

Invitation to Apply to ESA BIC Belgium

Reference: ESA BIC Belgium Open Call – Issue D, 28/08/2026

Thank you for your interest in ESA BIC Belgium.

The European Space Agency (ESA) together with its Member States supports entrepreneurs who seek to provide solutions to the space and non-space markets. In the case of the latter, the intention is to support entrepreneurs who exploit space technology or utilise space systems.

ESA has established a network of Business Incubation Centres (ESA BICs) across Europe in partnership with local providers who receive a contract from ESA to deliver business incubation support to entrepreneurs in participating ESA Member States.

In Belgium, Novaspace is responsible for managing ESA BIC Belgium and participating start-ups are incubated at BeCentral in Brussels.

ESA BIC Belgium offers a comprehensive package of support to start-ups selected for incubation, including, incentive funding, technical support, business coaching, and legal/IPR advice, and office accommodation (upon request) to the start-ups selected for incubation.

ESA BIC Belgium hereby invites you to submit your application for business incubation. This document provides an introduction to the application and evaluation process and contains references to the templates that should be used when applying.

Please contact ESA BIC Belgium for any further questions.

Please note that this Open Call is issued under the exclusive responsibility of Novaspace.

Yours sincerely,

Claire O'Sullivan
Local Project Manager
ESA BIC Belgium

Introduction

The purpose of this Open Call for ESA BIC Belgium is to inform you about the opportunity for space-related start-ups to be incubated in ESA BIC Belgium and to provide the material and guidance needed to apply for incubation.

Selection and evaluation of applications are scheduled periodically, see www.space-business.be for details.

The Call is permanently open, has no closing date for the submission of applications unless the ESA BIC Belgium has indicated otherwise.

Who can apply?

In general, any space-related start-ups in Belgium not older than five years, or natural persons with the intention to set up a space-related start-up, are welcome to apply for incubation.

However, some further criteria apply. These can be found in the annexes of the application form. In particular, note the following:

- The application needs to have a valid *space connection*. In general terms this means that it must be very clear that “space” (space technology or a space-based service such as satellite communication, navigation or earth observation) is fundamental to the solution developed by the entrepreneur. Alternatively, the proposed product or service must be related to performing activities or using a technology in space. In all cases, there must be a clearly articulated customer need for the product or service. It is strongly recommended that ideas related to performing activities or using technology in space are verified by a third party before applying. Please contact the ESA BIC for further guidance.
- Applicants need to run their start-up at their own risk. In practice this means that more than half of the shares must be owned by the entrepreneur(s) that apply to the ESA BIC.
- In case the application is done by natural persons, these need a working permit in Belgium valid for at least the expected duration of the incubation. Also, the process of setting up a company must have been started. The application shall include details about the status, the intended legal structure, and the shares distribution. An incubation contract can only be signed with a legal entity.
- The Applicant’s business application must be aligned with the purposes stated in the [ESA Convention](#).

How to apply

Please make sure you have received the following documents, which are part of the Open Call documentation:

- ESA BIC Application Form including Annexes
- Draft Incubation Contract
- Draft Rental or Service Agreements (when applicable)

Make sure to fill in all required sections in the application templates and pay particular attention to the following:

- Instructions inside the Application Form shall be followed in order to fulfil all pre-conditions of the Open Call and for the application to be accepted.
- Please read the Draft Incubation Contract carefully. Modifications or amendments to the Incubation Contract may only be done in exceptional cases. Please contact the local ESA BIC for guidance.
- Ensure that the Application Form is signed by either the majority shareholder or by shareholders with a combined ownership in excess of 50%. The signature confirms compliance with the ESA BIC General Application Requirements and the ESA BIC Specific Application Requirements, both available in Annexes to the Application Form. By signing the Application Form you confirm the acceptance of the Incubation Contract conditions.
- The application should include details on how the incentive funding is meant to be spent.
 - Note that, as a general rule, the incentive funding has a ceiling of 60,000- EUR and shall be used for purposes linked to the objectives of the incubation.
 - The incentive funding cannot be used to pay the salaries of the founders.
 - The ESA part of the incentive can only be spent in Belgium. Exceptions may be given under certain conditions. Please see the Draft Incubation Contract for details.
- Incubation in ESA BIC Belgium may be requested for a maximum of 24 months.

Please submit the Application Form as a pdf-file to the following e-mail address: incubation@space-business.be with subject "ESA BIC Belgium Open Call".

