

EIT Culture & Creativity Reaffirms Its Commitment to New Venture Creation with €1.05M in Funding

New funding call offers up to €30,000 per team alongside a nine-month venture-creation programme for early-stage founders in fashion, architecture and materials innovation.

Cologne, 6 October 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 a new funding call offering €1.05 million in total funding to help early-stage founders turn creative tech concepts into scalable ventures.

Under the New Ventures in Creative Tech Call (Spark), selected founders will receive up to €30,000 per team alongside a nine-month venture-creation programme combining funding with coaching, mentoring, business training and access to EIT Culture & Creativity's pan-European network.

The first cohort focuses on tech-centric ventures in Materials & Built Environment, spanning fashion, architecture, and advanced and circular materials. Future programmes will expand to additional sectors, with details to follow.

Why now: Europe's growth opportunity

Europe's cultural and creative economy is a major economic asset. The sector contributes [5.3% of EU GDP](#) and supports [8.7 million jobs](#), while the global creative economy is projected to approach [10% of global GDP by 2030](#). Europe's opportunity is not only to generate creative ideas and innovation, but to turn more of them into investable businesses that can scale across markets and compete globally.

"Europe has no shortage of creative talent, ideas or entrepreneurial ambition. The challenge is turning more of that potential into businesses that can scale," said **Anette Schaefer**, CEO of EIT Culture & Creativity. "That requires better connections between founders, industry and investors, stronger investment readiness, and clearer pathways to capital as companies grow. Our role is to help build those connections so that more creative businesses can scale from Europe."

From concept to company

Spark is the first step in bridging the gap between well-developed concepts and commercially sustainable companies. Rather than rewarding promising ideas, the call targets founders who are already testing, building and validating, and those ready to turn creative ambition into a viable business.

Selected founders kick-off with an in-person CreaTech Startup Sprint: a bootcamp hosted in a European city, where they work on problem-solution fit alongside international experts, coaches and peer founders. It continues with a nine-month online venture-creation journey, guided by a designated coach and international mentors, alongside topic workshops led by experienced industry and business experts. EIT Culture & Creativity exclusive technology partnerships support venture development, while access to major European events provides visibility.

Beyond funding and business support, the programme connects founders with a peer community of entrepreneurs tackling similar challenges. Ventures also gain access to EIT Culture & Creativity's pan-European ecosystem of investors, universities and research organisations, cultural institutions and industry partners across six regional hubs. These connections are key to helping founders test ideas, build partnerships and tap into expertise and investment networks as they grow across Europe.

Building the sector's capacity, stage by stage

Spark is part of EIT Culture & Creativity's broader effort to strengthen Europe's capacity to turn cultural and creative innovation into companies that can grow, attract investment and compete globally. It is the earliest stage of a venture growth pathway that continues through Shape, its acceleration programme, and Scale, its post-acceleration programme. Together, the programmes support creative-tech ventures from pre-seed through to Series A, helping founders move from early business development towards investment readiness and international growth.

Alongside calls supporting skills development and the market deployment of validated innovations, in 2026 EIT Culture & Creativity has put a total of €26.75M behind Europe's cultural and creative sectors, connecting the talent, innovation and investment needed to strengthen their contribution to Europe's competitiveness, resilience and technological sovereignty.

Who can apply

The Spark call is open to early-stage founders – individuals and small multidisciplinary teams – with an innovative business concept and no registered company, and the ambition to build for-profit, scalable, tech-centric ventures within the CCSI. Applicants must be based in an EU Member State or a Horizon Europe associated country.

Applications close on **16 November 2026** at 17:00 CEST. Full eligibility criteria, timelines and application details are available [here](#).

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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.

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