



## European Institute of Innovation and Technology

### Invitation to submit a proposal for the European Solar Academy activities

### Single Market Programme (SMP COSME)

**SMP-COSME-2024-EIT-EUSOLARACADEMY**

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## Introduction

This is an **invitation to submit a proposal for an EU action grant** in the field of solar energy under the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs strand of the **Single Market Programme (SMP COSME)**.

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in the:

- Regulation (EU) 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#));
- the Single Market Programme Regulation [2021/690](#)<sup>1</sup>).
- Commission Work Programme 2023<sup>2</sup>.

The regulatory and contractual framework for the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) in the 2021-2027 period is set out in the:

- EIT Regulation (recast)<sup>3</sup>;
- EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027<sup>4</sup>;
- the Partnership Agreements (PA)<sup>5</sup> which were signed by the EIT and eight Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) in 2021.

The Invitation is launched in accordance with the **EIT's 2024 Work Programme**<sup>6</sup> and will be managed by the EIT, following the signature of the **Contribution Agreement**<sup>7</sup> between the European Commission (DG GROW) and the EIT on 1 December 2023.

This Invitation concerns the **direct award to one or more KIC Legal Entities** for the **European Solar Academy activities** (the topic of the 'action') in order to support the upskilling and reskilling, by education and training providers in EU Member States, of workforce in the field of solar photovoltaic technologies, with a strong focus on employees in the EU SMEs.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/690 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing a programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium-sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed, and European statistics (Single Market Programme) (OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 1).

<sup>2</sup> Section 2.15 of Commission Implementing Decision C(2023)1119 on the financing of the Programme for the internal market, competitiveness of enterprises, including small and medium sized enterprises, the area of plants, animals, food and feed and European Statistics and the adoption of the work programme for 2023-2024, as amended by Commission Implementing Decision C(2023)5702 on amending the Commission Implementing Decision C(2023) 1119 as regards the implementation of actions under the Single Market Programme

<sup>3</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/819 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 on the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (recast) (OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 61)

<sup>4</sup> Decision (EU) 2021/820 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 on the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) 2021-2027: Boosting the Innovation Talent and Capacity of Europe and repealing decision No 1312/2013/EU (OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 91)

<sup>5</sup> [https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eit\\_kic\\_partnership\\_agreement\\_v1.0\\_final\\_14-03-2021.pdf](https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eit_kic_partnership_agreement_v1.0_final_14-03-2021.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Decision 36/2023 of the EIT Governing Board on the Amendment of the Final Single Programming Document (2023-2025) of the EIT (ref. Ares(2023)8035875).

<sup>7</sup> Ref. Ares(2023)8220783



We invite you to read the **Invitation documentation** carefully, and in particular this Invitation, the [Model Grant Agreement](#), the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#) and the [EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the [Invitation](#) outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results;
  - timetable and available budget;
  - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents);
  - criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion;
  - evaluation and award procedure;
  - award criteria;
  - legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreement;
  - how to submit an application.
- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the:
  - procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal');
  - recommendations for the preparation of the application.
- the [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#) contains:
  - detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement you will have to sign in order to obtain the grant (*including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc*).

## 1 Background

On 16 March 2023, as part of its Green Deal Industrial Plan<sup>8</sup>, the European Commission put forward a legislative proposal for a Net-Zero Industry Act<sup>9</sup> with the objective to support the scale-up of EU industrial manufacturing capacities of key net-zero technologies. The Act proposes a simplified regulatory framework to meet the EU climate neutrality goals in technologies such as batteries, windmills, heat-pumps, solar photovoltaic, electrolysers, carbon capture and storage. The proposal includes a Chapter on “Enhancing Skills for quality job creation” to support the re-skilling and upskilling of workers required for the upscaling of EU industrial manufacturing capacities. Article 23 of the proposal states that “the Commission shall support, including through the provision of seed-funding, the establishment of European Net Zero Industry Academies” to develop education and training content to upskill and reskill workers required for key net-zero technology value chains, including solar photovoltaic technologies.

More recently, in a joint communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the

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<sup>8</sup> COM(2023) 62 final

<sup>9</sup> COM(2023) 161 final



Council on a “European Economic Security Strategy”<sup>10</sup>, the Commission listed among the priorities promoting our own competitiveness by, inter alia, investing in human capital including by upskilling the European workforce, as well as protecting ourselves from economic security risks. Linked to that is the Commission Recommendation on critical technology areas for the EU's economic security for further risk assessment with Member States which list photovoltaics as one of 10 critical technology areas for the EU's economic security.

