



HERIFORGE

Cultural Heritage
and Immersive Technologies Forge



HERIFORGE

2ND OPEN CALL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Submission of applications starts on the 25th of August, 2026 at 09:00
(Brussels time)**

Submission deadline: 27th of October, 2026 at 17:00 (Brussels time)

Version 3: 09/10/2026



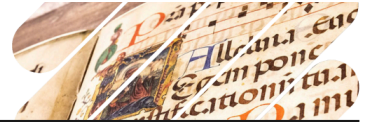
**Funded by
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HERIFORGE is a project funded by the European Union under Grant Agreement no. 101186573. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



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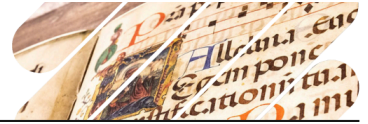
Open Call Frequently Asked Questions

Welcome to the HERIFORGE 2nd Open Call Frequently Asked Questions. This document is going to be updated throughout the Open Call with most frequently asked questions.

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

Good luck!

HERIFORGE Team



1. What is TRL?

TRL (Technology Readiness Level) – is a scale from 1 to 9 used to measure how mature or developed a technology is, from a basic concept (TRL 1) to a fully tested and ready-for-market solution (TRL 9). It helps funders understand how far along your technology is.

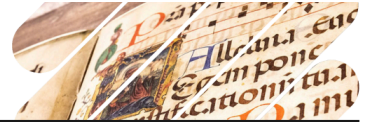
In other words, if your idea is still just a theory or lab experiment, it's at a low TRL (like 1–3). If it's already been tested in real-life conditions and is close to launch, it's at a high TRL (like 8–9). Many tech calls will only accept projects at a certain stage — for example, they might only fund technologies that are already prototyped and tested (e.g. TRL 5+).

2. What is Conflict of Interest?

Conflict of interest may occur if there are capital or personal connections between two or more entities (Applicant, Consortium partner or any person involved in the selection process), in particular, it should be understood as:

- any ownership relations - ownership of shares, financial links and economic connections – like joint venture, holding, joint participation, silent partner. E.g. Applicant's entity owns shares in the Consortium partner company or Consortium partner company own shares in the Applicants company (it also refers to the Applicant partner/linked enterprises). As economic connection we can understand exclusive license, sale agreements if they concern product or solution covered by your application;
- family and personal relationships - in particular: with marriage, kinship, a relationship of affinity to the second degree in a straight line or lateral line, adoption, custody or guardianship or actual life and other close personal ties binding the Applicant and Consortium partner or any person involved in the selection process (it refers also to employees, shareholders, members of the management body, members of the board, managers, subcontractors etc.) – e.g. person representing the Consortium partner company has family/personal relationship with any person representing the Applicant company;
- the existence of material, especially financial relationships (such as the receipt by a person involved in the selection process from Applicant any significant gifts, donations, future contracts or employment, etc);
- relationships based on employment, cooperation or existing civil contract between the Consortium partners and people involved in the Applicant structure, including managerial or supervisory functions, position in managing or supervising bodies. E.g. Director of the Consortium partner is involved in the management bodies of an Applicant company; the Applicant employees involved in the Project are employed or contracted by the Consortium partner company;
- remaining in a legal or factual relationship that may give rise to justified doubts as to the impartiality of the people involved in the selection process (expert/evaluator/employee/member of the management bodies of any of the Consortium partners).

The reasons set forth above may result in a conflict of interest if they occur at the time of an action or have occurred in the past (during the last 3 years before the action starts). Time limits do not apply to family and personal relationships.



Remember that the concept of the conflict of interest should be understood widely, so if you have any doubts about the conflict of Interest please consult it with our team.

3. What is 'local footprint'?

Local footprint refers to the real and demonstrable connection of an applicant to one or more of the target countries - Cyprus (CY), Poland (PL) or Türkiye (TR). This is especially relevant for applicants whose base is outside these countries, as it shows their active and meaningful presence in the local context. Such a footprint may be established through the presence of local staff, documented business records there or having other clear ties to the country. Depending on the type of applicant, this could mean having a branch office, place of residence, a history of professional activities or similar links in one of the target countries.

