

The EIT AI Community and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) presents:

EIT AI FOUNDERS CLUB 2025

Who Are We? The EIT AI Community is an initiative of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), led by EIT Digital, aimed at fostering the European AI ecosystem and boosting business and skills through the knowledge triangle of innovation, education, and entrepreneurship.

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Are you an AI visionary ready to scale your startup and shape the future of technology? The **EIT AI Founders Club 2025** offers you the opportunity to join an exclusive community of innovators, supported by the EIT AI Community. This pilot initiative provides selected startups with mentorship, resources, and peer support to accelerate growth in **next-generation AI technologies**.

Program Overview

The EIT AI Founders Club is a selective **pilot** program designed to empower **four early-stage AI startups** specializing in deep tech innovations. Spanning a minimum of **two months**, participants will benefit from tailored mentorship, founder-to-founder collaboration, and access to the extensive EIT ecosystem. As a pilot, this program will evolve with your input, giving you the chance to shape its future direction from 2026 to 2028 with the intention to building a lasting founder support community.

Rooted in the EIT's mission to fuel digital innovation across Europe, the AI Founders Club empowers high-potential, deep tech AI startups with resources, expertise, and a tight-knit founder community. Tailored for founders, it emphasizes peer-to-peer learning and strategic growth.

Objectives

- **Accelerate Growth:** Support deep tech AI startups in scaling their solutions.
- **Foster Collaboration:** Create a vibrant community for knowledge-sharing among AI founders.
- **Strengthen Innovation:** Position Europe as a global leader in AI advancements.
- **Increase Innovation Density:** Establish regional AI innovation hubs.

Offerings

- **Training and Mentorship:** Equity-free training, mentorship, and strategic support tailored for AI startups.
- **Founder-to-Founder Support:** Peer-learning opportunities with fellow AI founders to share challenges, insights, and solutions.
- **Open Innovation Workshops:** Exposure to open innovation principles and collaborative growth strategies.
- **Pitching to Investors:** Opportunities to present to investors and strategic partners.
- **EIT Ecosystem Connections:** Access to EU programs (e.g., funding, networking) based on startup needs.

Background

Europe stands at a pivotal moment in the global AI landscape, with the potential to lead in Trustworthy and Responsible AI. The EU Innovation Agenda 2030 highlights the urgency of strengthening Europe's AI ecosystem to remain competitive. In February 2025, at the AI Action Summit, the European Commission launched InvestAI, mobilising €200 billion to accelerate AI research and deployment.

Building on this momentum, the EIT AI Community, led by EIT Digital, is launching EIT AI Founders Club 2025 to support early-stage AI innovations with transformative potential. This initiative aims to foster a culture of bold entrepreneurship by providing essential support to AI start-ups, with the goal of transforming industries and establishing Europe as a global leader in AI.

Why should I apply?

- **Founder-to-Founder Support:** Collaborate with peers to exchange insights, tackle challenges, and co-create solutions.
- **Business Boost:** Access training and support to accelerate your AI technology's development and commercialization.
- **Investment Opportunities:** Pitch to investors and strategic partners.
- **Personalized Mentorship:** Receive expert guidance to refine your innovation and strategy.
- **Visibility and Recognition:** Gain prominence within the EU AI ecosystem.
- **Networking:** Connect with top talent, fellow AI founders, and industry leaders.
- **Cost Savings:** Enjoy services valued at over EUR 8,000 for free, preserving resources for growth.

Who is the Program For?

The ideal participant is a European early-stage AI startup or spin-off with disruptive, high-risk, high-reward innovations. Applicants should be pre-seed, have a market-ready prototype or minimum viable product (MVP), target pre-seed or seed fundraising, and need team scaling.

