of prizes

Category	1st prize	2nd prize	3rd prize	Portal budget line
Women Innovators	€100,000	€70,000	€50,000	€220,000
Rising Innovators	€50,000	€30,000	€20,000	€100,000
EIT Women Leadership	€50,000	€30,000	€20,000	€100,000
Total for the call				Derived estimate: €420,000 (220,000 + 100,000 + 100,000)

The Portal gives three expected prizes per topic, with contributions from €50,000 to €100,000 (Women Innovators) and from €20,000 to €50,000 (the other two topics). The prize page says “no

fewer than 9 prizes".

Competition

- Confirmed: if a category receives more than 500 applications, a pre-selection panel keeps the best 500 for the jury; otherwise every eligible application goes to the jury.
- Confirmed: up to six best-ranked applications per category are invited to a hearing with the jury in Brussels; the hearing may take place remotely. Three prizes follow in each category.
- Derived estimate: of up to six applicants heard in a category, three receive a prize, so at most half of those heard do not (exactly half if six are heard; ties can add winners).
- Confirmed: ties for a rank or category share the prize amount equally among all applications with the same score. The 2023–24 winners page lists two third-placed winners in the Rising Innovators category; it does not say why.
- Confirmed: the awarding authority may cancel the contest or decide not to award the prize, without compensation to participants, for example if there are no applications or the jury cannot determine a winner.
- Not published: the number of applications received in any edition or category. No success rate can be given.

Confirmed: only applications that pass both the individual thresholds (6 out of 10 on each criterion) and the overall threshold (18 out of 30) can win; the prizes go to the applications ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd in each category.

6. What has been funded before

The winners pages of the EIC site list three places per category in each edition (the 2023–24 Rising Innovators category lists two third-placed winners). Prize amounts in the previous edition (the 2026 prize) were the same as in this one (Rules of Contest of 17 June 2025).

Edition	Announced	Women Innovators (countries)	Rising Innovators (countries)	EIT Women Leadership (countries)
2026 prize, 12th edition	4 June 2026, EIC Summit, Brussels	Ukraine/UK, Germany, Spain	Belgium, Spain, Switzerland	Portugal, Italy, Portugal
2025 prize, 11th edition	3 April 2025, EIC Summit, Brussels	Spain, Ireland, France/Belgium	France, United Kingdom, France	Portugal, Estonia, Ireland
2023–24 prize, 10th edition	18 March 2024, R&I Week opening event, Brussels	Türkiye, Germany, Spain	Spain, Spain, Ireland and France (two third places)	Ukraine, Germany, Ireland

- Confirmed: the winners are named on the pages with their companies and a short biography. EUnita interpretation: health, medical and biotechnology companies are the largest group on the 2025 and 2026 pages; others work on space logistics, batteries and acoustic materials, artificial intelligence software, blockchain traceability and food ingredients.
- Confirmed: no winner from Romania is listed on the winners pages of the 2023–24, 2025 and 2026 editions. Editions before 2023–24 are listed on the prize page and are not summarised here.
- Confirmed: the winners page of the 2026 edition names the jury members of that edition; the jury of the 2027 edition is not published.
- Not published: the number of applications per edition and category, and the countries of the applicants who did not win.

7. Who should apply, and with which ideas

Profiles that fit

- Women Innovators: a woman founder or co-founder of any age, with a company registered before 1 January 2025 that is developing a breakthrough innovation.
- Rising Innovators: the same, born on or after 1 January 1991 (footnote 16 of the Rules), with a proof of age. EUnita interpretation: a woman born on any other day of 1991 meets the age condition in this edition and, on the Work Programme 2027 text, would not meet it for the next prize (born on or after 1 January 1992). A woman born exactly on 1 January 1991 is the unresolved case described in section 2.
- EIT Women Leadership: the same, with a direct link to the EIT Community, for example support from an EIT KIC through an acceleration procedure or a completed EIT Labelled Educational Programme, shown by a certificate, a signed agreement or a diploma.
- Founders in Romania: Romania is an EU Member State, and a woman resident there with a company registered there is eligible on the same terms as anyone else.

