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START FOR FUTURE

SYSTEMEU

TRANSFORMING INNOVATION EUROPEAN ECOSYSTEMS

HORIZON-EIE-2023-CONNECT-03

Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP)

JOINT INTERREGIONAL PROJECTS (JIP) – GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

BEN - Beneficiary / Consortium Beneficiary

COI - Conflict of Interest

EEN - Enterprise Europe Network

EU - European Union

FEB - Final Evaluation Board

FSTP - Financial Support to Third Parties

GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation

JIP - Joint Interregional Project

NUTS - Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques

PMG - Project Monitoring Group

RCP - Regional Contact Point

RTO - Research and Technology Organisation

TRL - Technology Readiness Level

WP - Work Package

1. About the SYSTEMEU Project

1.1. Summary & Vision

The SYSTEMEU project, officially entitled Fostering Systemic Innovation and Digital Transformation across European Innovation Ecosystems, represents a flagship European cooperative effort co-funded by the European Union under the highly competitive Horizon Europe framework. The core vision driving this initiative is the systematic mitigation of innovation fragmentation across European territories. Historically, Europe's research and development capacity has been concentrated in a limited number of high-performing metropolitan hubs, leaving peripheral and emerging regions with limited access to advanced value chains.

SYSTEMEU directly counters this imbalance by establishing an integrated, cross-border innovation infrastructure. By building functional operational bridges between leading innovation ecosystems and emerging valleys, the project enables a seamless flow of technology, human talent, and financial capital. This holistic approach ensures that local innovators are not left isolated, but are instead integrated into sustainable, long-term European value loops.

The project focuses on three key sectors—Healthcare, Energy, and Mobility—which are further detailed in Section 2.2. Additionally, applicant consortia must choose one of three defined project typologies to structure their initiative, fully elaborated in Section 3.4.

1.2. Strategic Objectives

To achieve this systemic transition, the partners have defined five distinct, interconnected strategic objectives that merge technological ambition with regional policy goals:

- **Objective 1: Interlinking Regional Innovation Ecosystems.**

The project seeks to actively mobilize and connect five regional innovation valleys and those being Bavaria (Germany), Norte Region of Portugal (Portugal), Romania, Castilla y Leon (Spain) and Tuzla Canton (Bosnia and Herzegovina). By fostering deep institutional trust and creating shared physical and digital co-creation spaces, SYSTEMEU brings together the heterogeneous actors of the quadruple helix to work on common societal and economic missions.

- **Objective 2: Accelerating Deep-Tech Implementation.**

Rather than funding low-maturity research, the project is designed to stimulate high-impact experimental development. It focuses on the deployment, testing, and validation of digital tools within real-world environments, targeting the critical transition from functional prototypes to market-ready systems in the fields of healthcare, energy and mobility.

- **Objective 3: Harmonizing Cross-Border Knowledge Transfer.**

To bridge the regional divide, SYSTEMEU facilitates the transfer of critical intellectual assets, business modelling capabilities, and regulatory expertise from highly advanced

administrative regions to moderate and emerging innovation territories, which are going to be mentioned in the table in 1.3 below.

To bridge the regional divide, SYSTEMEU facilitates the transfer of critical intellectual assets, business modelling capabilities, and regulatory expertise from highly advanced administrative regions (specifically Bavaria in Germany) to moderate and emerging innovation territories (namely Norte Region in Portugal, Castilla y León in Spain, Romania, and Tuzla Canton in Bosnia and Herzegovina).

- **Objective 4: Mobilizing Private and Leverage Public Funding.**

Strategically deploying a combination of public national and regional and EU funds under the Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP) line, the project acts as a catalyst to unlock additional private investments. Commercial partners are encouraged to co-finance, ensuring that public subgrants are multiplied by market-driven financial commitments.

- **Objective 5: Formulating Coherent Regional Policies.**

The project partners work closely with regional governments to translate the lessons learned from the pilot projects into formal policy recommendations, thereby aligning local Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) with overarching European priorities, using SYSTEMEU as an example for collaboration across regional ecosystems in Europe.

1.3. Consortium Partners & Geographies

The SYSTEMEU initiative is backed by a robust and multi-disciplinary consortium of fifteen partner organisations (Beneficiaries) representing academic and research excellence, industrial leadership, and regional authority across five European nations. The following table provides a comprehensive overview of the consortium structure:

Beneficiary Number (BEN)	Legal Name of Partner Organisation	Short Name	Region of Origin (NUTS)	Country	Actively Operating as an FSTP Funding Agency?
BEN 1 (Lead)	Strascheg Center for Entrepreneurship gGmbH	**SCE**	Bavaria (DE2)	Germany	**Yes** (Administers Bavarian/EU-Top-Up FSTP funds)
BEN 2	Munich Innovation Ecosystem GmbH	**MIE**	Bavaria (DE2)	Germany	No (Regional Ecosystem Partner)
BEN 3	Industrial	**IA**	Tuzla Canton	Bosnia-	No (SME

	Automation DOO Tuzla			Herzegovina	Technology Partner)
BEN 4	Ministarstvo Privrede Tuzlanskog Kantona	**MPTK**	Tuzla Canton	Bosnia-Herzegovina	**Yes** (Regional Funding Authority)
BEN 5	Universidad de Salamanca	**USAL**	Castilla y León (ES41)	Spain	No (Academic Coordination & Call Support)
BEN 6	Consejeria de Industria, Universidades, Empleo y Comercio	**DGI / Cons. CyL**	Castilla y León (ES41)	Spain	**Yes** (Regional Funding Authority)
BEN 7	Municipiul Cluj-Napoca	**CLUJ-NAPOCA MUN**	Nord-Vest (RO11)	Romania	No (Municipal Pilot Coordinator)
BEN 8	Ministerul Economiei, Antreprenoriatului și Turismului	**MEDAT**	București-Ilfov (RO32)	Romania	**Yes** (National/Regional Funding Authority)
BEN 9	Asociatia Cluster de Educatie C-EDU	**Cluster C-EDU**	Nord-Vest (RO11)	Romania	No (Regional Cluster Coordinator)
BEN 10	Bayerische Forschungsallianz GmbH	**BayFOR**	Bavaria (DE2)	Germany	No (Strategic Proposal & Call Advisor)
BEN 11	Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften München	**HM**	Bavaria (DE2)	Germany	No (Academic and Scientific Partner)
BEN 12	Comissão de Coordenação	**CCDRN**	Norte Region (PT11)	Portugal	**Yes** (Regional Funding

	e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte				Authority)
BEN 13	INESC TEC	**INESC TEC**	Norte Region (PT11)	Portugal	No (Research and Technology Organisation)
BEN 14	CCAB - Centro Clínico Académico - Braga	**CCAB**	Norte Region (PT11)	Portugal	No (Clinical Pilot & Hospital Partner)
BEN 15	Município de Braga	**MB**	Norte Region (PT11)	Portugal	No (Municipal Pilot Coordinator)

1.4. Objectives of Cascade Funding (Financial Support to Third Parties – FSTP)

A cornerstone of the SYSTEMEU strategy is the distribution of financial resources (grants) directly to local stakeholders through cascade funding (Financial Support to Third Parties - FSTP). Under Work Package 5, SYSTEMEU allocates 7.550.000 EUR (representing 50,8 % of the total project budget) to fund Joint Interregional Projects (JIPs).

