



OPEN CALL 1 - TERMS AND CONDITIONS PENETRATION TEST SCENARIOS DEVELOPMENT



Submission deadline: July 9, 2026, at 15:00 (Brussels time)
Apply at: <https://opportunities.getonepass.eu/open-opportunities/circat-opencalls/opencall1>



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v3	April 21, 2026	Final version	CIRCAT Selection Committee
v4	June 18, 2026	Update Financial Vertical	CIRCAT Selection Committee
v5	June 30, 2026	Updating selection process	CIRCAT Selection Committee

Open Call Terms and Conditions for CIRCAT

CIRCAT Funded under Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL) DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07,
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Disclaimer

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Open Call Terms and Conditions

Welcome to the **CIRCAT Open Call 1 Terms and Conditions** (also Terms or Guide). This document outlines the rules for participation in **CIRCAT Open Cal 1**, including eligibility criteria, maximum grant amount, timeline, submission rules, and the evaluation process.

Please take a moment to read this document carefully to understand the requirements and process. For any questions, please contact us at circat.help@fundingbox.com

Good luck!

CIRCAT Team

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List of Terms and Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CRA	Cyber Resilience Act
CIRCAT	Cybersecurity Infrastructure Resilience, Collaboration and Advanced Training
DORA	Digital Operational Resilience Act
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties
GA	Grant Agreement
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
IoT	Internet of Things
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
NCA	National Cybersecurity Authorities
NCC	National Coordination Centre
NIS2	Network and Information Security 2 (Directive)
OT	Operational Technology
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises



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DIGITAL-ECCC-2024-DEPLOY-CYBER-07



SgA	Sub-Grant Agreement
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1. Open call basic conditions

Section	Description
Call opening date:	May 8, 2026, at 10:00 (Brussels Time)
Call deadline:	July 9, 2026, at 14:00 (Brussels Time)
Max. grant amount	The maximum grant amount is up to EUR 40,000 per grantee, based on the budget included in the application form. The Project budget is part of the application form. The total amount you outlined will be fixed and will determine the maximum grant you'll receive. Applicants must co-finance the proposed activity by a minimum of 50% of the total project costs to be eligible for the maximum EUR 40,000 grant. The grant will be paid as a lump sum.
How to apply?	Submit your proposal via our online form LINK TO THE APPLICATION FORM within the deadline. Your application must be in English, and all mandatory sections must be completed. Proposals can be modified after submission (but only until the Open call deadline). Multiple submissions for the same company are not allowed. If more than one proposal was submitted, only the one submitted closer to the deadline will be considered.
Duration of the Support Programme:	The Grant is offered together with the CIRCAT Support programme. Our Programme lasts 6 months.
Who can apply?	We are looking for applications from National Cybersecurity Authorities (NCAs), National Coordination Centres, large industrial installations,



	Operators of Essential Services (OES), governmental entities, and other relevant stakeholders with the capacity to aggregate demand. Eligible applicants include SMEs, mid-caps, large companies, research centres (including universities), and public bodies. All entities must be registered in, and controlled by, an entity or person established in a Member State of the European Union or an EEA country.
Additional conditions related to who can apply?	Applicants under EU restrictive measures are ineligible. CIRCAT partners, affiliates, and employees cannot apply due to the conflict of interest.
Project scope - type of activities that can be funded	Selected beneficiaries have to develop testing scenarios for Networks, Applications, Virtualisation, Cloud, Industrial Control Systems (ICS), and IoT within CIRCAT prioritised verticals: Energy, Health, Public Administration, Digital infrastructure, ICT Service management (B2B)¹ and the Financial Entities². Applications must address large industrial operators. Eligible Activities: ● Vulnerability Testing Support: Developing and documenting realistic penetration testing scenarios. ● Threat & Risk Assessment Support: Conducting customised risk scenario analyses
Number of grants and total funding available	We will support up to 18 Projects in this Open Call. The total budget available for this Open call is EUR 720,000.

