

# GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

## CALL FOR LOCAL ORGANISERS

EUDIS Defence Hackathon and Mentoring program 2026 – Spring Edition



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## Glossary

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| <b>EU:</b> European Union  |
| <b>EC:</b> European Commission   |
| <b>DEFIS:</b> Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space   |
| <b>EUDIS:</b> European Union Defence Innovation Scheme   |
| <b>MS:</b> EU Member States  |
| <b>NO:</b> Norway  |
| <b>EDA:</b> European Defence Agency  |
| <b>MoD:</b> Ministry of Defence  |
| <b>EUDIS implementation team:</b> It is a consortium of entities responsible to implement the EUDIS Defence Hackathon and mentoring programme 2026 on behalf of DEFIS. Led by CIVITTA, its partners are CARSA, CECOFORMA and TEHNOPOL. More information is to be found on the website <a href="https://eudis-hackathon.eu/">https://eudis-hackathon.eu/</a>  |
| <b>Local organiser:</b> Local Hackathon Organisers are dedicated facilitators and coordinators of the EUDIS Defence Hackathon on a regional level. Selected through an open call process, these entities play a pivotal role in orchestrating the success of the hackathon within their respective localities.   |
| <b>Local organiser selection board:</b> A group of Hackathon/Innovation experts responsible for evaluating and choosing the 8 local organisers for the EUDIS Defence Hackathon.  |
| <b>Central Hub:</b> The main coordination hub for the EUDIS Defence Hackathon and local events. It employs two-way streaming to connect locations – facilitating interactive sessions between the Central Hub and local hackathons. Managed by Tehnopol, it hosts and streams shared hackathon sessions like opening, keynotes and awards. The Hub ensures smooth communication and is equipped with quality tech and staff to manage streaming and inquiries. |
| <b>Participants:</b> Enthusiastic teams who actively engage in the EUDIS Defence Hackathon, bringing their diverse skills, creativity, and problem-solving capabilities to the event. These include startups or startup founders who have already existing MVP which they want to develop further for defence purposes.  |
| <b>EMS Platform:</b> CARSA's platform – Evaluation Management System (EMS) – will be used to organise and manage in an efficient and dependable fashion the open call for expression of interest for selecting the local organisers for the EUDIS Defence Hackathons – centralising the data collection, evaluation and scoring/selection process.   |

**Idea Mentor:** These are local experts recruited by the local hackathon organisers who assist teams in their hackathon journey up till the mentoring programme. They have a vast knowledge of startups, lean practices, agile processes, coaching, and innovation.

**TAIKAI:** TAIKAI is a hackathon platform often used by innovators, corporates, developers to enable the registration of participants, perform participant evaluations and confirm the awarding of winning teams.

## 1. Background and objectives of the Call for EUDIS Defence Hackathon 2026 Local Organisers

The European Union (EU) is strengthening its defence sector in response to the evolving security challenges and changing geopolitical landscape. The EU Commission has taken significant steps to support defence industry, innovation, cooperation, research and development, and strategic autonomy – through initiatives such as the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act.

The EU Defence Innovation Scheme (EUDIS) is an instrument enabled by the EDF to strengthen defence innovation in the European Union. EUDIS offers a set of instruments for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), including start-ups, and other non-traditional players in defence industrial ecosystem to ensure more opportunities to access the European Defence Fund. It aims to lower entry barriers into the defence domain for smaller players and innovators, focusing on technological readiness and market maturity. EUDIS supports innovators throughout the development cycle to mature, scale-up, demonstrate their use-case, grow and successfully enter the market. The funding for **Annual Defence Hackathons** is one of the targeted innovation support tracks of EUDIS.

**The EUDIS Defence Hackathon 2026 – Spring Edition aims to continue strengthening Europe's defence innovation ecosystem through the organisation of a large-scale hackathon hosted by experienced entities across eight regional locations in EU Member States and Norway.** This event will gather at least 400 participants (at least 50 per location), ensuring a diverse and inclusive environment that brings together enthusiastic teams made of startups or startup founders with a working product. The hackathon will run for two and a half days, with experienced local organisers providing physical venues and a central hub overseeing coordination. Participants will work on defence related challenges and hardware innovation to attract a broader range of participants. The DG DEFIS EUDIS Defence hackathons aim to develop skills, attract new talent to the defence sector, and connect young researchers with industry experts and defence end-users.

The objective of this Call is to **select eight EUDIS 2026 Hackathon local organisers located in 8 different EU Member States/Norway**. In other words, this Call for proposals shall identify and select **eight proficient local organisers across the EU/Norway** who possess the expertise to successfully execute the envisaged hackathons while ensuring seamless implementation.

### 1.1. Hackathon themes and challenges

This Open Call offers potential Local Organisers to focus their Hackathon proposals on the following 2 possible Themes and Challenges:

#### **Theme 1: “Defending Air Space”**

The European Union calls for deeper defence cooperation with Ukraine, particularly on drone technology and countermeasures. Building defence partnerships is essential for Europe's military readiness. The Commission's Drone Alliance with Ukraine demonstrates how

collaboration can serve both parties: Transforming Ukraine into an indigestible 'steel porcupine' that protects Ukrainian sovereignty while strengthening European security. Europe must deepen this partnership, support Ukraine's defence capabilities while benefiting from its battlefield innovations, tactical expertise and rapidly expanded industrial capacity. This can be done by providing concrete deployable solutions for a multi-layered network capable of detecting, tracking and neutralising hostile drones, while also enabling precision strike capabilities through advanced drone platforms.

