EUnita | EU Grant Advisory & Consultancy

OPEN CALL ANALYSIS

EIT Culture & Creativity — Innovation Projects 2026

Two-stage open call for architecture, audio-visual media and fashion (TRL 7 to TRL 9)

Programme	EIT Culture & Creativity (Knowledge and Innovation Community of the EIT) — Innovation area
Exact call title	Open call for proposals: Innovation projects
Call ID and round	Call reference 26-INN-MAI-011-X · 2026 round · Stage 1 (concept) open 25 September – 30 October 2026; Stage 2 by invitation
Deadline	Stage 1: 30 October 2026, 17:00 CET (Berlin time) = 18:00 Bucharest (safe cut-off: 17:00 Bucharest — see section 2). Stage 2: 15 March 2027, 17:00 CET
Analysis date	8 October 2026

Prepared by: EUnita — EU Grant Advisory & Consultancy · Funding Strategy

For prospective applicants. The EUnita opportunity score in section 14 is not an official evaluation score.

1. Executive summary and EUnita strategic reading

EIT Culture & Creativity (EIT CC) has opened its **Innovation Projects 2026** call for companies in **architecture, audio-visual media and fashion** whose innovation is already at **TRL 7** and could reach **TRL 9 and the market within 18 months**. It is a staged competition: a short Stage 1 concept from a single company (**30 October 2026, 17:00 CET Berlin time = 18:00 Bucharest**); a six-week preparatory phase (1 February – 15 March 2027) in which up to **30** selected companies receive a **€20,000** lump sum to write a Business Development Plan and then submit a full Stage 2 application with a consortium; and **up to 11** funded projects of **up to €900,000** each (up to 70% of eligible costs, lump sum, 1 July 2027 – 31 December 2028).

This is the Innovation-area project grant. It is a different strand from EIT CC's acceleration and post-acceleration programmes, which EUnita covers on its separate page "Shape Acceleration & Scale Post-Acceleration 2026" (deadline 12 October 2026).

Key number	Value
Total call budget	€10.5M = €600,000 (30 × €20,000 preparatory phase) + €9.9M (11 × up to €900,000), conditional on formal EIT approval
Stage 1 cost to apply	No money is paid at Stage 1. The form has 17 text fields, at most 33,000 characters in total, and no uploads
Stage 1 pass mark	23 of 30 points, with minimum 8/10 Excellence, 4/5 Impact, 8/10 Implementation, 3/5 EU dimension
Own funding at the maximum grant	About €386,000 (30% of about €1.29M total eligible costs — EUnita arithmetic from the 70% rate)
Revenue share to EIT CC	3.5%–5% of qualifying revenues for 48–60 months, mandatory for every funded project

EUnita strategic reading

- **Light entry, heavy back end.** Stage 1 is cheap to enter and proves nothing yet: the €20,000 arrives only after selection and the real grant is a second competition with four expert evaluators, a portfolio selection and an online hearing. At most 11 of the up to 30 Stage 1 winners can be funded (arithmetic of the published numbers, not a probability).
- **The price of the grant is a revenue share.** Every funded project must sign a Revenue Sharing Agreement before its project agreement. The call page also mentions "SAFE" mechanisms; the guidelines do not. EUnita applies the guidelines.
- **The window is short.** Stage 1 closes on 30 October 2026. Companies that already hold a PIC, TRL 7 evidence, a clear IP position and a co-funding plan can still apply; companies starting from zero cannot realistically close those gaps in time.
- **Commercial, not research, money.** The call buys market entry and scaling. The information-session slides list as non-eligible: projects lacking substantial innovation, expansion of existing products without significant new features, marketing or sales only, replication of existing solutions, and projects without international market potential.

Verified official facts / Unconfirmed items

Verified: dates, amounts, rates, award numbers, eligibility, scoring thresholds, mandatory work packages and KPIs, revenue-share features (3.5%–5%, 48–60 months), payment stages — all read in the call guidelines v1.0 of 25 September 2026.

Contradictions (stricter reading applied): Stage 1 deadline hour (CET vs CEST); RSA only vs "Revenue Sharing or SAFE"; payment deadlines (90 vs 30 days); role of research bodies as partners.

Not confirmed in the available official sources. The RSA template (due mid-October); any cap, minimum or term start for the revenue share; State aid or de minimis treatment; what TRL 7 evidence is expected in each creative sector; whether TRL 8 is acceptable; the webinar Q&A (not covered in this analysis).