Examples (non-exhaustive) of acceptable evidence include:

- Substantial work carried out in the targeted country: This could be demonstrated through a portfolio, links to projects' websites, or other relevant documentation of past work in CY, PL or TR
- Memberships in cultural associations: Evidence of membership in cultural associations promoting the culture of CY, PL or TR
- Partnerships or collaborations with local organisations: proof of formal partnerships or ongoing collaborations with businesses, organizations, or institutions based in CY, PL or TR
- Having a local office or employing local staff: evidence that the applicant operates a physical office in the target country or employs individuals residing in CY, PL or TR
- Participation in local events or initiatives: Evidence of actively participating in industry events, cultural initiatives, or community projects within CY, PL or TR

4. What is an SME?

SME – An SME will be considered as such if it complies with the European Commission's Recommendation 2003/361/EC. As a summary, the criteria defining an SME are:

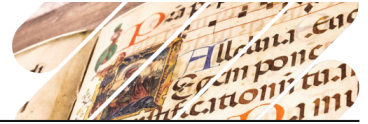
- Headcount in Annual Work Unit (AWU) less than 250;
- Annual turnover less or equal to €50 million OR annual balance sheet total less or equal to €43 million.

The figures of partners and linked enterprises should also be considered as stated in the SME user guide. For detailed information check the [EU recommendation](#):

In other words, some open calls are only open to SMEs. If your organization doesn't meet the European Commission's definition of an SME, you won't be eligible to apply for those calls.

5. What is meant by 'Natural Person'?

A natural person is defined as a citizen or permanent resident of an eligible country, identifiable by their name, surname, address, identity document, tax ID (or national insurance number), and of legal age, which allows them to sign a contract. A Certificate of Fiscal Residency is required to confirm the Tax Identification Number (or national insurance number).



In the context of the HERIFORGE project, 'natural persons' are a type of applicants who are professionals in the area of XR, heritage or related disciplines. In some examples, they collaborate with others under civil contracts and may use certain tax exemptions such as those for 'influencers and creative professionals'. Their legal status is different to that of SMEs or micro-firms.

6. Are local public bodies (such as municipalities responsible for historical sites or museums) eligible?

The list of eligible individual legal entities is restricted to SMEs, NGOs, foundations, associations, or natural persons. Therefore local public bodies such as municipalities are not eligible. Only entities registered as SMEs, NGOs, or associations can apply.

7. Can multiple XR producers partner up with one or more Cultural Heritage Institutions (CHIs) to submit a single proposal?

The Open Call requires **individual legal entities** to apply as single applicants. However, specifically for the Cyprus Hub Challenge, an XR technology provider may apply as a sole applicant while collaborating with a Cultural Heritage Institution (CHI). Although such collaboration is encouraged only XR technology provider - as a single entity can be the official applicant and beneficiary.

8. If an SME is established in an EU Member State but intends to apply for the Turkish challenges, are they eligible?

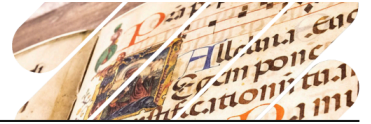
Applicants from EU Member States and Horizon Europe Associated countries are eligible to apply, provided they demonstrate a local footprint in Cyprus (CY), Poland (PL), or Türkiye (TK). The local footprint should be based on existing track record as opposed to a planned or potential footprint resulting from the collaboration. The main applicant should provide evidence of their local footprint already existing at the time of applying to the call.

9. Can we include international collaborators (natural persons) from other EU countries in our team?

Yes, individual collaborators from other EU countries can be part of the project team. While the applying legal entity must meet all legal and geographic eligibility criteria, the project can involve international collaborators through civil contracts or subcontracting. These collaborators can contribute to project activities, but they cannot apply independently. The applicant must remain the legally compliant beneficiary and retain responsibility for leading the technical aspects of the project.

10. Can an entity from one target country (Country X) apply to a challenge defined by another target country (Country Y)? For example, can a Cyprus entity apply to one of the Turkish challenges?

Yes. Individual legal entities must be legally registered in Cyprus, Poland, or Türkiye (or demonstrate a local footprint in one of these countries if registered elsewhere in the EU/Associated countries). Therefore, an entity legally registered in Cyprus can apply to a Turkish challenge.



11. Does the project idea need to be fully innovative, or is it acceptable to apply existing immersive technologies in a new cultural heritage context?

The call is specifically looking for innovative projects developing technical solutions in the use of immersive technologies for cultural heritage. The proposed solution must advance beyond the current state-of-the-art.

During the External Evaluation, the criterion of EXCELLENCE will evaluate:

- **Ambition:** Applicants must demonstrate the extent to which the project is beyond the State of the Art and describe the innovative approach behind it (e.g., ground-breaking objectives, novel concepts, or new products).
- **Innovation:** Applicants should provide information about the level of innovation within their market and the degree of differentiation this project will bring.