The objective of this FSTP scheme is to lower the barrier of entry for local innovators, specifically Startups and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), by bypassing complex, centralized EU application frameworks in favour of a regional, accessible, yet highly competitive application process. By funding collaborative projects, FSTP acts as a catalyst for local economic development, creating high-value jobs, attracting private capital, and generating validated market-ready deep-tech solutions.

In compliance with Horizon Europe cascade funding guidelines, the total cumulative financial support (FSTP grant) awarded to any individual Third Party across one or multiple Joint Interregional Projects funded under SYSTEMEU cannot exceed EUR 600,000.

2. About the First SYSTEMEU Open Call (OC1)

2.1. General Objective of the Call

The primary goal of the first SYSTEMEU Open Call (OC1) is to select and fund five to eight high-quality, cross-border collaborative innovation projects that focus on the digital transformation of the Healthcare, Energy, and Mobility sectors. The projects must operate at the application stage within the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) range of 6-8. A detailed description of these can be found in Chapter 2.3. or at the Q&A section EU Funding & Tenders Portal.

2.2. Project Topics & Challenges per Sector

Rather than prescribing narrow, rigid technological pathways, SYSTEMEU employs a topic domain-based approach. The topics are framed as open challenges with examples of eligible projects in brackets:

Topic 1: Healthcare (Digital Health & Medtech)

This challenge focuses on the digital transformation of clinical workflows, medical services, and diagnostic pathways utilising advanced deep-tech solutions. It aims to enhance diagnostic accuracy, optimise specialised medical service delivery, and enable seamless, data-driven operations across modern healthcare ecosystems.

Example Projects:

- **Advanced AI Diagnostics:** AI/ML-powered algorithms for automated diagnostic screening, anomaly detection, and medical imaging analysis in specialised fields like oncology, radiology, or cardiology.
- **Clinical Workflow Digitization:** Integrated digital service platforms designed to optimise hospital operational management, clinical documentation, and specialised patient care paths.

Topic 2: Energy (Decentralized, Clean & Smart Energy Networks)

This challenge focuses on the overarching digital transformation of regional and cross-border energy ecosystems. It remains completely open to any digital innovation, software architecture, data model, or optimisation methodology that accelerates the transition toward decentralized, clean, secure, and resilient energy systems, fostering overall resource efficiency and network optimization.

Example Projects:

- **Smart Grid & Management Systems:** Broad digital applications for the automated monitoring, balancing, optimization, and resilience of localized or distributed energy networks.
- **Integrated Municipal & Regional Loops:** Digital management tools designed to improve the performance, sustainability, and automated coordination of municipal

heating, cooling, or de-centralized energy networks.

Topic 3: Mobility (Intelligent Transport Systems & Logistics)

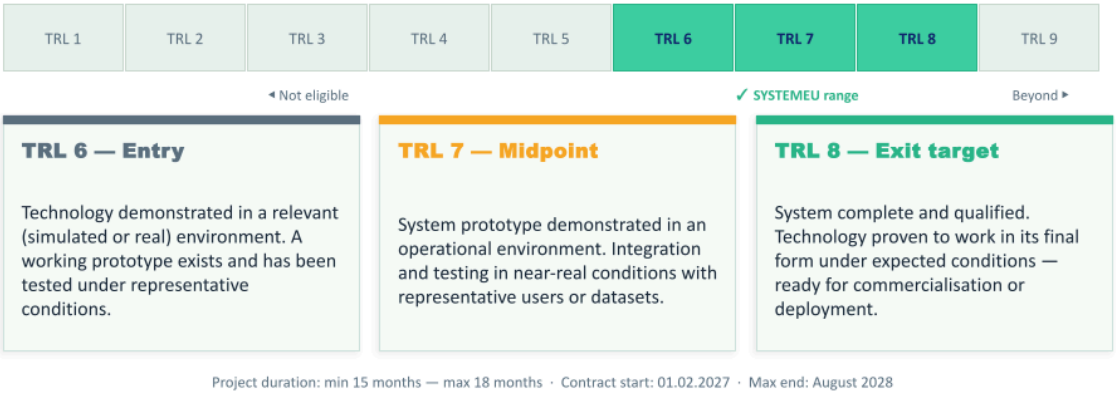
This challenge addresses the comprehensive digitisation of transportation operations, public transit, autonomous systems, and supply chain logistics. It is designed to welcome any software platform, data-driven architecture, or hardware-integrated digital solution that enhances the efficiency, cargo/passenger safety, connectivity, and environmental sustainability of transit networks.

Example Projects:

- **Ecosystem & Charging Infrastructure Coordination:** Smart digital networks or fleet-management systems that optimise transport infrastructure, vehicle-to-grid capabilities, charging terminals, or traffic operations.
- **Advanced Automation & Sensor Solutions:** Core software, telemetry frameworks, or connected sensor technologies designed to improve vehicular safety, automation components, public transit reliability, or micro-mobility solutions.

2.3. Technology Readiness Levels (TRL 6 to TRL 8): Sector-Specific Pathways

SYSTEMEU targets TRL levels 6-8. The following sector-specific pathways define how projects must transition from a functional prototype at TRL 6 to a validated, market-ready system at TRL 8 in real operational conditions.



2.3.1. Healthcare TRL Pathway

- **TRL 6 (Entry Level):** A functional prototype (e.g., an AI cardiovascular triage model) exists and has been demonstrated in a clinically relevant, simulated hospital environment. The technical architecture is stable, but has not yet been tested on actual patients in a live setting.
- **TRL 7 (Interim Midpoint):** System prototype demonstration in a live operational environment. The prototype is deployed in a real hospital or primary care clinic (such as

the University Clinical Centre in Tuzla or a regional hospital in Castilla y León) for pilot validation on a limited cohort of patients. All clinical ethics approvals and GDPR-compliance protocols are fully active.