The theme is subdivided into three challenges which will be supported with capabilities by local organisers to enable rapid development and prototyping whenever possible.

These challenges are the following:

### **Challenge 1: Cost-effective Drone Interceptors**

Ukraine faces critical interceptor shortages as Western allies compete for the same limited production. Defence organisations froze deliveries of key defence systems as simultaneous military activity in multiple regions, including Ukraine and the Middle East, rapidly drained existing inventories. Interceptor missile production capacity will cap at just 650 units annually by 2027. Additionally, the cost to intercept is exhaustive to Ukrainian defences as each Shahed costs \$20,000-50,000 while interceptors cost millions, and Russia tolerates 75%+ loss rates. Furthermore, the current interceptor operation systems are resource costly for training specialists. Developing more user-friendly and easy to use interfaces would offer a solution to the current scarceness in technical skillsets to operate the interceptors on a larger scale.

### **Challenge 2: Next Generation Drone Detection Systems**

Ukraine's drone detection infrastructure cannot keep pace with evolved threats. Weather conditions of rain, fog and low cloud cover blind both visual and thermal cameras, while upgraded Shaheds fly at 477 km/h as low as 100 meters above ground, giving defenders only five or six seconds to find, target and destroy them. Ukraine's 10,000-15,000 acoustic sensors cannot track over 1,000 drones weekly attacking from multiple directions simultaneously. Detection systems are designed for slower, higher-flying threats. Not able to provide adequate warnings against hundreds of fast, low-altitude drones attacking in poor weather across Ukraine's vast geography. Part of the Russian strategy is to send our waves of useless drones exhausting the detection and deterrence measures, before attacking with intent to damage.

### **Challenge 3: Local Organiser-Defined Challenge**

In addition to the common challenges under the Defending Airspace theme, Local Organisers will have the possibility to define a third challenge tailored to their specific local or regional context. This challenge will be designed by each Local Organiser to reflect local defence ecosystems, industrial strengths, research capabilities, and operational realities. By allowing Local Organisers to propose a dedicated challenge, the Hackathon encourages solutions that are closely aligned with regional needs and opportunities, while remaining connected to the overarching objective of strengthening European airspace defence. This approach supports

greater relevance, stakeholder engagement, and the development of practical solutions that can be tested, demonstrated, or further developed at local level.

## 2. Funding, support and activities foreseen for selected EUDIS Defence Hackathon organisers

### 2.1. Funding, support and resources available

Selected **EUDIS 2026 Defence Hackathon local organisers will be provided with a lump-sum financial support up to 60.000€** to carry out all the required activities for a successful hackathon implementation. An amount of one-third of the general expense budget (EUR 20,000) will be paid in advance as a pre-payment once the Grant Agreement has been signed to kickstart the hackathon preparations immediately.

The remaining 40,000 € will be paid once the hackathon is over and the corresponding activity reporting has been approved by DEFIS. Details about the technical, financial, and timing requirements will be described in the Grant Agreement.

Also, hackathon organisers and participating teams will have at their disposal the following resources in the **briefing material**. Covering a range of essential elements, including the event goals, theme, rules and evaluation criteria. To enhance engagement and empower creativity, the program will also include inspirational case studies, expert interviews, and practical resources that teams can leverage during the event. By providing well-crafted and informative briefing material, the underpinning idea is to set the stage for participants to dive deep into the challenges at hand, spark innovative thinking, and foster cooperative problem-solving throughout the hackathon.

Additionally, to empower local organisers and streamline the onboarding process, the **EUDIS Defence Hackathons 2026 implementation team will adopt TAIKAI as a centralised platform for the hackathon management**. This platform will provide local organisers with the ability to view participants and support team work processes while fully complying with the GDPR regulation. By providing a unified dashboard, local organisers will be able to monitor participant engagement, team formation and project idea submissions, thus staying in control of key milestones. Additionally, the **EUDIS defence hackathon Central Hub will support local organisers with standardised participant onboarding materials and communication/promotion resources**. By this offering, local organisers can ensure that participants receive a consistent, uniform, and informative introduction to the hackathon process, also reducing the administrative workload of the local organisers.

### 2.2. Preparations and required activities

In return, the selected EUDIS 2026 Hackathon local organisers will be **committed to implement the following tasks during their hackathons:**

1. **Attract and develop** the next generation of skilled talent to foster the growth and innovative capacity of the defence sector.

2. **Engage and nurture** a diverse spectrum of startups, startup founders and teams of innovators interested in providing breakthrough solutions to support the needs of the European defence sector.
3. **Raise awareness** of defence, EUDIS and find opportunities for developing the European Defence ecosystem.
4. **Provide winning teams** with additional skills facilitating the development of powerful collaborative solutions that will strengthen Europe's Defence Sector.
5. **Facilitate cooperation and knowledge sharing** by connecting young researchers, innovators, defence industry experts and communities.

