

## FUNDING SCHEME

Programme Announcement of the National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre (NCC-CY) of the Republic of Cyprus

## PROGRAMME

«Enhancing Cybersecurity for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) designated as Important Entities Falling Within the Scope of the NIS2 Directive»

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

NCC-CY- NIS2/0826



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## INTRODUCTION

The Research and Innovation Foundation (**RIF**) in collaboration with the Digital Security Authority (**DSA**) as the National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre (NCC-CY), announce the Call for Proposals for the Programme «**Enhancing Cybersecurity for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) designated as Important Entities Falling Within the Scope of the NIS2 Directive**» and invites beneficiaries to submit relevant Project Proposals (Proposals).

The present Call is announced as part of a series of actions of the National Coordination Centre—NCC-CY. With the introduction of European Regulation (EU) 2021/887 by the European Parliament and the Council on May 20, 2021, the European Competence Centre (ECCC) for Industrial, Technological, and Research Issues in Cybersecurity was established, consisting of the National Coordination Centers(NCCs) in each EU member state, with the goal of developing technological and industrial capabilities for cybersecurity issues in the European Union.

By a decision of the Council of Ministers on December 21, 2021, DSA, as an entity of the broader Public Sector, was appointed as the NCC-CY for cybersecurity matters in the Republic of Cyprus. At the same time, the Research and Innovation Foundation (RIF) was appointed as a member of the NCC-CY consortium, with responsibilities for managing funds secured by NCC-CY through European Programmes, with the aim of providing financial support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the Republic of Cyprus.

The Call is co-financed by the Republic of Cyprus and the Digital Europe Programme in the frame of the «N4CY2-Advancing the NCC-CY: The Next Chapter of the National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre of Cyprus» (Grant Agreement 101195086) project.



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## GENERAL CALL INFORMATION

|                                     |                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Programme</b>                    | <b>ENHANCING CYBERSECURITY IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs) DESIGNATED AS IMPORTANT ENTITIES FALLING WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE NIS2 DIRECTIVE</b> |
| <b>Call Code</b>                    | <b>NCC-CY-NIS2/0826</b>                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Call Budget</b>                  | <b>1.530.000 Euro</b>                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Minimum funding per proposal</b> | <b>20.000 Euro</b>                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Maximum Funding per proposal</b> | <b>100.000 Euro</b>                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Intensity of Funding</b>         | <b>70%</b>                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Date of Publication</b>          | <b>28 August 2026</b>                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Closing Date</b>                 | <b>Open Call until 10 November 2026, 13:00, or until the budget is exhausted.</b>                                                                     |

## OBJECTIVES

The “NCC-CY - NIS2” Program aims to ensure a baseline level of cybersecurity for a number of important entities covered by the NIS2 Directive, with the goal of protecting their infrastructure, systems, and information through the procurement of relevant cybersecurity solutions and services. The NIS2 Directive (EU 2022/ 2555), which entered into force on October 18, 2024, constitutes the updated pan-European framework for cybersecurity, aimed at strengthening digital security in critical sectors of economic and social activity. It expands upon the original NIS Directive by imposing stricter security measures, mandatory incident reporting, and severe penalties for noncompliance across a broader range of “essential” and “important” entities. The Program aims to obtain a verification certificate from the Digital Security Authority (DSA) for Beneficiaries regarding their compliance with the cybersecurity measures of the Belgian CyberFundamentals (CYFUN) framework, at the Basic level, as of the 2025 edition (for more information, click [HERE](#)). These measures will be adopted by the Digital Security Authority (DSA) and will form part of the beneficiary entities’ compliance with the requirements under national legislation transposing the NIS2 Directive.



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## DESCRIPTION

Through this program, small and medium-sized enterprises are given the opportunity to obtain a verification certificate from DSA for the implementation of the relevant measures. Verification audits will be conducted by Cybersecurity Maturity Auditors from the relevant registry managed by the Cyprus Organization for Standardization (CYS). For more information, click [HERE](#).

## BENEFICIARIES

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (Categories B.1, B.2), which are designated as Important Entities within the scope of the NIS2 Directive (EU 2022/2555) as designated by the Digital Security Authority.

Eligible applicants for this call are those who have no outstanding amounts owed to the Digital Security Authority, in accordance with the Network and Information Systems Security Law of 2020 (Law 89(I)/2020), as amended and/or replaced from time to time, and the Network and Information Systems Security (Fees) Regulations of 2020 (K.D.P. 359/2020), as amended and/or replaced from time to time.

