



# Frequently Asked Questions

## EmpoWomen OC#1

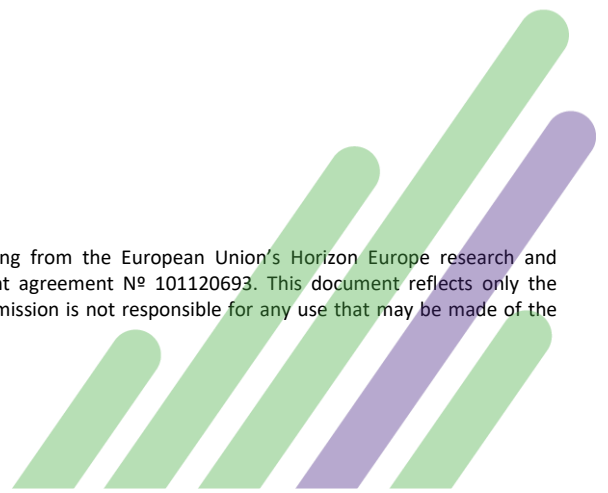
Project Website: [www.empowomen.eu](http://www.empowomen.eu)

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**Funded by  
the European Union**

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## 1. Introduction

EmpoWomen funded by the European Union through its Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme, seeks to overcome the obstacles faced by women in the field of R&D&I to improve equality in deep tech entrepreneurship.

EmpoWomen offers a unique programme for scaling up women-led companies with the objective to create an exclusive support programme for female founders and entrepreneurs leading deep tech startups from widening areas to grow into tomorrow's female tech leaders and put women at the forefront of deep tech in the world.

The initiative EmpoWomen is a 2-year programme (2024-2025) which consists of a unique acceleration and mentoring programme and includes non-repayable funding totaling 1,125 M EUR, prizes and services to 25 women-led deep-tech companies selected through a competitive process from European emerging markets and the outermost regions and associated EU countries.



## 2. General questions about the project.

### 2.1 What is EmpoWomen?

EmpoWomen, operating within the framework of the HORIZON-CSA action and falling under the call designation HORIZON-EIC-2022-STARTUPEU-01, is a project funded by the European Commission under grant agreement number 101120693. The EmpoWomen project has a duration of 24 months, starting on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 and ending on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025.

EmpoWomen project budget is 2.000.000 EUR being 100% funded by the EC. The amount devoted to startups is exactly 75% of the budget (1.5M EUR) which is divided in:

	MAX. GRANT	Nº STARTUPS	TOTAL AMOUNT
Equity-free cash	45,000 EUR	25	1,125,000 EUR
Vouchers	12,400 EUR	25	310,000 EUR
Prize#1 - Winners	15,000 EUR	2	30,000 EUR
Prize#2 - 2nd Place	11,500 EUR	2	23,000 EUR
Prize#3 - 3rd Place	6,000 EUR	2	12,000 EUR
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,500,000 EUR</b>

EmpoWomen is a project designed to actively involve women-led deep tech early-stage startups in widening areas. The project focuses on identifying and selecting promising startups to participate in a customized acceleration programme. Its main goal is to provide support that nurtures the development and investment potential of these startups, with the ultimate aim of turning them into prominent female figures in advanced technology innovation in Europe.

### 2.2 How does the project work?

EmpoWomen operates through an open call system. The first open call, OC#1, runs from January 8, 2024, to March 8, 2024. During this period, eligible startups can apply through the [SPLORO platform](#). The project provides equity-free funding of up to 45,000 EUR per beneficiary, along with a tailored 6-month acceleration program delivered by StartUp Wise Guys and Business Angels Europe. The second Open Call of EmpoWomen is scheduled for December 2024.





### 2.3 How much funding will be distributed in OC#1?

EmpoWomen OC#1 aims to provide equity-free funding to up to 11 startups led by women. The total available budget for the first call is 527,500 EUR.



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## 3. General questions about the open call

### 3.1 Who can apply?

EmpoWomen primarily focuses on women-led deep tech early-stage startups in Widening Areas. Key criteria include being an SME, an early-stage startup established within the last 6 years, having raised limited funding (up to 1 M EUR), and having substantial women leadership.

### 3.2 Can startups apply from any country?

Only startups legally established in Eligible Countries (Widening Area, Outermost regions, Associated countries) are eligible.

- **Widening Area Countries:** Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.
- **Outermost regions:** Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Réunion, Martinique, Mayotte and Saint-Martin (France), Canary Islands (Spain), Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Réunion, Martinique, Mayotte and Saint-Martin (France).
- **Associated countries:** Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, North Macedonia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine.

### 3.3 When can I apply?

You can apply for the EmpoWomen programme starting from January 8, 2024. The deadline for submission is March 8, 2024, at 17:00 CET.

### 3.4 How can I apply?

To apply for EmpoWomen OC#1, you must complete the application form on the [Sploro platform](#).

### 3.5 Can I update my application after submission?

Yes, applicants can submit a new version of their application if the deadline has not passed. Contact SPLORO to reopen the application through the support channel. Only the last version received before the deadline will be considered.





EmpoWomen offers a dedicated **support channel** available for applicants at [helpdesk@empowomen.eu](mailto:helpdesk@empowomen.eu).

