DIGIT

DIGITAL, INNOVATION, AND GREEN TECHNOLOGY PROJECT

DIGITAL, INNOVATION, AND GREEN TECHNOLOGY PROJECT (DIGIT PROJECT)

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REPUBLIKA HRVATSKA
Ministry of Science, Education and Youth

THE WORLD BANK
IBRD • IDA | WORLD BANK GROUP

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, EDUCATION AND YOUTH
Donje Svetice 38, Zagreb 10 000, Croatia

DIGITAL, INNOVATION, AND GREEN TECHNOLOGY PROJECT (DIGIT PROJECT)

IBRD LOAN NO. 9558-HR

PROJECT ID: P180755

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

"SEAL OF EXCELLENCE UNDER THE SYNERGIES PROGRAM"

CALL REFERENCE NUMBER: DIGIT.2.2.01

2nd revision

August 2025

Table of Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CSF	Croatian Science Foundation
DIGIT	Digital, Innovation, and Green Technology Project
EIC	European Innovation Council
ERA	European Research Area
ERC	European Research Council
ESCOP	Environmental and Social Code of Practice
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
ESSQ	Environmental and Social Screening Questionnaire
EU	European Union
EUR	euro (currency)
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GOM	Grants Operations Manual
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
MSCA PF	Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action Postdoctoral Fellowship
MSEY	Ministry of Science, Education and Youth
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
PoC	Proof of Concept
R&D	Research and development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	small or medium-sized enterprise
WIDERA	Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area

Definition

In this document, the following terms and expressions should be interpreted as explained hereafter:

- «Applicant» refers to a legal entity registered in Croatia that:
  - served as the host organization for a project proposal which received the Seal of Excellence certificate by applying to either the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action Postdoctoral Fellowship (MSCA PF) or the European Research Council Proof of Concept (ERC PoC) Grant calls for proposals;
  - is a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) that submitted a project proposal under the European Innovation Council Pre-Accelerator – Widening (EIC Pre-Accelerator) call for proposals, for which it received the Seal of Excellence certificate.
- «Application» is a project proposal, submitted by the Applicant.
- «Baseline survey» is a questionnaire completed at the beginning of the application process to collect important baseline information about the applicant. In the context of the DIGIT Project, the baseline survey gathers data on the applicants' previous achievements, specifically related to research and development activities, and technology transfer. This data helps assess the current capabilities of the applicants, sets a reference point for future evaluations, and provides insights for the impact assessment of the Call.
- «Beneficiary» is the signatory to the Grant Agreement, which receives the funding, claims costs, and takes complete responsibility for the proper implementation of the proposed project.
- «Call for proposals» or «Call» is an invitation for project funding issued by the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth (MSEY) and represents a funding opportunity available through the DIGIT Project. Direct financial contribution in a form of grant is awarded to the beneficiaries through the Call to engage in activities that support the objectives of the DIGIT Project and policies related to digital transformation and green transition.
- «Double funding» means eligible expenditures have not been previously financed by grants from any public source (including from the EU) nor will they be financed more than once besides this Call.
- «Grant» refers to funding provided or proposed to be provided under the terms of a Grant Agreement, in accordance with the criteria and procedures outlined in the Grants Operations Manual (GOM) and Call for proposals by MSEY, to an eligible beneficiary for financing a project. This grant is financed out of the proceeds of the loan.
- «Grant Agreement» means an agreement to be entered between the MSEY, Croatian Science Foundation (CSF) and a beneficiary, for financing and implementing a project.
- «Grant scheme» means, collectively, the scheme or programs for extending grants to beneficiaries under sub-components 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, and 2.2 of the DIGIT Project following the GOM.
- «Horizon Europe» means the research and innovation framework program adopted by the European Union (EU) for the 2021-2027 period for research and innovation.
- «Program» refers to the Synergies program under the DIGIT Project, which is divided into two (2) sub-programs: a) Seal of Excellence (Call for proposals DIGIT.2.2.01) and b) Routes to Synergies (Call for proposals DIGIT.2.2.02). One call for proposals will be published under each sub-program.
- «Project» means a project carried out by a beneficiary using a grant under one of the grant schemes (in this case the Synergies program).
- «Research organizations» are public and private organizations that meet the definition of organizations for research and dissemination of knowledge, i.e. entities whose goal is to independently conduct fundamental research, industrial research, or experimental development or to introduce the results of these activities to the general public through lectures, publication or transfer of knowledge.

