AI Challenge 2025

EIT AI Community Competition

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1. Introduction

The EIT AI Community is dedicated to fostering the adoption and implementation of advanced AI solutions across Europe. This initiative aims to position Europe at the forefront of the global AI revolution by connecting skilled talent with emerging technologies, linking markets with solutions, and bridging innovators with investors.

Technological progress is accelerating at an unprecedented pace, transforming industrial, social, and competitive landscapes. The ambition is not only to adapt to this transformation but to lead it. Achieving this requires overcoming the current fragmentation of value networks, strengthening collaboration among stakeholders, and leveraging Europe's collective knowledge and strengths to create value. Agile mechanisms are needed to accelerate and guide AI innovation, shaping the future role of AI in society.

Within this framework, the EIT AI Challenge 2025 builds on the momentum of previous AI Challenge competitions (2022–2024) and the ongoing scouting and branding activities of Business Creation operations. The challenge is designed to attract spin-offs, early-stage ventures, and mature startups, serving as an instrument to identify and support the most promising AI innovators in regard to the challenges.

Winners, selected by an expert jury, will receive financial support in the form of prizes funded through EIT AI Community resources and contributions from AI Challenge partners. The allocation of these funds will be closely monitored to ensure they are effectively directed toward the implementation of the proposed solutions. Through this initiative, the EIT AI Community continues to strengthen its position as a key driver of AI innovation in Europe.

One of the key objectives of this initiative is to strengthen innovation capacity across Europe by fostering stronger links between local ecosystems and the EIT Digital pan-European network. By taking part in the call, organisations from RIS countries can access unique growth opportunities, expand their international reach, and contribute to a more inclusive and balanced innovation landscape in Europe.

2. Call specific conditions

2.1 Call thematic

The EIT AI Community is launching the AI Challenge 2025 to identify and support AI-powered solutions addressing key business or societal challenges applicable in several sectors that have been defined by Industry leaders.

The solutions proposed can be based, not limited to data sharing and interoperability, process optimization, logistics, generative AI applications, AI agents, and intelligent systems for the defined food sector.

The competition is open to spin-offs, startups, and scaleups from all participating in the EIT AI Community project.

The AI Challenge 2025 is seeking innovative companies from across the EU with solutions to the real-world industry challenges set by lead companies:

Company proposing challenge	Challenge Description	Challenge number	KIC
Bayer	Unlocking Regenerative Agrifood Insights: Secure AI-Driven Extraction of Corporate Knowledge for Trusted Third Parties	1	EIT Manufacturing
Take Root Bio Technologies	AI for Carbon Monitoring and Environmental Optimisation in Modular Agrifood Ecosystems	2.a	EIT Food
	Adaptive AI Learning Platform to support TRB's Agrifood Ecosystem Borderless Training	2.b	
	Biosphere-Informed Digital Twin for Community Cohesion & Social Impact	2.c	

Grupo AN	AI solution to precisely and dynamically adjust fertilization, minimizing costs and avoiding environmental impacts.	3	EIT Food
EIT Digital corporate (to be confirmed)	Human Enhancement Challenge – Prioritizing: Health Monitoring and Predictive Analytics, Augmented Reality (AR) Integration	4.a	EIT Digital
	Brain Computer Interface Challenge - Prioritizing: AI and Cognitive Integration, Secure Communication Protocols	4.b	
	Information Warfare Challenge: Prioritizing: Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT)	4.c	

The companies proposing the challenges commit to seriously consider the selected proposals to develop a proof-of-concept to evaluate the solution applicability on their real conditions.

The challenges will be further detailed on the AI Challenge website.

2.2 Applicant organizations' profile

The applicants must meet the following requirements:

- It is always required that a legal entity for the application submitted has already been established.

- The company must be incorporated in an EU Member State or a country associated with Horizon Europe[1].

- Applicants shall describe their market traction achieved so far.

- A business development plan, including financial projections, must be described.

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/list-3rd-country-participation_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

- The application package should include a completed application form, pitch deck and logo.

2.3   Winners and Prizes

For each of the company challengers (i.e. Bayer, Take Root Bio Technologies, Grupo AN and EITD's pending), one winner will be selected independently of the specific challenge that they have applied.