### 3.6 Where and when can I get support in case of questions?

For any question about the process there is a general email address available at [helpdesk@empowomen.eu](mailto:helpdesk@empowomen.eu).

### 3.7 What does the EmpoWomen OC#1 offer?

- Up to 45,000 EUR in equity-free funding
- Six-month Acceleration programme including Vouchers to Business Angels Investment Readiness
- Access to Top-Level Mentors Vouchers
- Attendance to Tech-events Vouchers
- Awards for Top Startups per Cohort (up to 15,000 EUR)

### 3.8 What is a voucher?

In the EmpoWomen programme, a voucher is an instrument that provides access to specific business support services, such as participation in technology events, dedicated mentoring, or investment programmes. These vouchers, supplied by the EmpoWomen consortium, hold economic value and serve as additional support for the growth of beneficiary startups. It's important to note that beneficiaries must inquire with the EmpoWomen consortium about the intended use of the voucher, and the consortium makes the decision on whether the application is applicable or not.

### 3.9 What does "deep tech" mean?

In the context of EmpoWomen, "deep tech" refers to advanced and disruptive technologies based on cutting-edge scientific advances. These solutions aim to stay at the technological forefront by constant interaction with new ideas and results from the lab. Deep tech innovation aims to provide concrete solutions to societal problems by finding its source in a deep interaction with the most recent scientific and technological advances, seeking to produce a profound impact in the targeted application technologies.



### 3.10 What are the deep tech technologies covered?

The call spans various deep tech technologies, from quantum computing to augmented reality and artificial intelligence. Specific categories include Advanced Computing, Biotechnology, Robotics, Virtual Reality, and more. To find out about all the deep tech technologies covered by EmpoWomen, please refer to section 3.1 of the [guidelines for applicants](#).

### 3.11 How many startups will benefit from OC#1?

EmpoWomen OC#1 aims to empower up to 11 startups led by women.

### 3.12 What does the Acceleration Programme include?

This unique **EmpoWomen Accelerator** offers a 6-month programme of dedicated intensive support to the selected group of women deep tech entrepreneurs, with a view to enabling them to significantly boost their business growth and increase their potential to access investment. (More details in the [guideline for applicants](#) in section 6)

### 3.13 What is the significance of the Demo Day?

The Demo Day is a crucial event marking the end of the programme. It allows startups to showcase their businesses to mentors and external judges. Attendance in person is mandatory, and top-performing startups can win prizes.

### 3.14 Is attendance at the Demo Day mandatory?

Yes, attendance in person at the Demo Day is mandatory for all beneficiary startups.





## 4. Questions related to the evaluation.

### 4.1 How is the evaluation process conducted?

The evaluation will have 5 stages:

1. Eligibility criteria: An automatic filter will consider 8 criteria that all proposals must meet in order to be eligible.
2. Experts' remote evaluation: The proposals that pass the eligibility check will move to the remote evaluation stage. Applications will be assessed by a group of external and independent evaluators with an entrepreneurial, investment or innovation background. The evaluators will assess the proposals based on 3 different evaluation criteria (Excellence, Impact and Implementation).
3. Normalisation score: This method would ensure a more balanced distribution of scores and reduce the possibility of biases and distortions.
4. Interview stage: Top-ranked projects from the remote evaluation are invited to participate in an online interview. Evaluators individually determine if the proposal should move forward based on a yes/no decision.
5. Final Selection: All proposals are ranked based on their remote evaluation scores and interview stage. In the event of a tie, a series of rules will be followed that will make it possible to reach a tiebreaker.



## 5. Questions related to funding.

### 5.1 What is the total funding limit for a single organization?

The total funding limit for a single organization across all EmpoWomen calls is set at 60,000 EUR. This includes the 45,000 EUR grant upon completing the entire program and an additional 15,000 EUR if the organization secures the first prize at the Demo Day.

### 5.2 How are payments structured?

The payment of the 45,000 EUR will be distributed in three stages throughout the project timeline, subject to the achievement of designated milestones or key performance indicators and the attainment of specific results. All of these disbursements operate in parallel with the execution of the acceleration program. Payments will be made at the beginning of the months following the delivery of the results. Start of M2 (5,000 EUR), Months 4 (20,000 EUR), and Months 7 (20,000 EUR).

Project Duration	Month 1	Month 3	Month 6
	<b>Coaching Plan &amp; KPIs definition</b>	<b>MID-TERM REVIEW</b>	<b>FINAL REVIEW</b>
<b>Output</b>	D1. Individual Programme KPIs	Participate in at least 80% of the project acceleration activities until month 3.	Achievement of established KPIs for month 6.
		Achievement of established KPIs for month 3.	All the payments will be held to those teams who have engaged with less than 75% of the program content during the 6 months Participation of the startups in the final demo day.
<b>Grant per Team (EUR)</b>	5,000 EUR	20,000 EUR	20,000 EUR
<b>Vouchers</b>	Vouchers will be unlocked progressively during the programme. Startups will be allowed to request the voucher depending on the expertise and the stage of the programme reached.		





## 6. What happens if a startup underperforms during the programme?

Projects will be paid according to their overall completion of KPIs. Only in the case of an underperformance below 25% the team will be disqualified, and no further payment released. Regarding payments, the beneficiary must comply with a series of rules and conditions that can be found in greater detail in the Sub-Grant Agreement (Annex 3).