- **TRL 8 (Exit Target):** The system is complete, fully integrated with hospital electronic health records (via HL7/FHIR protocols), and qualified. The medical regulatory file (such as a CE Class IIb technical dossier) is finalized and ready for submission under the Medical Device Regulation (MDR).

2.3.2. Energy TRL Pathway

- **TRL 6 (Entry Level):** The smart energy manager is validated in a relevant laboratory environment (Hardware-in-the-Loop simulation). The communication protocols between grid hardware models and control software are verified.
- **TRL 7 (Interim Midpoint):** Demonstration of the decentralized grid coordinator in a real-world, operational grid environment (such as a local energy cooperative or industrial park with real solar/wind generation assets and prosumers).
- **TRL 8 (Exit Target):** The software platform is qualified and integrated with utility-grade SCADA systems. It complies with grid-operator cyber-security and communication standards (e.g., IEC 60870-5-104 or EEBUS) and is fully ready for commercial utility roll-out.

2.3.3. Mobility TRL Pathway

- **TRL 6 (Entry Level):** Telematics hardware and optimisation software are validated on a closed test track or localized test-rig under representative real-world conditions.
- **TRL 7 (Interim Midpoint):** Deployment and testing of the intelligent transit coordinator in a real operational environment (e.g., integrated into an active commercial delivery fleet of 50 trucks or a public municipal bus network during standard service).
- **TRL 8 (Exit Target):** The complete platform is qualified and integrated with urban traffic management platforms. Safety, communication, and localization protocols are verified, and the system is ready for immediate commercial deployment.

2.4. Call Overview & Key Indicators

The core parameters of the first SYSTEMEU Open Call are summarised in the table below:

Parameter	Specification
Call Name	SYSTEMEU Joint Interregional Projects Open Call 1 (OC1)
Total Call Budget	7.550.000 EUR
Expected Project Budget	Up to 2.200.000 EUR per flagship, and up to 1.100.000 EUR / 750.000 EUR for medium/small projects (One entity can participate in multiple projects — max €600,000 total per entity across all funded SYSTEMEU projects.[1])
Max Funding per Partner	600.000 EUR across all SYSTEMEU calls combined.
Min Budget per Partner	50.000 EUR
Budget Allocation in the Overall Project	A minimum of 60% of the total project budget should go to beneficiaries which are startups, SMEs, public authorities/NGOs and/or Universities/RTOs and not to large Corporates. Certified startups, NGOs, RTO, Universities and Public Authorities benefit from an exceptional 100% funding rate, with the exception of entities based in Castilla y León, Spain, where funding is capped at 70%.
Geographical Scope	Bavaria (DE), Norte Region (PT), Castilla y León (ES), Romania (RO), Tuzla Canton (BIH)
Project Duration	**15 to 18 months**
Eligible Entities	Quadruple Helix: Universities, Research and Technology Organisations (RTO), Startups,

[1]In the event that no flagship project is selected or deemed eligible for any reason, the remaining funding of €2.2 million will be redistributed among two to three additional mid-sized projects, with a maximum funding cap of €1.1 million per project. These projects will be selected based on the distribution across general SYSTEMEU topics. For example, if three projects from the healthcare sector are already funded, but only one in mobility or energy, the remaining funds will be allocated to the highest-performing mobility or energy projects.

	SMEs, Large Enterprises, Public Authorities, Hospitals, NGOs
Core Submission Portal	FSTP Portal
Matchmaking Portal	Open Hubs

2.5. Timeline of the Call & Operational Milestones

The competitive cycle of the first Open Call is structured around strict deadlines and operational phases, as detailed in the chronological table below:

Milestone / Phase	Operational Date	Primary Responsibility	Description & Mandatory Requirements
Launch of the Open Call (OC1)	Anticipated 15.09.2026	Call Secretariat & USAL	Publication of guidelines, application templates, and official opening of the online submission portal.
Deadline for Proposal Submission	Anticipated 16.11.2026 at 17:00 Brussels Time	Proposal Coordinators	Final deadline for uploading Part A, Part B, Part C, and all mandatory attachments. No late submissions nor changes after deadline allowed.
Scientific Evaluation Period	Pending: 17.11.2026 – 20.12.2026	Independent External Experts	Multi-disciplinary expert teams review, score, and rank proposals against Excellence, Impact, and Implementation criteria.

Ethical & Formal Clearance Check	Pending: 17.11.2026 – 20.12.2026	SYSTEMEU Ethics Board	Verification of GDPR-compliance, medical ethics protocols, environmental impact safety, and sanctions check.
Official Announcement of Selection	Anticipated 20.01.2027	Final Evaluation Board (FEB)	Selected consortia are notified. Publication of the preliminary ranking list on the SYSTEMEU web portal. Should a financing gap occur, due to i.e. exhausted regional budget or else, the FEB will suggest alternative (regional) funding sources
Redress & Appeal Window	21.01.2027 - 04.02.2027	Disadvantaged Applicants	Formally submitted procedural complaints are reviewed by the dedicated appeal committee.
Grant Agreement Preparation Phase	04.02.2027-01.03.2027	Regional Funding Authorities	Local administrative and financial verification of selected partners; collection of bank guarantees where required.
Signing of Agreements	01.03.2027	All Selected Partners & Agencies	Execution of the Multilateral Consortium Agreement and the Bilateral Subgrantee Agreements.

Official Project Starting Date	01.03.2027	All Selected Consortia	Earliest date from which project expenditures become eligible for regional co-funding.
Latest Project End Date	31.08.2028	All Selected Consortia	Formal technical completion of the actions. Final technical and financial performance files must be submitted.

3. Eligibility Criteria

3.1. Eligible Applicants (Who can apply)

Applications are open to any legal entity (legal person) established in one of the five participating SYSTEMEU regions (chapter 3.2). Natural persons are strictly ineligible. Financial support can be awarded across the following categories of eligible third parties:

- **Research and Higher Education organisations:** RTOs, universities, and research centres.
- **Commercial Enterprises:** Qualified deep-tech Startups (eligible for 100% funding; for startups based in Castilla y León, Spain, the funding rate is capped at 70%), Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs/KMUs), and Large Enterprises.
- **Public Sector Entities & Authorities:** Public authorities involved in digital transformation/innovation policies and public sector bodies providing services in Healthcare, Energy, or Mobility.

3.2. Eligible Regions & NUTS Classification

Only entities established in the following five territories are eligible to receive FSTP funding under this call:

1. **Bavaria (Germany)** (NUTS-1: **DE2**)
2. **Norte Region (Portugal):** Norte Region (NUTS-2: **PT11**)
3. **Castilla y León (Spain):** Castilla y León Region (NUTS-2: **ES41**)
4. **Romania** (NUTS-0: **RO**)
5. **Tuzla Canton (Bosnia and Herzegovina)** [Since BiH is not yet structured under the standard European NUTS registry, eligibility is verified through the legal entity's registration in the legal commercial/administrative registry of Tuzla Canton.]