What the criteria reward

- Breakthrough innovation: the company is developing a breakthrough innovation “focusing, among others, on Deeptech and Science Technology Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) fields”, and the applicant shows what makes it breakthrough in relation to other existing solutions.
- Impact: the innovation addresses a real need or challenge with significant benefits for people and/or the planet, and current performance and growth drive a positive socio-economic and/or environmental impact, “among others, in terms of wellbeing, education, profit, or job creation”.
- Inspiration: the applicant is an inspiring leader who has played a pivotal role in the company's success and is a role model empowering other women and girls. She should, for example, highlight efforts to promote gender balance and any advocacy that has contributed to gender equality in access to finance, networks, product design or education.

What the FAQ settles

- A founder of a social innovation company may apply if the company is registered as a “company or corporation”.
- A woman does not have to be a scientist, and no nationality criterion applies. She does not have to have taken part in any EIC activity or be a beneficiary of an EU programme (the EIT category needs the EIT link).
- A product not yet on the market: the FAQ says the innovation is taken into account in scoring and the criteria for submitting are those of sections 5 to 7 of the Rules. A dormant company: the FAQ gives no yes or no; section 7 of the Rules bars applicants in “suspended business activities or other similar procedures”.
- Co-founding with male co-founders is allowed. Two co-founders may apply separately, including in different categories.
- National prizes or national funding do not make an applicant ineligible. A company that won an EU prize as a legal entity does not bar a founder who did not personally receive an EU or Euratom prize.
- A finalist may apply to a later edition, with a similar proposal, provided it has not already been awarded an EU or Euratom prize.

Who can still use the deadline of 1 December 2026

EUnita interpretation: a woman who already meets every eligibility condition and has the proofs on hand. The remaining work is the Part B (at most 15 pages), the video (at most 90 seconds), the abstract (at most 2,000 characters including spaces) and the Portal steps (EU Login and a PIC as a natural person). Because applications can be changed and re-submitted until the deadline, an early complete version can still be improved.

Who should prepare for the next edition

EUnita interpretation: a founder whose company was registered during 2025, who is not eligible now and, on the Work Programme 2027 cut-off (before 1 January 2026), may be eligible for the next edition; a founder whose company was registered in 2026 would miss that cut-off too; a founder whose company works on quantum technologies, for the planned Challenge category; and any founder who needs more time to collect evidence. Official position on the next edition: the Work Programme 2027 plans the 2028 prize with an indicative opening in Q1–Q3 2027 and deadline in Q3–Q4 2027. Its Rules of Contest, exact dates and Portal topics are not published, so its conditions are unconfirmed.

8. Eligibility checklist

Source: Rules of Contest, section 6 (pp. 8–9) unless stated. Proof of eligibility can be requested at any time. Entities subject to EU restrictive measures cannot take part or receive a prize; entities subject to EU conditionality measures (currently Hungarian public interest trusts and any entity they maintain) are not eligible unless the measures are lifted by the time of the decision to award (p. 9).

✓	I am a woman, as the Rules define it: a cis woman, or a transgender woman who is legally defined as a woman (fn 7).
✓	I apply as a natural person, with a PIC created for me as a natural person, and I make this clear in Part A and Part B (fn 8; FAQ).
✓	I am legally residing in an EU Member State (overseas countries and territories included) or a country associated to Horizon Europe: recognised as a resident under national law, with proof available on request (fn 9).
✓	I am the founder or co-founder of the company or organisation (a co-founder started it with at least one other person). I am not applying as a self-employed professional (fn 11–12).
✓	The company is established in an EU Member State or associated country and was registered or incorporated before 1 January 2025, with the statutory authority, as a “company or corporation” (fn 14–15).
✓	I have not already received an EU or Euratom prize for the same activities (s. 6; s. 13).
✓	I apply to one category only. If I apply to several, only my latest application counts and the others are rejected as ineligible.
✓	Rising Innovators only: I am aged under 35 at the start of the call year, born on or after 1 January 1991 (fn 16), and I can upload a proof of age as a PDF.
✓	EIT Women Leadership only: I have a direct link to the EIT Community and can upload a supporting document as a PDF (fn 17).
✓	I am not part of a group application, and nobody applies for me; my application is individual.
✓	I am registered in the Participant Register as a natural person before the deadline and expect to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation) (p. 9).
✗	My company was registered or incorporated on or after 1 January 2025: not eligible in this edition.
✗	I applied with the PIC of a legal entity, or the company applies for me: ineligible.