- «Seal of Excellence» means a formal acknowledgment extended by the European Commission to a project proposal submitted to and evaluated under a Horizon Europe calls for proposals, certifying that the project proposal, which could not be financed with EU funds due to budgetary constraints, exceeds predefined quality thresholds.

1. About the Synergies program and context of the Call

The Call for Proposals "Seal of Excellence under the Synergies Program" (hereafter: the Call) is financed by the Digital, Innovation, and Green Technology (DIGIT) Project. The DIGIT Project, a EUR 106 million initiative, aims to drive digital transformation and green transition across the economy, increase funding for applied research and experimental development, and support the Croatian government in strengthening institutional capacity for delivering research and innovation policies. Funded through a World Bank loan signed in June 2023, the DIGIT Project is scheduled for completion by December 2028.

As a part of the grant scheme, the Synergies program (hereafter: the Program) gives a strategic approach in addressing the funding and integration challenges that organizations face in securing Horizon Europe funding. The Seal of Excellence sub-program (hereafter: the Sub-program) aims to fill a critical funding gap, ensuring that innovative projects that meet the standards of Horizon Europe evaluations, but have missed out on financing due to budget constraints, have another funding opportunity. This initiative not only enhances the chances of cutting-edge domestic research and innovation receiving the necessary funding but also signals to applicants the value of striving for excellence in their proposals.

The Sub-program will provide funding to support high-quality projects that have received the Seal of Excellence certificate[1] for project proposals submitted under the following Horizon Europe calls for proposals:

- European Research Council Proof of Concept (ERC PoC) Grant;
- Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action Postdoctoral Fellowships (MSCA PF);
- European Innovation Council Pre-Accelerator – Widening (EIC Pre-Accelerator).

The ERC PoC Grant aims to facilitate the exploration of the commercial and societal innovation potential of research previously funded by the ERC. Therefore, ERC PoC Grant funding is available only to those Principal Investigators who have already received one of the ERC financial grants (so-called Starting grants, Consolidator grants, Advanced grants and Synergy grants), and to further research the idea that developed during the implementation of the ERC financial grant. Funding through the ERC PoC Grant competition is therefore not aimed at expanding the original research idea, but covers activities in the early phase of turning research results into a commercial or socially valuable proposal, for example, the initial steps that precede commercial development.

The MSCA PF helps researchers gain research experience in other countries, disciplines and non-academic sectors. The aim is to support researchers' careers and foster excellence in research. The PF action targets researchers holding a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy), who wish to carry out their research activities abroad, acquire new skills and develop their careers.

Within WIDERA (Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area), the EIC Pre-Accelerator aims to boost the innovation potential of early-stage deep-tech startups in widening countries (including Republic of Croatia) by enhancing their business, investor, and technology readiness to secure funding from different sources. It provides tailored support to help startups advance their technologies (from TRL 4 to TRL 5 or 6), develop business strategies, and prepare for follow-up funding, including the EIC Accelerator or other national and private investment schemes.

[1] The Seal of Excellence certificate contains all the basic information on the proposal that is needed by a funding body that wants to identify the proposal and understand its key features and value (title of the proposal, reference to the call/topic, and name and address of the proposer's legal entity). It is digitally sealed against fraud, as are the project proposal and the evaluation summary report (this is indicated in the documents).

Seal of Excellence[2] means a quality label which shows that a proposal submitted to Horizon Europe calls for proposals exceeded all of the evaluation thresholds set out in the work program, but could not be funded due to lack of budget available for that specific work program.

By extending financing to research and development (R&D) projects with the Seal of Excellence certificate, the Sub-program will complement the existing Horizon Europe program, expand the net of beneficiaries, amplify the chances of funding cutting-edge domestic research and innovation, and create more interest of Croatian research organizations for participation in highly competitive Horizon Europe program.

The present Call requires applicants to submit their project proposals in the exact application form as it was submitted to Horizon Europe call for proposals (EIC Pre-Accelerator, ERC PoC Grant and MSCA PF) and for which the applicant received the Seal of Excellence certificate. Project implementation must follow the activities and budget as applied to the relevant Horizon Europe call for proposals, as well conditions specified in this Call.