3.3. Eligible Activities & Technology Scope

Eligible activities are strictly limited to **experimental development** under Article 25 of the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) and Horizon Europe rules.

- *Eligible:* Building of system prototypes, pilot lines, testing under operational conditions, clinical studies, software-hardware integrations, and validation of certification dossiers.
- *Ineligible:* Basic research, routine software updates, standard commercial marketing campaigns, establishing production facilities, or pure distribution channels.

3.4. Consortium Requirements & Project Typologies

To ensure maximum ecosystem participation while maintaining a strong cross-border collaborative focus, applicant consortia must align their proposal with one of the three distinct project typologies established under the SYSTEMEU framework. Regardless of the number of interregional innovation projects an applicant participates in, the maximum total amount of financial support to third parties (FSTP) granted to any individual organisation

over the entire project duration is strictly capped at EUR 600,000.

Consortium requirements are strictly tied to the chosen option:

3.4.1. Option A: Medium Projects (Innovation Projects)

- **Consortium Size:** Must comprise between **3 and 5 independent legal entities**.
- **Geographical Scope:** Partners must be established in a minimum of **3 different SYSTEMEU partner regions** (Bavaria, Norte Region Portugal, Castilla y León, Romania, or Tuzla Canton).
- **Mandatory Composition:** The consortium must include at least **one research and knowledge dissemination organisation (RTO/University)** and at least **one for-profit company** (of any size) as core partners.
- **Funding Envelope:** Maximum total allocated budget of **1,100,000 EUR** per project.[2]

3.4.2. Option B: Small Projects (Feasibility and Integration Projects)

- **Consortium Size:** Must comprise between **2 and 3 independent legal entities**.
- **Geographical Scope:** Partners must be established in a minimum of **2 different SYSTEMEU partner regions**.
- **Mandatory Composition:** The consortium must include at least **one for-profit company** (Startup or SME) from an eligible SYSTEMEU funding region as a core partner.
- **Funding Envelope:** Maximum total allocated budget of **750,000 EUR** per project.[3]

3.4.3. Flagship Projects (Full-Range Systemic Digitalization)

- **Consortium Size:** Must comprise between **5 and 8 independent legal entities**.
- **Geographical Scope:** Partners must cover **all 5 participating SYSTEMEU regions**, representing a complete interregional value loop.
- **Mandatory Composition (Triple Helix):** The consortium must represent the triple helix structure, including at least **one research organisation (RTO/University)**, at least **one company** (of any size), and at least **one public authority or public sector**

[2] For more detailed Information check table about the core parameters on page 13
[3] For more detailed Information check table about the core parameters on page 13

entity actively involved in public service delivery (e.g., municipal administrations or hospitals).

- **Funding Envelope:** Maximum total allocated budget of **2,200,000 EUR** per project.[4]

3.4.4. General Consortium Governance Rules

- **Project Coordination:** The JIP Coordinator (Lead Partner) must be established in one of the active SYSTEMEU Funding Agency regions and must possess the operational capacity to manage cross-border reporting. The JIP Coordinator (Lead Partner) of a funded SYSTEMEU project can only be taken by a startup, SME or University/ RTO and NGO.
- **Independence:** All partners within an applying consortium must be legally independent of each other (no subsidiary or joint-ownership relationships).

3.5. Specific Definition of Startups (100% Funding Eligibility)

To drive deep-tech innovation while lowering barriers for young, highly ambitious ventures, SYSTEMEU grants an exceptional **100% funding rate** to certified startups. The following table defines the mandatory conditions an applicant must meet at the time of submission, alongside the specific verification documents required to prove eligibility:

Exception to above: For startups based in Castilla y León, Spain, the funding rate is capped at 70%.[5]

[4] For more detailed Information check table about the core parameters on page 13

[5] The applicable provision is Article 25 – Aid for research and development projects, of the General Block Exemption Regulation nº 651/2014 (GBER).
Considering that the projects to be funded (TRL 6 to 8) fall under the category of "experimental development", according to Article 25(5), the aid intensity must not exceed 25%.
In line with Article 25(6)(a), this intensity may be increased by 10 or 20 percentage points depending on the size of the enterprise.
Furthermore, the aid intensity may also be increased by an additional 25 percentage points under Article 25(6)(d), provided that the following conditions are met:
• (i) The project has been selected by a Member State following an open call and forms part of a project jointly designed by at least three Member States or contracting parties to the EEA Agreement; and
• (ii) The project involves effective collaboration between undertakings in at least two Member States (for SMEs) or at least three Member States (for large enterprises); and
• (iii) At least one of the following conditions is fulfilled:
o The results of the project are widely disseminated in at least three Member States or EEA contracting parties through conferences, publications, open access repositories, or free/open-source software; or
o The beneficiary commits to making licences for the research results available in a timely manner, at market price, on a non-exclusive and non-discriminatory basis, for use by interested parties within the EEA.
This would allow reaching a total aid intensity of up to 50% for large enterprises, 60% for medium-sized enterprises, and 70% for small enterprises.

Eligibility Dimension	Mandatory Requirement / Threshold	Required Verification Document (PDF Upload)
Company age	Established for **≤ 7 years** from the date of official corporate registration to the date of proposal submission.	Official Commercial Registry Extract (*Commercial Registry Extract* or regional equivalent).
Innovative Character	Core business strategy and operations must revolve around proprietary, disruptive, or deep-tech research and development.	Active patent filings, commercial R&D spending share reports, or a detailed technical business plan.
Scalability	Possession of a scalable, technology-oriented business model indicating a high potential for rapid international growth.	Business Plan detailing market launch strategies, sales projections, and competitive advantage.
Independent	Must not be owned or controlled by another entity. At least **51%** of capital/voting rights must remain with the founders.	Up-to-date Cap Table signed by the company's legal representative or managing board.
Profit distribution	The entity has **never** distributed profits, dividends, or other financial returns to its shareholders since inception.	Signed and stamped Self-Declaration on Non-Distribution of Profits, backed by the previous year's tax filing.
Financial Cap	Annual turnover of less than **10 million EUR** in the preceding completed fiscal year.	Audited Financial Statement or official tax declaration from the last closed fiscal year.