?	Whether Participant Register validation must be finished before the deadline: the Rules require registration before the deadline and validation later; they do not say more.
?	Rising Innovators only: I was born exactly on 1 January 1991. Footnote 16 of the Rules includes me; the main text ("under 35 at the start of the call year") and the information-session slide ("after 01/01/1991") would leave me out. No official text settles it.
?	I live in a country negotiating association with Horizon Europe: I may take part and can receive a prize only if the association agreement applies before the award, which covers me and my company (p. 9, fn 19). The Portal list names Morocco for the entire Programme and Australia for Pillar II only, from budget year 2027.
?	Whether a past winner of this prize may apply again for different activities: the Rules bar only a second prize for the same activities, and the Rules and the FAQ say no more about past winners.
?	Whether countries associated to Pillar II only (Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand) count for this prize: the Rules refer to countries associated to Horizon Europe, the Portal list shows these four as associated to Pillar II only, and the Portal classes this prize under Innovative Europe (Pillar III).

9. How the money works

Item	Position	Source
Form	Confirmed: a recognition prize (Horizon Europe type of action; model agreement type "HORIZON Prize"). EUnita interpretation: not a grant; the Rules set no funding rate, budget table or co-funding	Portal data files; Work Programme 2026; Rules of Contest
Amounts	Women Innovators €100,000, €70,000, €50,000; Rising Innovators and EIT Women Leadership €50,000, €30,000, €20,000	Rules of Contest s. 3
Who receives it	The prize winner, "meaning the natural person who is the applicant"	FAQ (article 10)
When	After the award ceremony, provided all the requested documents have been submitted. The ceremony is planned for June 2027	Rules of Contest s. 10; prize page
Documents that may be requested	Legal entity validation, bank account validation, ethics review and a declaration of honour	Rules of Contest s. 5 p. 7
Ties	The prize amount for the rank is divided equally among applications with the same score	Rules of Contest s. 8 p. 12
No award	The awarding authority may decide not to award the prize or cancel the contest, without compensation	Rules of Contest s. 13
Double funding	"Strictly prohibited to cumulate funding from the EU budget"; an application that already received an EU prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities	Rules of Contest s. 13
Tax treatment	Not covered in the Rules, the FAQ or the prize page	Not published
Reporting	EUnita interpretation: the Rules set no reporting duty, milestones or project period; section 10 covers promotion, EU acknowledgement, rights of use, checks and withdrawal	Rules of Contest s. 10

Obligations of winners (Rules of Contest, section 10)

- Promote the prize and its results to multiple audiences, including the media and the public.
- In communication about the prize, acknowledge EU support, display the European emblem and the funding statement, and add the disclaimer ("Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only …"), naming EISMEA or the EIT.

- Rights of use: the awarding authority does not obtain ownership of the results; it may use non-sensitive information and materials received from winners, such as pictures or audio-visual material, for information, communication, dissemination and publicity. Photos and videos taken by the awarding authority at the ceremony are its property.
- Accept checks, audits and investigations by the awarding authority, the Commission, OLAF, EPPO and the Court of Auditors.
- The prize can be withdrawn and payments recovered if false information, fraud or corruption was used, if the winner was not eligible or should have been excluded, or if she is in serious breach of the Rules.

Open point on money

The Rules, the FAQ and the prize page do not say how the prize is treated for tax or whether the money may be used for any purpose. Not published. A winner who needs an answer has no official text to rely on.

10. Evaluation

Applications in each category are evaluated formally by a jury (Rules of Contest, section 8). The jury's assessment is based on Parts A and B of the application form and on the video (section 9).

