

STEP – Research and Development of Critical Technologies

The main objective of the Call is to support industrial research and experimental development projects aimed at acquiring new knowledge and using it for the development and production of critical technologies of European importance in line with the objectives of the STEP platform. The Call also aims to protect and strengthen the value chains associated with the development and production of these technologies.

SCHEDULE

Receiving applications for support:

- 17 July 2026 – 30 September 2026

KEY SECTORS

- Digital technologies and deep tech innovations – advanced semiconductor technologies, artificial intelligence technologies, quantum technologies, advanced connectivity, navigation and digital technologies, advanced sensing technologies, robotics and autonomous systems.

Deep tech innovations – Deep tech innovations should be understood as innovations that have the potential to deliver transformative solutions based on the cutting-edge science, technology and engineering, including innovations combining advances in the physical, biological and digital fields.

- Clean and resource-efficient technologies include clean and resource-efficient technologies within the meaning of Article 4 of the Zero Net Emissions Industrial Act as well as zero net emission technologies ¹in the following areas - solar technologies, onshore wind and offshore renewable energy technologies, battery and energy storage technologies, heat pumps and geothermal energy technologies, hydrogen technologies, sustainable biogas and biomethane technologies, carbon capture and storage technologies, power system technologies, nuclear fission technologies, sustainable alternative fuel technologies, water technologies, other renewable energy technologies, energy efficiency technologies related to energy systems, renewable fuels technologies of non-biological origin, biotechnological solutions for climate and energy, transformative industrial

¹REGULATION (EU) 2024/1735 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 13 June 2024 establishing a framework of measures to strengthen the European net-zero emission technology manufacturing ecosystem and amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1724

technologies for decarbonisation, CO₂ transport and utilisation technologies, wind and electric propulsion technologies in transport, other nuclear technologies, advanced materials, manufacturing and recycling technologies, technologies essential for sustainability, such as water purification and desalination, circular economy technologies.

- Biotechnology, including pharmaceuticals – DNA/RNA, proteins and other molecules, cell and tissue culture and engineering, process biotechnology techniques, gene and RNA vectors, bioinformatics, nanobiotechnology.

This includes medicines on the EU list of critically important medicines and their ingredients.

- Defence technologies - The term defence technologies used in the STEP Regulation refers to technologies incorporated into defence products or necessary for the development and production of defence products listed in the Annex to Directive 2009/43/EC (9) ², which corresponds to the EU Common Military List. For the purposes of STEP, the latest version of the list published in the Official Journal shall be taken into account.

These are also technologies that are related to the priority areas of capabilities set by the European Council on 6 March 2025 ³, namely – air and missile defence, artillery and precision strikes, missiles and ammunition, drones and anti-drone systems, strategic support assets, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and electronic warfare, military mobility, land combat, naval combat, air combat, healthcare (including medical countermeasures).

To be considered critical, technologies must be in line with the objectives of the STEP platform and must meet at least one of the two STEP conditions:

- bring to the market an innovative, emerging and cutting-edge element with significant economic potential for the Single Market⁴
- contribute to reducing or preventing the EU's strategic dependence.⁵

Projects that have received the seal of sovereignty (STEP SEAL) within the framework of calls for directly managed programmes under the Strategic Technology Platform for Europe (STEP) and are not international projects, i.e., in an international consortium of a Czech applicant together with foreign partners, will also be supported. Consortia consisting of applicants and partners with Czech business registration numbers are acceptable.

APPLICANT

- It is a **legal entity** that has **been assigned a Czech ID** and is **authorized to do business** ⁶.
- It is authorized to undertake business activities corresponding to **the economic activity** ⁷ in which the project is implemented ⁸;

²DIRECTIVE 2009/43/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 6 May 2009 simplifying the conditions for transfers of defence-related products within the Community

³See: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6-2025-INIT/cs/pdf>

⁴As part of innovation, it must meet at least 2 of the 3 elements, see the call

⁵As part of reducing strategic dependence, it must meet at least 2 of the 5 factors, see the call

⁶This is a trade license or business license according to other legal regulations (unless otherwise stated in the Rules for Applicants and Beneficiaries from OP TAK - special part).