There will be a cash prize of 10.000 EUR for each of the challenge winners up to a total budget of 40.000 EUR, that must be used to continue the development of the solution and/or support the Proof of Concept with the challenger company.

Winners will also be eligible for a Growth Package that provides access to the exclusive AI Founders Club — a curated portfolio of support services offered by the EIT Community. This includes tailored coaching, mentoring, and guidance on IP strategy and business development. The competition is designed to identify and scale the most promising AI solutions that are sustainable, resilient, and socially impactful.

The prize will be paid to the selected applicants provided all the requested documents have been submitted.

2.4   Monitoring and control related to the EIT AI Community financial prize

Control/compliance before paying out the financial prize: The winning companies must provide their banking and fiscal documentation before the EIT AI Community delivers the prize money.

They also have to disclose if there are any pending issues with government authorities or agencies in accordance with EU funding rules and Horizon Europe legislation. The prize winners must sign a "declaration of honor" (see also point 6.8), which is annexed to these guidelines, as well as sign the LOI of the EIT AI Community. If an issue is identified, the EIT AI Community reserves the right to withdraw the award of the AI Challenge.

2.5   Reporting

Prize winners must report two (2) months after the final receipt of support from the EIT AI Community. This report must confirm that they received the "growth package" prize and a summary of the executed or planned POC activities.

3. Proposal preparation and submission

All applications must be submitted using the application forms linked on the competition website (https://ai.eitcommunity.eu/ai-challenge-2025-solution-hand-in).

The official language of the competition is English (i.e., all submission material must be submitted in English, and the applicants must pitch in English if they are selected for participation in the final event).

Each application must identify the challenge it is applying as a solution for. Solutions not aligned with one of the challenges will be rejected.

Solution providers: The following documentation must be submitted by the solution providers for the second stage application through the submission tool after it opens and no later than the call deadline defined in the timeline chapter.

- Application form: (https://ai.eitcommunity.eu/ai-challenge-2025-solution-hand-in)

- Company Pitch Deck - to be added over the online form.

NB: Only applications submitted through the online form before the deadline will be accepted and considered. The organizers reserve the right to extend the submission deadline; any extension of the deadline will be communicated to the public on the competition website.

Any documentation missing or incomplete may be considered a reason for rejection.

Call contact points

All applicants may contact the EIT AI Community at ai@eitcommunity.eu to ask questions and clarify any points on general/technical procedures and call content. Also information to solve the questions can be obtained in the FAQ link in the AI Challenge webpage.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are available on the call webpage to help applicants better understand the process, requirements, and selection criteria. We recommend checking the FAQ section regularly, as it may be updated throughout the application period.

Important notice: All updates related to this call — including changes to deadlines, eligibility criteria, or documentation — will be announced at the top of this page through visible banners. We recommend checking this page regularly to stay informed about any modifications.

4. Proposal evaluation and selection process

The proposal evaluation will follow a strict procedure to guarantee the transparency and equality of opportunities for all applicants. The process is structured in three steps or gates:

- Eligibility gate

- Review gate (evaluation of proposals)

- Strategic gate (evaluation by challengers)

4.1 Eligibility gate

EIT KICs team will check that the organizations applying are eligible under the call criteria. Specifically, the items to be controlled are:

- The organization is registered in one of the eligible countries.

- The organization is an SME according to the EU Rules (startup, spin off…).

- The proposal is completed and submitted on time via the submission tool in English with all its mandatory sections and compulsory documents included (application form and pitch)

Applications containing one or more ineligible elements will receive official communication from EIT AI Community about the outcome of eligibility check and explaining why the proposal failed to meet the criteria.

The applicant deemed ineligible who disputes the ineligibility decision, may appeal. This appeal must be made within five calendar days from the official EIT AI Community notification of ineligibility (see paragraph 5.4 and the document Appeal procedure linked to the call).

4.2 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Each activity contributes to target values for a set of relevant KPIs, consisting of the EIT-Level KPIs (EIT KPIs): defined by the EIT for the entire EIT community (KICs). These are the most important KPIs and require formal evidence of achievement: Start-up supported by the KIC (EITHE03): the start-up must be supported by the KIC for at least 2 months during the year in which the activity is implemented.