Procedure

1. Admissibility and eligibility: applications must be complete, with all required annexes, and submitted before the deadline. Documents uploaded to the wrong category in the Submission System may make the application incomplete and inadmissible.
2. Pre-selection, only if a category has more than 500 applications: a panel selects the best 500. The pre-selection panel and the jury usually have a different composition, but jury members may take part in the panel.
3. Jury review: the pre-selection panel and the jury evaluate each eligible application against the award criteria.
4. Hearings: up to six best-ranked applications in each category are invited to a hearing with the jury in Brussels, which may take place remotely.
5. Mandatory checks and decision: ethics review, security scrutiny, legal entity validation, non-exclusion, double funding and plagiarism checks; then the awarding authority decides on the award.
6. Result letters: all applicants are informed of the evaluation result. Successful applications are awarded the prize; the others are put on the reserve list or rejected. Complaints follow the deadlines and procedure set out in the evaluation result letter, counted from the opening of the notification.

Award criteria and scoring

Criterion	What the Rules of Contest ask	Score
1. Breakthrough innovation	The company or organisation founded or co-founded by the applicant is developing a breakthrough innovation, focusing among others on deep tech and STEM fields. The applicant shows what makes it breakthrough in relation to other existing solutions	0–10; at least 6

Criterion	What the Rules of Contest ask	Score
2. Impact	The innovation addresses a real need or challenge with significant benefits for people and/or the planet. The applicant shows how current performance and growth drive a positive socio-economic and/or environmental impact (for example wellbeing, education, profit, job creation)	0–10; at least 6
3. Inspiration	The applicant is an inspiring leader with a pivotal role in the company's success and a role model for women and girls. She should for example highlight efforts to promote gender balance and any advocacy for gender equality	0–10; at least 6
Overall	Maximum 30 points; overall threshold 18 points. Both the individual and the overall thresholds must be passed	18 of 30

Tie-break

- For applications with the same score, the panel or jury sets a priority order: criterion 2 (Impact) counts with a weight of 2 and criterion 3 (Inspiration) with a weight of 1.5. The weight of criterion 1 in the tie-break is not stated.
- If applications still tie at pre-selection, they are all admitted to the next phase; if they tie at the jury review, they are all admitted to the hearings; if they tie for a rank, the prize amount is shared equally.

Guidance from the information session (not scoring rules)

- An evaluator, listed on the information-session slides as a jury member, told applicants that the readers come from business, venture capital, entrepreneurship and academia.
- Innovation: define the problem, show the deep-tech or STEM content, say what differs, show feasibility (research and development, a pilot, proof of concept, independent validation) and what makes the innovation hard to replicate (intellectual property, networks, backing, partnerships).
- Impact: market analysis, current impact (social, economic, environmental), forecast, scalability, risks and challenges.
- Inspiration: tell your story, not a CV; show leadership, thought leadership and role-model qualities.
- Video: who you are, the business, the impact so far, the team and the vision; short and authentic. Write the foundation yourself and use AI only to polish.

EUnita interpretation

The three criteria are scored on the same 0 to 10 scale and add up to 30 points; in a tie, the Rules weight Impact by 2 and Inspiration by 1.5 (the weight of Breakthrough innovation is not stated). The minimum of 6 on each criterion means that a strong score on one criterion cannot make up for a weak one.

11. Application package and timeline

All applications go through the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System, reached from the topic page. Paper submissions are not possible. The forms are inside the Submission System; the documents on the Portal topic page are for information only (Rules of Contest, section 5).

Part	Content and limits	Source
Portal account	An EU Login account, then registration in the Participant Register as a natural person; the 9-digit PIC is mandatory for the form. Registration must be done before the deadline	Rules of Contest s. 11, s. 13