You should, therefore, aim to go beyond the current state-of-the-art in many ways to give you the most advantage over other applicants. Providing a new context for an existing solution is somewhat innovative but not highly cutting-edge. The external experts will evaluate the extent of your innovation and score it accordingly.

12. If a project idea fits both Türkiye Hub challenges, should the applicant pick one challenge, or can they indicate both in the proposal?

An applicant is allowed to submit up to 2 proposals, but each proposal must address **a different challenge**.

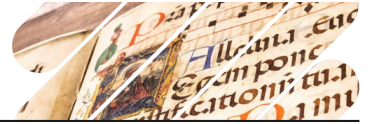
Therefore, if a project fits both Turkish challenges, the applicant must select one challenge for the proposal, or they may submit two separate proposals addressing each distinct challenge. If more than one proposal is submitted and is being considered for funding, only the highest-scoring proposal can be selected.

13. Does the Cyprus Hub Challenge support intangible heritage objects?

Yes, the Cyprus Hub Challenge encourages collaborative XR experiences grounded in tangible and intangible Cultural Heritage.

14. Does the maximum grant amount of €50,000 include VAT? If so, how is VAT calculated for applicants from different countries with different VAT rates?

The maximum grant amount of up to €50,000 is a lump sum. The funding rate is 100% of the budget included in the application form. Under the lumps-sum, national jurisdictions' rules on VAT on received funding are usually applied. Since VAT rules and recoverability vary across countries and depend on your organisation's tax status we strongly encourage all applicants to consult their national tax authority or a qualified tax advisor.



15. Can part of the budget be allocated to project management support (e.g., for reporting and administrative follow-up)?

Yes, part of the budget can be allocated to project management. All costs included must be eligible, meaning that they have to be related to tasks that have been properly implemented, be in line with the Project plan and must be accepted by the HERIFORGE Consortium, incurred during the Programme period. They may include: personnel costs, purchases (e.g., travel, equipment, goods, services), and overheads.

16. Can beneficiaries of the HERIFORGE 1st Open Call (1OC) apply for the 2nd Open Call (2OC), either with the same institutions or for further development of their 1OC project?

No. Under Horizon Europe rules and Annex 1 of the HERIFORGE Grant Agreement, financial support to third parties (FSTP) is strictly capped at a maximum of €60,000 per entity across the entire project lifecycle. Entities that were awarded funding in the 1st Open Call are therefore ineligible to receive an additional grant in the 2nd Open Call.

However, **applicants NOT selected for funding in the HERIFORGE 1st Open Call are encouraged to reapply.**

17. Can applicants license and build upon existing background IP?

Yes. Applicants may license and build upon their existing background IP and retain full ownership of their background IPR. However, applicants must ensure that background IP licensing does not restrict or conflict with HERIFORGE requirements to release project software outputs, source code, and 3D assets under an open-source license.

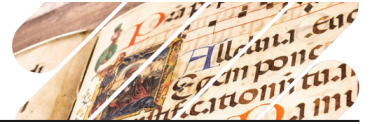
18. Is prior extended reality (XR) cultural heritage experience required for applicants?

Prior specific XR cultural heritage experience is not a mandatory prerequisite. However, applicants must clearly demonstrate how their team's skills apply to the selected hub challenge, explain how any missing XR talent will be engaged, and (when relevant) establish a cooperation agreement with a local Cultural Heritage Institution (CHI).

19. If the applying SME is associated with another company or research organisation (as a shareholder), would this SME be eligible to apply?

Under EU Recommendation 2003/361/EC, an enterprise is classified as autonomous if external entities hold less than 25% of its capital or voting rights.

Additionally, while public bodies are generally restricted from holding 25% or more of an SME's capital, EU SME rules provide an explicit exception for universities and non-profit research centres. These institutions



are permitted to hold up to 50% of an enterprise's shares or voting rights without causing the enterprise to lose its autonomous SME status.

 Crucial Condition: Conflict of Interest check

The research institute holding shares in that company must be completely independent of the HERIFORGE Consortium. If the research institute is a HERIFORGE Consortium Partner, any capital connection constitutes a direct Conflict of Interest under Horizon Europe rules, which would disqualify the application.

As long as the research institute in question is an independent third party not participating in the HERIFORGE project consortium, the application is fully eligible from that perspective.

20. Can you provide contacts to CHI in Cyprus for the applicants to connect with?

The Cyprus Institute has kindly provided the following contacts:

- Byzantine museum (director): Yiannis Eliades 99519998
- CVAR: Mobile: [+357 99 630872](tel:+35799630872) Tel: [+357 22 300994](tel:+35722300994)
- Ozlem Unsal (via Europa Nostra) ozlemunsal@gmail.com