2. Legal framework and governance

A grant within this Call will be awarded to the beneficiary in accordance with the conditions set forth in the:

- Project Appraisal Document (PAD) - Digital, Innovation, and Green Technology Project - P180755[3];
- Law on the confirmation of the Loan agreement between the Republic of Croatia and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for the Digital, Innovation, and Green Technology Project (Official Gazette 9/23)[4];
- Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)[5];
- Grants Operations Manual (GOM)[6];
- Grant Agreement[7].

The regulations applicable to this Call are those in force at the time of its publication. This means that the Guidelines for Applicants and annexes, and any relationships arising from the Call are subject to current legislation, including any laws and regulations that come into force later, as well as any future amendments. It is the responsibility of the applicant to verify the applicable laws at the time of submitting their project proposal, as the regulations in force at the time of submission will apply to the applicant.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Youth (hereafter: MSEY) oversees the entire DIGIT Project and manages each program. The MSEY is responsible for the execution of this Call, while the Croatian Science Foundation (hereafter: CSF) provides implementation support by conducting the selection process of project proposals, preparing and signing grant agreements (with MSEY), including any necessary addendums, and monitoring the implementation of projects.

[2] As defined in REGULATION (EU) 2021/695 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013
[3] Project Appraisal Document (PAD), link
[4] Law on the confirmation of the Loan agreement between the Republic of Croatia and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for the Digital, Innovation, and Green Technology Project (Official Gazette 9/23), link
[5] Environmental and Social Management Framework, link
[6] Grants Operations Manual (GOM), link
[7] Annex A. Template of a Grant Agreement is part of Annex I. Conditions for the preparation and implementation of projects within the DIGIT Project (Section 4.1.) of this Call for proposals

3. Objectives and focus of the Sub-program

The aim of the Call is to bridge the funding gap by providing support to projects that have demonstrated excellence and met the standards of Horizon Europe evaluations but were not awarded funding due to budget constraints. The main objective of the Call is to:

- *Support outstanding R&D projects awarded the Seal of Excellence in Horizon Europe, strengthening Croatia's innovation ecosystem and advancing towards sustainable future.*

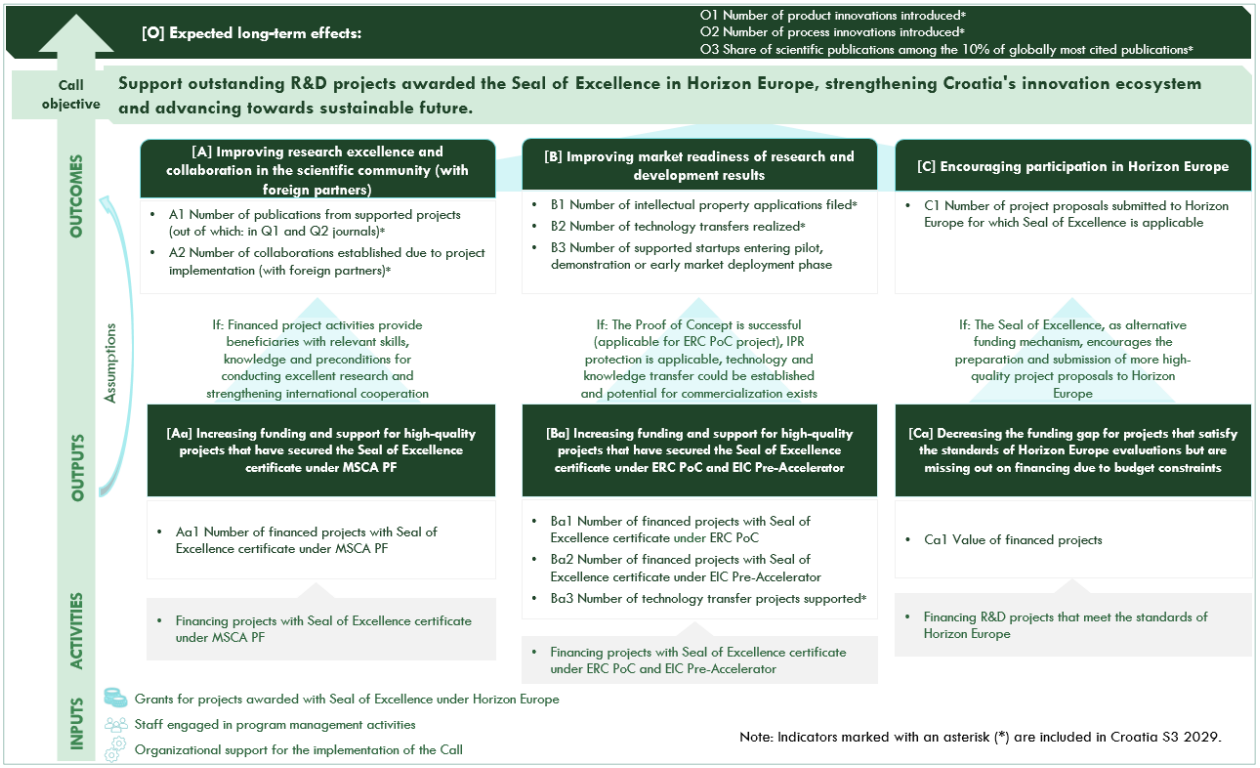
The Call's objectives are also in line with the main objectives of the Horizon Europe program:

- *Strengthening the EU's scientific and technological foundations and European Research Area (ERA);*
- *Increasing innovation capacity, competitiveness and the number of jobs in Europe;*
- *Addressing key policy priorities, including green and digital transitions, and achieving of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

The developed Theory of Change serves as the logical framework of the Call and is illustrated in the diagram below (Figure 1). The main outcomes include:

- *Enhancing research excellence and foster international collaboration within the scientific community, through projects with the MSCA PF Seal of Excellence;*
- *Increasing the market readiness of R&D outcomes built on ERC PoC and EIC Pre-Accelerator projects awarded with Seal of Excellence;*
- *Encouraging greater participation in Horizon Europe through alternative funding mechanisms, fostering the preparation and submission of high-quality project proposals.*

Figure 1. Theory of Change



For the purpose of monitoring Sub-program results, Table 1. outlines the results framework with indicators based on the Theory of Change. **Applicants are not required to select or specify targeted values for the indicators within the application form.** Data on outcome and impact indicators will be collected up to five years after project completion via post-implementation reports or surveys. By applying to the Call, the applicants consent to being contacted by MSEY after project completion.

Table 1. Effectiveness indicators (describing the program results according to the Theory of Change)

Objective of the Sub-program: Support outstanding R&D projects awarded the Seal of Excellence in Horizon Europe, strengthening Croatia's innovation ecosystem and advancing towards sustainable future				
Indicator label	**Level**	**Indicator**	**Measurement unit**	**Deadline for completion**
O1	Impact	**Number of product innovations introduced**	product	Five years after project completion
	Description: The indicator measures the number of new innovative products introduced to the market based on project implementation. Innovative products imply the introduction of goods or services on the market that are new or significantly improved in relation to their characteristics or purpose. This includes significant improvements in technical specifications, components and materials, embedded software, ease of use or other functional characteristics. Product innovations may use new knowledge or technologies or may be based on new uses or combinations of existing knowledge or technologies. **Source of verification:** report and/or survey in the post-implementation period.			
O2	Impact	**Number of process innovations introduced**	process	Five years after project completion
	Description: The indicator measures the number of new process innovations introduced to the market based on project implementation. Process innovation is the implementation of a new or significantly improved method of production or delivery. This includes significant changes in techniques, equipment and/or software. The goal of process innovation may be to reduce unit costs of production or delivery, to increase quality, or to produce or deliver new or significantly improved products. **Source of verification:** report and/or survey in the post-implementation period.			
O3	Impact	**Share of scientific publications among the 10% of globally most cited publications**	publication	Five years after project completion
	Description: The indicator measures the proportion of publications by Croatian researchers and research organizations that rank in the top 10% of the most cited research globally, indicating their global impact and influence in the scientific community. **Source of verification:** European Innovation Scoreboard.			