3.6. Exclusion Criteria & Sanctions Checks

Applicants will be immediately excluded from the selection process if:

- They are in a state of bankruptcy, liquidation, judicial administration, or have suspended business operations.
- They are subject to EU administrative sanctions or listed on the exclusion registry for fraud, corruption, or terrorism financing.
- They fail Russian sanctions checks. Enhanced due diligence is implemented across all SYSTEMEU Funding Agencies to shield against indirect circumvention of EU sanctions.
- They are in a situation of Conflict of Interest (COI) with any member of the SYSTEMEU evaluation board or main project partners. This includes anyone with employment ties, financial or personal stakes, close family relationships, or prior involvement in preparing the proposal.
- Their application is not written in English or it's not complete in all the compulsory sections.
- Their application exceeds the 25-page limit or the character limits will be automatically clipped and ignored by the evaluators.

4. Funding Scheme & Financial Rules

4.1. Budget Allocation & Regional Limits

In accordance with the **Amendment / Addendum to the Consortium Agreement (Annex 1)**, the total co-funded FSTP budget of 7.550.000 EUR is distributed across the regions as follows. Due to regional funding boundaries, no region can exceed its allocated maximum cap:

REGIONAL BUDGET ENVELOPES (MAX)	
Castilla y León (ES)	2.000.000 EUR
Romania (RO)	1.650.000 EUR
Tuzla Canton (BiH)	1.650.000 EUR
Norte Region (PT)	1.300.000 EUR
Bavaria (DE)	950.000 EUR

These ceilings are absolute. If a highly-ranked project requires a larger budget from a specific region than is remaining in that region's envelope, the project cannot be funded as proposed unless a budget adaptation is agreed.

4.2. Funding Rates by Entity Type

The maximum funding intensities, required co-financing contributions, and State aid rules applicable to the different partner typologies under the SYSTEMEU Open Call are detailed below; please note that these funding rates will be applied to the total budget included in the proposal. A minimum of 60% of the overall project budget has to be allocated to involved startups, SMEs, public authorities/NGOs and/or Universities/RTOs.

Entity Typology	**Maximum Funding Rate**	**Required Co-financing**	**Primary State aid / Legal Basis**	**Key Implementation Conditions**
Startups	**100%**	**0%**	GBER Article 22 / Article 25	Must strictly fulfil all criteria listed in the

				Startup Definition Matrix (Section 3.5).
Start ups based in Castilla y León (Spain)	**70%**	**30%**	GBER Article 22 / Article 25	Must strictly fulfil all criteria listed in the Startup Definition Matrix (Section 3.5).
Startups based in Tuzla Canton (Bosnia and Herzegovina)	**100%**	**0%**	Applicable State aid legislation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Must strictly fulfil all criteria listed in the Startup Definition Matrix (Section 3.5).
Non-Profit organisations (Universities, RTOs)	**100%**	**0%**	Non-economic Activity Exemption	Applicable only to non-economic activities. Must maintain a separate accounting system to prevent cross-subsidization.
SMEs / KMU	**70%**	**30%**	GBER Article 25 (Experimental Development)	Requires submission of a signed Co-financing Commitment Letter. Subject to SME size checks.
Large Enterprises	**50%**	**50%**	GBER Article 25 (Experimental Development)	Restricted to highly integrated, collaborative roles. Strict regional capping rules may apply.
Public Authorities / NGOs	**100%**	**0%**	Non-economic Activity / Regional Regulations	Funding must support public service digitalisation or policy deployment without commercial revenue.

4.3. Form of Payment & Staged Tranches

FSTP funding under SYSTEMEU is managed on a **lump-sum model** linked to the completion of specific technical and financial milestones, rather than pure invoice auditing. However, regional authorities reserve the right to audit and verify expenditures in case of suspected

irregularities or as required by national laws (specifically in Romania and Spain).

Payments are executed directly by each regional Funding Authority to their respective regional beneficiaries in three tranches:

1. **Pre-financing (25%):** Paid within 30 days of the bilateral subgrantee agreement's entry into force and upon submission of the Individual Follow-Up Plan. This allows the project to start without requiring upfront private capital.
2. **Interim Payment (50%):** Paid midway through the project implementation window, upon submission of the Technical Interim Report (Month 9 or 10) and its approval by the designated Project Monitoring Group (PMG).
3. **Final Payment (25%):** Paid after the final progress performance report is submitted (Month 16 or 19), presented, and officially signed off by the monitoring team and the European Commission.

4.3.1. Acceptance and Rejection Criteria — Technical Interim Report

As FSTP support under SYSTEMEU is disbursed on a lump-sum basis linked to milestone achievement, the PMG's review of the Technical Interim Report is a pass/fail determination rather than a scored evaluation. The Technical Interim Report is **accepted** where the PMG is satisfied that:

- Progress is consistent with the approved work plan and Gantt chart, or any deviation is adequately justified;
- Evidence is provided that the project remains on track towards the agreed TRL progression for the relevant sector pathway;
- The financial narrative provides a credible approximation of costs incurred to date and justifies how the remaining grant will be spent, in line with the lump-sum model;
- Minutes of the required monthly internal and PMG progress meetings have been submitted;
- No outstanding compliance issues remain (conflict of interest, ethics approvals, GDPR, where applicable).

The Technical Interim Report is **returned for revision or rejected** where milestones are materially unmet without adequate justification, where required supporting evidence is missing or insufficient, or where compliance or ethics gaps remain unresolved. In such cases, the PMG provides written feedback specifying the gaps identified, and the consortium is granted a correction period [two weeks] to resubmit before the 50% interim tranche is withheld further.

4.3.2. Acceptance and Rejection Criteria — Final Report

The Final Report is accepted where the PMG validates, through the final online presentation and the accompanying technical evidence, that the TRL 8 exit target defined for the relevant sector pathway has been credibly achieved, and where the narrative and financial closure

sections are complete and consistent with the Technical Interim Report and the GA/FSTP Annex.

If a project fails to reach TRL 8 due to unforeseen, justified technological risks, the funding is generally not recovered, provided the consortium can prove they executed the work plan diligently in good faith. However, if the project fails due to negligence, lack of effort, or non-compliance with the work packages, the regional Funding Authority may reserve the right to take appropriate contractual measures

In both cases, the PMG issues written feedback to the beneficiary rather than a bare accept/reject decision, in the interest of transparency and to support accountability towards the granting authority, OLAF, and the Court of Auditors under Article 25 of the Grant Agreement.