Right after the selection process has finalised and the selected Hackathon organisers have been informed, and validated, the following onboarding and supporting activities will be launched for them:

- **Kick-off and Onboarding Meetings:** At the beginning of the process, selected local organisers will participate in a kick-off meeting where expectations, roles and responsibilities will be defined. Subsequent onboarding meetings will delve into the details of materials, tools and support. This will ensure that the selected local organisers have a holistic understanding of the hackathon process.
- **Ongoing Coaching and Communication:** Following the initial onboarding, the EUDIS Defence Hackathon implementation team will maintain continuous contact with the selected local organisers through regular coaching calls and check-ins. A dedicated communication channel, such as Teams, and Discord, will be established to facilitate ongoing discussions, troubleshooting and information sharing. Peer-to-peer learning sessions will be included in the coaching to stimulate the sharing of best practice across various locations and countries.
- **Accessible Online Guides:** In addition to meetings and coaching, local organisers will have access to comprehensive written guides available online. These guides will serve as a reliable reference point, offering clarity on hackathon activities and procedures.
- **Standardised Templates and Materials:** Standardised templates and materials will be provided to reduce the administrative burden on local organisers. By offering ready-to-use resources for marketing, communications, and coordination, local organisers can focus on value-added tasks like participant, mentor, and partner engagement.
- **Shared cloud space:** The EUDIS Defence Hackathon implementation team will provide the awarded local organisers with a dedicated shared space in Sharepoint to ensure that every organisation has access to shared information, can work in a secure system and collaborate with the central hub in all the necessary inputs needed during the preparation, execution of the hackathon and after.

The **selected local organisers will be responsible for promoting teamwork, innovation, and communication within their local communities.**

### 2.3. Mentors

A crucial part of a successful hackathon is to have high-quality mentors, selection board members, and partners within defence, innovation and business expertise. Therefore, the **selected local organisers, with the support of the EUDIS consortium team responsible for EUDIS defence hackathon 2026 implementation, will also commit official partners for the local hackathons and all mentors and Selection Board members.** Indeed, **mentors will play a pivotal role in guiding hackathon participants**, offering insights into emerging defence technologies, global security trends and practical considerations. Their prolonged and continuous mentoring to the winning teams later during the mentoring programme will enhance the quality of the solutions, pushing them to be not just innovative but also at the forefront of cutting-edge defence ecosystems.

Except for the onboarding of the Ministries of Defences experts from EU Member States, Norway and Ukraine MoDs, and support of mentors from the EUDIS consortium's side, all activities are local organisers' responsibility. Knowledge, experience and capabilities to reach out to their communities and to secure qualified participants (teams) is expected from the selected local organisers. However, when needed, local organisers will be guided and provided with material and enough time to find and engage with these necessary stakeholders as well as to onboard skilful and motivated teams via a **Call for Participants**. The objective of the call for participants is to recruit at least 400 participants for 8 local events of the EUDIS Defence Hackathon. In this sense, it is expected that each Hackathon organiser will host at least 50 participants / 10-15 teams. This will be a **KPI commitment included in the corresponding Grant Agreement** and therefore a condition for final payment of the grant. This call for teams to participate will be open from 16<sup>th</sup> February 2026 – 20<sup>th</sup> March 2026 (see specific dates in Section 5 of this document) and it will be supported centrally.

### 2.4. Participants and their journey

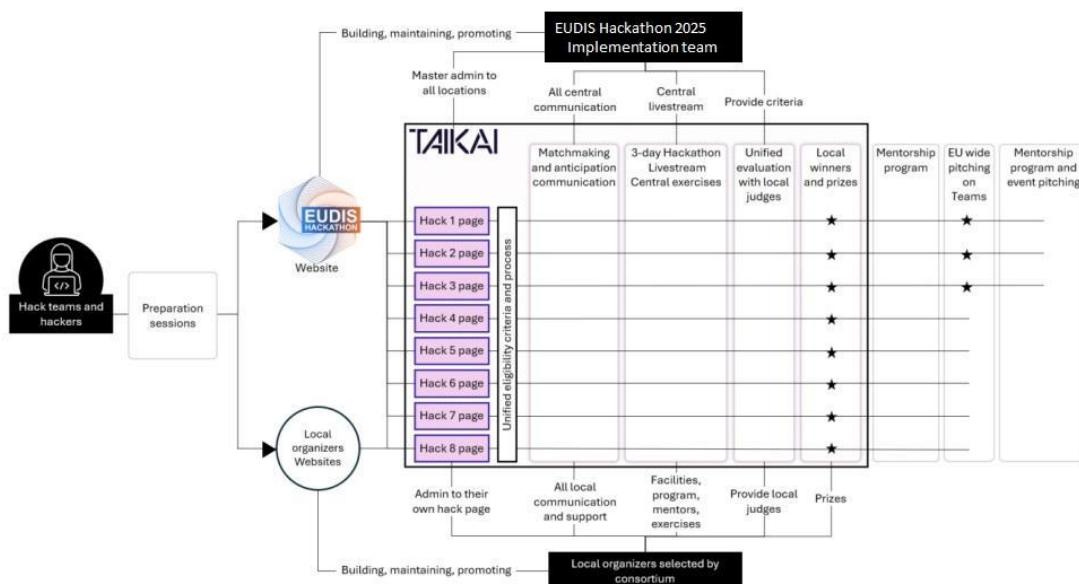
The success of a hackathon is determined by putting the right people in the right setting. Participants will have six main milestones in their journey: Call for participation, Registration and confirmation, Meet-Your-Mentor session, Hackathon, Post-hackathon Mentoring program and the EU-Wide pitching.