At global level, solar photovoltaic manufacturing increased with an annual growth rate of 25% from 2010 to 2021, and the trend is increasing. In 2023 and 2024, the global solar photovoltaic manufacturing capacity is expected to double, with China claiming over 90% of this increase, to reach almost 1.000 GW in 2024 (as predicted by the International Energy Agency).<sup>11</sup>

In the European Union, the REPowerEU plan<sup>12</sup> released in May 2022 proposes a deployment target of 320 GW of solar PV by 2025 and almost 600 GW by 2030. The Proposal for a Net-Zero Industry Act aims to ensure that, by 2030, the EU manufacturing capacity of the strategic net-zero technologies (including Solar photovoltaic) approaches or reaches a benchmark of at least 40% of the Union's annual deployment needs, to achieve the Union's 2030 climate and energy targets. To this end, the sector requires a range of skilled workers including engineers, project managers, technicians, and installers. For the manufacturing of photo-voltaic panels alone, 66.000 additional workers are estimated to be needed until 2030. In addition, solar photovoltaic deployment is estimated to require another 260.000 skilled workers by 2030.<sup>13</sup>

Against this backdrop, seed funding for the establishment of a European Solar Academy has been made available under the Single Market Programme - SME Pillar which allocated an initial amount under its 2023 work programme to be implemented via indirect management by the EIT.

## 2 Objectives — Themes and priorities — Activities that can be funded — Expected impact

### 2.1 Objectives

#### Overall objective

The overall objective of the action is to launch the European Solar Academy ('the Academy') to support the upskilling and reskilling by education and training providers in EU Member States of the workforce

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<sup>10</sup> JOIN(2023) 20 final

<sup>11</sup> [Is there enough global wind and solar PV manufacturing to meet Net Zero targets in 2030? – Renewable Energy Market Update - June 2023 – Analysis - IEA](#)

<sup>12</sup> COM(2022) 230 final

<sup>13</sup> COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing a framework of measures for strengthening Europe's net-zero technology products manufacturing ecosystem (Net Zero Industry Act)



required in the EU for, among others, developing, producing, installing, maintaining, repairing, re-using and recycling solar photovoltaic technologies, with a strong focus on employees in EU SMEs.

### **Main objectives:**

- I. Support the education and training of workers in the solar photovoltaic technology value chain and competent public authorities in Europe, addressing critical needs of the sector consistent with the objectives of the Net-Zero Industry Act and outlined, among others, in the EU Solar Strategy and the EU Solar Photovoltaic Industry Alliance.
- II. Develop learning programmes, content and learning and training materials for the solar photovoltaic value chain; promote the use of the learning programmes, content and materials by education and training providers in the Member States; develop and deploy learning credentials.
- III. Provide direct support to SMEs by up and reskilling the workforce in and for the solar photovoltaic manufacturing supply chain in the EU. The primary focus of the action would be SMEs, whose access to the learning programmes, content and learning and training materials should be promoted by the design of the terms and conditions of their use. Large businesses would also be entitled to participate but subject to conditions that take into account their larger education and training resources.

### **Specific objectives:**

- With a particular focus on SMEs, develop learning programmes, content and learning and training materials for training and education, among others, on developing, producing, installing, commissioning, operating, maintaining and recycling solar photovoltaic technologies, as well as support the capacities of public authorities competent to issue permits and authorisations and contracting authorities. To this end, and to ensure consistency with related EU-funded projects, the Academy must demonstrate that it will work closely with the European Solar Photovoltaic Industry Alliance and with the onshore renewable energy Large-Scale Skills Partnership under the EU Pact for Skills. It must, moreover, take into account input from Member States and stakeholders. It will also build upon and demonstrate synergies with the European Battery Alliance Academy and ensure alignment with the objectives of the Net-Zero Industry Act.
- Facilitate the deployment of the learning programmes, content and materials developed by the Academy, among others by setting up a network of education and training providers in Member States. This network must be sufficient to provide a significant contribution to the training of the workforce in Member States, including SMEs.
- Put in place credentials, including micro-credentials, for the learning programmes that it develops. The credentials will be issued to learners who have completed a relevant learning programme. These credentials will facilitate the transparency of skills acquired and enhance the transferability between jobs and the cross-border mobility of the workforce, and promote matching with relevant jobs.



## 2.2 Activities that can be funded (scope)

The Academy shall carry out the following activities directly linked to the training of workers in the solar photovoltaic value chain:

1. Develop learning programmes, content and learning and training materials and ensure their continuous update and improvement.
2. Make available a learning platform to serve as a repository for all learning content developed.
3. Build a network of education and training providers in the Member States to deploy the learning programmes, content and learning and training materials developed.
4. Support the deployment of learning programmes, content and learning and training materials by education and training providers in the EU Member States.
5. Ensure certification of learning and training programmes and education and training providers.
6. Develop learning credentials, including micro-credentials.
7. Perform continuous skills intelligence actions.
8. Perform continuous promotion and communication support.

All these services are intended to secure a comprehensive service package for local education and training multipliers across Member States.