⁷In the application in IS KP21+, the applicant indicated the CZ-NACE in which the project is implemented, which corresponds to the activity registered in public registers. The registered CZ-NACE must not be listed in the Annex to the Call entitled "Unsupported CZ-NACE".

⁸Does not apply to partners with a financial contribution.



- It provided **data to the extent required by Section 14, Paragraph 3, Letter e) of Act No. 218/2000 Coll., Act on Budgetary Rules and Amendments to Certain Related Acts** (hereinafter referred to as the “ZoRP “), as amended:
 - entered information on the identification of persons acting on behalf of the applicant in IS KP21+, indicating whether they act as its statutory body or whether these persons act on the basis of a granted power of attorney,
 - has registered beneficial owners of the legal entity pursuant to Act No. 37/2021 Coll., on the registration of beneficial owners (compliance with the condition will be verified by the INTERMEDIARY ENTITY),
 - entered information in IS KP21+ about the identification of persons in which it has a stake and the amount of this stake,
 - confirmed in an affidavit for the application for support that, as of the date of submission of the application for support, its beneficial owner is not a citizen of a state or is not resident in a state or jurisdiction listed on the currently valid Union list of non-cooperative jurisdictions in tax matters approved by the Council of the European Union⁹;
 - confirmed in an affidavit for the application for support that, if it has a relationship structure under the law governing the registration of beneficial owners, in which foreign legal entities or foreign legal arrangements appear, the legal entities or legal arrangements in the relationship structure are not domiciled or, in the case of legal arrangements, are not administered in a state or jurisdiction listed on the currently valid EU list of non-cooperative jurisdictions in the tax area approved by the Council of the European Union as of the date of submission of the application for support¹⁰;
- According to its affidavit, **it is not in liquidation.**
- According to its affidavit, it is registered as an income tax payer in the Czech Republic, continuously for at least two tax periods.¹¹ preceding the date of submission of the application for support.
- Is an SME as defined in the Annex I of the GBER; a large enterprise; a research and knowledge dissemination organisation in the role of a partner only;

TERRITORIAL FOCUS

- Target area: Territory of the Czech Republic outside NUTS 2
- The decisive factor for assessing local acceptability is not the location of the applicant (beneficiary), but the actual location of the project implementation, i.e., the area where the physical implementation takes place and the project expenses are incurred.

MAIN CONDITIONS OF THE CALL

- The project must not violate the horizontal policies of the EU and their fundamental principles. In particular, it must comply with:
 - with the principles of non-discrimination (in particular non-discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, ethnic origin, disability, age or sexual orientation),

⁹The list of non-cooperative jurisdictions in the tax area is updated twice a year, usually in October and February, and in the event of changes, it is published by the Ministry of Finance in the Financial Bulletin: <https://www.mfcr.cz/cs/dane-a-ucetnictvi/financnizpravodaj>.

¹⁰2 Ditto previous footnote.

¹¹This is a tax period according to Section 16b for natural persons / Section 21a for legal entities of Act No. 586/1992 Coll., on income taxes.