Participant registration, selection and attendance confirmation will be managed via the TAIKAI Platform, which will provide a seamless participant experience.

After the deadline, local organisers will select the teams to join the hackathon. These teams will immediately receive an acceptance email from the hackathon platform along with a request to confirm their participation. This will help the local organisers to determine the actual attendance of the hackathon and prepare the physical location to accommodate all participants.

The confirmed participants will also receive calendar invites for the pre-hackathon Meet Your Mentor session and the hackathon dates. Activities for onboarding and supporting participants will then commence. The picture below depicts the journey described above:





## 2.5. Attraction of participants to the EUDIS Defence Hackathon

Local organisers will play a fundamental role in running communication campaigns to promote and attract participants to the hackathon. These campaigns will be carried out in close coordination with the EUDIS implementation team and DG DEFIS to ensure consistent messaging and alignment with overarching program goals.

As part of these efforts, local organisers will be required to host at least one virtual information session or webinar in English. These sessions will complement a series of centrally planned events, including an EU-wide webinar organised by the EUDIS Implementation team, which will kick off the registration period and focus on the program, themes and eligibility criteria.

The local organisers' webinars should highlight local strengths and excellence as well as improve the skills of the already registered participants with training. Also, local organisers will have some autonomy and flexibility to tailor topics as long as they align with the theme and challenges of the hackathon, the implementation team guidelines and are approved by DG DEFIS.

Suggested topics include:

- Understanding the challenges with insights from experts or stakeholders.
- Inspirational founder stories.
- Insights from previous EUDIS Hackathon participants and winners.
- Strategies for succeeding in a hackathon.
- Identifying innovative ideas in defence.
- Navigating the defence market.
- Supporting young startups in the defence industry.

Each session must include



- An information point to address questions about the initiative and actively promote registrations.
- A promotional point to gain registrations

These local organisers' webinars must be conducted in English to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all participants. However, additional sessions in local languages are permitted to cater to regional audiences, provided they align with the consortium's guidelines and are approved by DG DEFIS.

### 3. Eligibility criteria for applicants

#### 3.1. Who can apply?

Any **private or public entity legally established in the European Union or Norway** and not being subject to control by a non-associated third country or by a non-associated third-country entity will be eligible to submit a proposal to this Call for organisers. Please note that this requirement will have to be validated even after the selection, and you might be required to provide additional information (see section 6).

Due to the nature of the events, it's a necessity that all of the information, communication, associated facilities, relevant assets and applied resources are only located within the EU Member State or Norway territory. This territorial requirement encompasses all infrastructure, including servers, cloud services and data processing facilities, that will be used for the purposes of the hackathon. No data or operational resources may be hosted, stored, or processed outside of these designated jurisdictions.

Furthermore, to be considered eligible, **applicants must comply with the following technical and organisational requirements:**

- a) The physical location is suitable for hosting the event, with the capability to have at least 50 participants as well as mentors, selection board members, visitors, experts and speakers from EU Member States, Norway or Ukraine. This includes:
  - Main stage with screens and speakers where people gather around with seating for 30 people, which can be used to stream the main sessions from the Central Hub.
  - Hacking area: 10 tables & 50 chairs for approximately 50 participants and 10 teams (with spares to add more if needed).
  - Meeting rooms: about 3-5 private meeting rooms
  - Catering area: Participants shall be provided with 5 meals (dinner on Friday, breakfast, lunch and dinner on Saturday, breakfast and lunch on Sunday).
  - Snack & coffee area
  - Camera(s) to stream activities from your location to the central hub – enabling also the remote connection of participants.
  - 3 qualified people who can host/facilitate the hackathon and provide organisational support to the teams.

- Chill-out area to chat, relax. (Optional)

b) The entity must have 2-3 laptops to connect to the internet as well as fast and reliable internet connectivity capable of running smooth, uninterrupted video calls and video streaming with 50+ people (*at least 100 mb/s upload and download capacity and the latency should be lower than 2 seconds*), allowing running video calls and video streaming services such as MS Teams or Google Meet as well as broadcast and stream HD quality video online. Additionally, organisers should have a main internet line and a backup line if the main one goes down [This is acceptable under eligible costs].

c) The entity must have a minimum project team of 3 people including: a project manager, marketing/communication manager and event production manager. At least 1 of these persons should be present during the hackathon and at least one person must have experience in the field of defence.

d) Every staff member involved in the organisation of the EUDIS Defence Hackathon is an EU or a Norwegian citizen residing in the EU Member States or Norway.

e) All hackathon participants, mentors, selection board members and speakers must be citizens of one of the EU Member States, Norway or Ukraine and must be residing in the EU, Norway or Ukraine. All participants must be adults.

f) The entity must demonstrate proven experience in organising at least 1 hackathon, accelerator (TRL 4+) or other forms of open innovation programmes with minimum 30 participants and 5 startups/innovative teams.