The program focuses on supporting innovative AI technologies including:

- Data-Centric AI
- Neurosymbolic AI
- Generative AI
- Prompt Engineering
- Multiagent Systems
- AI TRISM (Trust, Risk, Security Management)
- Artificial General Intelligence

Preference will be given to applications from RIS Countries ([Link here](#))

<https://eit.europa.eu/activities/eit-regional-innovation-scheme-ris-closing-innovation-divide-europe>

Assessment Criteria

- **Degree of Innovation and Disruption:** How groundbreaking and transformative the AI technology is, with a focus on its potential to disrupt existing markets and create new ones.
- **Market Potential:** The potential size and growth trajectory of the market, emphasizing untapped or emerging markets where the startup can create significant impact.
- **Scalability:** The startup's ability to scale rapidly and efficiently, considering both technological and operational scalability.
- **Risk Level:** The startup's willingness to take substantial risks, balanced by a clear understanding of those risks and strategies to mitigate them.
- **Visionary Team:** The entrepreneurial vision, expertise, and risk-taking capability of the startup's team, including their track record of innovation.
- **Feasibility of Disruption:** The practical feasibility of the startup's disruptive potential, considering technical viability and implementation challenges.
- **Potential for High Reward:** The expected returns on investment, focusing on the high-reward nature of the startup's technology and business model.
- **Strategic Fit:** Alignment with the EU goals and the ability to leverage the EIT ecosystem and resources provided to maximize disruptive impact.

Financial backing from third parties such as investors and strategic partners will be considered a strong indicator of the startup's credibility and potential for success. Moreover, EIT-supported startups will be highly prioritized as they are already strategically aligned and have proven team competencies and market potential.

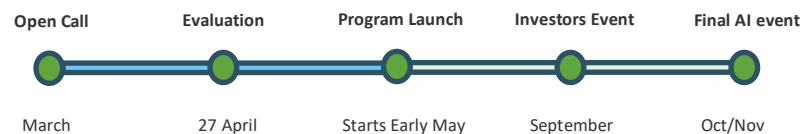
Programme & Timelines

Application Review process

- **Call for Applications:** We invite start-ups to submit their high-risk, high-gain solutions, highlighting the disruptive nature of their AI technologies and their potential to generate substantial returns on investment - **Deadline 12th May**.
- **Initial Screening:** An independent expert panel will evaluate the submitted applications. Each application is assessed by at least three independent external experts. Each expert evaluates the proposals following the evaluation criteria outlined above.
- **Review Gate:** During the Review Gate, the experts come together to discuss each application based on their own individual assessments and assign in consensus a Review Gate Score. Based on the results, due Diligence Interviews might be requested afterwards following a Consensus Meeting with EIT Digital & Experts to align the scores. The highest scoring applications that have passed any relevant thresholds will be selected.
- All applicants will receive the feedback and the “go/no go” result - **15th May**.

Program Services: Business Boost

- Selected finalists (4) will receive self-paced tailored support until the end of the year.
 - Mentorship: Strategic guidance, to further develop
 - Scale high-risk, high-gain AI innovations: -Management, Team Dynamics
 - Business Development, Sales Marketing, Product market fit
 - Access to Finance: Investor relations
 - On demand: Webinars with high-profile speakers, Problem-focused mentoring, HR
 - US Landing & Pitching Training
- Investment Events: The selected start-ups will pitch their refined business plans and investment propositions to a wider audience of potential investors, corporation Clubs and strategic partners.
- Visibility and Recognition: The winning start-ups will recognition and visibility within the EU AI ecosystem. We can connect them with EU funding/scaling opportunities and give them visibility and support through our Joint focus group AI, and strategic AI event in December.
- Community support: The selected startups will become part of a prestigious pool, receiving ongoing support in the coming years. As this is a pilot year, additional activities will be introduced in the future.
- Financial support: Travel & accommodation costs may be included in the programme up to EUR 1500 per start-up).



FAQs

- **How much does the programme cost?** The program is free of charge for the selected start-ups.
- **Does the programme require me to physically attend the activities?** The 3 months training will be online, but the participation of the event will require a physical presence (travel & accommodation costs may be included in the programme up to EUR 1500 per start-up).
- **What does the selection process looks like?** The applicants will be ranked according to the criteria noted here and the final decision as to the participants will be made by the selection committee. Applicants will receive responses by 15th May. If you wish to submit a complaint about the answer you got following the selection process, you can email us: ai@eitcommunity.eu. Please explain your complaint as clearly as possible, deadline: 31st March 2025.
- **What can I expect as an outcome of the programme?** As an outcome of the program, you can expect to receive tailored mentorship and strategic guidance, opportunities to secure funding and form strategic alliances through investment events, and enhanced visibility and recognition within the EU AI ecosystem, potentially leading to further growth, and scaling opportunities.
- **Do you have open office hours for more information?** Please send us an email to EIT Artificial Intelligence Community ai@eitcommunity.eu and we will organise a meeting with you.