ESA BIC Belgium will verify the identity of applicants.

Any questions related to submission of proposals should be sent to the same e-mail address: incubation@space-business.be

The evaluation procedure

The evaluation of all received applications is managed locally by ESA BIC Belgium and follows common ESA BIC procedures.

Once a published submission cut-off date has passed, ESA BIC Belgium first assesses the formal aspects of applications received before the submission deadline. If a non-compliance of a minor nature is found, the applicant may be asked to address this in an updated proposal within 48 hours. If the proposal is found non-admissible, the applicant will be informed and the reason will be explained. In such a case an applicant is eligible to submit a revised proposal at a later date.

If the application is compliant with the formal requirements, applicants will be invited to hold a presentation to the ESA BIC Belgium evaluation board. The evaluation will typically take place a few weeks after the submission cut-off date. The evaluation board consists of representatives of ESA BIC Belgium, ESA, BELSPO, and other experts. There will also be an opportunity for the evaluation board to ask questions to the applicant.

The application and the presentation will be marked against the criteria in Table 1, taking weighting factors into account.

ESA BIC Evaluation Criteria and Weighting Factors	
Criteria	Sub-criteria

1. Background & Experience (25%)	a) Experience and team composition b) Support entities c) Vision
2. Value Proposition & Market (20%)	a) Problem description and value proposition b) Market c) Competition
3. Technology & Service (20%)	a) Space connection b) Technical feasibility and development strategy of the product/service c) Uniqueness and intellectual property strategy
4. Business Modelling & Risk (15%)	a) Revenue model b) Finance c) Risk
5. Incubation Objectives & Planning (20%)	a) Incubation objectives b) Work description and need for support c) Use of incentive d) Match with ESA BIC

Table 1: ESA BIC evaluation criteria and weighting factors.

All applicants will be notified in writing about the outcome of the evaluation. The applicant may require, within 10 calendar days from the receipt of the notification, an oral debriefing explaining the reason why the application was successful or not. Any re-application to the same or another ESA BIC must properly address the feedback given during the debriefing. Applicants who wish to submit a complaint to the ESA BIC are required to request a mandatory debriefing before filing their complaint.

ESA BIC Belgium will enter into contract negotiations with successful applicants, taking the comments of the evaluation board into account. If a contract has still not been signed three months after the notification to a successful applicant and the applicant can be held accountable for the delay, the ESA BIC Belgium has the right *not* to place a contract.

Additionally, ESA BIC Belgium has the right not to place a contract in case the (intended) legal entity presented in the application is different from the actual established and registered legal entity.

Additional notes

Furthermore, we kindly ask you to pay attention to the following:

- The next application cut-off date is on 09/11/2026.
- Please note that applications will be treated as confidential. However, the applicant's idea may through this application fall into the public domain (e.g. if local laws require so). Therefore, we strongly recommend that the applicant discusses the protection of his/her idea with a dedicated expert in this field prior to application, and – if relevant – takes appropriate steps to protect the idea (e.g. by applying for a patent).
- As far as allowed by law, any title held by the applicant to his/her idea shall remain vested in him/her. An application to ESA BIC Belgium will not result in the acquisition of any title whatsoever to the idea. *However, ESA retains a right to use the Intellectual Property in specific cases, generally related to publicity and promotion. Please read the detailed conditions*

described under the section “Use of Intellectual Property Rights” in the Draft Incubation Contract.

- At the end of incubation the ESA BIC will request one or several deliverables. The purpose of these are both to verify the correct use of the incentive and for promotional purposes. The applicant should agree on suitable deliverables with the ESA BIC.
- Please do not apply to several ESA BICs at the same time. Please wait for one application to be evaluated and only if this is not successful, you may apply again to the same or another ESA BIC, taking any feedback into account.
- No expenses incurred in either stage of the application procedure will be reimbursed to the applicant by ESA BIC Belgium, ESA and/or any third party.
- This Open Call does not impose any obligation upon ESA BIC Belgium to enter into negotiations with any applicant.

Use of generative AI for the preparation of the proposal

Please note that applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal, including any parts produced by a generative AI tool. AI-generated content must be reviewed and validated by the applicant to ensure that it is appropriate and accurate, as well as compliant with any applicable intellectual property rights.

Applicants are requested to inform the ESA BIC about which sections have been generated (partly or fully) by AI tools by providing explanatory notes in the application document.