2. Call at a glance

Item	Official content
Programme / call	EIT Culture & Creativity — Open call for proposals "Innovation projects", reference 26-INN-MAI-011-X, version 1.0 (25 September 2026)
Instrument	Subgrant agreement – Project agreement with EIT CC GmbH (under Grant Agreement GA-101264271 between EIT and EIT CC). Preparatory phase: fixed lump sum. Implementation: project lump sum linked to accepted work packages
Status	Open. Stage 1 opened 25 September 2026. Stage 2 form is shared only with selected Stage 1 applicants (mid-December 2026)
Stage 1 deadline	30 October 2026, 17:00 CET (Berlin time) = 18:00 Bucharest (DST ends 25 October). The call page's application-form section says "17:00 CEST", which read literally is 17:00 Bucharest. Treat 17:00 Bucharest as the safe cut-off.
Stage 2 deadline	15 March 2027, 17:00 CET (Berlin) = 18:00 Bucharest. Direct Stage 2 applications are not permitted
Budget	€10.5M: €600,000 preparatory phase + €9.9M implementation
Awards	Up to 30 preparatory-phase projects (€20,000 each); up to 11 implementation projects (up to €900,000 each)
Funding rate	Implementation: up to 70% of total eligible project costs; each participant's own rate is 70%; the rest from own resources or other eligible non-EU sources. Costs funded by other EU programmes cannot be reimbursed
Eligible countries	EU Member States (incl. outermost regions), linked OCTs, Horizon Europe associated countries, certain low- and middle-income countries. Romania is eligible (EU Member State) and is a RIS country
Eligible applicants	Stage 1: one legal entity — start-up, scale-up, SME or larger company operating in or directly serving architecture, audio-visual media or fashion. Research organisations, universities and cultural institutions cannot apply alone
Consortium	Stage 1: single applicant. Stage 2: 2–3 independent legal entities; coordinator = Stage 1 applicant; mandatory commercialisation partner; optional third entity
TRL	Entry at TRL 7; target TRL 9 within 18 months. The forms say the current TRL "must be TRL 7"
Duration	Preparatory phase 1 February – 15 March 2027 (about six weeks). Implementation 1 July 2027 – 31 December 2028 (18 months), no extension

Item	Official content
Mandatory KPIs	EITHE01.1 IP rights (min 1); EITHE02.1 innovations launched on the market (min 1); EITHE02.4 launches with ≥ €10,000 documented sales (min 1, "if applicable"). Optional: EITHE04.1 and EITHE04.4 start-ups created
Financial sustainability	Mandatory Revenue Sharing Agreement: 3.5%–5% of qualifying revenues, 48–60 months, signed before the project agreement
Platform and language	Monday.com forms (Stage 1 link on the official call page); English only; character limits are admissibility rules; 9-digit PIC required
Evaluation	External experts (2 at Stage 1; 4 at Stage 2), then portfolio selection and a 10-minute pitch + 20-minute Q&A hearing at Stage 2 only
Information session	7 October 2026, 10:00–12:00 CEST (Berlin time), recorded: https://youtu.be/eB5XzTJzQVo
Contact	Applicant questions via the official contact form on the call page; evaluation matters: pmo@eit-culture-creativity.eu

3. What is funded and what falls outside scope

The guidelines fund innovation that is already built (TRL 7) and now needs technical finishing, business-model refinement, market entry and scaling. Implementation activities named in the call: technical development to TRL 9, business-model refinement and commercialisation, market entry and scaling, and participation in EIT ecosystem activities (Demo Days, Innovation Forum). Each project must follow five mandatory work packages with twelve mandatory deliverables.

Work package	Mandatory deliverables (due month)
WP1 Project set-up and solution specification	D1.1 implementation plan (M1); D1.2 specification and requirements report (M3); D1.3 user and stakeholder validation report (M6)
WP2 Development and prototyping	D2.1 prototype / MVP / demonstrator (M6); D2.2 technical development report (M8); D2.3 integration and testing plan (M9)
WP3 Validation and pilot implementation	D3.1 pilot implementation report (M13); D3.2 validation and performance report (M15); D3.3 updated solution (M16)
WP4 Market preparation, exploitation and investment readiness	D4.1 commercialisation and exploitation plan (M12); D4.2 investment readiness / scale-up roadmap (M16)
WP5 Communication, dissemination and closure	D5.1 communication and dissemination package (M9); D5.2 final impact and lessons-learned report (M18)

Outside scope or restricted

- Gaming and Cultural Heritage: strategic priorities of EIT CC but not covered by the 2026 calls (planned from 2027). Only architecture, audio-visual media and fashion count in this call.
- Research-led work: the programme "funds near-market projects"; limited research is tolerated only where it directly enables TRL 7 to TRL 9.
- Per the information-session slides (not stated in the guidelines text): projects lacking substantial innovation, expansion of existing products or services without significant new technology or features, marketing or sales only, replication of existing solutions, and projects without international market potential.

- Costs: financial support to third parties (cascaded grants, prizes, vouchers), internally invoiced goods and services, intra-consortium sales, deductible VAT, dividends and debt service are not eligible; in-kind contributions are discouraged and not eligible unless allowed.
- Anything already funded by another EU programme or EIT instrument: double funding is prohibited; other EIT KICs cannot take part.

4. Eligibility and individual/consortium requirements

Stage 1 applicant (single legal entity)

