

EIT Culture & Creativity Opens €10.5M to take Europe's Creative Innovations to Market

The Innovation Projects call supports startups, scale-ups and SMEs in fashion, architecture and audiovisual media with a validated prototype or solution at TRL 7, ready to execute their go-to-market strategy, build investment readiness and prepare for scale.

Cologne, 25 September 2026 – EIT Culture & Creativity, Europe's largest innovation network for the cultural and creative industries, supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), a body of the European Union, today opens Innovation Projects, a call making up to €10.5M available to companies with validated innovations set to build traction and grow.

The call targets startups, scale-ups and SMEs in three of Europe's most strategically important creative sectors: fashion, architecture and audiovisual media. Up to 11 projects will be funded in the implementation phase, with up to €900,000 available per project.

The commercial case for this call is clear. Fashion is under pressure to move beyond linear, environmentally damaging production models. Architecture has tools for climate adaptation and social innovation but often lacks the business infrastructure to deploy them at scale. Audiovisual media is being reshaped by generative AI faster than many players can respond. Across these industries, promising solutions can be technically validated yet still stall before market adoption because of gaps in customer access, go-to-market capacity, partnerships and growth capital.

"Europe is not short of creative innovation. The challenge is turning validated solutions into products and services that customers adopt at scale," said **Anette Schaefer**, CEO of EIT Culture & Creativity. "We are not funding ideas or early-stage prototyping. We are backing companies with a validated innovation and helping them build a credible go-to-market pathway - creating a pipeline of investable CCSI companies."

Thematic priorities for the call include circular textile technologies, bio-based building materials, and responsible AI for content creation, alongside other innovations directly relevant to the EU's green, digital and social transition goals.

From validated innovation to market and scale

Focused on market validation, pilot deployment and scaling, the programme supports innovations entering at TRL 7, where a system prototype has been demonstrated in an operational environment, and progressing to TRL 9, where the actual system is proven in an operational environment.

The call runs in two stages, allowing both applicants and EIT Culture & Creativity to build evidence before committing to full implementation:

- **Stage 1:** A single company submits a concept proposal. Selected applicants receive €20,000 over six weeks to develop a full Business Development Plan, strengthen market and customer validation, define the go-to-market pathway and assess the financing required for implementation and scale, including external investment where relevant.
- **Stage 2:** The strongest plans proceed to a full implementation phase of up to 18 months, with funding of up to €900,000 per project to execute the go-to-market plan, accelerate market adoption and prepare the solution for scale.

Access to EIT Culture & Creativity's pan-European ecosystem – industry partners, customers, investors and distribution networks across 30+ countries – is central to how selected projects enter into the market. The programme provides high-level matchmaking to connect companies with customers, investors and strategic partners, as well as commercial visibility through Demo Days and the network's flagship Innovation Forum. Where relevant, support will also be provided to connect companies with external capital and strengthen investment readiness.

Who can apply

The call is open to legal entities established in EU Member States and Horizon Europe associated countries. Eligible innovations must already have a technically validated prototype or solution at TRL7.

Full eligibility criteria, timelines and application details are available [here](#). Applications close on 30 October 2026 for stage 1 and on 15 March 2027 for stage 2. The stage 2 application form will be made available to applicants selected following stage 1.

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About EIT Culture & Creativity

[EIT Culture & Creativity](#) is the institutional partnership dedicated to transforming Europe's Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries to become more sustainable, resilient, and competitive. Established in 2023 by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), an independent EU body, the organisation offers funding, knowledge, and tailored support.

As part of Europe's largest innovation ecosystem, we connect research, industry, academia, and cultural institutions to drive systemic innovation. Our vision is to empower the CCSI as a vital force for economic, social, and environmental transformation. Our mission is to drive responsible growth through innovation, education, business creation, and societal impact.

Our initial strategic focus is on five sectors — architecture, gaming, fashion, cultural heritage, and audiovisual media — offering targeted support to innovators to scale ideas, translate innovation into impact, and redefine entrepreneurship for the creative economy.

EIT Culture & Creativity operates in over 30 countries, with its headquarters in Cologne and regional hubs in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Bologna, Helsinki, Košice, and Vienna.

Media Contact

Christy Drummond

Senior Communication Manager, EIT Culture & Creativity

christy.drummond@eit-culture-creativity.eu | +32 493 82 97 60