¹ Entities operating in the Energy, Health, Public Administration, Digital Infrastructure, and ICT Service Management (B2B) sectors may fall within the scope of NIS2. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022L2555>

² Entities regulated under DORA. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022R2554&from=FR>

Support programme	The support program provides expert guidance to help selected third-party projects design and document realistic penetration testing scenarios for critical infrastructures. The program execution period lasts up to 6 months, divided in three stages: Stage 1: Individual Mentoring Plan (Up to 1 month). Definition of a structured work plan tailored to the project. The Individual Mentoring Plan (IMP), a document that establishes the project's specific key performance indicators (KPIs) and deliverables. Stage 2: Scenario Definition (Up to 3 months), Identification of the relevant threat vectors and detailing the technical steps, tools, and methodologies required to safely replicate these threats in a controlled environment. Stage 3: Scenario Integration and Validation (Up to 2 months), the Mentors collaborate with participants to validate the scenarios, ensuring they accurately reflect emerging attack patterns and exploit techniques. CIRCAT OC1 beneficiaries have to design a Penetration Testing Scenario, following the template provided in Annex 1, in one of the CIRCAT prioritized verticals (Energy, Health, Public Administration, Digital infrastructure, ICT Service management (B2B) and the Financial market infrastructure).
Ground rules and formal requirements	When applying to the CIRCAT open call, please also note that the following conditions will be checked: ● Submission deadline: Only proposals submitted through the online form LINK TO THE APPLICATION FORM before the deadline will be considered. ● Language requirement: Proposals must be written in English. If mandatory sections are in another language, the proposal will be rejected. Non-mandatory sections in another language will not be evaluated, but the proposal will remain valid. ● Data accuracy: The information you provide must be correct, complete, and allow proper evaluation. Extra material provided by you

that was not requested in the form will not be considered. Although we may use other resources to verify that the provided data is true.

- **Completeness:** Ensure all required fields are filled. You can edit your submission until the deadline, but no changes are allowed after that.
- **European dimension:** Your proposal should align with EU goals and contribute to creating a positive impact within the EU.
- **Conflicts of interest:** We will check for any conflicts of interest between applicants and Consortium partners. Partners, their affiliated entities, and their employees cannot participate. Each case of conflict will be reviewed individually.
- **Financial stability:** Entities under liquidation, [in financial difficulty](#), or excluded from receiving EU funding are not eligible. We also exclude companies in bankruptcy.
- **Original work:** Execution of your project should not violate third-party IPR. It must be based on your intellectual property or you must be allowed to use third-party rights. IPR to the project can not be subject to any dispute.
- **AI content:** The use of AI tools to improve clarity and structure is permitted, provided the content remains accurate and fact-based. Applications may be rejected if found to be AI-generated and lacking a factual foundation. All submissions must be authentic reflections of the project, and the applicant team must evidence the technical and operational capacity required for implementation. Providing unverifiable or non-authentic information is grounds for immediate rejection.
- **Ownership control and governance:** We only accept entities that are registered in the Member States of the European Union or EEA. **CIRCAT does not accept entities that are directly or indirectly controlled by a person or entity established in a country that is not an eligible country (i.e. any country outside the EU Member States or EEA) or by an ineligible country entity.** This prohibition includes

	arrangements or coordination between shareholders from ineligible countries that would together exercise control, as well as any other financial or commercial links with ineligible countries or ineligible country entities conferring control. ● Gender Equality Plan (GEP): Public bodies, universities, and research organizations from EU or Associated countries must have a GEP. ● Acceptance of rules: By applying, you agree to the Open call Terms and Conditions outlined in this document.
More info about CIRCAT	You can find more information about our Project on https://circat.eu/ Open call is managed by FundingBox Accelerator sp. z o.o., and organised by the CIRCAT Consortium partners. All documents - including the template of the Sub-grant Agreement can be found here.

2. Submission and evaluation process

Only proposals submitted through the [online form](#) before the Call Deadline (July 9, 2026, at 15:00 Brussels Time) will be considered. You will receive an email confirmation if the form is submitted correctly. If not, contact us immediately.

Our evaluation process is transparent, fair and equal to all participants. We will evaluate your project in a few phases described below. We will inform you about the results of the evaluation as soon as they become available.

2.1. Admissibility Check

After the closure of the Open Call, the system will review your proposal to ensure it meets the Call Terms and Conditions (section 1). This check will be based on the declarations in your proposal.