[A] Specific objective: Improving research excellence and collaboration in the scientific community (with foreign partners)				
Indicator label	**Level**	**Indicator**	**Measurement unit**	**Deadline for completion**
A1	Outcome	**Number of publications from supported projects (out of which in Q1 and Q2 journals)**	publication	Five years after project completion
	Description: The indicator measures the number of publications from supported projects. Publications can take the form of articles, book chapters or books (including co-authorships). It should be possible to clearly identify the contribution of the supported project. The indicator includes papers submitted or accepted for review by peer-reviewed journals. In order to capture the quality of publications produced, publications in Q1 and Q2 journals will be tracked as a disaggregate measure of the indicator. **Source of verification:** report and/or survey in the post-implementation period, Scopus database.			
A2	Outcome	**Number of collaborations established due to project implementation (with foreign partners)**	collaboration	Three years after project completion
	Description: The indicator refers to the number of new collaborations established due to the support provided by the Sub-program. Collaborations taken into account for the indicator achievement must include the beneficiary of the supported project and at least one other foreign entity. The term cooperation may, for example, refer to a joint publication, joint submission of a project proposal or a new contracted collaborative project, other formal agreements and contracts, memoranda of understanding and other forms of collaboration involving the beneficiary of the supported project **Source of verification:** report and/or survey in the post-implementation period.			
Aa1	Output	**Number of financed projects with Seal of Excellence certificate under MSCA PF**	project	Project completion
	Description: The indicator refers to number of projects awarded with grants, that have received a Seal of Excellence certificate under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action Postdoctoral Fellowships program. **Source of verification:** Decision on project financing, implementation reports and final report.			

[B] Specific objective: Improving the market readiness of research and development results				
Indicator label	**Level**	**Indicator**	**Measurement unit**	**Deadline for completion**
B1	Outcome	**Number of intellectual property applications filed**	application	Three years after project completion
	Description: The indicator refers to the number of applications for intellectual property, including patents, trademarks, industrial designs, etc., by supported entities involved in the implementation of the project, which are the result of research activities carried out within the framework of the funded project. **Source of verification:** report and/or survey in the post-implementation period, document or link to a public source verifying the application status.			
B2	Outcome	**Number of technology transfers realized**	technology transfer	Three years after project completion

	Description: The indicator refers to the transfer of research results (knowledge and technology) achieved due to the implementation of the project for the purpose of their further development and/or use in the development and commercialization of new products (goods or services). The results of the project can be transferred from the project beneficiary to other subjects in the form of signed research and development contracts or intellectual property licensing contracts, or by establishing new enterprises. **Source of verification:** report and/or survey in the post-implementation period.			
B3	Outcome	**Number of supported startups entering pilot, demonstration or early market deployment phase**	startup	Three years after project completion
	Description: This indicator measures the number of deep-tech startups supported through the sub-program whose innovations progressed beyond the proof-of-concept phase and entered a pilot, demonstration, or early market deployment stage. It reflects the advancement in technological maturity (from TRL 4 to TRL 5/6) and market readiness. **Source of verification:** implementation reports and the final report, including information on TRL status and achievement of defined milestones, and if applicable: evidence of pilot/demonstration activities and business or commercialization plans.			
Ba1	Output	**Number of financed projects with Seal of Excellence certificate under ERC PoC**	project	Project completion
	Description: The indicator refers to number of projects awarded with grants, that have received a Seal of Excellence certificate under European Research Council, Proof of Concept program. **Source of verification:** Decision on project financing, implementation reports and final report.			
Ba2	Output	**Number of financed projects with Seal of Excellence certificate under EIC Pre-Accelerator**	project	Project completion
	Description: The indicator refers to number of projects awarded with grants, that have received a Seal of Excellence certificate under the EIC Pre-Accelerator. **Source of verification:** Decision on project financing, implementation reports and final report.			
Ba23	Output	**Number of technology transfer projects supported**	project	Project completion
	Description: The indicator refers to technology transfer projects supported through Sub-program implementation. Technology transfers refer to the transfer of research results (knowledge and technology) from the beneficiary to other entities, for the purpose of their further development and/or use in the development and commercialization of new products (good or services) or processes. The results of the projects can be transferred in the form of R&D agreements or intellectual property licensing agreements, or the establishment of new enterprises. **Source of verification:** implementation reports and the final report.			

[C] Specific objective: Encouraging participation in Horizon Europe				
Indicator label	**Level**	**Indicator**	**Measurement unit**	**Deadline for completion**
C1	Outcome	**Number of project proposals submitted to Horizon Europe for which Seal of Excellence is applicable**	application	Three years after project completion
	Description: The indicator refers to the number of applications submitted to Horizon Europe programs from Croatian participants, for which Seal of Excellence is applicable. It measures the engagement with Horizon Europe funding opportunities and provides insight into the level of interest in participation after the Sub-program implementation. Indicator achievement is calculated on an annual basis. **Source of verification:** European Commission (Horizon Europe country profiles), MSEY.			
Ca1	Output	**Value of financed projects**	EUR	Project completion
	Description: This indicator measures the total value of grants awarded to projects that received the Seal of Excellence certificate but were not funded under Horizon Europe. **Source of verification:** Decision on project financing, implementation reports and final report.			

