Call for International Experts for the ELIgnite Cascade Funding Programme

Join the ELIgnite evaluator database

The ELIgnite project funded under Horizon Europe EIE, Scaling up deep tech ecosystems, is launching a call for **international evaluators** to establish a database of independent evaluator and ethics experts who will support the assessment of proposals submitted under the ELIgnite cascade funding programme.

ELIgnite will provide financial support to deep-tech innovation projects with strong market and societal potential. The programme will support breakthrough technologies in selected strategic areas starting at TRL 1–3 and help them progress towards TRL 3–5, with stronger commercial and societal potential. The first call of the cascade funding programme is expected to take place in the first half of 2027.

We are looking for experienced experts with **business/industrial, investment or scientific backgrounds** who can contribute to a high-quality, transparent and merit-based evaluation process. Experts will receive a honorarium (see below).

About the ELIgnite Funding Programme

The ELIgnite grant scheme will support approximately 6-10 **deep-tech innovation projects**, depending on the quality of proposals received and the funding needs justified by applicants with individual projects eligible to receive up to **EUR 500,000**.

The funding is structured as **Proof-of-Concept funding**, aimed at bridging the gap between basic research and technologies ready for commercialisation and private investment. Supported projects are expected to advance at both TRL and CRL levels, while developing stronger technical, commercial and investment readiness. A key feature of the programme is that funded projects will be **implemented in close collaboration with ELI ERIC research infrastructure.**

Fields of expertise sought

We invite international experts with scientific, technological, industrial, commercial or investment experience related to one or more of the five ELIgnite thematic areas. This may include, for example, having invested in a company active in one of these fields or having worked in a related research or business team. Applicants do not need to be narrow specialists in the specific topics listed below:

1. Medical Applications

Including expertise related to **next-generation cancer therapy and biomedical research**, as well as enabling technologies, validation pathways, regulatory considerations, clinical or pre-clinical relevance, and market potential in biomedical innovation.

2. Security & Space

Including expertise related to **space mission reliability**, **homeland security**, advanced detection, diagnostics, radiation environments, resilient systems, dual-use technologies, and validation of technologies relevant to security and space applications.

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3. Clean Energy

Including expertise related to **clean energy technologies**, with particular relevance to breakthrough energy solutions, technology validation, system integration, scalability, commercialisation potential and contribution to environmental and societal impact.

4. Semiconductors

Including expertise related to **semiconductor characterisation at spatial and temporal resolution limits**, advanced materials, photonics, diagnostics, nanotechnology, metrology, device development, prototyping, industrial validation and semiconductor-related innovation pathways.

5. Artificial Intelligence

Including expertise related to **AI-enabled technologies**, data-driven innovation, modelling, simulation, AI-assisted analysis, digital technologies, technology validation, deployment potential, ethical considerations and market readiness of AI-based solutions.

Evaluators should be able to assess deep-tech innovation projects from the perspective of their professional background.

Expert profiles

ELIgnite is seeking evaluators from three different backgrounds:

Business / Industry experts - Professionals with experience in technology development, product validation, industrial deployment, advanced engineering, regulatory pathways, business development or commercialisation of deep-tech solutions.

Investor and venture experts - Investors, venture capital professionals, business angels, accelerator experts, venture builders or innovation finance specialists with experience in assessing market potential, team capacity, investment readiness and scalability of early-stage deep-tech companies.

Scientific experts - Researchers, professors, senior scientists, technology specialists or research infrastructure experts with strong knowledge of cutting-edge scientific and technological developments relevant to the ELIgnite missions.

Each evaluation committee is expected to include **international and gender mixed experts** from the **scientific environment, industry and investor environment**, ensuring a balanced assessment of scientific excellence, technological feasibility, market potential and implementation capacity.

Role of Evaluators

Selected evaluators may be invited to participate in one or both stages of the evaluation process:

1. Written proposal evaluation

Evaluators will review proposals of approximately 10 pages and prepare a written evaluation report. Proposals will be assessed under three criteria: Excellence (the breakthrough concept, objectives and interdisciplinary approach), Impact (transformative and innovation potential, exploitation and route to market), and Implementation (team, milestones and KPIs, risks, work plan, resources and collaboration with ELI ERIC).

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2. Jury Interview

Evaluators may also be invited to an oral interview, where applicants will present their projects and teams through a pitch deck. The interview will assess the team's technology and market expertise, communication skills and leadership skills.

3. Ethics screening by ethics experts

In addition, evaluators who declared to be ethics experts may be invited to support the ethics screening and ethics review of projects classified as GO or GO Reserve. Ethics experts will assess potential ethical issues, review applicants' ethics self-assessments, and may recommend additional approvals, permits, safeguards or monitoring measures in line with Horizon Europe ethics requirements.

Expected remuneration

Evaluators will be remunerated as follows:

- **EUR 250 per proposal evaluation**, including preparation of the written evaluation report (indicative workload: 4 working hours)
- **EUR 200 for participation in the oral interview**, including preparation of the related evaluation report (indicative workload: 2 working hours)
- **EUR 150 per ethics screening** (indicative workload: 1.5 working hours)

Evaluation principles

The ELIgnite evaluation process will be conducted in line with principles of **fairness, transparency, non-discrimination and alignment with Horizon Europe standards**.

All evaluators involved in the process will be required to sign the relevant declarations, including: *Declaration of confidentiality, Declaration of absence of conflict of interest, Declaration against discrimination of applicants based on gender, age, ethnicity, nationality or other personal characteristics.* The evaluation committees will be international, gender mixed and will promote diversity.

Indicative Timeline

The call of the ELIgnite grant programme is expected to be launched in the **February 2027** with two **cut-off dates** in **July 2027** and **January 2028**. The **evaluation and selection process** is expected to take place from **August to September 2027** and from **February to March 2028**.

Evaluators included in the database may be contacted depending on the number, thematic focus and timing of proposals received.

How to express interest

Experts interested in joining the ELIgnite evaluator database are invited to submit their expression of interest by competing this **QUESTIONNAIRE** and uploading a short CV or professional profile.

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Disclaimer

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