g) The entity must have the capability to run a hackathon in the given timeline. (*This includes all different phases from sponsor and partner recruitment, participant recruitment, a recorded webinar and other pre-hackathon sessions to the preparations and facilitation of the actual hackathon*)

h) The entity must have the financial capability to host the hackathon within the given budget and payment timeline.

i) The entity must secure additional sponsorship of at least EUR 10,000 to be allocated as a monetary prize for the local winners. This can be complemented with in-kind, discount, or skills development perks (in addition to cash prices).

j) The entity must have the capability to execute and facilitate prototype testing to validate the teams' final projects, as included in the provided event schedule (*see key dates section of this Guide*).

k) The entity must have access to 10-15 of the region's relevant key research & innovation stakeholders (University faculties, RTOs, startups, etc.) and defence end-users as well as defence technical mentors and judges to support and evaluate the teams.

l) The entity must have autonomous capability to conduct communication and promotion activities with a marketing/communications specialist having experience in digital marketing/communications, and in the production of professional communications products. Also, the organising entity must have suitable channels for promotion with demonstrable reach (social media, website, newsletters). Content creation capabilities, including an on-location professional photographer/videographer are considered a must as well. The organiser must execute adequate communication and promotional

activities to reach the needed participants, mentors, selection board members and partners.

- m) The entity must consider risk mitigation measures for the hackathon date in their country and foresee any potential risks in terms of lack of participation.
- n) In terms of security and data protection, local organiser's key people working on the project must be trained on up-to date cybersecurity measures and Data Protection management and compliance.

In other words, all these questions which are included in the online application form must be answered with YES in order to be an eligible applicant. Evidence for some of them will be required to be submitted in the application (see section 3.2. of this Guide).

### 3.2. Eligible proposals

In order to be considered eligible, proposals must comply with the following requirements:

1. Proposal is submitted by the deadline using CARSA's EMS Platform – <https://eudis.carsa.es/>
2. A complete and readable technical project description included (.pdf document) in English which follows the template provided.
3. Include resumes (in English) of the 3 team members involved, including the resume of the marketing/communication specialist.
4. Include relevant information about communication and promotion capabilities (requirement k) above). Namely, a .pdf document containing (**ANNEX I**):
  - A Communications & dissemination strategy/plan for the event
  - Social media channels & website.
  - Examples of relevant communications products needed
5. Include a general expenses budget table following the template table provided as **ANNEX II**.
6. Upload the **Ownership Declaration** duly filled in, signed and scanned, following the template provided in the EMS Platform.

Several organisations are allowed to co-host the Hackathon. Applications with more than one organisation involved will designate the coordinating organisation, who will be responsible for the completion and submission of the application. The application can only be submitted by the coordinator.

### 3.3. How to apply

Applicants will **first have to register in the EMS Platform (a cloud-based tool)** by accessing the following URL: <https://eudis.carsa.es/>

General information about the person registering and the entity he/she is representing will be required (first name and family name, email address, telephone, full legal name of the

organisation, short name of the organisation, VAT nr., City and Country of location). Access to the EMS platform needs to be established by creating a username and a password.

Once the registration is completed, **applicants may start preparing and submitting their applications** directly on the EMS Platform. This process consists in 3 simple steps:

1. **Filling in the online application form** by providing replies to a set of questions (only YES/NO answers) + declaration/commitments.
2. **Introducing the candidate's Name-Acronym and uploading a Technical Project Description** (*template is provided to all applicants in the EMS Platform and in EUDIS Defence Hackathon 2026 website. Also, as annex to this Guide*), **the required 3 resumes** (the team for the hackathon and the marketing/communication specialist) **as well as Annex I, Annex II and the Ownership Declaration** filled and signed.
3. **Pressing the “Submit” button.**

Applicants can save their progress and submit their application as many times as they want until the call is closed (until the application deadline). Only the last submitted version of the application will be evaluated

## 4. The evaluation process

### 4.1. Eligibility check and preparations

Once the Call closes, the evaluation phase will first start with the **eligibility check** and will then move to the assessment of the proposals, scoring, and ranking of the applications (based on the evaluation criteria described below).

**Only eligible proposals** (see the 3 requirements above) **will be evaluated further.**

The **selection board will be composed of 3 experts (+2 in reserve list)** in Innovation/Hackathon experts with experience in similar innovation competitions, innovation management, or start-up support schemes. The European Commission may also be participating in the selection board.

**Avoiding conflicts of interest** is essential to ensure fairness and transparency in the selection process. That is why – before receiving access to the application files, the evaluators from the Board shall make and sign a specific written declaration of absence of conflict of interest to pursue their work as a member of the Selection Board. Where received applications present a potential situation of conflict of interest for a Board Member (e.g., personal/financial/professional relation with the applicant) He/She will be replaced by a member in the reserve list.

