#SMEsConnectingEurope

THINK BIG, PLAY SMART, STAND OUT!

Digital Innovation Challenge for Europe’s SMEs and startups.

Imagine new services based on open and reusable solutions provided by the European Commission. Co-create with our coaches. Pitch your idea, win up to EUR 50 000 and stand out at European level. Interested?

Guidelines for Applicants
Europe is becoming increasingly digital. Make sure you are one of the SMEs and startups shaping a Digital Europe. The European Commission provides open and reusable solutions to help you.
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1. The context

In the context of the Digital Single Market and with the European Commission’s support, public administrations across the EU have adopted open and reusable solutions to create generic digital components that make it possible for them to provide better services to citizens and businesses.

These solutions have been adopted as part of the digital transformation of government, in accordance with the principles set out in the Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment. But it doesn’t end here. SMEs and startups across Europe are also already using these smart solutions to build and expand their businesses. And this is only the beginning!

Recognising the importance of SMEs within the European economy, the European Commission is launching the Digital Innovation Challenge to SMEs and startups across Europe — to the ones that are willing to innovate and grow their business by taking the lead towards making a digital Europe¹, the ones who think big, play smart and stand out.

Through this Challenge the European Commission aims to experiment new ways to engage with SMEs and startups to re-imagine how open and reusable solutions are created and promoted, stimulate awareness and, ultimately, increase their adoption.

Europe is becoming increasingly digital. Make sure you are one of the SMEs and startups shaping a digital Europe. The European Commission provides open and reusable solutions to help you.

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¹ This pilot project (within the meaning of Article 58(2) of the Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom 2018(1046)), funded under 2019 EU Budget, looks into ways to increase participation of SMEs in providing digital solutions and services compliant with the open and reusable solutions provided by the European Commission (i.e. via the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and Interoperability solutions for public administrations, businesses and citizens (ISA²) programmes).
2. The Challenge

The Digital Innovation Challenge invites SMEs and startups, providers of digital services across Europe, to propose innovative services and solutions based on the European Commission open and reusable solutions. The Challenge is particularly targeted at Digital SMEs and startups that would like to accelerate their digitally-enabled growth and leverage on already existing components that provide basic capabilities to facilitate the delivery of digital, interoperable, cross-border and cross-domain services and solutions.

As a participant you will develop a concept of a service or solution that can:

- Reinforce your service offering by using standards-based solutions,
- Facilitate cross-border operations and tap into pan-European markets,
- Reach a higher level of security, interoperability and compliance of the services and solutions offered.

The closing date for application is **28 February 2020, 12.00 pm Brussels time**, following which application is no longer possible. We strongly advise you not to wait until the last few days before submitting your application. Once the deadline for the submission of applications has passed, you will no longer be able to introduce any data. Late registrations are not accepted.


These ‘Guidelines for Applicants’ provide all the rules related to the Challenge. Please read them carefully before submitting your application. By submitting an entry, you accept these rules and agree to comply with them.

The Challenge is funded under the 2019 European Union budget. The legal basis for this Challenge is the Commission Decision C/2019/7236.

2.1. What’s in it for you?

Participants in this Challenge will get the opportunity to:

- Improve their awareness and knowledge about the open and reusable solutions provided by the European Commission;
- Get inspired by success stories of other SMEs and startups that already reused those solutions;

*SMEs and startups based in cross-border regions may find the Challenge particularly useful due to the nature of their business ecosystem.*
- Test and showcase how these solutions can bring added value to their business.

The ten (10) best shortlisted applications will be invited to attend a one-day co-creation bootcamp to:

- Pitch their ideas, get visibility and receive feedback;
- Work with coaches and receive guidance to further develop their service/solution;
- Connect with people within the European Commission and other SMEs.

The three (3) top ranked proposals will:

- Get a financial reward up to EUR 50 000;
- Be invited to receive their prize at the award ceremony to be held in the context of one of the flagship events of the European Commission in 2020;
- Get exposure that can contribute to their business growth.

2.2. What’s expected from you?

This Challenge invites participants to shape a concept for a service or solution that could be integrated in their company business offer. The proposed service or solution concept must be based on one or more of the open and reusable solutions provided by the European Commission (cf. section “2.3. The open and reusable solutions” for an overview of the solutions in scope of this Challenge).

