

F.A.Q. for Catalyse NEB 2026 Call

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Resources

- [Info session recording](#)
- [Application platform](#)
- [Call manual](#)

Eligibility – Who can apply

Q: Is the SAFE mandatory?

A: Yes, to be accepted into the programme the start-up must sign the SAFE.

Q: Start-ups registered in which countries are eligible to apply?

A: All Horizon Europe Countries as well as the 21 third associated countries which are listed in [this document](#). This includes all EU member states and third countries associated to Horizon Europe.

Q: What are the criteria a business should meet to be eligible and competitive for selection?

A: All the eligibility criteria listed in section 3 of the call manual must be met in order to be eligible. To be competitive, a well-written application, clear embodiment of NEB values, and strong alignment to one of the KIC strategic focus areas (annex 2 of the call manual) are encouraged.

Q: Is a company with less than a year of operation eligible?

A: Yes, any company that is legally registered at the time of submission of the application, with registration date no earlier than January 1st, 2021, is eligible. A proof of registration is required to be submitted as part of the application to demonstrate when and where the entity was incorporated. However, it is important to note that all other eligibility criteria must be met by the entity which is applying. For instance, a company with less than a year of operation must still have either received EUR 15,000.00 in revenues in 2025 or EUR 40,000.00 in total funding or have participated in Grow NEB.

Q: Would a start-up be considered if the company has been bootstrapped by the founder to satisfy the EUR 40,000.00 in funding received criteria?

A: No, the eligible funding sources are listed under annex 4 of the call manual. The purpose for this criteria is to demonstrate that solution meets an existing demand and thus has received funding from external sources, since internal funding does not aid in demonstrating market traction.

Q: Does founder's capital count towards the EUR 1,000,000 funding limit?

A: This depends on whether the capital is represented in the entity's balance sheet. The total assets must be below the EUR 1,000,000 funding limit.

Q: What happens if a company receives an investment term sheet between application and the start of the programme (if they are currently fundraising) that takes them over the EUR 1,000,000 limit?

A: The company's total funding will be evaluated as it stands at the time of submission of the application. If the company raises funds that bring it over the limit during the evaluation process, they will remain eligible.

Q: If funding has been delivered through research funds to a university, but not as a separate private legal entity, are these considered eligible?

A: No, the funding must be clearly provided to the bank account of the private legal entity (start-up) which is applying.

Q: Is the EUR 15,000 revenue requirement gross or net?

A: Gross revenue.

Q: What is the period of income assessment: calendar year 2025 or until January 2026 (date of submission)?

A: Calendar year 2025.

Q: Are private entrepreneurs eligible?

A: The entity must be able to issue equity. As such, if you are legally registered as an entity, and are a 1-person team, then you are eligible. However, if you are registered as a sole proprietor, you are NOT eligible.

Q: Can a not-for profit be eligible?

A: No. In order to sign the SAFE, the registered entity must be a for profit entity. However, you are encouraged to look into other EIT Community NEB calls, such as the [Connect NEB](#) and [Co-Create NEB](#) calls.

Q: If the organisation has a VAT number, is it eligible?

A: The company needs to be a registered entity. However, simply having a VAT number is not sufficient as the company must also be a for profit.

Q: What is meant by “TRL/BRL of at least four or participant in the Grow NEB programme”?

A: Technology Readiness Level (TRL) and Business Readiness Level (BRL) are methods for estimating the maturity of technologies or businesses. Typically, a technology that has entered into the development phase with a readily developed proof-of-concept qualifies at a TRL of four or greater. The Grow NEB programme (previously NEB Hackathons Winners Contest) is an EIT Community NEB programme that helps nurture early-stage ideas into newly created start-ups. Past participants in this programme may have a slightly inferior TRL/BRL, but are still encouraged to apply as long as they are a registered entity.

Q: What is included in the definition of NEB?

A: The New European Bauhaus (NEB) philosophy applies to any start-up that holds all 3 core NEB values (sustainability, aesthetics, inclusivity) as an integral component of their product/service and their organisation as a whole. Furthermore, start-ups that respond to one or more of the four NEB thematic axes are encouraged to apply. These are 1) regaining a sense of belonging, 2) reconnecting with nature, 3) prioritising the places and people that need it the most, and 4) long-term life cycle thinking in the industrial ecosystem. More information about what NEB is can be found in the [NEB Compass](#).

Q: What is meant by “Have founders owning more than 50% of shares”? Does this mean that one of the company’s founders must own 51% or more of the shares?

A: This requires the sum of all the shares owned by the various founders and co-founders to be greater than 50%. For example, if the company has three founders who each own 20% of the shares, the company would pass the eligibility criteria, since the founders own 60% of shares.

Q: What is the evaluation scheme for start-ups that meet all the required eligibility criteria?

A: Start-ups will be evaluated in 2 rounds, both using the same scoring and evaluation criteria provided in section 5.2 of the call manual. All details pertaining to the evaluation process are described in section 5 of the call manual.