### 4.2. Evaluation Criteria

Evaluations will be fair, impartial, transparent and carried out in a standardised/consistent manner following the below-outlined evaluation criteria, thresholds and weights will be the following:



| Criteria  | Scoring   | Threshold | Weight |
|---|---|-----------|--------|
| The quality of the communication and promotion plan for the hackathon, and the commitment on the number of participants (also implying that the designated period will not be national/regional/public holiday in their states/regions concerned)   | <b>10 points max</b><br>1-2: Inadequate<br>3-4: Poor<br>5-6: Fair<br>7-8: Good<br>9-10: Excellent | 6         | 20%    |
| Level of involvement from relevant national/regional defence agencies (including Ministry of Defence, procurement and defence innovation agencies) and contributing partners (companies, universities, incubators, accelerators, public entities etc.) that can deliver support (such as defence and business mentoring) to the participants as mentioned in task 1; previous experience from organising a defence hackathon. | <b>10 points max</b><br>1-2: Inadequate<br>3-4: Poor<br>5-6: Fair<br>7-8: Good<br>9-10: Excellent | 6         | 60%    |
| Digital capabilities to ensure connectivity and co-operation between the local hackathon locations, experience in the use of ICT technologies, ability to provide technical tools or solutions to the hackathon, access to prototyping facilities, testing equipment, databases or other resources that can help the participants to mature their ideas, solutions or prototypes.   | <b>10 points max</b><br>1-2: Inadequate<br>3-4: Poor<br>5-6: Fair<br>7-8: Good<br>9-10: Excellent | 6         | 20%    |

The specific elements associated with each evaluation criteria will be the following:

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| <p><b>1. The quality of the communication and promotion plan for the hackathon, and the commitment on the number of participants (also implying that the designated period will not be national/regional/public holiday in their states/regions concerned). Also, quality of the sustainability plan or strategy to leverage outcomes beyond the hackathon (e.g. matchmaking, follow-up support, integration into innovation pipelines).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appropriateness of the plan for securing 50 participants, approx.10-15 teams</li> <li>▪ Appropriateness of the communication plan showing the capability to promote the event including the forecasted budget, the current reach on social media, a list of partners willing to promote the event and that can reach the targeted audience</li> <li>▪ Appropriateness of the post-hackathon support strategy – sustainability plan</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>2. Level of involvement from relevant national/regional defence agencies (including Ministry of Defence, Armed Forces, procurement, defence innovation agencies) and contributing partners (companies, universities, incubators, accelerators, public entities etc.) that can deliver support (such as relevant defence and business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appropriateness of the plan for securing partners and sponsors, as well as the amount of sponsorship that will be required and how it will be allocated. Specify which partners/sponsors are already confirmed and which are potential future partners, and the role that each partner will play in the project.</li> <li>▪ How relevant actors from the defence end-users (Ministry of Defence or Defence innovation agencies) are involved in the hackathon?</li> </ul>   |

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| <b>mentoring) to the participants and previous experience in organising a defence hackathon.</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Specification of actors the team will partner with and the plan for securing them as partners</li> <li>▪ Access to defence and technical mentors as well as selection board members to support and evaluate the teams. They should also have experience in organising a defence hackathon and the skills to test and evaluate prototyped solutions, sanity-check code, etc. How the right profiles with industry-specific knowledge are secured. List already secured profiles, if any.</li> <li>▪ Appropriateness of the plan to confirm that all participants, mentors, speakers and selection board members must be citizens of one of the EU Member States, Norway or Ukraine and must be residing in the EU, Norway or Ukraine. All participants must be adults. Giving explanations about what local authorities the team will partner with to enable this process.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>3. Digital capabilities to ensure connectivity and co-operation between the local hackathon locations, experience in the use of ICT technologies, ability to provide technical tools of solutions to the hackathon, access to prototyping facilities, testing equipment, databases or other resources that can help participants to mature their ideas, solutions or prototypes.</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Experience in organising defence hackathons or other forms of open innovation programs. Competencies of the CVs presented. 3 of these competences are required: 1) Project Management, 2) Event Production Management and 3) Marketing Management. At least two people should share these tasks and at least one person must have experience in the field of defence.</li> <li>▪ Appropriateness of the budget presented its alignment with the foreseen tasks ensuring a good implementation of the hackathon and its complementarity/accordance with DEFIS financial payment procedure timeline.</li> <li>▪ How the organiser will run the hackathon in the given timeline, including participant recruitment, pre-hackathon sessions, all initial preparations and the organisation of the hackathon as a whole.</li> <li>▪ Plan for streaming the Central Hub content to your participants and recording the physical hackathon venue live for the Central Hub to see, including the potential budget for camera equipment. Teams will be provided the</li> </ul> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>streaming server and training from the Central Hub.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appropriateness of the physical location for the hackathon, including the venue, catering of meals and snacks, audio systems, electricity and working stations for each team. Venue must ensure that it has the capability to host 50 participants as well as mentors and selection board members. Appropriateness of the plan to ensure good digital connectivity allowing smooth HD video services for approximately 50 people to connect to an internet network.</li> <li>▪ Appropriateness of the plan and the means put at the disposal of participants to build prototypes</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

The **threshold** for each criterion will **be 6 out of 10** and will be weighted as indicated above. The **total weighted score for all criteria will be out of 100 points**. The **total threshold score is 60**. Only the applications above the minimum threshold (6 out of 10 for each criterion) will be eligible for selection.

#### 4.3. Assessment of applications

All evaluators will be registered on the EMS platform and will be able to evaluate the applications assigned to them. The evaluation and scoring of the applications will also be documented using a standardised online template on the EMS platform which will include brief qualitative comments on the assessment of the proposal and the score for each evaluation criterion. The total score for each application will be calculated and once all applications have been assessed, it will **a ranking is created according to the evaluation scores**.