4.3 Review gate

An evaluation committee, comprising experts in artificial intelligence, technology and innovation, will review each proposal meticulously. The evaluation will focus on EU dimensions about innovation: Excellence, Impact and Quality and Efficiency of Implementation.

Applicants' applications will first be reviewed online by a panel composed by one representative of the KIC supporting the challenge (EIT Manufacturing for challenge 1, EIT Food for challenges 2.x and 3, and EIT Digital for challenges 4.x) and at least two external experts. Any proposal will be evaluated by at least three experts.

External evaluators will assess each evaluation criteria will be assessed according to the following scores on a scale from 0 to 5

Score	Description	
0	*None*	Proposal fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to mission or incomplete information.
1	*Extremely poor*	The information provided is considered irrelevant or inadequate compared to the specific call provisions
2	*Bad*	The information provided lacks relevant quality and contains significant weaknesses, compared to the specific call provisions
3	*Average*	The overall information provided is adequate, however, some aspects are unclear or insufficiently detailed, compared to the specific call provisions
4	*Good*	The information provided is adequate with sufficiently outlined details, compared to the specific call provisions
5	*Excellent*	The information provided is outstanding in its details, clarity and coherence, compared to the specific call provisions

The criteria levels are then summed together to come up with a final score.

Each evaluator will have to score each application based on three standardized criteria:

Evaluation dimension	Description	Score
Excellence	The application presents an innovative solution with potential to solve the business pain or exploit the business opportunity described in the challenge.	0-5
Impact	The application is addressed to specific target group/s and/or market sector/s and the solution demonstrates a competitive advantage over existing offers in the market and shows a capacity to be sustainable and scale-up.	0-5
Quality and efficiency of implementation	The team/founders have the expertise and entrepreneurial drive. The work plan Is well structured. The risks are well Identified and mitigation actions defined.	0-5

Thresholds apply to individual criteria and to the total score. The maximum score for a proposal is 15. The default threshold for individual criteria is 3 and the default overall threshold is 11.

The experts will evaluate each proposal and produce an Individual Evaluation Report (IER). Once all evaluations have been completed, the system creates a ranking listing all evaluation results in the order, from maximum score to minimum score, based on the average of Individual scorings.

After the Individual evaluations, the experts will come together to a consensus meeting to share the evaluations and make possible adjustments, leading to a final consensus score. Those that are over the established threshold will pass to the next stage.

The call and selection procedure ensures the avoidance of conflict of interest (CoI) and comply with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and sound financial management. Measures to avoid potential CoI or unequal treatment of applicants are ensured.

4.4 Strategic gate

The qualified solutions address specific challenges defined by the Industry Leaders (challengers), that, in addition, are committed to implement or support a proof of concept with the winners.

Therefore, the challengers must define which of the qualified proposals actually fits better with their business requirements. This is structured through this Strategic gate.

Selected teams will receive support from the EIT AI Community, including expert guidance and training, to develop high-quality pitches tailored to the challengers' needs.

This stage evaluation is structured through live pitches by the selected proposals for each challenge with a representation of the challenger organization that has proposed that challenge.

The format of the live pitch will be a ten minutes presentation by the applicants and 20 minutes questions from the challenger jury panel. The challenger jury finally defines which proposal is the best one applying to its challenges, and therefore the winner of the prize and the one executing the proof-of-concept with the challenger.

For challengers with more than one challenge proposed, the single winner can be an applicant to any of them.

All proposals will receive complete feedback by the challenger jury.

It is the participants' responsibility to keep track of announcements and information on the website. All pre-selected finalists will also receive an email with the detailed timing of the final pitching competition sessions prior to the event.

4.5 Procedure for complaints and appeal

The applicant (the representative of the legal entity or the team) of a rejected application who disagrees with the decision may request an evaluation review.

Only procedural aspects of an evaluation may be subject to a request for an evaluation review, for example process errors or technical problems. The evaluation of the merits of a proposal shall not be the subject of an evaluation review. In this case, the applicant will have five calendar days after receipt of the final evaluation results to submit an appeal to the evaluation team (see document Appeal procedure).