Participants are requested to complete an application form via the Challenge website. This includes general information about the company (number of full-time employees, annual turnover, area(s) of economic activity) as well as all the elements relevant to describe the proposed service/solution (cf. section “3.4. Evaluation criteria”).

The 10 shortlisted finalists are expected to make a pitch (PPT format and/or videos can be used as supporting materials) of the service/solution covering the most relevant elements from the proposal.

2.3. The open and reusable solutions

This Challenge proposes SMEs and startups to reuse solutions provided by the European Commission. These solutions are technical specifications, open standards, software and tools that are free to use by any public and private sector entity. These are the open and reusable solutions:

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3 First place EUR 50 000, second place EUR 20 000, third place EUR 10 000.
4 Additional solutions can be reused in the context of this Challenge. Please visit the Digital Innovation Challenge website (https://ec.europa.eu/cefdigital/sme) for further details.
Trusted and secure services and solutions (compliant with eIDAS regulation):

- **eID** to offer digital services capable of electronically identifying users from across Europe
- **eDelivery** to design solutions and services around secure and reliable exchange of data
- **eSignature** to develop eSignature services and solutions in line with European standards

Smart governance and data management services and solutions:

- **Context Broker** to develop smart applications and services to enable data-driven decisions
- **eArchiving** to store and preserve digital information cost-efficiently in various stages of the archival workflow
- **Blockchain** to enhance trust between parties and improve the efficiency of operations
- **Core Public Service Vocabulary Application Profile** to develop solutions and services around stable data models for describing public services related to business and life events
- **Data Catalogue Vocabulary (DCAT) Application Profile** to reuse the application profile of DCAT for describing data catalogues with three key concepts: catalogue, dataset and distribution
- **Core Vocabularies** to create services and develop new systems reusing simplified and extensible data models

Other services and solutions:

- **eInvoicing** to create services and solutions to support others to process eInvoices according to the European standard
- **Visualisation tool from ESTAT** to create solutions and services around the dissemination and better access to statistical data
- **EU Survey** to reuse a multilingual online survey management system built for the creation and publication of surveys and consultations
- **Testbed** to use Minder to create, group, edit and execute test cases within interconnected systems (especially relevant for conformance testing)
- **Legislation Editing Open Software (LEOS)** to support public administrations to develop and edit legislation with an open source software
- **Licensing assistant** to reuse a tool that allows comparing and selection of open licenses based on their content
3. How to participate?

3.1. Key dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Launch of the Challenge at the Web Summit (call for applications opens)</td>
<td>7 November 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First info session</td>
<td>25 November 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second info session</td>
<td>30 January 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadline for submission (call for applications closes)</td>
<td>28 February 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcement of the 10 best applicants</td>
<td>March 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-creation bootcamp for the 10 best applicants</td>
<td>Mid-April 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcement of the winners</td>
<td>End of April 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award ceremony at a European Commission flagship event (venue and date to be announced)</td>
<td>Q2 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2. Evaluation and selection process

The evaluation process will be carried out in **three phases**:

- **PHASE 1 [all applicants]**: Following their online submission, the applications will go through a **first review round**. This review will be carried out by appointed experts with experience and knowledge in the fields of digital transformation, digital services and business strategies. This review starts with an eligibility and exclusion screening. The applicants that do not comply with these criteria (cf. section “3.3. Eligibility criteria and 3.4. Exclusion criteria”) will not be further evaluated and will be notified about their disqualification. The experts will evaluate the eligible applications based on the evaluation criteria (cf. section “3.4. Evaluation criteria”) and shortlist the 10 best-ranked applications. The 10 shortlisted
applicants will be notified about their qualification and invited to participate in the phase 2. The applicants that do not make it to the next phase will be notified about the selection decision\(^5\).

- **PHASE 2 [10 shortlisted finalists]**: The 10 shortlisted finalists will be invited to attend a one-day co-creation bootcamp in Brussels mid-April 2020. During this bootcamp the shortlisted applicants will have the opportunity to participate in co-creation activities that will allow them to further improve their proposed service and/or solution. The applicants will be invited to pitch their idea in front of a jury composed by European Commission and other EU institutions’ representatives.