### #1 Develop learning programmes, content and learning and training materials and ensure their continuous update and improvement:

The Academy shall, with particular focus on SMEs, develop learning programmes, content and learning and training materials for training and education on developing, producing, installing, commissioning, operating, maintaining and recycling solar PV technologies, as well as to support the capacities of public authorities competent to issue permits and authorisations.

To ensure access of SMEs and their workers to the learning programmes, content and learning and training materials, any fees that the Academy may charge to access these learning programmes, content and learning and training materials shall take into consideration the resources available to SMEs for the provision of education and training and shall not impede their access to them. The beneficiary shall be invited to offer access to SMEs and their workers to learning programmes, content and learning and training materials at reduced fee rates. The EIT shall monitor compliance with these principles and the access of SMEs and their workers to the learning programmes, content and learning and training materials developed by the Academy and, if appropriate invite the beneficiary to review its fee structure.

To ensure that the learning content developed by the Academy continuously reflects the latest technological developments in the sector, the Academy shall continuously update and improve this content with feedback collected from the European Solar Alliance, the Net-Zero Industry Platform sub-





group on skills and the education and training providers, industry, social partners, stakeholders and trainers participating in the Academy (who in turn shall collect it from learners/trainees in order to adapt the learning content).

#2 Make available a learning platform to serve as a repository for any learning content developed:

The Academy shall make available a learning platform in which it will store all learning resources for distribution and/or re-use by the network of education and training providers. This will allow the academy to offer shared learning resources such as online courses, case studies, training programmes and other learning formats, also accessible by individual learners.

#3 Build the network of Education and training providers for the roll-out of the training programmes:

Meeting the Academy objectives requires a network of education and training providers, including with proven SME outreach, rolling out the learning programmes, content and learning and training materials developed by the academy. One key activity shall thus be the creation of a network of education and training providers in the Member States, ensuring maximum relevant geographical spread, by engaging with relevant stakeholders. Special attention shall be paid to education and training providers targeting SMEs.

#4 Support the deployment learning programmes, content and learning and training materials by education and training providers in the EU Member States:

The Academy shall offer training to the trainers at the education and training providers that are members of the network mentioned under activity 3. In doing so, it shall particularly focus on trainers targeting workers for SMEs. This will further support their deployment of the learning programmes, content and learning and training materials developed by the Academy.

The Academy will make learning programmes, content and learning and training materials available in the national language of Member States whose education and training providers would like to use these in their national language.

Many training formats require significant investments in education technology – EdTech- such as a learning repository, a digital learning platform, VR/AR solutions, virtual hybrid classrooms, remote labs, serious gaming platforms and digital certificates. It is often not efficient or even possible for small Education and training providers and SMEs to invest in state-of-the-art EdTech solutions. The Academy shall offer a number of shared EdTech solutions as a service to those in the network that might need these. This should also include access (remote or on site) to lab equipment.

#5 Ensure certification of learning and training programmes and education and training providers:

The Academy shall ensure that the learning activities and programmes it develops meet defined standards of quality, relevance, and accuracy and cover necessary learning required to achieve a specific level of knowledge and skills in designated areas. To this end, it shall use a process of independent certification of these learning activities and programmes covering key criteria, such as content accuracy and relevance, pedagogical design, interactivity, assessment mechanisms and/or accessibility. Where possible, the Academy shall seek and expand the EIT label, to ensure a high-level recognition and qualification of its learning activities and programmes.



The academy shall certify the education and training providers in Member States for the roll-out of its courses, to ensure that institutions which deliver the training uphold the integrity and quality of the learning activities and programmes. This could be based on criteria such as qualification of educators/trainers, teaching infrastructure, learner support, monitoring and feedback mechanisms and ethical practices.

#6 Develop learning credentials, including micro-credentials:

The Academy shall develop a credentialing system consisting of both, comprehensive programme credentials and micro-credentials for specific skills or modules. The description of these credentials shall be based on the European Learning Model. Where relevant, the Europass Supplements shall be used to describe credentials. Credentials shall be issued by the education and training provider or adequate awarding body in the format of European Digital Credentials for Learning.

#7 Perform continuous skills intelligence actions:

This activity shall combine market research, innovation trends and industry insights related to skills, skill gaps, new job profiles and talent needs for the solar value chain. Skills intelligence shall be gathered in permanent contact with the key players and projects in the industry, and in particular SMEs, and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders listed in the Net-Zero Industry Act, as well as by consulting the Net-Zero Europe Platform. The results shall allow to anticipate the needs of the value chain, with specific focus on SMEs employees. The results of the skills intelligence should inform the development of the Academy's learning content.