Part	Content and limits	Source
Part A	Administrative information about the applicant as a natural person, filled in online. It also asks for an “Acronym” and a “Project Name”, which the FAQ says may describe the applicant, her project, her company or her initiative	Rules of Contest s. 5; FAQ
Part B	Technical description. Template downloaded in the Submission System, completed and uploaded as a PDF. At most 15 pages; evaluators do not consider additional pages. The template, its sections and its font cannot be changed	Rules of Contest s. 5; FAQ
Video	An inspiring message of at most 90 seconds describing the applicant and her achievements; at most 100 MB; uploaded as a .zip file in the annex. The format is free	Rules of Contest s. 5; FAQ
Category proof	Rising Innovators: proof of age. EIT Women Leadership: proof of the link to the EIT Community. Each as a PDF. Women Innovators: no category proof in the list	Rules of Contest s. 5, s. 11
Abstract	At most 2,000 characters including spaces; always in English	FAQ; Rules of Contest s. 13
Language	Any official EU language; English strongly advised	Rules of Contest s. 13
Confirmation	A confirmation e-mail with date and time follows submission. Without it, the application has not been submitted	Rules of Contest s. 11
Contacts	Non-IT questions: EISMEA-WIP@ec.europa.eu for Women Innovators and Rising Innovators, eit-awards@eit.europa.eu for EIT Women Leadership, with the call and topic reference stated. Questions on the Portal Submission System: the IT Helpdesk. The FAQ says EISMEA cannot validate eligibility before submission	Rules of Contest s. 12 p. 17; prize page; FAQ

Dates

Date	Step	Status
2 September 2026	Call opens on the Portal; Rules of Contest V1.0 (dated 2 September 2026)	Confirmed
17 September 2026	Online information session, 11:00–12:00 CEST	Held; slides and tips on the prize page
1 December 2026, 17:00 CET	Deadline for all three topics (18:00 in Romania)	Confirmed
December 2026 – April 2027	Evaluation	Planned (Rules of Contest)
January 2027	Evaluation (prize page)	Planned
February – March 2027	Jury hearings of up to six applicants per category, in Brussels or remote	Planned (prize page)
March 2027	Shortlist and finalists announced	Planned (prize page)
April – June 2027	Information on evaluation results and award	Planned (Rules of Contest)
June 2027	Award ceremony (the news item says the second quarter of 2027)	Planned (prize page)

For comparison, the previous edition's Rules of Contest gave the opening on 17 June 2025, the deadline on 25 September 2025 at 17:00 CET, evaluation from October 2025 to February 2026 and results from February to May 2026; its winners were announced on 4 June 2026.

Next edition: what is official

Item	Work Programme 2027, section IX.1 (pp. 137–141)
Name	The 2028 European Prize for Women Innovators; organised by EISMEA in coordination with the EIT
Categories	Women Innovators (€100,000, €70,000, €50,000); Rising Innovators (€50,000, €30,000, €20,000); a Challenge category, quantum technologies (one prize of €100,000), mutually exclusive with the others; the EIT Women Leadership category, funded and managed by the EIT
Conditions stated	Company registered or incorporated before 1 January 2026; Rising Innovators born on or after 1 January 1992; for the Challenge category, evidence that the core activity is quantum technologies and, on request, revenue, external investment or a pilot or commercial agreement
Indicative timetable	Opening Q1–Q3 2027; deadline Q3–Q4 2027; award Q1–Q2 2028
Not published	Rules of Contest for this edition, exact dates and the Portal topics. The Work Programme says details are specified in the rules published at the launch of the contest

12. Risks and red flags

Main risk

The deadline is fixed. The Rules of Contest say call deadlines cannot be extended and that problems caused by last-minute submission are at the applicant's risk. An application without the confirmation e-mail has not been submitted. Eligibility is checked only after the deadline, so an ineligible application cannot be corrected afterwards.

Risk	Why it matters	What reduces it
Eligibility is not checked in advance	The FAQ says EISMEA cannot validate eligibility before submission, and eligibility is assessed after the deadline on the documents provided	Test each condition against the Rules of Contest, and keep the proofs ready; contacts are in section 11
Wrong cut-off in the FAQ	The FAQ example (1 January 2026) belongs to the next call; this edition's date is 1 January 2025	Follow the Rules of Contest
Natural person, not company	An application with a legal entity's PIC is ineligible; Part A and Part B must say she applies as a natural person	Register as a natural person; check both parts
Several categories	Only the latest application counts; the others are rejected as ineligible	Choose one category before submitting
Few prizes, thresholds and no published odds	Three prizes per category; 6 of 10 on each criterion and 18 of 30 overall; applications received are not published	Write to each criterion with evidence
Age boundary (Rising Innovators)	A woman born exactly on 1 January 1991 is unresolved: footnote 16 of the Rules includes her, while their main text (“under 35 at the start of the call year”) and the info-session slide (“after 01/01/1991”) would leave her out. No official text settles it, and the FAQ says EISMEA cannot validate eligibility before submission	Women Innovators has no age limit; for Rising Innovators, prepare a proof of age and send non-IT questions to EISMEA-WIP@ec.europa.eu (Rules of Contest s. 12)
EIT link not documented	The EIT category needs a supporting document: a certificate, signed agreement or diploma. The EIT Portal page carries older wording and does not list the Rules	Upload the PDF proof; follow the Rules of Contest