4.4. Eligible Costs

Eligible budget categories include:

- **Personnel Costs:** Researchers, technicians, and administrative support staff directly assigned to the action (timesheet tracking required).
- **Travel & Subsistence:** Travel expenses directly related to interregional project meetings or validation campaigns.
- **Purchase Costs (Equipment Depreciation):** Only the depreciation of equipment, infrastructures, or software assets corresponding to the period and extent of use in the project is eligible. Full purchase prices are ineligible.
- **Subcontracting:** Restricted to minor, non-core technical services (e.g., specialized testing, regulatory translations) is strictly prohibited between consortium partners. Furthermore, subcontracting costs must not exceed **20%** of an individual beneficiary's budget, nor 20% of the total project budget.
- **Indirect Costs:** Calculated automatically as a flat rate of **25%** of eligible direct costs, excluding subcontracting.

4.5. Oversubscription & Funding Gap Resolution

If a highly-ranked proposal has a partner based in a region where the funding envelope is already exhausted, a "funding gap" occurs. Depending on the specific context, the SYSTEMEU Evaluation Board may explore the following non-exhaustive options in coordination with the consortium:

- Inviting the consortium to find a replacement partner from a region with remaining budget.
- Reallocating tasks within the consortium to shift budget to regions with available funds, provided the quality and scope of the project are maintained.
- Allowing the partner in the exhausted region to participate on a self-funded basis.
- If no solution can be found, the proposal will be passed over, and the next-ranked eligible proposal in line will be funded.

5. Project Management, Post-Call Monitoring & Consortium Governance

To secure the technological de-risking process and ensure that projects move successfully from TRL 6 to TRL 8, SYSTEMEU implements a robust post-award monitoring framework.

5.1. Structure and Role of the Project Monitoring Group (PMG)

Immediately upon selection, each funded project is assigned a dedicated, independent **Project Monitoring Group (PMG)**:

- **Three-Officer Team:** The PMG consists of **three to five Project Officers** representing the different SYSTEMEU partner regions. All of these officers will represent regions where the project consortium has active, funded partners.
- **Independence:** PMG members are strictly independent of the funded entities and have no conflict of interest. They act on behalf or are part of the overall SYSTEMEU consortium.
- **Role:** The PMG serves as a technical auditor and strategic mentor, checking deliverables, verifying milestones, conducting progress meetings, and validating the final TRL system achievement.

5.2. Roles and Responsibilities in the Funded Project

To ensure smooth operations and professional execution of the project, each selected consortium must sign a comprehensive *Consortium Agreement* based on the standard DESCA Horizon Europe model before starting work. The internal roles, technical responsibilities, and financial administration rules must be distributed as follows:

5.2.1. The Lead Partner (Project Coordinator)

- **Single-Point Connection:** Serves as the primary operational and administrative interface to the PMG and the SYSTEMEU secretariat, coordinating all cross-border communications.

- **Consolidation of Deliverables:** Assumes total responsibility for gathering, reviewing for quality, and submitting all technical deliverables and milestone proofs generated by the consortium via the electronic submission portal.
- **Consortium-wide Risk Monitoring:** Evaluates work progress, monitors overall timeline consistency (Gantt-chart alignment), and is responsible for escalating potential critical delays or deviations to the PMG.
- **Role of Lead Partner:** The official lead partner of a funded SYSTEMEU project can only be taken by a startup, SME or University/ RTO and NGO.

5.2.2. The Technical Lead (TL)

- **Technical Oversight:** Directly manages the engineering, software coding, and physical integration tasks described in the technological work packages.
- **TRL Progress Management:** Measures and documents the technological maturation steps, ensuring the baseline prototype successfully progresses from TRL 6 through TRL 7 to TRL 8.
- **Pilot Site Coordination:** Oversees real-world deployment at the designated clinical, municipal, or industrial test environments, supervising live tests and compiling technical feedback data.

5.2.3. The Financial Officer / Administrator

- **Direct Cost Claiming:** Manages and justifies their respective organisation's expenditures (personnel timesheets, travel invoices, depreciation proofs) in compliance with local rules.
- **Bilateral Funding Agency Relations:** Coordinates directly with the respective regional Funding Authority (e.g., SCE in Bavaria, CCDRN in Norte Region Portugal) regarding financial audits, budget adjustments, and timely disbursement of tranches.
- **Consortium Budget Coordination:** Collates individual financial declarations into consolidated financial statements to be presented during the scheduled reviews.

5.2.4. The Dissemination & Exploitation Manager

- **Exploitation and Commercialization Lead:** Spearheads the development of commercially viable business models, coordinates joint patent applications, and prepares licensing contracts or spin-off strategies.
- **European Network Connectivity:** Manages strategic relationships with external innovation networks, particularly leading the integration and exchange of results with European Networks and matching EIT KICs.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Coordinates municipal, hospital, or public utility workshops to showcase pilot outcomes and increase uptake of the developed digital solutions.

5.2.5. The Data Management & Ethics Officer

- **Ethics Board Registration:** Coordinates the submission of necessary clinical, behavioural, or environmental trial dossiers to local, regional, and national Ethics Commission or equivalent registries.
- **GDPR Compliance & Cyber-Security:** Ensures that all patient, mobility, or

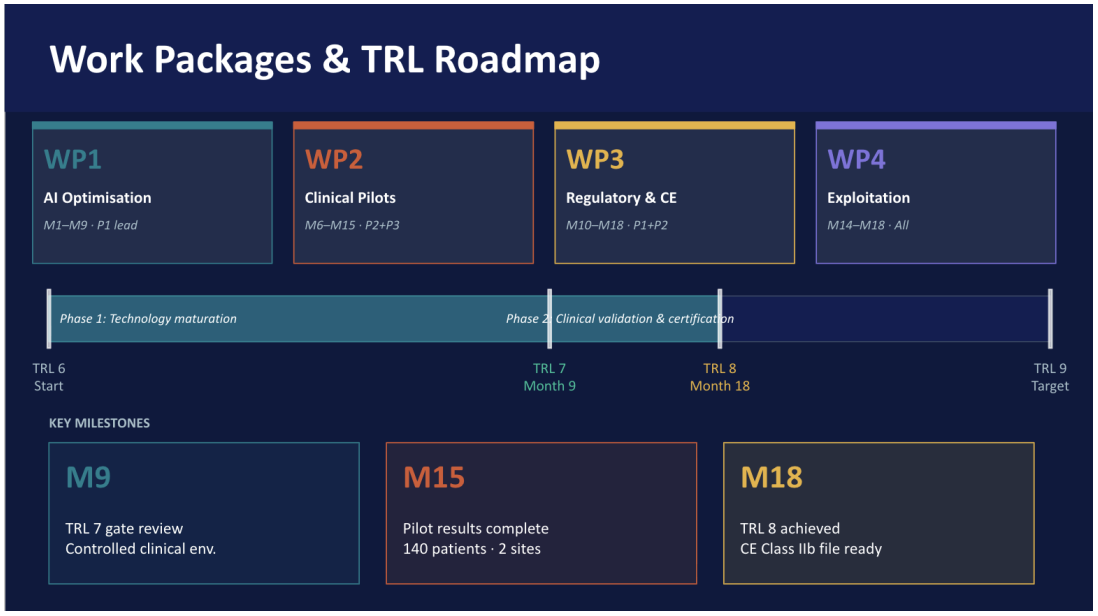
energy-usage data collected during the operational pilots are pseudonymized, stored on secure regional servers, and processed strictly in line with GDPR requirements.