- **Type and sector:** start-up, scale-up, SME or larger company operating within, or in direct service of, architecture, audio-visual media or fashion. Form guidance: start-up "typically up to 5 years"; scale-up "typically" at least 20% annualised growth over three years; SME as per the EU definition. These are guidance, not hard thresholds; no minimum age or turnover was found.
- **Not eligible alone:** research organisations, universities and cultural institutions.
- **What you must show:** technical capacity to take the innovation from TRL 7 to TRL 9 within 18 months; a clear ownership or licensing position on the core IP; capacity to coordinate, manage finance and report to EIT CC.
- **Country:** legal establishment in an eligible country. Romania qualifies as an EU Member State and is on the RIS list (eit-ris.eu; information-session slide 20).
- **PIC:** the Stage 1 form asks for the 9-digit Participant Identification Code. Section 4.2 says applicants "may be required" to hold one; the information-session slides say the coordinator and all participants "must". Register now on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal. New entities also go through PIC and legal-entity validation by the EIT Onboarding Service before signing.
- **Declarations ticked at Stage 1:** no shareholders, UBOs or controlling persons linked to sanctioned jurisdictions; authority to submit and acceptance of the call rules; no double funding; financial capacity; operational capacity; and a broad "legal and dispute history" statement (no legal, regulatory, arbitration, criminal, civil or other dispute proceedings, investigations or material claims). Read the last one literally before ticking; how EIT CC interprets it is not stated.
- **Hard exclusions:** entities in Russia, Belarus or non-government-controlled Ukraine in any capacity; entities more than 50% owned by a Russia-established entity; Hungarian public-interest trusts in a funded role; EU restrictive measures; Article 138 Financial Regulation exclusion grounds (insolvency, unpaid taxes or social security, fraud, misrepresentation and similar).
- **Capacity checks:** financial capacity is normally checked for the coordinator where requested EIT support is €500,000 or more, and may be checked at any time. Pre-financing can be paid in instalments, reduced or removed, or a guarantee required, if capacity is weak.

Stage 2 consortium (selected Stage 1 applicants only)

Role	Requirement
Participant 1 — coordinator	Must be the Stage 1 applicant. Bears primary accountability for delivery, financial management and reporting
Participant 2 — commercialisation partner (mandatory)	Brings market access, distribution, licensing, investor relations, business development or IP commercialisation. May be a start-up, scale-up, SME, larger company, business support organisation, accelerator or industry association with a clear, evidenced commercial mandate
Participant 3 (optional)	Any additional organisation supporting the project. Associated partners get no EIT CC funding and do not count towards the minimum

Role	Requirement
Independence	Participants must confirm they are independent of the coordinator: neither exercises direct or indirect control over the other
Research bodies, universities, cultural institutions	Only as commercialisation partner with a direct commercial contribution (section 2.2); the Overview wording is looser ("primarily focused on commercialisation"). EUnita applies the stricter reading
Funding	The full €900,000 is reserved for multi-beneficiary consortia. Each participant's rate is 70% of its own eligible costs

RIS (Regional Innovation Scheme). Participation of RIS members is encouraged, not mandatory, and there is no minimum budget share. At Stage 2, the budget sub-criterion states that "the budget assigned to RIS countries is significant" and the form asks for the budget share allocated to RIS-eligible members. A consortium led from Romania, or including Romanian or other RIS partners, can use this.

5. Topics or strands

There is one funding pool and one ranking. Sector is a selection field on the form (it routes the proposal to evaluators), not a budget line. No sector quota or sector budget is stated (Not confirmed in the available official sources.); at Stage 1 no portfolio selection applies, and at Stage 2 portfolio diversification and gap-filling are scored (5 of 15 portfolio points).

Priority area	Topics named in the call	Expected impact (guidelines §2.1.4)
Fashion	Circular textile technologies; digital product passports and traceability; AI-assisted design tools; circular business models (rental, resale, repair); sustainable supply-chain solutions; bio-based materials and waste-reduction technologies (slides)	More circular practices, lower environmental footprint, sustainable jobs across regions incl. RIS countries. The sector is 99.8% SMEs and largely linear
Architecture	Bio-based and innovative building materials; circular design for disassembly; affordable climate-adaptation retrofits; urban social-cohesion tools; standardisation platforms for SMEs; digital twins and community-led planning (slides)	More low-carbon and circular building practice, better urban liveability, scalable business models for SMEs
Audio-visual media	Responsible generative-AI tools for content creation; new digital-monetisation models; GDPR-compliant audience analytics; digital identity and sovereignty technologies; IP protection and rights-management tools for the AI era; immersive storytelling (slides)	More deployment of responsible AI, stronger IP monetisation for European creators, more competitive European AVM SMEs

EUnita reading by strand. Fashion and architecture proposals will usually have physical or process innovations with measurable pilots, which makes TRL 7 evidence easier to document but market entry slower to prove. Audio-visual proposals are often software, so TRL 7 and early revenue can be demonstrated quickly, but the "responsible and trustworthy technology" framing, GDPR and AI compliance (form field F1) will be read closely. In all three strands the weak spot is usually the same: traceable revenue linked to the funded innovation, not the technology.

6. Funding, budget, co-financing, payments and cash flow

Stage	What is paid	When and how
Stage 1 submission	Nothing	"No financial support is provided at stage 1" (§3.4)
Preparatory phase (up to 30 companies)	€20,000 fixed lump sum per project	100% pre-financing on signature of the preparatory-phase project agreement (signature January 2027, tentative start 1 February 2027). Exclusively for the Business Development Plan; does not cover writing the full proposal; may be partly or wholly recovered if the plan and full proposal are not submitted
Implementation (up to 11 projects)	Project lump sum up to €900,000, allocated across work packages and participants	Pre-financing up to 25% of the maximum lump sum; interim payment up to 70% cumulative after the first periodic report (RP1: July–December 2027, report due within 60 days); balance up to 100% after the final report (RP2: January–December 2028). Payments depend on accepted work packages, not on invoices

The 70% rate and own funding

EIT CC "may cover up to 70%" of the total eligible project costs used to set the lump sum. The remaining 30% must come from the participants' own resources or other eligible non-EU sources. At the €900,000 maximum this implies total eligible costs of about €1,285,700 and own funding of about €385,700 (EUnita arithmetic). The rate applies to each participant, not only to the consortium as a whole. The tie-break order rewards a lower EIT CC percentage.