Furthermore, pursuant to Article 12 of Regulation (EU) 2021/694, Host Organisations must not be under the direct or indirect control of an ineligible third country or entities/nationals of such a country.

## SPECIFIC RESTRICTIONS AND CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

- Each Entity may submit only one (1) Project Proposal as a Host Organization under this Call. If an Entity submits more than one (1) proposal as a Host Organization in the Call, the first proposal will be considered valid based on the order of submission and the remaining proposals will be considered invalid.
- Participation of entities engaged in an economic activity in a proposal shall be deemed valid, if they are legally established and are active in territories under the control of the Republic of Cyprus. The activity of the entities is documented by the existence of facilities and staff in territories under the control of the Republic of Cyprus and, indicatively and not restrictively, by audited financial statements, the tax return of the entity in the Republic of Cyprus, etc. These conditions should be met to the satisfaction



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of RIF and without prejudice to the Foundation to request further data and information from the entities.

- Upon completion of the projects, each SME will be required to undertake at least one publicity activity (media/social media publication, video, event, etc.) highlighting the achievement of the verification following the implementation of the funded project, with references to the benefit derived from the funding. For publicity actions, the obligations for promotion and publicity for projects funded by the Digital Europe Programme should be applied, including the logos of the NCC-CY, the Research and Innovation Foundation (RIF), the Commissioner of Communications and the Digital Security Authority, as well as reference to the co-funding by the Republic of Cyprus.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The projects involve the implementation of activities related to strengthening cybersecurity and preparing for compliance with the requirements of the NIS2 Directive. Eligible activities include the implementation of organizational and technical measures, the development of information security policies and procedures, staff training, and the implementation of basic cybersecurity technology solutions.

The Program's initial goal is the gradual implementation of all measures outlined in Belgium's CyberFundamentals (CYFUN) framework up to the "Basic" assurance level, which includes 34 essential cybersecurity measures (for more information, click [HERE](#)). This approach strengthens business resilience, risk management, and preparedness against cyber threats, while also establishing a minimum level of security and compliance with European standards and cybersecurity requirements.

The 34 key measures included in Belgium's CyberFundamentals (CYFUN) framework (version dated October 1, 2025) are fully aligned with the NIS2 Directive. For more information, click [HERE](#).

NOTE: Please note that funding will be disbursed ONLY if the company is fully compliant with all 34 cybersecurity measures of the CyberFundamentals (CYFUN) framework (for more information, click [HERE](#)). Entities that complete part of these measures will not be eligible for funding. It should also be noted that the funding covers the cost of the audit for obtaining the verification certificate confirming the implementation of the measures.

## DURATION OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION



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Up to twelve (12) months

Upon completion of the projects, a «Final Activity Report» and a «Funding Payment Request» must be submitted within one (1) month in order to secure the final installment, provided that a verification certificate confirming the implementation of the measures has been obtained.

## BUDGET

€ 1.530.000

## MINIMUM - MAXIMUM FUNDING PER PROJECT

€20.000 – €100.000

The aid intensity is 70% of eligible costs.

If, upon completion of the projects, the total eligible expenses based on approved costs (total amount of eligible expenses taking into account the aid intensity – 70%) are less than the minimum project funding €20,000, the funding will not be granted to the beneficiary.

## ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Costs which will fall under the categories «Costs for external services» and/or «Costs for Instruments and Equipment».

Eligible expenses are considered to be all expenses incurred based on the results of the Gap Assessment and documented as necessary for the verification of Beneficiaries, in accordance with the requirements of the CyberFundamentals framework - CYFUN, version 2025-10-01 (for more information, click [HERE](#)).

Indicatively, funding covers consulting services (implementation of policies, procedures, and organizational/technical measures; staff training and awareness), the necessary hardware and software for network, system, and data security, as well as the cost of one (1) audit to obtain verification of the measures' implementation.

The above list is indicative and not exhaustive, as any service, hardware, software, or tool that is documented as necessary for the implementation of the CYFUN framework measures and



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the successful verification (verification) of the Beneficiary, provided that it is deemed reasonable during the verification process by the Cybersecurity Maturity Auditor.

The cost of the audit to obtain the verification certificate confirming the implementation of the measures is also eligible.

Beneficiaries must **receive and evaluate at least three (3) independent tenders for each purchase exceeding Euro 15,000** (excluding VAT) resulting in the selection of the most economical solution that meets their needs.