- **FAIR Data Management:** Translates the SYSTEMEU Open Science policies into practice, creating the project's official Data Management Plan and publishing non-sensitive research outcomes in open-access repositories.

5.3. Work Packages (WP) & Financial Administration

Projects must structure their work plans into clearly defined Work Packages. Example:

- **WP1: Technology Maturation (TRL 6 to 7):** Focuses on refining the prototype, sensor integration, or software compilation.
- **WP2: Demonstration & Real-World Pilot (TRL 7 to 8):** Real-world testing at designated regional pilot sites with end-users.
- **WP3: Dissemination, Exploitation & Regulatory Compliance:** Drafting business models, IP agreements, and preparing CE/regulatory dossiers.
- **WP4: Project Management & Data Administration:** Coordinating internal meetings, progress reviews, and maintaining a Data Management Plan.



5.4. Reporting Schedule, Reviews, and Meeting Rhythms

The monitoring schedule combines regular checks with milestone reviews:

- **Monthly Internal Meetings:** The consortium must hold an internal progress meeting **at least once every 4 weeks** (minutes of these meetings must be uploaded to the portal).
- **Monthly PMG Reviews:** Every 4 weeks (once per month), a joint review meeting (online or hybrid) is held with the PMG to discuss progress, delay risks, and mitigation plans.
- **Mid-Term Review (Month 9 or 10):** A formal progress review. The consortium submits the Technical Interim Report. The PMG must officially sign off on the progress before the 50% interim funding tranche can be released by the regional authorities.

- **Final Review (Month 16 or 19):** A final, on-site or hybrid presentation of the completed TRL system. Successful validation and sign-off by the PMG are mandatory prerequisites for the release of the final 25% balance payment.
- **Financial Reportings:** Financial support under SYSTEMEU operates on a performance-based lump-sum model. Grant funding is disbursed upon the successful technical verification and formal sign-off of agreed project milestones and deliverables, as described in section 4.3. Beneficiaries must submit the required technical progress reports (based on the templates that will be provided) and fulfill the standard administrative documentation required by their respective regional Funding Authority to receive local grant disbursements. However, Interim financial reporting might be requested if needed.

6. Preparing the Application

All application documents and all associated materials must be written in English. Furthermore, the application must be complete in all compulsory sections and the information provided must be correct, complete and allow proper evaluation. Applications are submitted by completing the SYSTEMEU FSTP Application Narrative Template (Word) and the SYSTEMEU Budget Template (Excel) (must be **submitted together** with the Narrative Template).

The application will be completed through the online form.

6.1. Policy on the Use of Generative AI

When considering the use of generative AI tools for the preparation of the proposal, it is imperative to exercise caution and careful consideration. The AI-generated content should be thoroughly reviewed and validated by the applicants to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations. Applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal (even those parts produced by the AI tool) and must be transparent in disclosing which AI tools were used and how they were utilised.

6.2 Part A-F: Application Documents

The entire document has a limit of **strictly 25 pages**. Any pages exceeding the 25-page limit will be automatically clipped and ignored by the evaluators.

The Narrative Template (Word) is divided into:

- **Part A** — Project Identification: Basic metadata (acronym, title, thematic area, duration, total funding).
- **Part B** — Lead Partner: Detailed information on the lead partner (contact details, type, region, conflict-free declaration, budget planning).
- **Part C** — Partner(s): Detailed information on other consortium partners (identical to Part B).
- **Part D** — Project Narrative: The technical core of the application (Excellence, Impact, Implementation), divided in:
    1. Project Summary
    2. Relevance (Problem analysis, SystemEU mission, interregional cooperation)
    3. Ambition and Innovation (State of the art, novelty)
    4. Work Plan (Description of pilot/demonstration, milestones, work packages)
    5. Team and Network (Expertise, stakeholders)
    6. Risk Analysis
    7. Social Impact
    8. Business and Broader Impact (market, commercialisation, sustainability)
- **Part E** — Ethics Self-Assessment: Assessment of ethical aspects (data protection, AI, security, etc.).
- **Part F** — Compulsory Requirements & Final Declarations: Mandatory formal

confirmations (checklist of requirements and signature of the lead partner).

6.3. Part G: Budget Template & Cost Justifications

Part G is an Excel template where applicants must calculate their estimated eligible costs partner by partner.

- **Direct Costs:** Personnel, travel, equipment depreciation, other Goods, works and services and subcontracting.
- **Indirect Costs:** Automatically calculated at 25% of eligible direct costs, excluding subcontracting.
- **Justification:** Every major cost item (specifically subcontracts and equipment depreciation) must be thoroughly explained and justified in the comments section of the template.

6.4. Mandatory Supporting Documents

The following documents must be uploaded alongside the application:

- **Proof of Liquidity:** A bank statement or verified financial statement from each partner, proving their ability to execute pre-financing steps.
- **Co-Financing Commitment Letter:** For KMUs/SMEs requiring a 30% private contribution, a signed commitment letter by the managing board is mandatory. **For large corporations the commitment letter will include 50 % co-finance.**
- **Startup Evidence:** For entities applying for 100% startup funding (for startups based in Castilla y León, Spain, the funding rate is capped at 70%), they must upload:
  - Official business registration certificate (proving age ≤ 7 years)
  - Up-to-date cap table (proving independence/founder share ≥ 51 %).
  - Signed declaration of non-distribution of profits.
  - Additional State aid documentation may be required for **beneficiaries based in Tuzla Canton** in accordance with the applicable legislation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

6.5. Partner Search & Matchmaking Support on "Open Hubs"

To support applicants in building interregional consortia that satisfy the eligibility criteria, the SYSTEMEU project provides access to a dedicated online matching database:

- **Open Hubs SYSTEMEU Community Platform:** Applicants can register, post concrete project pitches, and browse other registered profiles. Access is available via: https://openhubs.io/topics/47675/feed.