Q: Is special consideration given to start-ups legally registered as innovative start-ups?

A: No.

Q: Is it still possible to apply if a co-founder previously received a EUR 22,000 tax-free voucher from an accelerator for the same business idea and the current company has received a total of EUR 20,000 in grants?

A: Yes, participation in previous accelerators and other grant funding does not disqualify entities from being eligible. However, if you have previously participated in an accelerator led by one of the KICs (not including Grow NEB), then you will not be able to be evaluated, nor signed with that KIC for conflict of interest reasons.

Programme Contents – What we offer

Q: What is the timeline for the programme?

A: The programme will start May 25th and run until the end of November 2026. A full schedule for the programme will be released prior to the start-date. An in-person kick-off event will occur in Leuven, Belgium in June, an in-person workshop will run around September in Berlin, Germany, and a final demo day will take place in November in Helsinki, Finland.

Q: What is the expected time commitment?

A: The average time commitment is around 3h per week and 2 weeks a month. There will be 1 to 2 online workshops per month, as well as a given number of 1-on-1 mentoring sessions per month. Additionally, there will be 3 in-person events throughout the programme. All expenses related to travel and accommodation for the in-person events is covered in the grant award.

Q: When are the 2 instalments of EUR 11,000 paid out? Are there any conditions?

A: The first instalment will be paid upon signing of contracts in May/June 2026. The second instalment will be paid out upon completion of the final reporting at the end of the programme in December 2026.

Q: Can the EUR 22,000 be used for prototyping of good/service? Can it go towards capital expenditure?

A: As stated in the call documentation, used for travel, participation to events and other goods and services needed for dissemination and exploitation purposes. In general, the direct grant must be used to help develop the start-up in line with the objectives of the Catalyse NEB programme. This can include prototyping and other capital expenditure.

Q: Are there in-person events? Which costs are eligible to be covered?

A: Yes, there are 3 in-person events. All travel and accommodation costs related to the in-person events are covered by the grant.

Q: What are the specific services that the accelerator offers for EUR 50,000?

A: The organisation of 3 in-person events, including workshops, networking opportunities, and a Demo Day. Tickets and booths for international start-up events part of the KIC ecosystems (e.g., NextBite, Tomorrow Mobility, etc.). At least 8 online workshops to complement in-person workshops, focusing on business, communications, and NEB skills. Dedicated programme team during the accelerator to facilitate conversations and guide you through the programme. One business and one design mentor for one-on-one sessions. Dedicated post-accelerator support, as per SAFE terms, with the investment team from the KIC with which you are contracted. This support can include help in negotiations, fundraising opportunities, and connections with KIC networks, including access to KIC community platform.

Q: What kind of support can be expected by the design mentor?

A: Design mentors can provide the following support: assess LCA, co-design, design for social change, differentiate a brand, communicate and reach out, envision the future, extend design thinking to business viability, focus on user experience, frame and re-frame challenges, ideate, iterate and de-risk development, prototype a product/service/system

Simple Agreement for Future Equity (SAFE)

Q: Is there a valuation cap?

A: No.

Q: How much equity will the EIT Community NEB take from the startup?

A: As with all convertible investments, this is entirely dependent on the valuation that the company raises at their subsequent funding round. We do not have a valuation cap, and so will follow whatever valuation is agreed with the later stage investor (typically investors would put a cap in to ensure they take a minimum amount of equity, like 7-10%). Below are examples without the discount rate as this differs based on KIC.

Example 1 – Company raises at a valuation of EUR 5m

EIT Community NEB ownership = $\text{EUR } 50,000 / \text{EUR } 5,000,000 = 1\%$

Example 2 – Company raises at a valuation of EUR 10m

EIT Community NEB ownership = EUR 50,000 / EUR 10,000,000 = 0.5%

Q: What does 20% discount mean?

A: This means that the shares at the conversion event will be discounted 20% for the KIC compared to the new investors. E.g. if a financing round occurs with new investors purchasing shares at EUR 1.00 per share, then the KIC will only pay EUR 0.80 per share.

Q: What post-accelerator services are provided by the EIT Community NEB?

A: Post-accelerator services vary depending on the KIC within the EIT Community NEB with which the startup signs a SAFE (I.e., EIT Climate-KIC, EIT Food, EIT Manufacturing or EIT Urban Mobility). These typically include access to the KIC's community, EIT Community NEB access, business and entrepreneurship support, NEB support, communication support, and funding opportunities.

Q: With which KIC will I sign a SAFE?

A: You will be matched with the KIC that most closely matches your domain and that has the most potential to provide further support through their networks upon completion of the programme. Nonetheless, the services provided throughout the programme are the same regardless of the KIC with which you sign the SAFE. Please refer to annex 2 of the call manual. Your selection of strategic focus areas will be used to allocate to KIC.

Q: Are there differences between the SAFE terms for different KICs?

A: Yes, these are captured in annex 5 of the call manual. The main differences are for the minimum qualifying round, discount rate, and longstop date.