Cost rules that shape the budget

- Personnel: daily rate = annual personnel cost ÷ 215, in half-day units. Indirect costs: flat 25% of eligible direct costs excluding subcontracting.
- Subcontracting: at most 30% of a participant's costs and 15% of project costs, chosen on best value for money with several offers.
- Mandatory budget lines: at least three international trips per year for two project participants, plus at least one representative per year at an ecosystem engagement event (EIT events, investor days).
- Depreciation, not purchase price, for equipment; deductible VAT is not eligible. The Stage 2 Excel template applies the 25% indirect rate and the 30%/15% subcontracting checks automatically.
- State aid and de minimis: Not confirmed in the available official sources. The form (field F1) only asks applicants to describe any state-aid requirements.

Revenue Sharing Agreement (financial sustainability mechanism)

Feature	As stated in the guidelines (§3.5)
Obligation	Mandatory for every project selected after Stage 2; agreed with EIT CC and signed before the project agreement; attached to it as an annex. Payments may be withheld or suspended if it is not signed on time or not complied with
Rate and term	3.5% to 5% of qualifying revenues; 48 to 60 months; "as established by EIT Culture & Creativity's practice"
Qualifying revenues	Net income from commercialising the funded product or service (including licensing, subscriptions, customisation and related professional services), excluding VAT, grants, loans, equity proceeds and intra-group transfers

Feature	As stated in the guidelines (§3.5)
Calculation and payment	Quarterly, via a Calculation Statement with customer-level revenues; EIT CC invoices, payable within 30 days
Who signs	The legal entity identified in the Stage 2 application as the one expected to commercialise the results — not necessarily the coordinator. Due diligence documents are required from it
Illustration (EUnita arithmetic)	Every €1,000,000 of qualifying revenue returns €35,000 to €50,000 to EIT CC
Not stated	Cap on total payments; minimum payment; when the 48–60 month term starts; whether "net income" means revenue or profit (the agreement template suggests no deduction for overheads or staff costs unless accepted); security, guarantee or consequences of a sale or insolvency. Not confirmed in the available official sources.

Equity. The call text takes no equity. Equity-like instruments (SAFE, future equity) appear in the agreement template's menu of possible mechanisms, in the Strategic Agenda and on the call page, but not in the guidelines. Whether any applicant could be offered or required to accept one: Not confirmed in the available official sources.

Cash-flow reality (illustrative arithmetic, not an official forecast)

Assume the €900,000 maximum, total eligible costs of about €1,285,700 spread evenly over 18 months (about €71,400 a month). Pre-financing is 25%, about €225,000. The interim payment follows the first periodic report; the implementation guidelines say payments are "normally in Q2" of the following year, so around April–June 2028. By the end of June 2028 the consortium would have worked 12 months (about €857,000 of costs) against €225,000 received, a gap of about €630,000 to be funded from own money, other non-EU sources or the next-stage cash. The final balance (up to €270,000) is likewise expected in Q2 2029. The call text says payment is due 90 days after approval of a report; the agreement template says 30 days (see section 15.1). Plan on the longer period.

7. Calendar

Date	Event	Note
25 Sep 2026	Call opened; Stage 1 form open	Guidelines v1.0 published
7 Oct 2026	Information session, 10:00–12:00 CEST (Berlin)	Recording https://youtu.be/eB5XzTJzQVo
Mid-Oct 2026	RSA template and pitch template announced	Pitch template already online on 8 Oct; RSA template not yet published
30 Oct 2026, 17:00 CET	Stage 1 deadline (18:00 Bucharest; safe cut-off 17:00 Bucharest)	Friday. Form says CEST in one place (see 15.1)
Nov – Dec 2026	Stage 1 evaluation (two external experts)	Threshold 23/30
Mid-Dec 2026	Results to coordinators; Stage 2 form shared with selected applicants	30-calendar-day standstill starts the next day; appeals within 7 days
Mid-Jan 2027	Publication of Stage 1 results; preparatory-phase agreement signed in January	Subject to standstill, checks and legal-entity validation
1 Feb – 15 Mar 2027	Preparatory phase (about six weeks)	€20,000; end date fixed, delays shorten the phase

Date	Event	Note
15 Mar 2027, 17:00 CET	Stage 2 deadline (18:00 Bucharest)	Business Development Plan + full proposal + budget + Gantt + due diligence
Mar – May 2027	Stage 2 external evaluation, portfolio selection, hearings (online, Teams)	Hearing dates not stated; two representatives maximum
Mid-May 2027	Results to coordinators	30-day standstill
Mid-Jun 2027	Publication of Stage 2 results	Information-session slides wrongly show mid-June for Stage 1 as well
Jul 2027	Revenue Sharing Agreement and project agreement signed	Slides say June; guidelines say July
1 Jul 2027	Implementation start (tentative)	Subject to RSA and project-agreement signature
Jan – Feb 2028	First periodic report (RP1 July–Dec 2027), due within 60 days	Interim payment normally Q2 2028
31 Dec 2028	Implementation end, no extension	Final report within 60 days; final payment normally Q2 2029

8. Application process, content limits and required documents

Stage 1 form (online only, English)

The Stage 1 form lives on Monday.com. Save the draft link: administrators cannot recover it, and the same link lets you edit a submitted application (whether editing stays possible after the deadline: Not confirmed in the available official sources). Every text field has a character limit and exceeding it makes the application inadmissible.