#8 Perform continuous promotion and communication support:

Promotion of the project and also of its results among Commission services, ESF+ Managing Authorities, European Industrial Alliances, EIT events, panels and platforms and other relevant fora:

- European Commission relevant services: GROW, EAC, EMPL and others if interested.
- ESF+ Managing Authorities in order to enable them to use the outcomes of the initiative in the implementation of EU funds in the area upskilling and re-skilling of workers in the solar field.
- European Industrial Alliances set up by the European Commission, such as solar and battery alliances and others if see it fit.
- EIT events, EIT education and business creation panels, and other relevant EIT fora
- Relevant SME fora (e.g., Enterprise Europe Network, European Cluster Collaboration Platform and others)
- Academy will be promoted in the EIT Campus

The Academy shall provide promotion and communication support for all education and training organisations in the network, which then will customize and adapt it to local needs. Widely spread information on the new training programmes should help to fill the trainings with learners.



The Academy actions must be in line with the objectives of the Net-Zero Industry Act, notably with respect to innovating and scaling up the manufacturing capacity of solar photovoltaic technologies in the EU, and must have as their objective to support the benchmark of the EU’s manufacturing capacity to reach at least 40% of the EU’s annual deployment needs of solar photovoltaic technologies by 2030.

## 2.3 Expected impact

The expected impact and result shall be in line with the [EIT’s Impact Framework 2021-2027](#) and the [EIT’s Key Performance Indicators](#).

On the level of the European Solar Academy activities, the overall and specific objectives, the expected results and activities are described in Annex I – Logical Framework.

## 3 Available budget

The available grant budget for this action is **EUR 3 920 000**.

We reserve the right not to award (all of) the available funds, depending on the proposal received and the results of the evaluation.

The 2024 budget of the EIT has been adopted by the EIT Governing Board on 19 December 2023<sup>14</sup>.

## 4 Timetable and deadlines

The indicative timeline of the submission and evaluation procedure is the following:

Key dates	Date and time or indicative period
Launch of Invitation to submit a proposal on the Funding & Tenders Portal	16 January 2024
Call opening for proposal submission	1 February 2024
<b>Deadline for submission of the proposal</b>	<b>15 February 2024</b>
Evaluation period	Mid-February – mid-March 2024
<b>Starting date of the action (retroactive)</b>	<b>1 March 2024</b>
Grant award decision by EIT Director	By end-March 2024
Information on evaluation result to the applicant(s)	By end-March 2024
<b>Grant Agreement signature</b>	<b>April 2024</b>

<sup>14</sup> Decision 43/2023 of the EIT Governing Board on adopting the EIT Budget and Establishment Plan for the financial year 2024 (ref. Ares(2023)8669589).



## 5 Admissibility and documents

**The proposal must be submitted by one or more of the KIC Legal Entities, invited for this Invitation.** For further information, please refer to Section 6.1.

The proposal must be submitted before the Invitation deadline (see Section 4.)

The proposal must be submitted electronically via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (as an action by invitation (named Beneficiaries and GA)). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

The proposal (including the annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided inside the Submission System (NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

The proposal must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required annex and supporting document:

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the participant(s) and the summarised budget for the project (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application form Part B — contains the technical description of the project, including a task allocation of the project team (to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed then assembled and re-uploaded)
- mandatory annex and supporting document (templates available to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed, assembled and re-uploaded):
  - detailed budget table/calculator.

Please note that the amounts entered into the summarised budget table (filled in directly online) must correspond to the amounts calculated in the detailed budget table. In case of discrepancies, the amounts in the online summarised budget table will prevail.

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants (only in case the proposal is submitted by a consortium). Moreover, you will have to confirm that the information in the application is **correct and complete** and that the participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, exclusion, financial and operational capacity, etc). Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH). Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable**.

Proposal is limited to maximum **50 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc*).

**Language:** You can submit your proposal in any official EU language (project abstract/summary should however always be in English). For reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English for the entire application.



For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

## 6 Eligibility

### 6.1 Eligible participants

Article 195(f) of the EU Financial Regulation allows that a grant may be awarded without a call for proposals for activities with specific characteristics that require a particular type of body on account of its technical competence, its high degree of specialisation or its administrative powers (on condition that the activities concerned do not fall within the scope of a call for proposals).

In accordance with the Annual Work Programme 2024 of the EIT, **this invitation is therefore addressed to the Legal Entities of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> wave KICs**, as follows:

- KIC Legal Entity of EIT InnoEnergy,
- KIC Legal Entity of EIT Digital,
- KIC Legal Entity of EIT Climate-KIC,
- KIC Legal Entity of EIT Health,
- KIC Legal Entity of EIT RawMaterials,
- KIC Legal Entity of EIT Food,
- KIC Legal Entity of EIT Manufacturing,
- KIC Legal Entity of EIT Urban Mobility.

**The EIT expects to receive only one proposal submitted by**

- **one KIC Legal Entity,**
- **or by more KIC Legal Entities in a consortium<sup>15</sup>**: in this case, besides the KIC Legal Entity acting as coordinator, other KIC Legal Entities may participate in the proposal as applicants (and will be co-beneficiaries in the grant agreement).