4. Evaluation of the Sub-program

By applying to this Call, the applicant consents to the use of the complete application documentation and data collected during the evaluation of project proposals for the purpose of conducting an impact evaluation of the Sub-program, regardless of whether they receive support or not. Access to this data will enable the proper evaluation of the impact of the Sub-program. This consent is given through the signed declaration by the applicant (Annex II. of this document).

Before submitting the project proposal, the applicant is required to complete a baseline survey. Annex III. of this document provides the indicative content of the baseline survey solely to inform applicants about the information required in the baseline survey. The baseline survey must be completed exclusively via the provided link. The applicant confirms in declaration by the applicant (Annex II. of this document) that they have fully completed the survey form.

This survey will collect data on the previous achievements of the applicant related to R&D activities and technology transfer. The responses gathered from the survey will be used to evaluate the impact of the Program.

If the MSEY decides to conduct an impact evaluation of the Sub-program, surveys will be administered after project completion and in the following years, with the purpose of collecting data on the results achieved by the applicants in comparison to the baseline situation reported during project submission. By applying to this Call, the applicant commits to participating in these additional surveys, should the MSEY decide to conduct them, and consent to the use of collected data for impact evaluation purposes, regardless of whether they receive support or not. This consent is also provided through the signed declarations by the applicant (Annex II. of this document). The MSEY will ensure that any future surveys do not create an undue administrative burden for respondents, ensuring also the adherence to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) particularly with regards to purpose limitation and data minimization principles.

5. Eligible applicants

The eligible applicant must be:

- a legal entity registered in Croatia that served as the host organization for a project proposal which received the Seal of Excellence certificate by applying to either the MSCA PF or the ERC PoC Grant calls for proposals; or
- a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) established in Croatia that submitted a project proposal under the EIC Pre-Accelerator call for proposals, for which it received the Seal of Excellence certificate.

The applicants may not be in any of the exclusion situations listed in Annex I. Conditions for the preparation and implementation of projects within the DIGIT Project (hereafter: Annex I.).

An applicant can submit more than one project proposal under the Call. A beneficiary can have more than one signed Grant Agreement within this Call for different projects and project activities. If the applicant has received multiple Seal of Excellence certificates for the same or similar project proposal, in terms of activities and costs, under different calls within the same Horizon Europe instrument (e.g. multiple MSCA PF calls, ERC PoC calls, or EIC Pre-Accelerator calls), only one project proposal may be submitted under this Call.

The applicant is submitting the project proposal independently, without any partners. However, if the project proposal submitted to the relevant Horizon Europe call for proposals, for which the Seal of Excellence certificate was awarded, involves partner(s) or a consortium, the applicant is required to confirm within Annex II. Declaration by the Applicant that no changes have occurred in this regard. Additionally, the project must be implemented within the same partnership or consortium as outlined in the original proposal.

6. Budget of the Call and the intensity of grant support

The budget allocation planned for this Call is EUR 2,5 million.

The grant will be awarded in the form of a lump sum. The total grant amount will correspond to the budget requested in the original Horizon Europe project proposal for which the Seal of Excellence certificate was awarded, and will not exceed the available funds allocated under this Call.

For projects awarded a Seal of Excellence under the EIC Pre-Accelerator call for proposals, the intensity of support for eligible costs is limited to up to 70%. The applicant is responsible for securing co-financing for the difference between the total project value and the awarded grant amount.

7. Project duration

The project duration must correspond to that indicated in the original Horizon Europe project proposal for which the Seal of Excellence certificate was awarded.

All project activities and payments should be completed by October 31, 2028.

8. Eligibility criteria

8.1. Eligible projects

Eligible projects are projects that received the Seal of Excellence certificate under Horizon Europe EIC Pre-Accelerator, ERC PoC Grant or MSCA PF calls for proposals. To receive funding, the applicant must submit the exact project proposal that was submitted to Horizon Europe's call for proposals (EIC Pre-Accelerator, ERC PoC Grant or MSCA PF).

All project proposals must comply with the conditions for the preparation and implementation of projects within the DIGIT Project set out in Annex I.