4.6 Selected applicants and follow-up

The selected applicants will receive the following awards:

- All applicants that go to the strategic gate will receive the "Growth package" and enjoy visibility and international publicity through EIT AI Communities communication channels.

- The winners of each challenge will receive a cash prize of 10,000 EUR and will develop a PoC with the challenger organization.

- The KICs will support the winners in the preparation of the PoC with the challenger for two months until the PoC report delivery

Selected applicants will have to diligently collaborate with the following steps that will be taken after closing the competition:

- Signature of the financial prize agreement and other necessary arrangements (for example for the pitch presentation).

- Delivery of "growth package" support services.

- Signature on Support Review Form (SRF) and Execution and monitoring of the (SRF) commitment.

4.7 Timeline

The timeline for the process is described in the table below:

Step	Date
Call open	Aug 15
Info Session	Sep 1
Deadline for proposals	Oct,15
Eligibility rejections communication	Oct, 17
Eligibility appeal period	Oct 18 - Oct 23
Communication to application selected for pitches and rejected	Oct 24
Pitches to the challengers	Oct 28 – 30
Final Result Communication (winners and all)	Oct, 31
Prize payments (subject to administrative conditions)	Nov 14
Delivery of the Proof-of-Concept execution/plan by winners	Dec 31

5. Other terms and conditions

5.1 Communication, dissemination, visibility of funding

Prize winners must promote the prize and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner. Communication activities related to the prize (including media interviews, press statements, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.), must acknowledge EU support and display the EIT AI Community logo (emblem) and text. The emblem must remain distinct and separate and cannot be modified by adding other visual marks, brands or text. Apart from the emblem, no other visual identity or logo may be used to highlight the EIT AI Community support. When displayed in association with other logos (e.g. of winners or sponsors), the emblem must be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos.

For the purposes of these obligations, the winners may use the emblem without first obtaining approval from EIT AI Community. This does not, however, give them the right to exclusive use. Moreover, they may not appropriate the emblem or any similar trademark or logo, either by registration or by any other means. Any communication or dissemination activity related to the prize must use factually accurate information.

The EIT AI Community may use, for their communication and publicising activities, information relating to the prize, as well as photos or audio-visual material that they receive from the applicants (including in electronic form) and photos and videos taken either in preparation for the award ceremony or during the award ceremony. The EIT AI Community will publish the name of both the finalist/s and the selected applicants, their origin, the amount of the prize and its nature and purpose.

5.2 IPRs

Participants retain full and exclusive ownership of their prior information and intellectual property rights. By submitting their application, participants affirm that they hold ownership or have legally secured the right to use all elements of the innovative product or service. Participants agree that the EIT AI Community and/or any assignee will be held harmless from any third-party allegations or claims of intellectual property rights infringement by the product or service of participants.

Participants shall have the right to further develop, use and license their intellectual property rights for creating, making, marketing and distributing products, services and technology.

Participants agree to respect the IPR Rules (Article 16) of the Model Grant Agreement.

Participants have the obligation to have a PIC number registered when applying.

5.3 Right to activate audits

EIT AI Community retains the right to activate an audit on AI Challenge prize winners, in case of alerts and/or to confirm governance and proper usage of the financial prize.

EIT AI Community keeps the right to request any data related to the AI Challenge Competition for 5 years after completion to ensure transparency and allow monitoring from EIT.

5.4 Withdrawal of the prize — Recovery of undue amounts

EIT AI Community may withdraw the prize after its award and recover all payments made if it finds out that:

- false information, fraud or corruption was used to obtain it

- the prize winners were not eligible or should have been excluded or – the prize winners are in serious breach of their obligations under these Guidelines

5.5 Data protection

EIT AI Challenge ensures that any processing of personal data shall be performed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016, on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and in accordance with Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation). As a data subject, you have the right to access, the right to rectification, the right to erasure, the right to restrict processing, the right to data portability, the right to object and the right not to be subject to a decision-based solely on automated processing. If you have a question about personal data processing or want to exercise your data subject rights, you can contact our Data Protection Officer privacy@eitdigital.eu at in the case of complaints, you can address them to the Belgian regulator at commission@privacycommission.be.

