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Call for Business Coaches

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EPIC-X Acceleration+ Programme

EPIC-X is a European acceleration initiative supporting women-led deep-tech startups from 16 moderate and emerging innovator countries. Funded by the European Union under Horizon Europe, EPIC-X provides equity-free funding, business coaching, capacity building, cross-fertilisation, and access to a wider European innovation network.

We invite experienced business coaches, strategic advisors, and other experts to support women-led deep-tech startups from 16 European countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain.

EPIC-X is looking for expertise in areas such as market access, commercialisation, scaling, investment readiness, communication, leadership, deep-tech applications, and regulatory or IP-related matters to support 20 women-led deep-tech startups that have been selected for the EPIC-X Acceleration+ Programme, a six-month initiative running from April to September 2026.

Through this call, EPIC-X aims to build a pool of business coaches for possible matching during the Acceleration+ Programme. Inclusion in this pool is valid only for the duration of the EPIC-X Acceleration+ Programme and does not automatically guarantee a match with a startup.

This is an ongoing call assessed in two rounds, with cut-off dates on 30.04.2026 and 29.05.2026. Applications received by each cut-off will be reviewed shortly thereafter.

Profile of Business Coaches

This call is open to business coaches, strategic advisors, and other experts with relevant experience in startup growth, innovation, investment, business development, or deep-tech-related sectors.

EPIC-X business coaches will support selected startups through tailored coaching aligned with each startup's specific needs and development priorities.

Each business coach will be expected to contribute to one or more tailored coaching assignments. Support may include strategic advice, one-to-one coaching, practical feedback, and access to relevant networks and opportunities.

Depending on the needs of the assigned startups, coaching may focus on one or more of the following areas:

- go-to-market strategy, market access/expansion, and internationalisation
- business development and commercialisation
- product development and productisation
- startup growth and scaling

- fundraising, investment readiness, and financial strategy
- communication, strategic positioning and visibility
- leadership and organisational development
- deep-tech, technical, or sector-specific guidance
- sector-specific regulatory, legal, IP compliance and technology transfer or market-entry considerations
- strategic partnerships and corporate collaboration

Coaching may be delivered online, in person, or in hybrid format, depending on startup needs.

EPIC-X aims to build a diverse pool of business coaches (only during the Acceleration+ Programme) whose expertise can be matched to the different needs of the selected startups.

Eligibility criteria

Applicants should demonstrate:

- at least 5 years of proven professional experience in startup, innovation, investment, and entrepreneurship
- provide up to 3 relevant examples of previous coaching, participation in networks or references from startups coached
- proven experience (supported by examples) in at least one of the priority support areas listed above
- good command of English (*at least B2 - Common European Framework of Reference for Language skills*)

The following will be considered an advantage:

- understanding of the European startup and innovation ecosystem
- knowledge of one or more of the 16 EPIC-X target countries and their innovation environments
- proven experience in deep-tech-related environments
- experience working with women-led ventures or supporting gender equality in innovation
- access to relevant networks, including investors, corporates, research organisations, clusters, accelerators, public agencies, or ecosystem actors

Expected commitment

Selected business coaches may support one or more EPIC-X startups during the Acceleration+ Programme from April to September 2026.

The expected contribution includes:

- participation in an online onboarding meeting with the EPIC-X consortium
- review of startup profiles, self-assessments, and coaching priorities

- contribution to the definition of coaching priorities and support actions aligned with startup needs
- brief follow-up or reporting, where required for coordination and monitoring

A startup may work with one or more business coaches. As startup needs vary, the exact coaching format and distribution of support will depend on the assignment.

Matching approach

EPIC-X consortium will match coaches to startups based on the relevance of their expertise to the startup's specific needs, sector, stage of development, and strategic priorities. Ultimately, the decision is made by the startup according to their needs.