In case more than one proposal is received from the KIC Legal Entities, all eligible proposals will be evaluated.

The proposal may also include affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors, third parties giving in-kind contributions, etc (see Model Grant Agreement provisions), who may then participate in the action.

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must be registered in the Participant Register — before submitting the proposal — and have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, they will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

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<sup>15</sup> In this invitation, any reference to an “applicant” shall also mean a reference to “more applicants forming a consortium”.



Natural persons — Natural persons are NOT eligible (with the exception of self-employed persons, i.e. sole traders, where the company does not have legal personality separate from that of the natural person).

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons.

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (*e.g. entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)*). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

For more information, see Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment.

## 6.2 Eligible activities

The application will only be considered eligible if its content corresponds to the activities described in Section 2 above.

# 7 Exclusion criteria

An applicant which is subject to an EU exclusion decision or is in one of the following exclusion situations that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate<sup>16</sup>:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
- guilty of grave professional misconduct<sup>17</sup> (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);

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<sup>16</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 of the EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#)

<sup>17</sup> Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.



- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

An applicant will also be rejected if it turns out that<sup>18</sup>:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information;
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the invitation and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

Evidence:

- Before signing the grant, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour (DoH)<sup>19</sup>.
- Before the time of the signature of the grant agreement, the EIT may request **appropriate evidence that the beneficiary is not in one of the exclusion situations referred to in Article 136(1) of the EU Financial Regulation**: e.g. a recent extract from the judicial record for the KIC CEO and recent certificates issued by the competent authority/ies of the country of establishment of the KIC Legal Entity (KIC LE) (e.g. certificate from the registry in which the KIC LE is registered, tax certificate, social security certificate)<sup>20</sup>. (This obligation can be waived in the cases indicated in Article 137(4) of the EU Financial Regulation).

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<sup>18</sup> See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>19</sup> Except when such declarations have already been submitted for the purposes of another award procedure, provided that the situation has not changed and that the time that has elapsed since the issuing date of the declarations does not exceed one year (Article 137(1) of the EU Financial Regulation

<sup>20</sup> Article 137(2) of the EU Financial Regulation



## 8 Financial and operational capacity

As stated in Section 6.1, this invitation is addressed to the KIC Legal Entities as particular type of bodies in accordance with Article 195(f) of the Financial Regulation, and they are, in principle, considered to have sufficient financial and operational capacity to carry out the action.

By submitting the application, the applicant confirms that it has **stable and sufficient resources** and the **know-how, qualifications and operational resources (human, technical and other)** to successfully implement the project.

Any organisation participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

In case of doubt, the granting authority may however undertake a check, as follows:

- a) The EIT may carry out a financial capacity check on the basis of the documents uploaded in the Participant Register during grant preparation (e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc). The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The purpose of this assessment can be also to determine whether a pre-financing guarantee is needed, in case of grant award.

- b) The EIT may carry out an operational capacity check on the basis of profiles (qualifications and experience) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the project, the description of the applicant, the applicant's activity report of last year, list of previous projects, etc.

## 9 Award criteria

The award criteria for this invitation are as follows:

	Criteria	Maximum score
1. Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adequacy, clarity and consistency of the proposal;</li> <li>- General objectives and the extent to which they address the objectives of the Invitation and the EIT;</li> <li>- Needs analysis and specific objectives;</li> <li>- Complementarity with other actions and innovation, synergies with other EU and Member States programmes, European added value</li> </ul>	40
2. Quality	<p><b>Project design and implementation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- technical quality of the proposal;</li> </ul>	20





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- methodology for implementing the project (concept and methodology; project management, quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation; risk management);</li> <li>- feasibility of the project within the proposed time frame; cost effectiveness and financial management (value for money)</li> <li>- Quality of the work plan, work packages</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Project teams, staff and experts and cooperation arrangements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- quality of the project team;</li> <li>- quality of the outside resources;</li> <li>- appropriate procedures and problem-solving mechanisms</li> </ul>	20
<b>3. Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ambition and expected long-term impact of results;</li> <li>- Impact for EU Member States and non-EU countries;</li> <li>- Appropriate communication and dissemination strategy for ensuring visibility, sustainability and long-term impact after EIT funding ends;</li> <li>- Coherence with the EIT Education agenda and the EIT Impact Framework</li> </ul>	20
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>

**Evaluation and award procedure:**

The proposal will be checked against the formal requirements (admissibility, eligibility, operational capacity) and then evaluated by an **evaluation committee** against the award criteria (assisted by independent (an) external expert(s)). If successful, it will be invited for grant agreement preparation.

## 10 Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreement

If you pass the evaluation, you will be invited for grant preparation.

**Grant preparation** will involve a dialogue in order to fine-tune technical or financial aspects of the project and may require extra information from your side. It may also include adjustments to the proposal to address recommendations of the evaluation committee or other concerns. Compliance will be a pre-condition for signing the grant.