- **PHASE 3 [3 winners]**: The jury will carry out the evaluations, select the top 3 (*) service and/or solution proposals and provide an updated evaluation summary report reflecting the input received during phase 1 and the co-creation bootcamp. The 3 winners will be notified and invited to attend an award ceremony. The remaining shortlisted applicants will be notified about the final selection decision. The award ceremony will take place at one of the flagship events of the European Commission and the winners will be invited to pitch their idea to the audience.

\(^5\) In case of applications with the same score in the shortlisting phase the jury can consider contacting the applicants via email for further clarifications informing final selection decision.

### 3.3. Eligibility criteria

The applicants must be considered as one of the following categories of companies:

- Legal entities responding to the European Commission definition of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)\(^6\),

- Startups, defined as companies younger than 5 years old, proposing a product, service or business model innovation, and with a clearly stated intention to grow the number of employees/markets they operate in\(^7\).

SMEs and startups must be headquartered in EU Member States, Iceland or Norway. The applications must be submitted in English. The application should be completed using the entry form provided via the Challenge website (cf. section “2.2. What's expected from you?”).

The European Commission reserves the right to discard applications that are incomplete or that do not comply with the eligibility criteria above.

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\(^5\) The Commission reserves the right to establish a reserve list of up to five applicants in addition to the 10 shortlisted ones. Applicants in the reserve list may be invited in case of withdrawal or exclusion of a shortlisted applicant.


\(^7\) In the context of this Challenge, startup is defined as detailed in the EU Startup monitor 2018 report, available at: http://startupmonitor.eu/EU-Startup-Monitor-2018-Report-WEB.pdf
3.4. Exclusion criteria

Applicants will be excluded from participating in the Challenge if they are in any of the situations of exclusion described in Article 136 of the EU Financial Regulation, or are subject to an administrative sanction as described in Articles 106 and 131(4) of the aforementioned regulation.

Applicants will be excluded from award if, in the course of the award procedure, they fall under any of the situations defined in Article 141 of the EU Financial Regulation.

To avoid conflict of interests, the European Commission reserves the right to exclude applicants that were already featured in CEF or ISA² success stories for using the aforementioned solutions or with which the European Commission maintains a contractual relationship in the context of the CEF and/or ISA² programmes.

3.5. Evaluation criteria

The participants should provide a relevant, viable, scalable, desirable and actionable concept proposal for a product/market fit service/solution reusing one or more of the solutions in scope of the Challenge. The proposals will be evaluated by a jury that will award the prizes to those applicants who best address the following criteria:

- **Relevance** – A comprehensive understanding of the purpose of the Challenge.
  - The proposed service/solution must be based on the use of one or more open and reusable solutions in the scope of the Challenge.
  - The proposed service/solution must address a clear and compelling vision and ambition.
  - The proposed service/solution must address clearly defined target clients and markets.
  - Services/solutions that integrate a cross-border approach in the service/solution will be considered a plus.
  - Services/solutions that are based on the reuse of more than one open and reusable solution will be considered a plus.
  - Services/solutions that are based on open and collaborative principles (e.g. promote open source, community-based and transparency values) will be considered a plus.

- **Viability and scalability** – A viable, impactful and scalable business rationale.
  - The proposed service/solution must show that it is economically viable and be supported by a 5-year business plan.
  - The proposed service/solution technology should be clearly described.
The proposed service/solution must have the potential to realise benefits (direct and indirect) for the company (e.g. increased business opportunities, expansion into new markets, development of the company’s offering).

- **Scalable**

**Desirability** – A clear and tested demand or desirability for the service/solution.

- The proposed service/solution must show a value proposition that meets the needs of the targeted clients and markets.
- The proposed service/solution should clearly explain how the service will be delivered to the customers/clients.
- Any prototyping or testing done can be documented and uploaded as additional information (e.g. client feedbacks, tested customer journey, piloting of the service/solution) and will be considered a plus.

**Actionability** - the ability of the company to deliver the service/solution.

- The proposed service/solution must demonstrate to be actionable within a 1-year timeframe and be supported by a consistent action plan.
- The proposal must determine a capable team of professionals with the relevant expertise able to implement the proposed service/solution.
- The proposed service/solution must present a compelling communication and dissemination plan.
- [For the 10 shortlisted finalists] Quality of the pitch: the applicants will further be evaluated according to the quality of the pitch delivered to the jury during the co-creation bootcamp. The pitch can be supported by PPT and/or videos.