Matching will consider:

- thematic expertise (see Profile of Business Coaches)
- startup growth challenges
- deep-tech or sector relevance
- knowledge of specific ecosystems or countries
- availability and preferred mode of engagement

Compensation

Compensation for business coaching is covered through the lump-sum grant awarded to each startup under the EPIC-X Acceleration+ Programme.

Under the FSTP grant framework, startups were awarded a grant that includes 20.000 EUR designated for business coaching.

The financial arrangement will be established directly between each startup and the selected business coach or coaches, in line with the applicable programme rules and the agreed scope of work.

Further information on contracting and implementation conditions will be shared with selected business coaches.

How to apply

Interested applicants are invited to apply by completing the EU Survey and submitting the required supporting documents.

Applications should include:

- a CV or professional biography highlighting relevant experience
- a short statement of interest explaining your motivation, expertise, and fit for the EPIC-X programme including relevant examples or references.

All application materials must be submitted in English.

This is an ongoing call assessed in two application rounds:

- Applications submitted by 30.04.2026 will be reviewed in the first cut-off.
- Applications submitted after 30.04.2026 and by 29.05.2026 will be reviewed in the second cut-off.

EPIC-X may begin evaluation, matching, and onboarding after the first cut-off.

Submission of an application does not guarantee selection, and selection does not automatically guarantee a startup match.

Incomplete applications may not be considered for evaluation.

Selection process and timeline

Applications will be assessed on a rolling basis across two cut-off dates, based on the relevance and quality of the applicant's experience, alignment with EPIC-X objectives, and potential fit with the needs of the selected startups.

Key milestones for this call are:

- Launch of the call: 15.04.2026
- First cut-off for applications: 30.04.2026
- Second cut-off for applications: 29.05.2026
- Evaluation and notification: carried out after each cut-off
- Matching and onboarding of business coaches: no later than 1 week after notification of selection, where applicable

Successful applicants will be informed directly by the EPIC-X team. Applicants who are not selected will also be notified.

Selected applicants may be admitted to the EPIC-X pool of business coaches for possible matching during the Acceleration+ Programme. Admission to the pool does not constitute a guarantee of assignment. Matches will be made according to startup needs, expertise fit, availability, and programme requirements.

Data protection and privacy

As a business coach, you may have access to personal data of startups, applicants, or other stakeholders within the EPIC-X programme. The personal data you handle should only be used in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other relevant EU and national data protection laws.

- All personal data provided to you must be handled confidentially.

- You are required to protect personal data from unauthorised access, alteration, or disclosure.
- Personal data should be used exclusively for the purpose of supporting the EPIC-X programme and must not be used for personal or unrelated purposes.
- Once the data is no longer necessary, you must ensure that it is securely deleted or anonymized.
- If you receive a request from an individual to access, correct, or delete their personal data, you must immediately notify the EPIC-X consortium to process the request in line with the GDPR.

For more information, please refer to EPIC-X full [Privacy Policy](#).

If you have any questions or need clarification regarding your responsibilities in terms of data protection, please contact the EPIC-X consortium at general@epic-x.eu.

Conflict of interests

As a business coach for the EPIC-X Acceleration + Programme, you are expected to provide impartial and objective guidance to the startups. To maintain transparency and fairness, you are required to disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest that may influence your impartiality.

A conflict of interest can arise in situations such as:

- Having a personal relationship with any startup from the Acceleration + Programme or with a consortium member from EPIC-X
- Owning financial interests in a startup or its competitors.
- Being involved in any other relationships that could affect your judgment or actions as a business coach.

If you believe you have or might have a conflict of interest, you must immediately disclose it to the EPIC-X consortium. We will assess the situation and determine how best to address the conflict, which may include reassignment to a different startup or providing an alternative solution.

Your participation in the EPIC-X programme depends on your full transparency regarding any potential conflicts of interest.

Contact

For any questions related to this coach call, the application process or the EPIC-X Acceleration+ Programme, please contact EPIC-X Team at general@epic-x.eu.