8.2. Eligible activities

Only activities eligible within the EIC Pre-Accelerator, ERC PoC Grant and MSCA PF calls for proposals are eligible for funding under this Call. Additionally, activities must not include any ineligible actions as defined in Annex I.

8.3. Eligible costs

Only costs that are eligible under the EIC Pre-Accelerator, ERC PoC Grant and MSCA PF calls for proposals can be funded through this Call. Costs not included in the project proposal's budget, for which the project received the Seal of Excellence certificate, are considered ineligible. Additionally, the project cannot receive funding from multiple sources for the same expenses (no double funding).

This Call will provide a lump sum to cover beneficiaries' eligible project costs, which must fully correspond to the costs in the original Horizon Europe applications, either the EIC Pre-Accelerator, ERC PoC Grant or MSCA PF call for proposals, that received the Seal of Excellence certificate.

9. Instructions for the submission of project proposals

Project proposals must be written and submitted in English via the application portal eDIGIT available on the website https://digit.mzom.hr/. Please follow these instructions carefully to ensure your project proposal is properly submitted and considered:

1. **Access the application portal eDIGIT**: Applicants, either the authorized representative or the project manager, must create a user account on the application portal eDIGIT if not already registered. This account will be used throughout the application process.
2. **Complete the baseline survey**: Applicants must complete the baseline survey which can be accessed at the following link:
   - https://croatiasurvey.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8iduAnPiqVjC10y.

   The completion of the survey is mandatory before submitting the application. Please note that it is not necessary to upload a .pdf version of the completed surveys, but you may keep one for your own records.
3. **Upload required documents and provide needed information**: Log in to the application portal eDIGIT and upload all required documents listed below:

   - Project proposal (exact application form as submitted in the EU Funding & Tenders Portal (EIC Pre-Accelerator, MSCA PF or ERC PoC Grant calls for proposals), along with all supporting documents that were part of the project proposal) (.pdf or .zip);
   - Seal of Excellence certificate (.pdf);

- Evaluation Summary Report (.pdf);
- Declaration by the applicant (Annex II.) (completed, signed and stamped) (.pdf).

4. **Review and finalize submission**: Carefully review the entire application and ensure all required fields and documents are completed and attached. Incomplete proposals may be disqualified from the evaluation process.
5. **Submit the application**: Once all required information and documents are prepared, submit the application including documents via the application portal eDIGIT. Ensure the submission is completed before the specified deadline. The project proposal can be submitted by a person authorized to represent the applicant or by the project manager, who must be an employee of the applicant.
6. **Confirmation of submission**: After successfully submitting, the applicant will receive a submission confirmation. This confirmation should be retained as proof of submission.

Important notes:

- **Submission deadline**: Project proposals submitted after the deadline will not be accepted. It is advisable to complete the submission process well in advance of the deadline.
- **Electronic submission only**: All submissions must be made through the application portal eDIGIT. E-mail or paper submissions are not accepted.
- **Completeness and accuracy**: The information provided in the project proposal application must be complete and accurate. The MSEY or CSF may request additional information if needed.

10. Timetable and deadlines

This Call is a permanently open Call, meaning project proposals can be submitted continuously from January 31, 2025 (start date) at 09:00:00, until either December 31, 2026, or until all available funds are allocated, whichever occurs first[8]. The indicative timetable and deadlines are outlined in the following table.

Table 2. Indicative timetable and deadlines

Indicative timetable and deadlines	
Call opening	January 31, 2025 – 09:00:00
Call closing	December 31, 2026 – 16:00:00 or until all the available funds are allocated
Project proposal evaluation results	Max. 30 days after project proposal submission

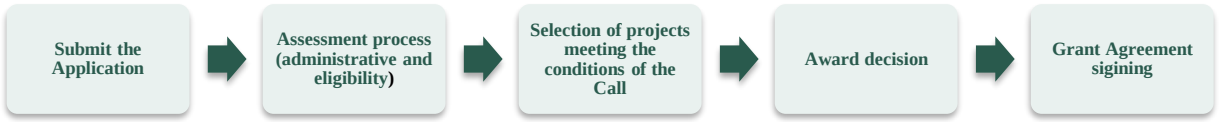
11. Grant award process

For this Call, funding will be provided only to projects that have received the Seal of Excellence certificate awarded by the European Commission within the Horizon Europe EIC Pre-Accelerator, ERC PoC and MSCA PF calls for proposals, and that meet the requirements of this Call. Projects that meet these criteria can be funded as long as the Call is open or until available funds are allocated.