2.2. Pre-Scoring (if applicable)

If more than 70 proposals pass the initial check stage, a pre-scoring system may be implemented. Proposals will be automatically scored based on specific criteria:

As an applicant, choose the option that best fits your project for each criterion and confirm all your statements are true. We will check them during the next phases. If we identify false information, we may reject the proposal.

Your project can earn up to 75 points. The top 65 applications will move on to the next phase. Each question is automatically scored on a scale from 0 to 5 points based on the applicant's selected answer from a drop-down menu. The final score is calculated automatically using the defined percentages.

- **Relevance (15% Weight | Maximum 11.25 points).** To assess the proposal's technological scope and its alignment with EU policies and supply chain security.
 - *Technological Scope.* How many of the targeted CIRCAT technologies (Networks, Applications, Virtualization, Cloud, Industrial Control Systems, IoT) does your scenario integrate?
 - *Policy Alignment.* How many EU regulatory frameworks (e.g., NIS2, DORA, EU Cyber Solidarity Act) does your scenario directly support for compliance?
 - *Digital Supply Chain Security.* What percentage of the digital assets in your proposed testing scenario are sourced from EU-based providers?
- **Impact (35% Weight | Maximum 26.25 points).** To evaluate the technical benefits of the scenario, specifically regarding vulnerability detection, asset coverage, and response times.
 - *Time to Detect (TTD) Reduction.* What is the estimated percentage reduction in the time elapsed between the occurrence of a cyber threat and its detection targeted by your scenario?
 - *Asset Coverage Rate.* What proportion of the organization's targeted infrastructure assets will the scenario be able to detect and assess?
 - *Vulnerability Target.* How many potential vulnerabilities do you estimate your scenario will expose and analyse?
- **Implementation (50% Weight | Maximum 37.5 points).** To measure the team's technical capacity, the maturity of the action plan, and resource allocation to execute the project.
 - *Action Plan Maturity.* How many distinct penetration testing phases are fully detailed in your current implementation plan?

- *Team Expertise.* What is the combined cybersecurity experience of the core technical team dedicated to this project?
- *Resource Allocation.* How many Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) personnel will actively work on defining the scenario?

Tie-Breaking Rules If two or more proposals receive the exact same total score at the cut-off threshold, the system will apply the following tie-breaking criteria automatically, in this specific order:

- The highest score obtained in the **Impact** section.
- The highest score obtained in the **Implementation** section.
- The highest score obtained in the **Relevance** section

2.3. Expert Evaluation

Eligible applications, or the 75 best proposals if pre-scoring has been applied, will be assessed, using predefined award criteria, by a panel consisting of **two external independent experts and one internal expert** selected from a **pool of cybersecurity experts**.

2.3.1. Relevance

This criterion assesses the extent to which the proposal aligns with the objectives and scope of the CIRCAT Open Call. Additionally, it assesses the level of contribution to European cybersecurity priorities. In particular, evaluators will consider:

The degree of alignment with CIRCAT objectives, including the development of penetration testing scenarios within the proposed verticals.

- The relevance of the targeted vertical sector, in relation to critical infrastructure and cybersecurity needs
- The appropriateness and clarity of the proposed technological scope (e.g., networks, cloud, ICS, IoT), and its suitability for the defined use case
- Contribution to long-term policy objectives, relevant policies and strategies, and frameworks (e.g., NIS2 Directive, EU cybersecurity strategy).
- The extent to which the proposal strengthens the security and resilience of the European digital supply chain.

2.3.2. Implementation

This criterion evaluates the quality, feasibility, and efficiency of the proposed implementation plan, as well as the capacity of the applicant to carry out the project. Evaluators will assess:

- The maturity and clarity of the proposed penetration testing scenario.
- Soundness and coherence of the implementation plan including work plan and timeline.
- The efficiency of allocation of resources including the level of effort.
- The availability and adequacy of the required infrastructure, tools, and testing environments (e.g., cyber range).
- The expertise, experience, and operational capacity of the applicant to implement the proposed plan.