All applications received will be evaluated individually and then, the evaluators will meet online to reach a consensus and produce an Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) per each application. In case of even scores, the ranking will also take into consideration the capacity to allocate prizes. These cases will be discussed and assessed with the European Commission.

#### 4.4. Final selection

The Selection Board together with the European Commission will hold a consensus meeting to complete and decide about the selection of local organisers.

The selection of local organisers will be completed by selecting the best 8 proposals of the ranking list making sure that all the chosen hackathons will be hosted in 8 different EU/Norway countries. In other words, **a final exclusion criterion will be implemented to ensure that none of the selected EUDIS Defence Hackathon 2026 hosts comes from the same country and doesn't compete for the same participants.**

Up to 3 applicants will also be put on a back-up list in case the contractual/administrative procedure fails with any of the selected local organisers.

The results of the evaluation will be communicated to all eligible applicants. Selected applicants will receive an official award letter and the details and conditions of the contract agreement with the notification email. Please note that the results of the evaluation letter might also require you to proceed with the necessary validation of the eligibility. Particularly the selected local organisers might be requested to complete the [Ownership Control Declaration](#) validating their compliance with the requirements. The entities will have to confirm officially their interest in being a local organiser and provide without delay the necessary documentation which will be validated by the consortium and transmitted to DG DEFIS for confirmation.

## 5. Key dates

- Opening of the Call: **12<sup>th</sup> December 2025**
- **Deadline for submitting applications: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 23:59h (CET)**
- Online Info session: **12<sup>th</sup> January 2026**, 11:30 (CET)
- Decision on the selected organisers: **1<sup>st</sup> week of February 2026** (*selected Local Organisers will be informed in that week, so it is recommended to regularly check email inbox*)
- Kick-off with the local organisers selected: **February 2026**
- Signing of the Grant Agreement: **2<sup>nd</sup> 2026 – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2026**
- Call for participants and selection: **16<sup>th</sup> February 2026 – 20<sup>th</sup> March 2026**
- **Hackathon: 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> March 2026** (2.5 days)
- Mentoring programme: Kick-off with winning team's: **6<sup>th</sup> April 2026**
- **Live pitching for EU-wide competition:** (tentative) **11<sup>th</sup> June 2026 16:30h (CET)**

The **proposed Hackathon weekend schedule** is the following:



| DAY 1                     |  | DAY 2  |  | DAY 3  |   |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|
| <i>Thursday – Opening</i> |  | <i>Friday – activities are up to local organizers; central Hub is ready to provide any support needed but there will not be any live sessions and requirements to join</i> |  | <i>Saturday – Closing and award ceremony</i> |   |
| <b>16:00</b>              | Opening Ceremony, Welcome speeches, Intro to challenges and checkpoint with local organisers | <b>9:00</b>  | Opening session by Local Organizers<br>Inspirational speaker | <b>9:00</b>                                  | Opening session by Local Organizers                     |
| <b>19:00</b>              | Checkpoint #1  | <b>9:30</b>  | Mentor meetings  | <b>12:30</b>                                 | Submission deadline                                     |
|                           |  | <b>13:00</b>   | Checkpoint #2  | <b>12:30</b>                                 | Jury briefing   |
|                           |  | <b>15:30</b>   | Mentor meeting   | <b>13:30</b>                                 | Pitching (LOs)  |
|                           |  | <b>18:00</b>   | Checkpoint #3  | <b>15:30</b>                                 | Jury deliberation                                       |
|                           |  | <b>20:00</b>   | Social networking (optional)                                 | <b>16:30</b>                                 | Winner announcement/<br>Awarding ceremony (Central Hub) |

Online activities

On-site activities

During the three hackathon days, short sessions with interviews involving participants will be streamed from the central hub for the online audience. Additionally, Day 2 activities can also be organised independently from the central hub schedule. Pitch training is planned to be held during the second half of day 2, this will be provided by the central hub.

## 6. Support to applicants

Interested applicants may contact EUDIS Defence Hackathon 2026 Open Call for organisers' helpdesk on [contact@eudis-hackathon.eu](mailto:contact@eudis-hackathon.eu) at any time if they wish to receive further information on the procedures, terms, and conditions.

EUDIS Defence Hackathon 2026 implementation team fully complies with the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) on the protection of natural persons with regards to the processing of personal data and the free movement of such data. The EUDIS Defence Hackathon 2026 consortium is responsible for the personal data processing, under automated and analogical means, from its collection, through its organisation and storage, up to its deletion. The EUDIS Defence Hackathon 2026 Consortium keeps a continuous and thorough registry of all its personal data processing activities. The applicants' data will be retained in the EUDIS Defence

Hackathon 2026 shared archives until the end of the project activities for which the applicants submitted their applications. No transfer of the personal information will take place to an organisation or a country unless there are adequate controls in place including security of the data and other personal information.