**No commitment for funding** — Invitation to grant preparation does NOT constitute a formal commitment for funding. We will still need to make various legal checks before grant award: legal entity validation, financial capacity, exclusion check, etc.

Then, the EIT Director will take the award decision and the **Grant Agreement** will be prepared.



The Grant Agreement will set the framework for your grant and its terms and conditions, in particular concerning deliverables, reporting and payments.

The Model Grant Agreement that will be used (and all other relevant templates and guidance documents) can be found on [Portal Reference Documents](#).

## 10.1 Starting date, eligibility period and project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (Data Sheet, point 1).

Unless differently requested by the applicant and agreed by the granting authority, the **starting date**<sup>21</sup> of the action will be 1 March 2024.

**Project duration:** 24 months

Extensions are possible, if duly justified and through an amendment.

## 10.2 Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for the project will be managed through the Portal Grant Management System and will be reflected in Annex 1 of the Grant Agreement.

## 10.3 Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters (maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc) will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (Data Sheet, point 3 and Article 5).

For the **maximum grant amount**, see Section 3 above. The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The **project budget** will consist of the grant and the beneficiary's own contribution. The beneficiary of the grant shall contribute with its own financial resources to the launch of the Academy and the objectives and actions. **The contribution from the beneficiary should amount to at least 50% of the grant requested.**

The costs incurred will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the Grant Agreement (up to 66%), which will be calculated based on the grant awarded and the project budget.

The grant will be a budget-based mixed actual cost grant (actual costs, with unit cost and flat-rate elements). This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and costs that were *actually* incurred for your project (NOT the *budgeted* costs). For unit costs and flat-rates, you can charge the amounts calculated as explained in the Grant Agreement (*see Article 6 and Annex 2 and 2a*).

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<sup>21</sup> A retroactive starting date can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons — but never earlier than the proposal submission date.



The grant may produce a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs).

Moreover, please be aware that the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance with the Grant Agreement (*e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc.*).

## 10.4 Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 3, Article 6 and Annex 2*).

*Budget categories for this Invitation:*

- A. Personnel costs
  - A.1 Employees, A.2 Natural persons under direct contract, A.3 Seconded persons
  - A.4 SME owners and natural person beneficiaries
- B. Subcontracting costs
- C. Purchase costs
  - C.1 Travel and subsistence
  - C.2 Equipment
  - C.3 Other goods, works and services
- D. Other cost categories
  - D.1 Financial support to third parties
- E. Indirect costs

*Specific cost eligibility conditions for this Invitation:*

- personnel costs:
  - SME owner/natural person unit cost<sup>22</sup>: Yes
- travel and subsistence unit cost<sup>23</sup>: Yes
- equipment costs: depreciation
- other cost categories:
  - costs for financial support to third parties: allowed for grants and prizes; maximum amount per third party is EUR 60 000, unless a higher amount is required because the objective of the action would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult to achieve and this is duly justified in the Application Form
- indirect cost flat-rate: **25%** of the total eligible direct costs, excluding subcontracting costs, financial support to third parties and any unit costs or lump sums which include indirect costs
- VAT: non-deductible VAT is eligible (but please note that since 2013 VAT paid by beneficiaries that are public bodies acting as public authority is NOT eligible)
- other:

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<sup>22</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 20 October 2020 authorising the use of unit costs for the personnel costs of the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and beneficiaries that are natural persons not receiving a salary for the work carried out by themselves under an action or work programme (C(2020)7715).

<sup>23</sup> Commission [Decision](#) of 12 January 2021 authorising the use of unit costs for travel, accommodation and subsistence costs under an action or work programme under the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (C(2021)35).



- in-kind contributions for free are allowed, but cost-neutral, i.e. they cannot be declared as cost
- kick off meeting: costs for kick-off meeting organised by the granting authority are eligible (travel costs for maximum 2 persons, return ticket and accommodation for one night) only if the meeting takes place after the project starting date set out in the Grant Agreement; the starting date can be changed through an amendment, if needed
- project websites: communication costs for presenting the project on the participants' websites or social media accounts are eligible; costs for *separate* project websites are eligible
- other ineligible costs: No

## 10.5 Financial support to third parties

Financial support to third parties is allowed for grants and prizes under the following conditions:

- the calls must be open, published widely and conform to EU standards concerning transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest and confidentiality;
- the calls must remain open for at least two months,
- the outcome of the call must be published on the participants' websites, including a description of the selected projects, award dates, project durations, and final recipient legal names and countries;
- the calls must have a clear European dimension.

Your project application must clearly specify why financial support to third parties is needed, how it will be managed and provide a list of the different types of activities for which a third party may receive financial support. The proposal must also clearly describe the results to be obtained.