Risk	Why it matters	What reduces it
Dates after the deadline are ranges	The Rules give ranges and the page gives months; the previous ceremony fell after its Rules' window	Do not plan around a precise date before an official announcement
Documents in the wrong place	Documents uploaded to the wrong category in the Submission System may make the application inadmissible	Check each upload against the form
Payment conditions	Payment follows the ceremony and needs the requested documents; the tax treatment is not covered	Keep identity, bank and validation documents ready
Obligations after winning	Promotion, EU acknowledgement, rights of use of materials, checks, and withdrawal and recovery if the winner was not eligible	Read section 10 of the Rules before applying
Strict formats	Part B limited to 15 pages with an unchangeable template; video at most 90 seconds and 100 MB, as a .zip	Build to the limits early

13. EUnita recommendations

EUnita interpretation: the recommendations below follow from the Rules of Contest read on 18 November 2026.

1. Test the entry conditions first, in this order: woman as the Rules define it; legal residence in an eligible country; founder or co-founder, not self-employment; company registered with the statutory authority before 1 January 2025; the category condition. If the company was registered on or after 1 January 2025, do not apply now.
2. Choose one category. Women Innovators has no age limit; Rising Innovators needs birth on or after 1 January 1991; EIT Women Leadership needs the EIT link. Only the latest application counts.
3. If the conditions are met, decide at once whether 1 December 2026, 17:00 CET is realistic, and open the Submission System early to download the Part B template.
4. Register in the Participant Register as a natural person and write “natural person” in Part A and Part B. Do not use a company's PIC.
5. Write Part B to the three criteria with evidence: what is breakthrough compared with existing solutions; the current performance and growth that drive impact; her pivotal role and her efforts for gender balance. Keep within 15 pages.
6. Record a video of at most 90 seconds: who she is, the business, the impact so far, the team and the vision. Keep the file at or under 100 MB and upload it as a .zip.
7. Upload the category proof (proof of age, or proof of the EIT link) as a PDF, and keep the proofs of residence, founder status and company registration ready.
8. Submit a complete version early, check the confirmation e-mail, and improve it until the deadline if needed.
9. If the deadline cannot be met, or the company was registered during 2025, watch the EIC prize page and the Portal for the Rules of Contest of the next edition, which the Work Programme 2027 plans for an opening in Q1–Q3 2027; a company registered in 2026 would miss its planned cut-off too.

Unresolved points

- The Rules of Contest, exact dates and Portal topics of the next edition (the 2028 prize): not published.
- The number of applications received in any edition or category: not published.
- The tax treatment of the prize and any limit on how the money may be used: not published.
- Whether Participant Register validation must be completed before the deadline: not stated (registration is required before it).
- Whether a past winner of this prize may apply again for different activities: the Rules bar only a second prize for the same activities.
- A woman born exactly on 1 January 1991 in Rising Innovators: footnote 16 of the Rules includes her; the main text and the slide would leave her out.
- Whether countries associated to Pillar II only (Canada, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand) count for this prize, which the Portal classes under Pillar III: not stated; the Rules state a principle for countries negotiating association (p. 9, fn 19).
- The jury of the 2027 edition, and the exact dates of the hearings, the finalists' announcement and the ceremony: only months or ranges are published.
- The Part B template headings and layout: available only inside the Submission System, which needs a login.

Sources

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Checked 18 November 2026. Official updates prevail.