7. Award Criteria & Selection Process

7.1. Formal Eligibility Check

Upon closure of the submission window, the Call Secretariat will perform an initial eligibility check based on the information provided by the applicants in their application form. A strict formal eligibility check, based on requested documents, will be performed for the pre-selected finalists before the granting decision . Any proposal that fails one of the criteria outlined in Section 3 will be rejected without entering the scientific evaluation phase.

7.2. Independent Evaluation & COI Clearance

Every eligible proposal is assigned to three experts for review:

- **One Partner Expert:** An internal expert from a SYSTEMEU consortium partner who has no affiliation with the applicants and does not work within the core SYSTEMEU project group.
- **Two External Experts:** Recruited via the external global expert database. They must have demonstrated expertise in deep-tech, commercialization, and cross-border innovation.
- **Conflict of Interest Declaration:** All evaluators must sign a standard NDA and Conflict of Interest declaration before receiving proposals.

7.3. Award Criteria & Scoring Thresholds

Proposals are scored from 0 to 5 on each of the three Horizon-style criteria: Excellence, Impact, Quality/ Implementation. Evaluators may award individual criterion scores in **half-point increments** (e.g., 3.0, 3.5, 4.0). The average score per criterion (across the three independent evaluators) and the final weighted total score will be calculated and rounded to **two decimal places** (e.g., 4.15 / 5.00). In the event of tied total scores on the ranking list, priority will be given to the proposal with the higher score under the *Impact* criterion (40% weight), followed by *Excellence* (30% weight).

- **Excellence (30% Weight | Threshold 3.0/5.0):**
  - Clarity, ambition of objectives and risk analysis.
  - Credibility of technological progress from TRL 6 to TRL 8.
  - Methodological approach and integration of joint assets.
- **Impact (40% Weight | Threshold 3.0/5.0):**
  - Market opportunity, replicability, and regional economic benefits/ social impact.
  - Integration into interregional value chains.
  - Quality of the dissemination and exploitation plan.
- **Implementation (30% Weight | Threshold 3.0/5.0):**
  - Practical work plan, Milestones, and Deliverables.
  - Appropriateness of the budget allocation.
  - Competence, diversity, gender balance, and complementarity of the consortium.

Overall Threshold: To be eligible for funding, the project must also achieve a total score of at least 10 out of 15 points.[6]

7.4. Final Evaluation Board (FEB) & Regional Balance

The final selection list is validated by the simple majority of the **Final Evaluation Board (FEB)**:

- **Structure:** Comprises one high-level representative from each of the five regional administrations of the partners (Bavaria, Norte Region Portugal, Castilla y León, Romania, Tuzla).
- **Guiding Principles:** The FEB must respect the independent ranking list. Minor adjustments are only permitted to optimise regional budget envelopes or to avoid oversubscription conflicts, and must be fully documented.

7.5. Ethics Assessment & Redress Procedure

- **Ethics Check:** Every proposal recommended for funding is checked for compliance with EU environmental, data protection (GDPR), and medical ethics standards.
- **Redress Window:** Rejected applicants have **14 calendar days** from the receipt of the evaluation result to submit a formal procedural appeal via: procedural_review_systemeu@sce.de.

[6] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-13-general-annexes_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf

8. Registration of a New Entity & PIC Code Validation

To comply with Horizon Europe financial rules and avoid delays in reporting or grant disbursements, all funded third parties must be traceable in the European Commission's system.

- For **Applicants (Recommended):** You are strongly encouraged to register your organisation in the EU Participant Register before submitting your proposal. Obtaining a PIC early prevents administrative bottlenecks later.
- For **Successful Beneficiaries of FSTP funding (Mandatory):** Providing a registered 9-digit PIC is a strict requirement prior to signing the FSTP Grant Agreement, it doesn't need to be validated yet.

8.1. Registering on the Funding & Tenders Portal

How to Obtain Your PIC (10-Minute Process)

1. Log in to the **EU Funding & Tenders Portal** using your EU Login account.
2. Go to the **Participant Register** section and click on *Register an organisation*.
3. Perform a quick duplicate check to ensure your entity is not already registered.
4. Enter your organisation's basic legal details (Name, Country, VAT/Registration Number) and submit.
5. The system will immediately generate your unique **9-digit PIC** with the status **"Declared"**.

8.2. Entity Validation & Supporting Documents

Once registered, the organisation's status is "Declared." To achieve "Validated" status (mandatory for signing the FSTP Grant Agreement), the Central Validation Service will request supporting legal documents:

- **Legal Entity Form:** Official legal registry certificate (VAT registration, commercial registration).
- **Financial Capacity Form:** Balance sheets and tax declarations from the last two fiscal years (exempt for public bodies and RTOs).

8.3. LEAR Appointment

A validated organisation must appoint a **Legal Entity Appointed Representative (LEAR)**.

- **Role:** The LEAR is the only person authorised to manage the organisation's legal and financial data on the portal, appoint electronic signees, and manage administrative access rights.

9. Support & Contact Points

9.1. Call Helpdesk

For any questions regarding the technical scope, eligibility conditions, templates, or portal access, please contact the general SYSTEMEU Helpdesk:

- **Topic / Call Related Questions - Email:** helpdesk_opencall_systemeu@sce.de
- **Email for Technical Support:** support@getonepass.eu
- **Technical Support Portal:** https://discord.gg/KebyUWBRd

9.2. Regional Contact Points (RCP)

For questions concerning region-specific funding regulations, co-financing demands, or local support, please contact your Regional Contact Point (RCP).

Region	Managing Agency	Contact Email
Bavaria (Germany)	SCE	Moritz Hoffmann moritz.hoffmann@sce.de
Norte Region (Portugal)	INESCTEC	Gustavo Dalmarco: gustavo.dalmarco@inesctec.pt
Castilla y León (Spain)	DGI / Cons. CyL	Maya Tasis maya.tasis@jcyl.es
Romania	C-EDU	Oana Buzatu: oana@c-edu.ro
Tuzla Canton (BiH)	Ministry of Economy of Tuzla Canton (MPTK)	Erna Kusturica: ernas@tk.kim.ba

10. Open Call Documents

Applicants are encouraged to consult all relevant documentation carefully before preparing and submitting their proposal. The following documents form an integral part of the call package and provide detailed information on requirements, procedures, and templates. The full set of annexes and supporting documents can be accessed via the SYSTEMEU Website:

- Terms and Conditions of the Call
- Application Templates:
    - Part A-F - Project Application Form
    - Part G – Budget Template
- Regional Annexes (including region-specific rules and requirements, bank statements, proof of registration for startups and SMEs, co-funding statement by SMEs and other profit oriented entities)

Applicants should ensure that they are using the latest versions of all documents and that their proposal complies with both the general call requirements and any applicable regional conditions.