Form section	Content asked	Limit
Part A — project and organisation	Title, acronym, priority area; coordinator legal data (type of entity, address, PIC, VAT, registration number, NACE, NUTS, RIS yes/no, coordinates, woman-led yes/no); single point of contact; legal representative	Fields
Indicative budget	Approximate EIT funding and total project budget for Stage 2 (numbers only, EUR); indicative, no commitment	Numbers
Declarations	Sanctions and UBO, legal and dispute history, authority to submit, acceptance of the rules, no double funding, financial capacity, operational capacity	Tick boxes
Abstract	Problem, innovation, current TRL (must be TRL 7), market, expected commercial outcome	2,000 characters
A1–A3 Excellence	A1 concept, objectives and TRL 7 evidence (pilot, demonstrator, field-test data); A2 state of the art and competitors; A3 methodology TRL 7→9, assumptions and gender dimension	3 × 2,000

Form section	Content asked	Limit
B1–B2 Impact	B1 measurable outcomes and contribution to SO2 (deploying and scaling CCSI innovations); B2 customers, value proposition, business model, IP strategy	2 × 2,000
C1–C5 Implementation	C1 work-plan logic; C2.1–C2.5 short description of the five mandatory work packages; C3 risks (type, likelihood, impact, mitigation); C4 team, track record, commercialisation partner if known; C5 budget justification	C1–C4: 2,000 each (C2 ×5); C5: 1,000
E1 EU dimension	Why the proposal is relevant beyond one local, regional or national context; countries, replication, European stakeholders	2,000
F1 Ethics and compliance	Personal data, AI systems, permits, data protection, consumer protection, state aid, sector rules	2,000

In total: 17 text fields, 16 at 2,000 characters and one (C5) at 1,000, so at most 33,000 characters. No documents are uploaded at Stage 1.

Admissibility checks (both stages)

- Submitted before the deadline through the official form, using all mandatory templates; complete (all sections, annexes and supporting documents); entirely in English; readable and printable; every section within its character limit.
- Eligibility then checks applicant type, PIC, country, consortium composition (Stage 2), reimbursement rate and KPI targets, with failing proposals notified with reasons.

Stage 2 package (selected applicants, by 15 March 2027)

- Stage 2 online form: Part A for each of two or three participants, KPI targets, work packages, milestones, budget logic incl. RIS share, consortium capacity and biographies (up to three per participant), governance, risks, EU dimension, portfolio fit (D1) and financial sustainability and RSA entity (D2), ethics.
- Budget file in the EIT CC Excel template (file name Budget_<project reference>.xlsx); Gantt chart with the five mandatory work packages (PDF); Business Development Plan (the Business Model Canvas may serve as checklist or summary).
- Due diligence for the RSA signing entity: financial statements (income statement, balance sheet, cash flow), historical and projected to 2030; cap table; certificate of incorporation and bylaws; organisational chart; shareholder agreements and IP assignments or ownership documents if applicable; own English translations with a statement of accuracy.
- Declaration of Honour (selected applicants) and, for the hearing, a pitch deck on EIT CC's template (company, team, need, innovation, competitive landscape, market, go-to-market, financials 2026–2031).

9. Evaluation and selection

Stage 1 (two external experts, all criteria)

Criterion	Sub-criteria	Max	Threshold
Excellence	Ambition and clarity of objectives (5); methodological soundness and gender dimension (5)	10	8

Criterion	Sub-criteria	Max	Threshold
Impact	Credibility of pathways incl. early commercialisation thinking: target customers, value proposition, business model, IP strategy	5	4
Quality and efficiency of implementation	Work plan and risk management (5); budget justification and value for money (5)	10	8
EU dimension	Cross-border reach and scalability across European markets	5	3
Total	Strict descending ranking; no portfolio selection; no hearing	30	23

Stage 2 (four external experts, then portfolio selection)

Criterion	Sub-criteria (points)	Max	Threshold
Excellence	Ambition and clarity (5×2); methodology, gender dimension, interdisciplinarity, open science (5×2)	20	16
Impact	Credibility of outcomes (5×2); dissemination and exploitation (5); viability of the Business Development Plan (5×3)	30	24
Quality and efficiency of implementation	Work plan and risks (5×2); consortium capacity (5); budget and value for money incl. significant RIS budget (5×3)	30	24
EU dimension	Consortium composition and market impact across European markets (5×2)	10	6
External quality evaluation	Minimum overall 70 of 90; two experts are technical/thematic (60 points), two business/financial (30 points)	90	70
Portfolio: strategic fit and FSM	Portfolio complementarity (5); contribution to financial sustainability, credible RSA revenue pathway (5); diversification and Knowledge Triangle Integration (5)	15	9
Portfolio: hearing	Presentation (5); answers (5); communication and adaptability (5). Online, 10-minute pitch + 20-minute Q&A, max two representatives	15	9
Portfolio: impact and commercial scalability	Novelty and market disruption (5); stakeholder uptake and revenue/investment pathway within 2–3 years (5)	10	6
Portfolio selection	Minimum 24 of 40; internal scores cannot exceed 40% of the total	40	24

Ranking and outcome. The final ranking sums the quality and portfolio scores (maximum 130 at Stage 2). Funding runs in strict ranking order until the budget is exhausted; proposals that meet all thresholds but are not funded go to a reserve list valid for up to one year. **Tie-break order:** higher contribution to the mandatory KPIs; stronger value for money including a lower EIT CC reimbursement percentage; women-led ventures (35% portfolio target). **After results:** the coordinator is notified at pmo@eit-culture-creativity.eu; a 30-calendar-day standstill applies (no public announcement, no signature); appeals on procedural grounds only, within 7 calendar days, by the coordinator. Selection is not an award: funding depends on the standstill, appeals, validation, budget availability and signature.