The personal data collected will be used solely to process and assess the applications and manage, complete, organize, disseminate information, and publicize the AI Challenge 2025. The data controller is the EIT AI Community and/or its subsidiaries.

Personal data shall be deleted five years after the announcement of the competition winners.

Participants have the possibility to indicate that the EIT AI Community may grant access to parts of their submission to trusted investors and partners.

The application submission and evaluation process will be done via XXXXXXX an online

submission management tool XXXXX.

YOUR CONSENT TO THE USE OF PERSONAL DATA: By submitting your application within this competition you consent that EIT AI Community will collect, transfer, process, store and delete your data in accordance with the aforementioned conditions.

5.6 Acceptance of the Guidelines

By submitting the application form, the participant agrees to these Guidelines and respective Annexes, which form part of the submission. Participants agree that they have no legal entitlement to a prize.

EIT AI Community reserves the right to make reasonable amendments to these Guidelines. Amendments and additions to these Guidelines shall be valid only if communicated in writing or otherwise made available to the participants.

EIT AI Community also reserves the right to cancel or declare the Competition unsuccessful provided all applicants are informed and sufficient justification is given (for example no applications received, or all applications do not pass the default thresholds).

5.7 Confidentiality

EIT AI Community undertakes to use any Confidential Information shared by the applicants solely for the purposes of the Call for Proposals. Confidential information shall mean data and/or information that is proprietary to, or possessed by, the applicants and not generally known to the public or that has not yet been revealed, whether in tangible or intangible form, whenever and however disclosed and might also be included in the application form. Confidential information must be expressly labelled as such on the application form.

Applicants agree that EIT AI Community and its subsidiaries can disseminate, publish and use non-confidential information regarding the call to promote EIT AI Community's activities or establish reports or other necessary documents for EIT.

The applicants agree that data and information in the application form that are not labelled as confidential may be disclosed in connection with the activities of the EIT AI Community.

Considering the confidential nature of the data and information referred to above, EIT AI Community also undertakes to (i) not disclose them in any way and in any form, without prior written authorisation of the company concerned and (ii) not to use them for purposes other than those strictly necessary for participation in the Learning Factories Competition.

Confidential Information may be shared among the EIT AI Community and its subsidiaries (e.g. CLCs) solely for the purposes of the AI Challenge Activity. EIT AI Community undertakes to

impose this confidentiality obligation on its employees and the employees of its subsidiaries and its collaborators, as well as on Rapporteurs and independent experts and all subjects who, by virtue of participating in the call for proposal as members of the Selection Committees or Jury, will take knowledge of or may have access to such confidential data and information.

5.8 Exclusion Criteria

Applicants will be excluded from participating in the call if they are in any of the situations of exclusion defined in Article 136 of the EU Financial Regulation[2]. Applicants shall sign a Declaration of Honor to confirm that they respect the above-mentioned criteria at the application stage. Successful Applicants may be requested to provide relevant recent documentation substantiating the Declaration of Honor. Failure to provide adequate documentation may result in the exclusion of the applicants concerned.

5.9 Applicable law

The present guidelines are governed by the applicable European Union laws (i.e. the EIT Regulation, the EU Financial Regulation and the Horizon Europe Regulation) and are complemented, where necessary, by the law of France. The applicants agree to observe the obligations set forth in the (Model) Grant Agreement signed between the EIT and EIT AI Community, particularly Articles 12 (conflict of interest), 13 (confidentiality and security), 14 (ethics), 17.2 (visibility), 18 (specific rules for carrying out action), 19 (information) and 20 (record-keeping). These obligations will also be mentioned in the contracts to be signed if the application is successful.

5.10 Gender Equality

AI Community is committed to promoting gender equality and diversity across all its activities. Applicants are encouraged to integrate gender considerations into the design of their proposed activities, ensuring inclusivity and equal opportunities. Additionally, during the contract performance, applicants should share their measures and strategies that promote gender equality, contributing to a more equitable digital innovation ecosystem.

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