## 10.6 No double funding

**There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget.** In accordance with Article 191 of the EU Financial Regulation concerning the principle of non-cumulative award and prohibition of double funding, **each action may give rise to the award of only one grant from the EU budget to any one beneficiary. In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the EU budget.**

## 10.7 Reporting and payment arrangements

The reporting and payment arrangements will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (Data Sheet, point 4 and Article 21 and 22).

Payment of the grant will be made in **two pre-financing instalments** and a **final payment (the balance)**. The aim of the pre-financing is to provide the beneficiary with a float. The pre-financing remains the property of the EU until the payment of the balance.

There will be no interim payments.



The following payment and reporting scheme is foreseen under this grant:

	When	Requirements	Reporting period
First pre-financing payment (app. 70%)	Within 30 days from entry into force / financial guarantee (whichever is the latest)	No contribution to the Mutual Insurance Mechanism will be retained from the first pre-financing payment. A pre-financing guarantee may be required from the beneficiary, based on the result of the financial capacity assessment.	
First Progress Report	Within 30 days after the end of the reporting period	The <b>progress report</b> shall include a technical part only (template will be provided).	1-6 months
Second Progress Report	Within 30 days after the end of the reporting period	The <b>progress report</b> shall include a technical part only (template will be provided).	7-12 months
Additional pre-financing report	Within 60 days following the end of the reporting period.	The <b>additional pre-financing report</b> shall include a technical part and a financial part (i.e. statement on the use of the previous pre-financing payment). If the statement on the use of the previous pre-financing payment shows that less than 70% was used, the amount set out in the Data Sheet will be reduced by the difference between the 70% threshold and the amount used.	1-12 months
Second pre-financing payment (app. 20%)	Within 60 days from receiving the additional pre-financing report / financial guarantee (whichever is the latest).	No contribution to the Mutual Insurance Mechanism will be retained from the second pre-financing payment. A pre-financing guarantee maybe required from the beneficiary, based on the result of the financial capacity assessment.	
Third Progress Report	Within 30 days after the end of the reporting period	The <b>progress report</b> shall include a technical part only.	13-18 months
Fourth Progress Report	Within 30 days after the end of the reporting period	The <b>progress report</b> shall include a technical part only.	19-24 months
Final report	Within 60 days following the end	<b>Final report</b> shall include a technical part and a financial part (i.e. individual and consolidated	1-24 months



	of the reporting period.	financial statements, explanation on the use of resources, certificates on the financial statements (CFS) if required, etc). The final report shall be submitted 60 days after the end of the reporting period.	
<b>Final payment (10%)</b>	Within 90 days from receiving the final report.	The EIT will calculate the final EIT grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, EIT will ask the beneficiary/ies to pay back the difference (recovery).	

All payments will be made to the beneficiary.

Please be aware that payments will be automatically lowered if the beneficiary/ies has/have outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset — in line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement (see Article 22).

Please also note that you are responsible for keeping records on all the work done and the costs declared.

## 10.8 Prefinancing guarantees

If a prefinancing guarantee is required, it will be set during grant preparation and will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (Data Sheet, point 4). In this case, the pre-financing guarantee will be required for 5 % of the pre-financing, unless the granting authority decides differently for justified reasons.

The guarantee should be in euro and issued by an approved bank/financial institution established in an EU Member State. If you are established in a non-EU country and would like to provide a guarantee from a bank/financial institution in your country, please contact us (this may be exceptionally accepted, if it offers equivalent security).

Amounts blocked in bank accounts will NOT be accepted as financial guarantees.

In case of a multibeneficiary grant, prefinancing guarantees are normally requested from the coordinator, for the consortium. They must be provided during grant preparation, in time to make the prefinancing (scanned copy via Portal AND original by post).

If agreed with us, the bank guarantee may be replaced by a guarantee from a third party.

The guarantee will be released at the end of the grant, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Grant Agreement (Article 23).

## 10.9 Certificates

The types, schedules and thresholds for each certificate will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet, point 4 and Article 24*).



## 10.10 Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries will be fixed in the Grant Agreement (*Data Sheet point 4.4 and Article 22*).

For **beneficiaries**, it is limited joint and several liability with individual ceilings — *each beneficiary (if any) up to their maximum grant amount*.

The action may include **affiliated entities**. In that case, as a rule, declarations on joint and several liability will be requested by the EIT, if the budget of the affiliated entity is higher than the budget of the beneficiary concerned, with the following exceptions:

- a. If the total budget of the affiliated entity is lower than EUR 100,000,
- b. If the affiliated entity is a public body.

The beneficiary shall collect the Declaration on joint and several liability from the affiliated entities falling into the above situation and submit these to the EIT for the deadline indicated by the EIT.