- with the principles of sustainable development,
- with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the applicant shall provide a declaration of honour)
- with environmental legislation (the applicant shall provide an affidavit).
- The project objectives must be in line with the objectives of the operational programme and the Call.
- The number of points obtained in the simplified economic assessment, which expresses the financial health of the applicant, must not be less than 5 points;
- The project does not significantly harm the environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council ¹²;
- Applications for support where the applicant has already submitted an identical active project (any PP status up to and including PP31) in OP TAK will not be approved at the stage of evaluation of formal requirements and acceptability, unless the applicant has withdrawn from the project. An identical project is understood to be a project that shows the same place of implementation (up to the level of the municipality) and analogous eligible expenses related to identical or only slightly modified activities aimed at fulfilling the same purpose of the project. The aim of the aforementioned measure is to prevent the blocking of budgetary funds by re-submitting previously unfinished projects identically or slightly modified.
- Applications for support can be submitted by individual entities (companies) and consortia consisting of multiple partners from businesses and research organizations; in the case of consortia, one entity (business entity) from the consortium always acts as the applicant/beneficiary, other entities act as partners involved in the implementation of the project, who have their own budget and possibly different levels of support.
- The applicant is entitled to submit a maximum of one project to this Call (i.e., one application for support, in which it acts as an applicant or partner). The restriction applies to so-called active applications for support, i.e., applications in the PPxx status that have not been withdrawn by the applicant, terminated by the Director of the Department/INTERMEDIARY ENTITY, discarded or rejected. This condition does not apply to research organizations acting as project partners.
- For projects implemented within a consortium, the total number of members is limited to 5, i.e., the main applicant and 4 partners with a financial contribution;
- The project output will be at least one of the following supported research and development results: pilot plant, proven technology, prototype, functional sample and digital solution;
- Projects must reach **TRL 4 and above before implementation begins**

ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

- external services (contract research, R & D consulting services used for the purposes of the project and other operating costs) max. 30% of the total eligible expenditure;
- personnel costs – wages and insurance premiums of researchers, technicians and other technical support staff to the extent necessary for the purposes of the project;
- material – costs for materials and components that arose directly as a result of the project;
- other overheads – indirect flat-rate costs (additional overhead costs) amounting to 15% of personnel costs;

¹²See Annex No. 7 DNSH Form



- depreciation – costs of tools, devices and equipment purchased from third parties in the form of depreciation of fixed tangible movable assets, to the necessary extent and for the period when they are used for the purposes of the project, up to a maximum of 20% of the total eligible expenditure;

Eligible and ineligible expenses are defined in detail in Annex 3 Definition of eligible expenses.

FORM AND AMOUNT OF SUPPORT

- Support is provided in the form of a subsidy.
- The project subsidy is provided in the amount of at least CZK 10 million ¹³ and up to a maximum of CZK 150 million.

SUPPORT LEVEL AND BREAKDOWN OF FUNDING SOURCES¹⁴

Activity category	Small business	Medium-sized enterprise	Big business
Industrial research ¹⁵	70%	60%	50%
Experimental development ¹⁶	45%	35%	25%

In the case of the implementation of a project involving **effective cooperation between consortium members** ¹⁷, the maximum level of public support, depending on the category of supported activities and the size of the enterprise, is as follows:

Activity category	Small business	Medium-sized enterprise	Big business
Industrial research	80%	75%	65%
Experimental development	60%	50%	40%

In the non-public support regime, support is provided in accordance with the Framework for entities that meet the definition of a research organisation. The aid intensity is 85% of the total eligible expenditure of the research organisation, regardless of the size of the research organisation.

Activity category	Support not constituting public support
	Research organization
Industrial research	85%
Experimental development	85%

¹³Valid at the stage of approval by the selection committee.

¹⁴The chapter indicates the EU share. The remaining part of the financing will be covered by the beneficiary's resources.

¹⁵Industrial research is defined in Article 2(85) of the GBER.

¹⁶Experimental development is defined in Article 2(86) of the GBER.

¹⁷For the purposes of the GBER, effective cooperation must be 1.) between undertakings, at least one of which is an SME, or the cooperation takes place in at least two Member States or in a Member State and a State which is a party to the EEA Agreement, and an individual undertaking does not bear more than 70% of the eligible costs, or 2.) between an undertaking and one or more research and knowledge dissemination organisations, if the latter bear at least 10% of the eligible costs and have the right to publish the results of its own research.

The maximum total share of eligible expenditure for the supported industrial research activity may not exceed 30% of the total eligible expenditure of the project.



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