10. Implementation and material legal/compliance obligations

- **Contracts before start:** legal-entity validation by the EIT Onboarding Service (including EDES checks), bank and KYC checks, signed Revenue Sharing Agreement, signed project agreement. Without the RSA, payments can be withheld and the agreement terminated.
- **Lump-sum logic:** payments follow acceptance of work packages; partial completion can reduce payment proportionally. No invoices or timesheets are required for payment unless asked, but evidence that the work was done must be kept for at least five years after the final payment.
- **Reporting:** the coordinator submits yearly performance and cost reports within 60 days of the reporting period (RP1 July–December 2027, RP2 January–December 2028) on EIT CC's platform, using its templates; deliverables and KPI reports are reviewed within about one month.
- **Milestone review and sanctions:** a mid-term milestone review applies; failure to meet agreed milestones "may result in termination or reduction of funding". Any consortium change or significant plan change needs prior written approval. Termination grounds include insolvency, tax or social-security breach, false information and loss of eligibility.
- **KPIs:** at least one IP right (EITHE01.1) and at least one innovation launched on the market (EITHE02.1) during the project or within three years after it; at least one launch with documented sales of €10,000 or more (EITHE02.4, "if applicable"). Evidence is required.
- **Mandatory activities:** three international trips a year for two project participants and at least one ecosystem engagement event a year, reflected in plan and budget; Demo Days and the Innovation Forum are part of the support offered.
- **GEDI:** gender equality, diversity and inclusion must be embedded in design, development and delivery, with an intersectional perspective where relevant (EIT Gender Equality Plan 2025–2027).
- **IP:** applicants keep ownership of prior IP and of results they generate; they must hold or have secured rights to every element of the innovation and indemnify EIT CC against third-party IP claims. EIT CC may require a non-exclusive royalty-free licence for portfolio and communication use where the call or FSM requires it; its IP Policy applies. The call text requires no such licence and does not mention a right to object to transfers or exclusive licences. Not confirmed in the available official sources. (scope of the licence, content of the IP Policy).
- **Audit, recovery, data:** checks and audits by EIT, the Commission, OLAF, EPPO and the Court of Auditors; information can be requested for five years after completion; undue amounts are recoverable and can be offset; personal data under GDPR (retained five years for unsuccessful and seven for successful applicants); disputes go to the courts of Brussels.
- **Visibility and fast-track:** EIT and EIT CC funding must be acknowledged; the logo may not suggest wider endorsement. EIT CC may at its sole discretion activate a fast-track for follow-up support; applicants have no entitlement to it.

11. Strong-fit and poor-fit applicant profiles

Strong fit	Poor fit
A start-up, scale-up or SME in fashion, architecture or audio-visual media with a pilot, demonstrator or field test that proves TRL 7	Technology below TRL 7, or a market-launched product needing only marketing or sales
Clear IP ownership or licence, and a PIC already in hand	Unclear IP ownership, or a core component licensed from a third party with restrictions

Strong fit	Poor fit
Existing revenue, contracts or a qualified pipeline that can be traced to the innovation	A university, research organisation or cultural institution wanting to lead
Shareholders aligned on a 3.5%–5% revenue share and able to fund 30% of costs	No co-funding capacity, or shareholders unwilling to sign a revenue share
A known or findable commercialisation partner (distributor, platform, licensee, retailer, investor network)	A company that cannot name any commercialisation partner or route to market
A European market story (several countries), not only a domestic one	Purely local market potential
Romanian or other RIS-country base, or RIS partners to include at Stage 2	A company that cannot truthfully tick the broad "legal and dispute history" statement, until EIT CC clarifies it

12. Possible strategic directions

These are generic structures, not real projects. Each pairs a TRL 7 innovation with a commercialisation partner and an RSA-compatible revenue stream.

- **Product-passport or traceability software (fashion).** A SaaS or licensing model; commercialisation partner: a retail platform, textile association or ERP/PLM reseller; qualifying revenues are subscriptions and customisation fees that are easy to trace.
- **Bio-based or circular building material (architecture).** Pilot-proven at TRL 7 on real buildings; commercialisation partner: a manufacturer-distributor or construction group; revenue from product sales and licensing; budget heavy on certification, pilots and trips.
- **Responsible AI or rights-licensing tool (audio-visual media).** Software with GDPR-compliant data handling; commercialisation partner: a distributor, collecting society, streaming or production platform; revenue from licences and usage-based fees.
- **Circular business model (rental, resale, repair).** A new service model with proven unit economics in one market; commercialisation partner: marketplace or logistics operator opening additional countries; revenue easily separated from the rest of the group's income.
- **Consortium design.** Keep the coordinator as the technology owner; make the commercialisation partner the RSA signing entity only if it will actually sell the product and can supply cap table, financial statements to 2030 and shareholder agreements; use the optional third participant for a RIS-country pilot partner to address the RIS budget criterion.

