



## FUNDING SCHEME

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

## PROGRAMME

«FAST TRACK INNOVATION CYBERSECURITY»

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

NCC-CY-FTI/1026



Co-funded by  
the European Union



Republic of Cyprus



RESEARCH  
& INNOVATION  
FOUNDATION



**NCC**  
CYBERSECURITY NATIONAL  
COORDINATION CENTRE  
CYPRUS

**COMMISSIONER  
OF COMMUNICATIONS**

Office of the Commissioner  
for Electronic Communications  
and Postal Regulation

The Programme is co-financed by the Republic of Cyprus and the Digital Europe Programme of the European Union



ΙΔΡΥΜΑ  
ΕΡΕΥΝΑΣ ΚΑΙ  
ΚΑΙΝΟΤΟΜΙΑΣ



**NCC**  
ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΣΥΝΤΟΝΙΣΜΟΥ  
ΚΥΒΕΡΝΟΑΣΦΑΛΕΙΑΣ  
ΚΥΠΡΟΥ

**Ε** ΕΠΙΤΡΟΠΟΣ  
ΕΠΙΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΩΝ

Αρχή  
Ψηφιακής  
Ασφάλειας

## 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 «**Fast Track Innovation - Cybersecurity**» and invites potential beneficiaries to submit relevant Project Proposals (Proposals).

The present Call is announced as part of a series of actions of the 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 Centres (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 «N4CY2-Advancing the NCC-CY: The Next Chapter of the National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre of Cyprus» (Grant Agreement 101195086) project is co-financed by the Republic of Cyprus and the "Digital Europe" Programme of the European Union.



Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση  
της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία

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## GENERAL CALL INFORMATION

|                             |                                     |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Programme                   | FAST TRACK INNOVATION CYBERSECURITY |
| Call Code                   | NCC-CY-FTI/1026                     |
| Call Budget                 | 1.500.000 euro                      |
| Maximum funding per project | 100.000 euro                        |
| Date of Publication         | 9 October 2026                      |
| Closing Date                | 8 December 2026, 13:00              |

*The English version of the Call, even though an official translation endorsed by the Research and Innovation Foundation, is provided for information purposes only. Only the Greek version of the Call is legally binding and shall prevail in case of any divergence in interpretation.*

## OBJECTIVES

The Programme aims to support existing enterprises that invest in the rapid development and market deployment of competitive and innovative cybersecurity products and services, specifically through:

- The development of innovative cybersecurity software solutions;
- The development of innovative cybersecurity hardware solutions;
- The development of innovative cybersecurity educational and training materials, for example for critical infrastructures, SMEs, students, and other target groups.

The Programme supports the enhancement of existing products, services, and processes through research and development (R&D) activities, or the development of new products and services that can generate new revenue streams for the enterprise within a short period of time.

## DESCRIPTION

The Programme aims to support existing enterprises that have developed innovative products and/or services that have reached at least the testing or pilot implementation stage. Funding is primarily intended to support the rapid development and optimisation of the product or service, the initiation of commercial production, marketing and promotional activities, and ultimately the successful introduction and commercialization of the product in international markets.





Specifically, funded projects may include experimental development activities such as prototyping, demonstration, pilot operation, testing, and validation of new or improved innovative products and/or services. The new products or services may form part of a family of innovative products already available on the market by the enterprise.

Where the new product or service is based on a new technology, the technology is expected to be at **Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 6** at the start of the project. A corresponding requirement shall apply to non-technological innovations, whereby the innovation should have reached an equivalent level of maturity at project commencement.

## BENEFICIARIES

Small and Medium Enterprises (Categories B.1, B.2)

In addition to the eligibility requirements set out in the RESTART 2016–2020 Programmes Work Programme, eligible applicants under 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 (P.I. 359/2020), as amended and/or replaced from time to time.

In addition, 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 organisation can submit only one (1) project proposal as a Host Organisation. In the event that an Organisation submits more than one (1) proposal as a Host Organisation, 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 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.), 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 may include activities fall under Experimental Development.

Prototyping, demonstration, pilot operation, testing, and validation of improved innovative products and/or services, or the development of new functionalities and applications for a minimum viable product (MVP).

Experimental development activities must correspond to Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) of 6 or higher, in accordance with the relevant definitions adopted by the European Union.

Dissemination activities are not eligible for funding. However, they constitute a prerequisite for applicants seeking the additional aid intensity provided under the Call.

## DURATION OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Up to twelve (12) months.

## BUDGET

€ 1.500.000

## MAXIMUM FUNDING PER PROJECT

€100.000

The aid intensity applicable to the Host Organisation for Experimental Development activities shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of Section 3.2 of the RESTART 2016–2020 Programmes Work.