2.3.3. Impact

This criterion assesses the expected outcomes and broader effects of the proposal, particularly in terms of societal and environmental benefits. Evaluators will consider:

- The contribution to strengthening cybersecurity resilience and improving the security posture of the targeted sectors or infrastructures.
- The potential to generate significant benefits for society, industry, or public services, including increased competitiveness and innovation capacity
- The degree of cross-border relevance and potential for collaboration or knowledge sharing across EU Member States
- The clarity of expected results in terms of vulnerability identification, risk mitigation, and operational improvements.

Each **criterion will be scored on a scale from 0 to 5 by the experts** in accordance with the award criteria. Evaluators will provide justifications for the scores awarded. The final score for each proposal will be calculated as the sum of the scores assigned by all evaluators for each criterion.

For each criterion, the minimum threshold is 3 out of 5 points. **The maximum total score will be 15 points, with a minimum total threshold of 10 points.**

Once there is an initial ranking, ties (if any) will be solved using the following criteria in order of priority:

- The highest score obtained in the **Impact** section.
- The highest score obtained in the **Implementation** section.
- The highest score obtained in the **Relevance** section
- Gender balance among the personnel responsible for carrying out the activities.

As a result of the Consensus Group, a 'Ranking List' will be produced. It will be procured in 6 ranking lists, one per CIRCAT prioritised vertical. All proposals above the threshold will move on to the next step.

2.4. Consensus Meeting

The Selection Committee, composed of consortium partners (CERTH, K3Y and FBA), will review and discuss the results of the expert evaluation. They will reach a consensus or majority of $\frac{2}{3}$ votes on the list of proposals to be selected, and the 'Selection Committee' will make sure, to ensure a balanced portfolio of supported activities in the different sectors, so that **up to 2 highest-ranked in the Energy, Health, Public Administration, Digital infrastructure and ICT Service management (B2B) verticals each and 8 in the Financial Entities. In addition, 1 proposal per vertical will be placed on a reserve list in case selected proposals drop out in later stages.**

Keep in mind that although the highest-scoring proposals are usually chosen for funding, the Selection Committee can reject a candidate for valid reasons, such as not fitting CIRCAT goals and scope, limited potential impact, commercial competition issues, serious ethical concerns, or possible conflicts of interest.

The exact number of proposals approved in total and per vertical will be decided based on the overall quality of the proposals.

In the event that a prioritised vertical does not receive a sufficient number of applications, or if the proposals fail to pass the admissibility checks, pre-scoring, or expert evaluation thresholds, the Selection Committee reserves the right to reallocate the available slots.

2.5. Interview (Optional)

An optional final step may be added to the selection process: an interview stage. The purpose of this stage is to support the final decision on which shortlisted proposals will participate in the support programme. Interviews will be conducted by the Selection Committee only if, during the

Consensus Meeting, the Committee identifies outstanding questions or requires further clarification to determine the finalists.

2.6. Formal check & Agreement signature

Finalists will undergo a formal check to confirm their legal status (e.g., company registration, financial documents, ownership structure, tax ID, etc.) and ownership control and governance. Therefore, we will ask you to provide documents to confirm all the details:

- **To confirm the ownership, control, and governance of your entity**, you must submit the Ownership Control Declaration along with all required supporting documents.
- **To confirm your formal status, we may ask the applicants for:** the company's registration document, the legal representation (optionally POA), tax ID number, ownership structure³, financial statements, document/s confirming the staff headcount, Bank Identification form, and other documents in case of doubts raised during the checks (this list is not exhaustive)

Documents must be provided within the given deadline. If you don't deliver the requested documents on time, without a clear and reasonable justification, we will have to exclude you from further formal assessment.

After passing this check, we will invite you to sign the Sub-grant Agreement with the CIRCAT consortium to officially participate in the programme.

3. After the Sub-Grant Agreement signature

3.1. Payment conditions

The Grant will be paid in a lump sum. Payments depend on the successful and timely completion of each stage of the work planned and outlined in the Individual Mentoring Plan developed at the beginning of the Support programme. Payments are scheduled in tranches as follows:

Stage 1: Up to 10% of the Grant Amount by month 2

Stage 2: Up to 57,5% of the Grant Amount by month 4

Stage 3: Up to 32.5% of the Grant Amount by month 7

³ If the ownership structure is not clear from the registration documents, additional documents confirming the ownership structure, e.g. statute, company deed, founding act, share register, in a joint-stock company - list of the company's shareholders; etc, may be requested.