13. Key risks and mitigations

Risk	Why it matters	Mitigation
Short Stage 1 window (closes 30 October 2026)	PIC, TRL 7 evidence, IP position and co-funding decisions cannot be improvised; late submission is inadmissible	Screen first; get a PIC now; submit days early; do not rely on the 18:00 Bucharest reading
High Stage 1 thresholds	23 of 30 overall and a minimum on every criterion; Impact needs 4 of 5 from one block	Write to the grid; lead with evidence (pilots, contracts, pipeline); one clear business model and IP strategy

Risk	Why it matters	Mitigation
Revenue Sharing Agreement	Mandatory 3.5%–5% for 48–60 months; template unpublished; cap, start and base unconfirmed; RSA entity must provide due diligence	Read the template when published; model the effect at your own revenue forecast; align shareholders before applying; ask EIT CC the open questions
30% own funding and long payment gap	At the maximum grant about €386,000 of own funds plus a gap of about €630,000 before the first interim payment (illustrative)	Secure bridge finance or non-EU co-funding early; model cash by quarter; do not count EU funds as co-funding
Stage 2 sprint and consortium formation	Six weeks, one mandatory commercialisation partner, due diligence, budget, Gantt and plan; the €20,000 is recoverable if not submitted and does not pay for proposal writing	Identify the partner during Stage 1; prepare financial statements to 2030 and the cap table now; budget external support for the plan
Competition at Stage 2	At most 11 of up to 30 can be funded; four evaluators, portfolio selection and a hearing	Plan for portfolio criteria (RSA pathway, diversification, KTI) and rehearse the 10 + 20 minute hearing
Hard end date and milestones	31 December 2028, no extension; a mid-term review can reduce or terminate funding; a late signature could shorten the 18 months (effect not confirmed)	Start-up-ready work plan; conservative milestones; early contracting and legal-entity validation
Inconsistent official sources	CET vs CEST; SAFE vs RSA; 30 vs 90 days; role of research bodies; dispute declaration	Stricter reading used here; ask EIT CC through its contact form and keep the answers on file
Post-project obligations	KPI evidence up to three years after the project; five-year audit window; licence and IP-policy duties unclear	Contract for evidence collection from day one; check IP Policy before signing

14. Explained EUnita opportunity score

This is EUnita's own assessment of the opportunity for an eligible applicant. It is not an official evaluation score and it is not a probability of winning. Gates are applied first; a high score cannot override a failed or flagged gate.

Gates (assessed on 8 October 2026)

Gate	Result	Evidence
G1 Real third-party route exists now	Pass	Stage 1 open since 25 September 2026; EIT CC sub-grants to companies in eligible countries
G2 Enough official evidence	Pass	93-page guidelines incl. both application forms, eligibility document, agreement template, budget template, slides. RSA template and FAQ answers still missing
G3 No unresolved fundamental eligibility question blocking a typical applicant	Pass with conditions	Stage 1 eligibility is clear; open points (RSA terms, SAFE wording, dispute declaration, CET/CEST) affect the decision to apply, not Stage 1 eligibility
G4 Not closed	Pass	Closes 30 October 2026

Gate	Result	Evidence
G5 Time for preparation (flag if under 4 weeks)	FLAG	Stage 1 closes 30 October 2026; mitigated by a short Stage 1 form but constrained by readiness gates

Score

Dimension	Score	Max	Reason
Funding value relative to applicant effort	12	20	Light Stage 1, but only €20,000 at that point; €900,000 sits behind a second competition, 30% own funding and a revenue share
Eligible applicant pool and accessibility	13	20	Any company size and EU country incl. Romania; limited by three sectors, exact TRL 7, IP ownership, PIC and the need for a partner
Scope clarity and credible applicant fit	10	15	Sectors, KPIs and work packages are explicit; SAFE vs RSA, TRL meaning and the non-eligible list are not
Time available for preparation	6	15	Stage 1 closes 30 October 2026; six weeks for the Stage 2 package
Funding mechanics and implementation feasibility	7	15	Lump sum and 25% pre-financing help; 70% rate, mandatory RSA, late interim payment, hard end date and milestone review weigh
Total	48	85	

Applicant attractiveness — moderate, conditional. Entry costs little and a selected company gets €20,000 up front. The headline €900,000 needs a second competition, a commercialisation partner, 30% own funding and a revenue share to EIT CC. Attractive for revenue-ready TRL 7 companies that can co-fund and want European market access; unattractive without shareholder alignment, co-funding or TRL 7 evidence.

15. Official sources

All sources read or downloaded on 8 October 2026.