The participants will be asked to submit the proposal using an online application provided by the European Commission via the Challenge website. The online application will allow the attachment of mandatory and optional elements (e.g. pitch videos, client feedbacks, piloting and testing results) relevant to shape the proposal.
### Table 1: Evaluation summary report with priority level and ponderation by criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>PRIORITY</th>
<th>WEIGHT</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision and ambition</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defined target client(s) and market(s)</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-border dimension</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of more than one open and reusable solution</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open and collaborative principles</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Viability and Scalability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic viability</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological explanation</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scalability</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits for the company</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desirability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addresses targeted client(s) and market(s) needs</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear delivery plan</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Experience / Engagement</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actionability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>35 (45 for shortlisted candidates)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear communication</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the pitch (**)</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>10**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action plan</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL (*)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>160 (170 for shortlisted candidates)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) Applications falling below the threshold of a weighted average lower than 5.5 will not be considered.

(**) Applicable only for the 10 shortlisted candidates.
4. Support for applicants

To support you and answer questions related to the Challenge and the application procedure, the following channels are available:

- Two Info sessions on 25 November 2019 and 30 January 2019 (visit the website to register)
- FAQs (visit the 'Support' section on the website)
- Contact us via: EC-SMEs-Connecting-Europe@ec.europa.eu
- Check the supporting materials, links and tools on the website.
5. Other conditions

5.1. Payment arrangements

The prize money will be paid to the three winners (respectively EUR 50 000 to the first place, EUR 20 000 to the second place and EUR 10 000 to the third place) in one instalment after the award ceremony by bank transfer, provided all the requested documents have been submitted.

5.2. Publicity – promoting the prize by the shortlisted applicants and winners

The 10 shortlisted applicants and the winners are invited to promote the Challenge and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner. All communication activities related to the action (including in electronic form, via social media, etc.) should: (a) display the EU emblem and (b) include the following text: “This action/activity was [finalist for/]winner of the Digital Innovation Challenge from the European Union’s ‘Reuse of Digital Standards to Support the SME Sector’ pilot project”. When displayed together with another logo, the EU emblem must have appropriate prominence.

5.3. Publicity – promoting the prize by the European Commission

The Commission may use, for its communication and publicising activities, information relating to the Challenge received from the participants (including in electronic format), such as documents, pictures or audio-visual material. The Commission will publish the name of the shortlisted applicants and the winner(s), their origin, the amount of the prize and its nature and purpose. Photos and videos taken by the Commission either in preparation of the award ceremony or during the award ceremony are the sole property of the Commission.

5.4. Processing of personal data

Any personal data will be processed by the Commission under Regulation No 45/20017 and in accordance with the EU Survey’s privacy statement. All winners consent that the Commission can publish (in whatever form and medium) the following information:

- Company name
- Member State of origin
- Activities in relation to the award of the prize
- Prize amount
5.5. Ethics

The activities must be carried out in compliance with:

- Ethical principles (including the highest standards for the development of the proposal) and
- Applicable international, EU and national law.

5.6. Conflict of interests

The participants must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective award of the prize is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest. They must inform the Commission without delay of any situation constituting or likely to lead to a conflict of interests and immediately take all the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

The Commission may verify that the measures taken are appropriate and may require additional measures to be taken by a specified deadline.

5.7. Liability for damages

The Commission cannot be held liable for any damage caused by any of the participants in the context of the Challenge.

5.8. Withdrawal of the prize

The Commission may withdraw the prize after its award and recover all payments made, if it finds out that: (a) false information, fraud or corruption was used to obtain it, (b) a winner was not eligible or should have been excluded, and (c) a winner is in serious breach of its obligations under these guidelines.

5.9. Cancellation of the Challenge

The Commission may cancel the contest or decide not to award the prize, without any obligation to compensate participants, if:

- No applications are received,
- The jury does not find a winner,
- The objectives of the contest cannot be fulfilled, or
- The winner is not eligible or must be excluded.
Questions?

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to our Challenge team at:
EC-SMEs-Connecting-Europe@ec.europa.eu

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