## ELIGIBLE EXPENSES



Με τη συγχρηματοδότηση  
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For the purposes of the Programme, the following categories of expenditure are eligible for funding:

- Personnel
- Instruments and Equipment (depreciation costs)
- External Services
- Travel
- Consumables
- Specific Costs
- Overheads

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.

Beneficiaries that have not previously participated in the RESTART 2016–2020 Programmes shall be required to apply the simplified cost option of Standard Scale Unit Costs for the calculation of personnel costs.

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

## RESTART 2016-2020 WORK PROGRAMME

Under the present Call, all general rules and procedures for the participation of organisations and individuals, as well as the eligible activities, eligible costs, and other applicable provisions of the RESTART 2016–2020 Programmes, shall apply.

The relevant details are set out in the RESTART 2016–2020 Programmes Work Programme for the period May 2022 – December 2026, which constitutes the main reference document and an important information source for interested parties. The Work Programme is available through the IRIS (Innovation and Research Information System) Portal of the Research and Innovation Foundation (RIF) at <https://iris.research.org.cy/#/documentlibrary>.

## SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

- In addition to the responsibilities of the Coordinator described in the RESTART Work Programme, the Project Coordinator must be employed by the Host Organisation at the time of proposal submission and shall also assume the role of **Project Manager**.





The Project Manager shall be responsible for the planning, management, and implementation of the project from initiation to completion, ensuring that project objectives are achieved in accordance with the agreed timeline, budget, and quality requirements.

- At least one member of the Host Organisation's project team shall assume the role of **Product Developer**. This role may not be undertaken by the same individual serving as the **Project Coordinator / Project Manager**. The Product Developer shall be responsible for the strategy, design, development, and management of the product throughout its lifecycle. The role includes identifying customer needs, analysing market trends and competing solutions, defining product requirements, and coordinating across different business functions (such as engineering, marketing, and sales) to ensure the successful development, commercialization, and market deployment of the product.
- All private sector entities 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 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 informative workshop on project management, which will be organized by RIF.
- Beneficiaries must attend seminars on the financial management of projects.
- Under this Call, requests for an extension of the project duration may be granted for a maximum period of one (1) month, subject to the submission of a fully justified request.
- Payment requests for the interim and final instalments must be submitted within fifteen (15) calendar days following the end of the period to which they relate.
- During the examination of Payment Requests, the deadline for the submission of supplementary information is fourteen (14) calendar days.





- The signing of the Contracts must be completed within forty-five (45) calendar days from the date on which the applicant is invited to proceed with Contract preparation. Otherwise, RIF reserves the right to terminate the Contract preparation procedure. The project start date may be no later than fifteen (15) days after the date of Contract signature.
- As part of the requirements of the Digital Europe Programme (DEP), and in particular 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)** procedure aims to verify that applicants:

- are established in a Member State of the European Union or in an eligible country associated with the DEP; and
- are not directly or indirectly controlled by an ineligible third country or by entities or nationals of such a country.

The Research and Innovation Foundation (RIF) and/or the National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre (NCC-CY) may request additional information or supporting documents as part of the OCA procedure, including information concerning the applicant's shareholding structure, beneficial owners, ownership and control structure, as well as any commercial or financial relationships that may affect the control of the organisation.

**Failure to submit the relevant declaration at the proposal submission stage will result in the rejection of the proposal at the preliminary eligibility check.** In addition, failure to provide the required supporting documents/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 all local participating organizations of the Cypriot Consortium, 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:  
o the participation of women as Project Coordinators, and  
o a gender-balanced participation in Projects.*

**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 I – Curricula Vitae (A document to be uploaded as an Annex to the IRIS Portal in PDF format). Applicants are encouraged to submit the curricula vitae of the key members of the project team. It is recommended that the CVs be prepared using the EUROPASS format and do not exceed five (5) pages per person – **Optional**
4. ANNEX III - **Mandatory Submission** Call Specific Information (A document to be uploaded as an Annex to the IRIS Portal in PDF format).  
(a) Ownership Control Declaration – OCA

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

## PROJECT SELECTION

### Evaluation Procedure

The Proposals are evaluated in two Stages.

For the Stage A of the Evaluation, will consists of a Preliminary Check and a Remote Evaluation procedure by two (2) experts.

Proposals which secure an Evaluation Score of at least 12.00/15.00 are eligible to qualify to Stage B of the Evaluation.

In Stage B, proposals are evaluated by the Independent Evaluation Committee. Specifically, proposals shall proceed to Stage B in descending order of score, until the cumulative amount





of funding requested by the selected proposals reaches twice the total budget available under the Call, provided that the proposals have been deemed eligible for funding (with a score of at least 12.00/15.00).