## 10.11 Provisions concerning the project implementation

**IPR rules:** *see Model Grant Agreement (Article 16 and Annex 5):*

- list of background: No
- rights of use on results: Yes
- access rights to ensure continuity and interoperability obligations: No

**Communication, dissemination and visibility of funding:** *see Model Grant Agreement (Article 17 and Annex 5):*

- communication and dissemination plan: Yes
- additional communication and dissemination activities: Yes

**Specific rules for carrying out the action:** *see Model Grant Agreement (Article 18 and Annex 5):*

- specific rules for PPI Grants for Procurement: No
- specific rules for blending operations: No

## 10.12 Non-compliance and breach of contract

The Grant Agreement (*Chapter 5*) provides for the measures we may take in case of breach of contract (and other non-compliance issues).

For more information, see [AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement](#).

# 11 Transparency

In accordance with Article 38 of the [EU Financial Regulation](#), information about EU grants awarded is published each year on the EIT website.



This includes:

- beneficiary names
- beneficiary addresses
- the purpose for which the grant was awarded
- the maximum amount awarded.

The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

## 12 Processing of personal data

The reply to the Invitation involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed by the EIT pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data<sup>24</sup>. Any personal data requested in accordance with the Invitation will be processed solely for that purpose by the EIT. The EIT privacy statement for the management of grants is available at:

<https://eit.europa.eu/data-protection>

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System by the Commission, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in Article 136 and 141 of the Financial Regulation 2018/1046 (for more information see the Privacy Statement on:

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/data-protection-public-procurement-procedures\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/data-protection-public-procurement-procedures_en).

## Annex:

Annex 1: Logical Framework template – to be followed during project implementation.

Annex 2: Application Form Template (Part A and B) – link in Funding & Tenders portal

Annex 3: Detailed Budget Table Template – link in Funding & Tenders portal

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<sup>24</sup> Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC





## Annex 1 – Logical Framework template

	Intervention Logic	Interim KPIs	KPIs	Means of Verification	Baseline	Assumptions
<b>Outcome</b>	The upskilling and reskilling of the workforce required in the EU for developing, producing, installing, maintaining, repairing, re-using and recycling solar photovoltaic technologies, by education and training providers in EU Member States is reinforced through the launch of the European Solar Academy with a strong focus on employees in EU SMEs.	* Upskilling and Reskilling 15.000 learners across the EU by m12.	*Upskilling and Reskilling 65.000 direct learners across the EU by m24 with a view to reaching 100.000 <sup>25</sup> direct learners across the EU solar photovoltaic and related industry within three years from the launch of the Academy.			

<sup>25</sup> The timeline for the overall and the specific objectives is intended to start from the signature of the Grant Agreement between the EIT and the beneficiary implementing the action



<p><b>Outputs</b></p>	<p>1. Learning courses, content, learning and training materials developed. The content and duration of the courses reflects the upskilling and reskilling demand of industry in the solar PV value chain</p>	<p>*Develop at least 13 learning courses fully operational for upscaling in volume by m18</p>	<p>*Develop at least 26 learning courses fully operational for upscaling in volume by m24 with a view to reaching 40 within 3 years from the launch of the Academy</p> <p>*Out of these, at least 10 courses should be newly developed</p> <p>*all courses will issue a certificate of course participation</p>			
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	<p>2. A network of education and training providers in Member States is established to facilitate the deployment of the learning programmes, content and materials developed by the Academy including training the trainers and establishing a learning platform.</p>	<p>*A min of 33 education and training providers fully certified to train workers across the solar value chain by m12</p> <p>*At least 18 trainers trained to roll-out the program to the targeted learners by m6 and at least 36 by m12</p> <p>*Make available a reliable ICT platform that can be scaled-up to meet the increased demand for these skills by m12</p>	<p>* A min of 66 education and training providers fully certified to train workers across the solar value chain by m24 with a view to reaching at least 100 within 3 years from the launch of the Academy ensuring maximum relevant geographic spread</p> <p>*At least 75 trainers trained to roll-out the program to the targeted learners by m24 with a view to reaching 110 within 3 years from the launch of the Academy</p>			
	<p>3. Certification of learning through digital credentials, including micro-credentials, for the Academy learning courses is put in place</p>	<p>*by m18 at least 5 courses certified and able to issue credentials to learners</p>	<p>* All courses will build and issue credentials by m24</p>			



<b>Activities</b>	1.1 Develop learning programmes, content and learning and training materials and ensure their continuous update and improvement.  1.2 Perform continuous skills intelligence actions.					
	2.1 Make available a learning platform to serve as a repository for any learning content developed.  2.2 Build the network of Education and training providers for the roll-out of the training programmes  2.3 Support the deployment learning programmes, content and learning and training materials by education and training					



	<p>3.1 Ensure certification of learning and training programmes and education and training providers</p> <p>3.2 Develop learning credentials, including micro-credentials</p>					
<b>Evaluation source</b>						
<p>Reporting by the beneficiary as per the Grant Agreement.</p> <p>Quarterly project management meetings between the European Commission, the EIT and the beneficiary.</p> <p>During the first semester of implementation, these meetings will be held every 6 weeks.</p>						