The process from the submission of project proposal to the signing of the Grant Agreement is shown in the following chart.

[8] In case that all available funds are allocated before the Call deadline, the MSEY will inform all potential applicants through the DIGIT Project website.

Figure 2. Grant award process



Stages in the grant award process for this Call are explained in Section 2. of Annex I.

After the submission of project proposals and before adopting an Award decision on funding, applicants (upon the CSF's request) must prepare and submit the following:

- Environmental and social screening questionnaire (ESSQ) (Annex IV. of the Guidelines for Applicants). Only low and moderate risk activities can be eligible for financing/awarded.

If the ESSQ results indicate the need for specific Environmental and social (E&S) instruments, the applicant will be responsible for preparing the required documentation (such as the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), ESMP Checklist, Environmental and Social Code of Practice (ESCOP)) before the Award decision on funding is made. Failure to submit any of the required documents will result in the application being automatically rejected, and an Award decision on funding will not be adopted.

12. Other information

Any questions regarding the Call can be submitted via email to info-digit@mzom.hr (referencing the Call DIGIT.2.2.01) until January 31, 2025. After this date, questions must be submitted through the eDIGIT application portal, where potential applicants will be able to select the relevant Call (DIGIT.2.2.01) to submit their inquiries. The MSEY will respond to these questions through a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section, which will be published on the DIGIT Project website.

13. Data protection

The protection of personal data is ensured in accordance with the provisions of the Law on the Implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (Official Gazette 42/18).

Personal data collected includes details of the applicant or authorized representative (name, surname, OIB, email, phone number). During the grant award process, personal information is kept confidential. Data related to stakeholders (name, surname, OIB, salary, etc.) involved in project implementation may also be collected. These data are processed for project preparation, evaluation, implementation, and auditing.

Personal data may be shared within bodies implementing and monitoring the DIGIT Project and with individuals authorized by the above bodies to fulfill specific services.

Access to personal data is limited to those with a need for it.

Applicants and beneficiaries have the following rights regarding the protection of personal data:

- The right to access their personal data, i.e., the right to request confirmation of whether data are being processed and, if so, to request access and information on the processing as well as a copy of the processed personal data;
- The right to rectify inaccurate data and to supplement incomplete data;

- The right to erase personal data if such data are no longer necessary for the purposes for which they were collected, if they have been unlawfully processed, or after the expiry of the data retention period;
- The right to restrict the processing of personal data;
- The right to object to the processing of personal data;
- The right to file a complaint with the Croatian Personal Data Protection Agency.

Personal data will be stored as long as there is a purpose for it, and at most five years after the closure of the DIGIT Project.

Contact:

- Data Protection Officer: SzZOP@mzom.hr, Donje Svetice 38, 10000 Zagreb, tel: +385 1 4594 294.

14. Grievance Redress Mechanism

The MSEY and CSF are responsible for the establishment of the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) for receiving and facilitating the resolution of complaints and concerns presented by applicants, beneficiaries, and any individuals, groups, or communities who feel affected or interested, or feel that they may be affected or interested in the activities of the projects and the DIGIT Project.

The GRM is also intended to prevent and mitigate the risk of corruption, limit the risk of conflict between the beneficiary, contracted subjects (services or goods), and the community, mitigate environmental and social risks and impacts, and allow stakeholders to provide practical suggestions and opinions to ensure that the program remains accountable and transparent to the beneficiaries. The GRM is prepared to capture complaints and refer them to the relevant sectors to obtain solutions within reasonable time frames.

Contacts:

- Contact details of the MSEY GRM – a) e-mail address: grmdigit@mzom.hr; or b) postal address: Ministarstvo znanosti, obrazovanja i mladih, Uprava za znanost i tehnologiju, Sektor za programe i projekte Europske Unije, Donje Svetice 38, 10000 Zagreb;
- Contact details of the CSF GRM – e-mail address: grmdigit@hrzz.hr.

15. List of annexes

1) Annex I. Conditions for the preparation and implementation of projects within the DIGIT Project
2) Annex II. Declaration by the applicant
3) Annex III. Indicative content of the baseline survey
4) Annex IV. Environmental and social screening questionnaire