The number of proposals that qualify to Stage B of the Evaluation may be increased in the following occasions: (i) Eligible proposals with the same score which are ranked at the bottom of the ranking list. In this case the proposals will proceed to Stage B, and (ii) Re-evaluation of proposals, for which a redress was submitted and approved regarding the result of the Evaluation in Stage A. In this case, re-evaluated proposals that receive the same or higher score than the last proposal on the ranking list, will qualify to Stage B.

The final decision regarding the selection of a proposal for funding by RIF is at the discretion of the Committee. After the completion of the procedure, the relevant Evaluation Report will be communicated to the Project Coordinator, stating the rationale behind the Committee's decision. The Committee's decision is final and cannot be appealed against.

Prior to the evaluation of each Proposal, and the score assignment according to the evaluation criteria, evaluators will examine the compatibility:

- a) of the Proposal with the Programme and Call Objectives,
- b) of the proposed activities with the activities allowed by the Programme/Call, and
- c) of the Proposal with the «Do No Significant Harm» principle.

In case where the Proposal is not compatible with the above, the evaluator rejects the Proposal and does not proceed with the examination of the evaluation criteria.

## Evaluation Criteria/Weighting

### 1. Excellence - Weight 30%

- **Degree of Innovation and Originality**
  - The proposed product/service/process is of high value. Emphasis on a high degree of innovation and diversity, relative to existing or competing solutions and practice at the an international level.
  - Ability to successfully enter the existing market or create a new market. Emphasis should be placed on clearly identifying the strengths and weaknesses of innovation, as well as opportunities and threats
- **Value Proposition & Competitive Advantage**





- ○ A clear description of the product/service/process and its competitive advantage. Adequate explanation of the problem it solves, the needs it addresses, and the value it creates for the market.
- ○ Assessment of the market opportunity, including the size, specific segments, key geographical areas, and the projected growth over the next five years. The significance of the opportunity and the timing for its implementation.
- ○ Justification of the "Voice of the Customer," i.e., confirmation from customers, including the identification of key customers and whether interest or willingness to use the product/service/process has been demonstrated.
- ○ Analysis of the strategies of existing competitors offering similar products/services, and justification of how the proposed innovation can successfully compete.
- **Technology & Product/Service/Process Development**
  - Description of the technology underlying the product/service/process.
  - Assessment of how the technology creates a competitive advantage for the proposed product/service/process.

## 2. Added Value and Benefit - Weight 35%

### ○ Market Opportunity & Business Environment

- • Analysis of the business environment, including trends, driving forces, market entry barriers, and other dynamics that may affect the introduction of the product/service/process into the markets
- • Analysis of the regulatory environment, including opportunities and potential barriers.

### ○ Business Case

- • Clarity and adequacy of revenue and cost structure, including cash flow projections, Net Present Value (NPV), and Internal Rate of Return (IRR).
- • Estimation of the expected impact on the growth of the company from the use of funding.
- • Identification of all key resources required for the success of the innovation in the market.

## 3. Implementation – Weighting: 35%

### ○ Implementation Plan





- Assessment of the completeness, credibility, and appropriateness of the project proposal, including the suitability of the implementation timetable and the proposed budget.
- Assessment of the credibility of the risk management and mitigation plan to ensure that the proposed product, service, or process can be delivered within the specified timeframe.

#### ○ **Go-to-Market Plan**

- Assessment of the Go-to-Market Plan, including the commercialization strategy and development timeline, is detailed, realistic, and feasible.
- Assessment of the detailed product/service/process development plan is aligned with the proposed Go-to-Market strategy.
- Assessment of the suitability and reliability of the strategy for managing and protecting knowledge to ensure 'freedom to operate' (unobstructed commercial exploitation). This includes intellectual property (IP) ownership in a manner that avoids infringing third-party IP rights, pending patent applications, and any related commercial licensing issues.

#### ○ **Team**

- Completeness, quality, and capability of the Host Organisation (at organisational or individual level) to implement the project successfully and achieve its objectives across all stages, including product development, value chain development, and market entry.
- The Host Organisation and the team possess the necessary experience and capabilities for the development and commercialization of the proposed product/ service/process in a short period of time.
- The main team members are already employed by the company and ready to implement the project.

### **Selection**

Proposals that have been deemed eligible for funding following a competitive process and evaluation are selected for funding.

It is understood that the total amount of approved project funding will not exceed the total budget of the Call for Proposals.

### **Funding Payment**

For this Call, funding payment will be provided as follows:





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- **Pre-financing:** pre-financing corresponds to 70% 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.

## INFORMATION – CONTACT DETAILS

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### RIF Support Service

Email

[callsupport@research.org.cy](mailto:callsupport@research.org.cy)

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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