3.2. Progress evaluation

We pay upon the delivery of the agreed results - not upon the delivery of certain receipts. Therefore, Consortium Partners, gathered in the Selection Committee, will evaluate your progress regularly.

Stage	Explanation
Stage1: Individual Mentoring Plan (IMP)	Within the first month of the Support Programme, you will prepare an Individual Mentoring Plan (IMP), outlining the final budget, KPIs, and deliverables for performance assessment. It will also cover any specific Ethics Assessment requirements. The IMP will be evaluated by the Selection Committee, taking into account the Deliverable quality (90%) and Deadline compliance (10%). Each criterion will be scored from 0 to 10, and the final score will be calculated based on the weights indicated. A score of 7 points or more is required to continue in the program. For more details, please check the template of the Sub-grant Agreement.
Stage2 & 3	Before each payment, the Selection Committee will review your progress. Performance will be evaluated by Technical Partners (or Experts), Business Partners (or Experts), and Ethics Partners (if applicable) based on: • Deliverables quality (30%) • Technical/Business KPIs (60%) • Deadline compliance (10%) Each criterion will be scored from 0 to 10, and the final score will be calculated based on the weights indicated. A score of 7 points or more is required to continue in the program. For more details, please check the template of the Sub-grant Agreement.

4. Contact us

If you have any questions about our application process, feel free to reach out on our helpdesk by sending an email at circat.help@fundingbox.com

Please note that responses are given individually and do not change these Terms, they are provided for informational purposes only.

In case of any technical issues or problems, please include the following information in your message:

- your username, phone number and email address;
- details of the specific problem (e.g. error messages you encountered, bug description, i.e. if a dropdown list isn't working, etc.); and
- screenshots of the problem.

5. Complaints

If you believe there was an error in one of the evaluation phases, you may submit a complaint within five (5) calendar days after sending the results to you. Send it to circat.help@fundingbox.com in English and include:

- your contact details (including email),
- the subject of your complaint,
- evidence of the specific issue.

Please note that we will review only complaints related to:

- errors in the process caused by our staff,
- technical issues beyond the applicant's control,
- clear human or mechanical errors made by our staff,
- incorrectly marked statements, minor clerical errors, and obvious typographical mistakes.

Please note that we will not review complaints related to the content of the expert evaluations.

Complaints will be reviewed within seven (7) calendar days. If more time is needed, we will inform you via email. Anonymous complaints or those with incomplete information will not be considered.

6. Last but not least - final provisions

Any issues not covered by these Terms and Conditions are governed by Polish law, Digital Europe Programme rules, and EU grant regulations.

We make our best effort to keep all provided data confidential; however, for the avoidance of doubt, you are solely responsible for indicating your confidential or sensitive information as such. Please be aware that your application form will be shared with the external evaluators and CIRCAT Consortium partners.

You retain ownership of your intellectual property rights (IPR).

The signature of the Sub-grant Agreement is the initial condition to establish any obligations among applicants and any Consortium partners (with respect to the obligation of confidentiality of the application). The Sub-grant Agreement will include a set of obligations towards the European Commission (for example: promoting the project and giving visibility to the EU funding, maintaining confidentiality, and understanding potential controls by the EC/ECA, EPPO, and OLAF).

Please be aware that eligibility criteria will be checked throughout the process, including a final review and support programme.

In the event of any discrepancies between these Terms and their Annexes, the Terms shall prevail.

The CIRCAT Consortium reserves the right to cancel or modify the call at any time, informing applicants accordingly.

Need more help? Contact us at circat.help@fundingbox.com, and we'll be happy to assist.

7. Annex 1 - Use Cases Scenario Template

This is the scenario description you may need to provide if you are selected to join CIRCAT. It is for your reference only, so you do not need to complete it now. Only selected companies that sign the SGA will be required to work on it. **It serves as an example of the outcome you are expected to deliver after the six-month funded support programme.**

Check the template here: <https://opportunities.getonepass.eu/open-opportunities/circat-opencalls/opencall1>



CIRCAT Open Call 1
Terms and Conditions
Penetration Test Scenarios Development

Do you have questions or want to know more?

Contact us

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