VAT is not considered an eligible cost. Beneficiaries are responsible for VAT payments to all consultants and solution providers and certification bodies.

The total amount of funding is committed at the time of Project Contract preparation, and the funding is made as a lump sum payment as de minimis aid ([EU Regulation 2023/2831 of 13th December 2023](#)) in two instalments.

The first instalment of 50% is paid upon signing of the Project Contract and the second instalment is paid upon approval of the «Final Activity Report» and the «Funding Payment Request» which are submitted within one (1) month from the completion of the works by the Host Organization.

**Failure to secure the Verification certificate for all 34 measures within the duration of the funded project will result in the funding not being granted and a refund of the pre-financing will be requested.**

It is clarified that, according to the EU Regulation [2023/2831](#) on de minimis funding, enterprises active in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and in the primary production of agricultural products cannot be funded.

## SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

- All private sector entities (Host Organization) are required to register the updated data regarding its ultimate beneficial owners in the Competent National Registry / Archive, as per «The prevention and suppression of money laundering and terrorist financing Law of 2007 (188(I)/2007)». The RIF maintains the right to proceed with the appropriate checks in the competent Registries to verify the registration of the data



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and it is possible to request for the submission of official proof. For this purpose, during the contract preparation stage, all private-law entities are required to submit the Beneficial Ownership Declaration, accompanied by the official proof of registration.

- Funded Projects should comply with the «Do No Significant Harm» principle, according to which they must not include or support activities that could cause significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives, as per Article 17 of Regulation (EU) No 2020/852, on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment.
- Mandatory participation of at least the Project Coordinator in an informational workshop on project management, organized by the RIF.
- All funded entities must attend mandatory training seminars on the financial management of projects.
- In cases of subscription costs, the eligible cost is considered to be only up to the end of 2028.
- For expenses in the category of Instruments and Equipment, the concept of depreciation does not apply.
- The entity conducting the gap assessment must not be the same entity providing the services/equipment for implementing the activities included in the gap assessment.
- For the purpose of complying with the provisions of the State Aid Control (Central Register of State Aid and De Minimis Aid) Regulations of 2020 (K.D.P. 193/2020), the granting of state aid under this Program will take place only upon the issuance of a relevant Certificate through the Central State Aid Registry System, which constitutes the beneficiary's legal right to receive the aid, in accordance with the relevant Circulars of the State Aid Commission (Nos. 90, 105, 108).
- Requirement to comply with the Ownership Control Declaration (OCA) "Ownership Control Assessment (OCA) – Declaration of Ownership and Control"

In accordance with the requirements of the Digital Europe Program (DEP) and, specifically, Article 12 of Regulation (EU) 2021/694, applicants are required to complete and submit the relevant Ownership Control Declaration (OCA), which forms part of the eligibility verification process.

The Ownership Control Assessment (OCA) process aims to verify that applicants:

- are established in a European Union member state or in an eligible associated country under the DEP, and
- are not, directly or indirectly, under the control of an ineligible third country or entities/nationals of such a country.

RIF and/or the NCC-CY may request additional information or supporting documents as part of the OCA process, including details regarding shareholding structure,



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beneficial owners, the ownership and control structure, as well as any commercial or financial relationships that may affect control of the organization.

Failure to submit the relevant declaration when submitting the proposal will result in rejection during the preliminary review stage. Additionally, failure to submit the necessary supporting documents or information may result in the termination of the contract preparation process.

## SUBMISSION

Proposals are submitted through the Research and Innovation Foundation's IRIS Portal (<https://iris.research.org.cy/#/>).

It is noted that, the Project Coordinator and the Host Organisation, should register in advance on the IRIS Portal.

Potential applicants are advised to read the general «Guide for Applicants» and «IRIS Portal User Manual» which can be found on the IRIS Portal (<https://iris.research.org.cy/#/documentlibrary>).