- Call page: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/your-opportunities/calls-funding/innovation-projects
- EIT listing: https://www.eit.europa.eu/our-activities/opportunities/eit-culture-creativity-innovation-projects-open-call
- Call guidelines v1.0: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/sites/default/files/2026-09/EITCC_Open%20call_Innovation%20projects_25.09.2026%20%281%29.pdf
- Stage 2 budget template: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/sites/default/files/2026-09/EIT-CC_Budget-breakdown-template_Innovation%20projects_stage2_v1.xlsx
- Eligibility of Expenditures: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/sites/default/files/2026-09/EITCC_Eligibility%20of%20Expenditures_v2-2026.pdf
- Subgrant agreement – Project agreement template: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/sites/default/files/2026-06/EIT%20CC_Project%20Agreement%20Template_master%20unique%20template.pdf
- Declaration of Honour: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/sites/default/files/2026-06/EITCC_DoH.pdf
- Project Implementation Guidelines: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/sites/default/files/2026-07/Project%20Implementation%20Guidelines_%20EXT_31072026.pdf
- Business Model Canvas: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/sites/default/files/2026-09/EITCC_Business%20Model%20Canvas_Template.docx

- Pitch deck template: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/sites/default/files/2026-09/EITCC_Innovation%20projects_Pitch%20Template.pdf
- Information-session slides: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/sites/default/files/2026-10/EITCC_Innovation%20projects%202026_v1.pdf
- Information-session recording: https://youtu.be/eB5XzTJzQVo
- Strategic Agenda 2024–2027: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/sites/default/files/2025-12/EIT-Culture-Creativity_Strategic-Agenda-2024-2027.pdf
- Code of Conduct: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu/sites/default/files/2025-12/EIT-Culture-Creativity_Code-of-Conduct_Sept-2024.pdf
- EIT Impact Framework: https://www.eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-07/EIT%20Impact%20Framework%20%282022-2027%29%20with%20codes.pdf
- Horizon Europe participating countries: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf
- EIT RIS eligible countries: https://eit-ris.eu/about-eit-community/
- Stage 1 application form (online only): https://forms.monday.com/forms/7bcb9806fbdc1de36f8b5360d3ed1263?r=euc1
- Contact form: https://forms.monday.com/forms/5cd7745a9507663060ba36aa6c030f0c?r=euc1

15.1 Points where the official sources disagree or are silent

Point	What the sources say	Treatment in this analysis
Stage 1 deadline hour	Guidelines p.8, call page key dates, EIT listing, slides: 17:00 CET (Berlin). Call page form section: 17:00 CEST. On 30 Oct Berlin is CET; 17:00 CEST would equal 17:00 Bucharest	Official time 17:00 CET = 18:00 Bucharest; safe cut-off 17:00 Bucharest
RSA or SAFE	Guidelines: RSA mandatory. Call page: "Revenue Sharing or SAFE". Slide 26: RSA is the "default". Agreement template and Strategic Agenda list SAFE/equity options	RSA mandatory; SAFE not offered; equity effects unconfirmed
Where the €20,000 sits	Call page funding box says Stage 1; guidelines say no money at Stage 1 and place it in the Stage 2 preparatory phase	Guidelines prevail; wording "preparatory phase" used
Stage 2 dates	July 2027 + 18 months equals 31 December 2028 — consistent. Slides give June 2027 signature and mid-June 2027 Stage 1 publication	Guidelines prevail; no real contradiction on duration
Payment deadlines	Guidelines: 30 days for pre-financing, 90 days for interim and final. Agreement template: 30 days throughout. Implementation guidelines: payment normally in Q2 of the following year	Longer period used for cash-flow planning
Research bodies as partners	Overview: allowed if primarily commercialisation, limited research tolerated. §2.2: only as commercialisation partner, not for research	Stricter reading
Mandatory KPI wording	EITHE02.4 is listed as mandatory but "if applicable"; Stage 2 form allows 0	Plan for at least 1 on all three; confirm with EIT CC
Not published or silent	RSA template; State aid; TRL 7 meaning per sector; whether TRL 8 qualifies; editing after the deadline; travel ("3 trips per year for 2 participants"); EIT CC IP Policy; webinar Q&A	Not confirmed in the available official sources.

16. Final EUnita verdict

Strand	Verdict	Reasoning
Stage 1 concept application (deadline 30 Oct 2026)	Worth applying for companies that already meet all five readiness gates	Light form, no cost, no upload; but the bar is 23/30, Stage 1 closes on 30 October 2026, and readiness gates (PIC, TRL 7 evidence, IP, shareholders on RSA, co-funding) cannot be created in time
Stage 2 full proposal and implementation (by invitation, 15 Mar 2027 / 1 Jul 2027 – 31 Dec 2028)	Attractive only for revenue-ready consortia that can co-fund and accept the revenue share	Up to €900,000 at 70% rate, but a second competition, a mandatory commercialisation partner, due diligence, a hard end date, a mid-term milestone review, 30% own funding and a cash gap before the first interim payment

17. How EUnita can help

- **Readiness screen (before you invest time):** TRL 7 evidence, IP position, revenue traceability, co-funding capacity and the effect of a 3.5%–5% revenue share on your own forecast.
- **Stage 1 concept:** writing to the published scoring grid within the character limits, with the evidence that evaluators look for.
- **If selected:** the Business Development Plan (the call allows external support), revenue projections to 2030, the 30% co-funding plan, the Excel budget and Gantt chart, commercialisation-partner structuring, due diligence preparation and the hearing pitch.

18. Contact

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EUnita full-call analysis — verified 8 October 2026 against the official call guidelines (reference 26-INN-MAI-011-X, v1.0, 25 September 2026) and the call documents listed in section 15. Any corrigendum, FAQ answer, template revision or instruction issued by EIT Culture & Creativity prevails over this analysis. EUnita does not guarantee eligibility, selection or funding.