# Application form – Technical Project Description

*[Please be aware of the page's limitations per section. Content provided outside these limits will not be considered for evaluation]*

**1. Hackathon organisation and commitment on the number of participants recruited [5 pages max]**

- 1.1. What specific activities and initiatives will you implement to attract 50 participants or 10-50 teams to the hackathon?
- 1.2. Provide an overview of the program you envision for the hackathon in your location. How will it encourage engagement and foster the active participation of 50 individuals or 10-50 teams?
- 1.3. What prizes such as cash or consulting services, or a business development programme to the best teams (Top 3) will you be able to provide to the hackathon teams? Describe your plan.

**2. Involvement of relevant contributing partners, sponsors, mentors, and selection board members as well as the local/regional innovation ecosystem [5 pages max]**

- 2.1. How will you leverage the local and regional innovation ecosystem to enhance the event's impact? Provide a plan for securing partners and sponsors, as well as the amount of sponsorship that will be required and how this will be allocated. Specify which partners/sponsors are already confirmed and which are potential future partners, and the role that each partner will play in the project. In addition, please fill in the following table with at least 4 stakeholders:

| No | Name of the region's key Research & Innovation stakeholder | Type of relation you have with it<br>(Collaborated in past hackathons; Collaborated in past R&D and innovation projects; Client-provider; Other) | Foreseen role during EUDIS Defence Hackathon/Contribution expected |
|----|--|--|--|
| 1  |  |  |  |
| 2  |  |  |  |
| 3  |  |  |  |
| 4  |  |  |  |

- 2.2. Describe your plans to engage relevant stakeholders from the defence sectors, including end-users such as Ministry of Defence, Armed Forces, Defence innovation agencies or other relevant government agencies responsible for defence sector in your hackathon. Specify which of these stakeholders you will partner with and provide your strategy for securing them as contributors.
- 2.3. Explain how you will secure the right profiles of defence-related technical mentors and selection board members who will support and evaluate your participating teams during the hackathon. List already secured profiles, if any.
- 2.4. Provide a plan to confirm that all participants, mentors, speakers and selection board members must be citizens of one of the EU Member States, Norway or Ukraine and must be residing in the EU, Norway or Ukraine. All participants must be adults. Explain what local authorities you will partner with to enable this process.
- 2.5. Describe how you will ensure that the outcomes of the hackathon will have an impact beyond the event itself. In particular, explain:
  - How you will support participants after the hackathon (e.g. mentoring, matchmaking, incubation opportunities, links to defence stakeholders).
  - How you will maintain engagement with stakeholders after the event.
  - Any partnerships, programmes, or funding schemes you plan to connect participants to (if any).
  - How you will capture and disseminate results (e.g. reports, success stories, KPIs, integration into wider innovation ecosystems).

3. **Capability to run a defence hackathon, to ensure digital collaboration between hackathon locations, the capability to provide testing, and the quality of the online and onsite event components [5 pages max]**
  - 3.1. Describe your experience of organising defence hackathons, other forms of open innovation programs or hybrid events and explain how you will run EUDIS Defence hackathon 2026 in the given timeline including all the different phases required for a successful implementation. Please also describe how the given budget and payment schedule fit your current financial situation. Finally, present your team (brief profile description with competence, role and experience) and how they will work together to implement this project. Please consider eligibility requirement c) and upload the corresponding CVs in the EMS Platform.
  - 3.2. Provide a plan for streaming the Central Hub content to your participants and recording your own physical hackathon venue live for the Central Hub to see, including the potential budget for camera equipment.
  - 3.3. Describe the capabilities of the event location(s) you have in mind, highlighting factors contributing to the overall quality of the venue. Provide up to 3 venue hosting options – including the name of the location, photos, and a clear explanation of how the venue will meet the requirements. What measures will you put in place to ensure a seamless and secure digital experience for both on-site and remote participants? Please consider for your description what's included in the eligibility requirement b)
  - 3.4. Explain how you plan to facilitate prototype testing during the hackathon.

## Annex I. Hackathon Communication and Promotion Plan

Name of the applicant organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

*[Please be aware that this document should not have more than 4 pages]*

1. How do you plan to communicate and promote the hackathon to ensure maximum participation? Can you outline a detailed communication strategy, including the channels you intend to utilise for promotion, your forecasted budget, and a list of partners willing to contribute in this regard?
2. Provide a list of social media channels (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.) and the official website used for previous events or campaigns
3. Please indicate a preliminary list of the relevant promotional items (e.g. posters, rollups, backdrop banners, badges, t-shirts, etc.) you intend to utilise for the promotion of the EUDIS Defence Hackathon 2026. For each product you listed, please explain why it is needed and how it will contribute to the event's communication and outreach efforts. EUDIS Defence hackathon consortium will support with the design of the promotional items

## Annex II. General Expenses Budget Table

*Please provide an overview of the costs that will be covered by the general expense budget. You can request an amount up to **60.000,00 €**.*

**N.B**

- *The expenses Budget table cannot include costs related to financial prizes provided to the local hackathon winners.*
- *All listed amounts must be VAT-exclusive!*

Name of the applicant organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Overview of the cost:

| # | Description   | Amount (€) |
|---|---|------------|
| 1 | <i>Personnel costs (event staff, coordinators)</i>                                |            |
| 2 | <i>Other costs (e.g. venue rental, catering, equipment rental, printing, etc)</i> |            |
| 3 | Back-up internet line   |            |
| 4 |   |            |
| 5 |   |            |