The Research and Innovation Foundation encourages in all its Calls for Proposals:

- ◊ *the participation of women as Project Coordinators, and*
- ◊ *a gender-balanced participation in Projects.*

## STRUCTURE OF PROPOSALS

**The Project Proposal consists of the following parts:**

1. Part A – General Information & Budget (electronic form (fields) to be completed online through the IRIS Portal).
2. Part B – Technical Annex (document to be uploaded as an Annex on the IRIS Portal in PDF format) – **Mandatory Submission.**

*Note: The template provided for this Call must be submitted **without any alterations.** The Part B template for this Call can be found on the IRIS Portal, under the relevant Call for Proposals (Call Documents).*

3. Annex II – files which are posted as Annexes on the IRIS Portal in pdf format) - **Mandatory Submission:**



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- (a) Gap assessment in English.
4. Annex III - Call Specific Information (files which are posted as Annexes on the IRIS Portal in pdf format) - **Mandatory Submission:**
- (a) Single Undertaking Declaration.
- (b) Ownership Control Declaration – OCA

**It is noted that, if during the Proposal submission stage all required documents are not submitted, then the proposal will not be forwarded for scientific evaluation.**

## PROJECT SELECTION

### Evaluation Procedure

For the evaluation of the Proposals in this Call, a process of Preliminary Check and remote evaluation process conducted by two (2) independent evaluators, as described in the RESTART WorkProgramme for the period May 2022-December 2026 will be followed.

### Evaluation Criteria

#### 1. Relevance (Excellence) – Weight 30%

- Alignment of the Proposal and the expected project results with the objectives and activities described in this Call.
- Degree of cybersecurity upgrading/development in the company in relation to the current state/operation of the company (holistic approach based on gap assessment and obtaining the Cybersecurity certification).

#### 2. Added Value and Benefit – Weight 40%

- Degree to which the proposed project can ensure the expected results and deliverables stated in this Call.
- Effectiveness of the proposed actions in terms of visibility to demonstrate the benefits of the funding.
- Degree of enhancement of the competitiveness of the enterprise and effectiveness of the funding in terms of increasing the level of cyber security of the enterprise itself and thereby providing increased security to its customers and recipients of its services.
- Degree of positive impact on the overall operations of the business as a result of the increased level of cybersecurity (resilience, increased efficiency, reduced costs, exploitation of new capabilities/opportunities).



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### 3. Implementation – Weight 30%

- Maturity of the proposed project and adequacy of the needs assessment based on the existing infrastructure in the Host Organization.
- Completeness and appropriateness of the action plan, timeline and budget for securing the products and services based on compliance with the 34 cybersecurity measures of the CyberFundamentals (CYFUN) framework (more information [HERE](#)).
- Completeness, quality and capacity of the Host Organization to carry out the project and implement the proposed objectives and action plan.
- Plan to ensure that the increased level of cybersecurity resulting from the funding is preserved over time.

### Selection

Prioritised in order of submission to the RIF (non-competitive procedures apply) on the condition that proposals have been deemed eligible for funding following the evaluation procedure until the sum of the requested funding in proposals approved equals the total Call budget.

## FUNDING PAYMENT

Within one (1) month of the completion of the projects, the Host Organization will submit an «Final Activity Report» and the «Funding Payment Request» form to the RIF, available on the IRIS Portal.

In addition, monitoring visits may be carried out by RIF for on-site verifications whenever deemed necessary.

The method of payment of the RIF funding shall be as follows:

- Pre-financing: pre-financing corresponds to 50% of the Requested Funding and will be paid upon Contract signature.
- Final Payment: the Final Payment may correspond to up to the balance of the Requested Funding, taking into consideration the eligible costs of the project and the Final Aid Intensity.

It should be noted that the final installment will be paid provided that the Host Organisation has obtained a verification certificate from DSA confirming the implementation of the measures. The verification audits will be conducted by Cybersecurity Maturity Auditors from



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the relevant registry managed by the Cyprus Organization for Standardization (CYS). For more information, click [HERE](#).

The invoices for the provision of services and products/solutions and the cost of the certification body must be attached to the «Funding Payment Request». If the cost of the eligible expenses, based on the supporting documents, is less than the amount of the total requested funding for the proposal, then the final, actual cost will be provided.

In addition, if the Host Organization has not secured certification and/or the total eligible expenses based on approved costs are less than the minimum project funding (€20.000), the funding will not be granted to the beneficiary and the entire funding given will be returned to RIF.

## RESTART 2016-2020 WORK PROGRAMME

In the context of this Call, all general rules and procedures for the participation of organizations and persons, the eligible activities and costs as well as the required details are applicable, as included in the RESTART 2016-2020 Work Programme - Period 05/2022 - 12/2026 which is a key reference document and an important information tool for stakeholders and is available on the IRIS portal. (<https://iris.research.org.cy/#/documentlibrary>)

## INFORMATION – CONTACT DETAILS

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### RIF Support Service

#### E-mail

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#### Telephone

+35722205000

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*The Research and Innovation Foundation may, at its discretion, proceed to the extension or revocation of the present Call by applying the same publication procedure.*



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