PHOTON BOOST

Open Call for Solutions,
Missions, Trainings and Services

OC2-2025

Guidelines for Applicants

Call Summary

- **Project name:** Photonics and Quantum Technologies for Sustainable Industry
- **Project acronym:** PhotonQBoost
- **Project number:** 101177922
- **Project website:** photonqboost.eu/

- **Call ID:** OC2-2025
- **Call name:** Open Call for Solutions, Missions, Trainings and Services
- **Opening:** 17/11/2025
- **Closing:** 19/01/2026 17:00 CET
- **Target audience:** SMEs operating in the Photonics or Quantum sectors or integrating these technologies into their business activities.
- **Helpdesk email:** photonqboost@eura-ag.de

- **Funding body:** European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA)
- **Total budget:** €728,800
- **Maximum funding per beneficiary:** €50,000

- **Link for applications:**
  https://cascadefunding.sploro.eu/apply/program/photonqboost-open-call-2-2025

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CAP	Capitalisation
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
EC	European Commission
ESR	Evaluation Summary Report
EU	European Union
FSTP	Financial Support to Third Parties
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LED	Light-Emitting Diode
OC	Open Call
OCT	Optical Coherence Tomography
OPEX	Operating Expenses
PIC	Participant Identification Code
PoC	Point of Care
QKD	Quantum Key Distribution
SERS	Surface Enhanced Raman Spectroscopy
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
VAT	Value Added Tax

1. Introduction

PhotonQBoost is a Horizon Europe project dedicated to helping European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) become more sustainable, resilient, and competitive by harnessing the power of Photonics and Quantum technologies. Many SMEs struggle to adopt these advanced technologies due to limited awareness, expertise, or resources. At the same time, the potential benefits are significant: smarter resource use, improved productivity, and more robust supply chains to name but a few. PhotonQBoost acts as a gateway, helping SMEs connect their sustainability and resilience needs with practical Photonics and Quantum solutions.

The project provides a thorough pipeline of advisory services, including innovation and technology support, and sustainability transition services. This offer is complemented by funded open calls, making available more than 3.6 million euros to directly support SMEs. PhotonQBoost also encourages cross-border collaboration through matchmaking events and matching missions. These activities will improve market access for SMEs and help close gaps in knowledge, infrastructure, and networks across regions.

The project brings together seven leading Photonics and Quantum clusters, four specialised consultancies, and two research and technology organisations across nine EU Member States. Together, they are working to build a strong European innovation ecosystem in Photonics and Quantum technologies, contributing to Europe's global leadership and strategic autonomy in these critical fields.

More information about the project and its activities is available at:

- Project website: https://photonqboost.eu/
- CORDIS project page: https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101177922

2. Open Call for Solutions, Missions, Trainings and Services

The guidelines present in this document are targeted to applicants interested in submitting proposals for the second Open Call (OC) of the PhotonQBoost project, which will open on November 17, 2025, and close on January 19, 2026, 17:00 CET.

The document contains information that is specific to this Open Call, including eligibility criteria, evaluation procedures, and submission requirements, which have been carefully curated to ensure clarity and accuracy. Therefore, it is essential that all applicants thoroughly read and comprehend this document to ensure that their proposals meet the specific requirements outlined for the OC.

2.1. Scope & Objectives

This open call is launched under the Horizon Europe PhotonQBoost project, funded by the European Commission, and fully aligned with the European guidelines on Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP). The purpose of this call is to select SMEs demonstrating excellence and impact potential to:

- Receive up to €40,000 to develop photonics and/or quantum challenge-oriented solutions.
- Receive up to €10,000 to be used for training and related services that enhance their resilience and/or sustainability.
- Participate in up to two Matching Missions organised by the project in 2026 and receive up to €1,440 to cover participation costs.

In addition to the financial support, beneficiaries of this call will gain access to mentoring, coaching, and networking opportunities to help them implement the activities described in their applications. This non-financial support will be delivered by the project partners under the Advisory Support Services Framework of PhotonQBoost.

SMEs are invited to apply for any or all the available grants (Solutions, Missions, Trainings and Services), with a maximum funding per beneficiary of €50,000. The specific objectives of each grant are detailed below.

2.2. Solutions

As part of this initiative, the PhotonQBoost project has conducted a series of workshops to identify key challenges solvable through Photonics and Quantum solutions within 5 strategic sectors: Advanced Manufacturing, Agrifood, Life Science and Health, Mobility, and Digital Technologies. These challenges represent concrete technological needs that demand innovative and impactful solutions.

SMEs applying to this call are invited to propose Photonics and/or Quantum related solutions at Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 4 to 8; from technology validated in a laboratory environment (TRL 4) to tested in operational conditions (TRL 8).

Proposed solutions should address or contribute to one or more of the PhotonQBoost challenges listed below, while supporting the development of a sustainable, competitive and resilient European industry.

- **Advanced Manufacturing**

1. **Photonics or Quantum Sensing:** develop sensors or sensor networks to enable ultra-precise positioning, material characterisation and inspection (such as microfracture detection), or to optimise production lines.
2. **Advanced Photonics Manufacturing:** Develop advanced laser systems for precision manufacturing (including lithography and additive Manufacturing methods), material processing, surface treatment, and enable methods to go beyond rapid prototyping in industrial environments.
3. **Advanced Optical Systems:** Design and integrate high-tech optical systems enabling high-performance imaging, inspection, and quality assurance in industrial setting.

4. **Optics and Photonics in Semiconductor Production:** Enhance optical production processes by improvements in lens/mirror coatings and manufacturing, mirror materials, mask design, etc.

- **Agrifood**

1. **Precision Agriculture:** Develop and implement Photonics or Quantum sensing, imaging and advanced lighting solutions to enable a) targeted precision farming reducing energy needs, fertiliser and pesticide consumption; b) increased yield in fields or in greenhouses; or c) improved plant and soil phenotyping precision. Solutions can apply quantum computing/simulation for optimisation of inputs and processing flows and use quantum communication to secure data from field to cloud.
2. **Zero-waste Food Processing:** Develop and implement hyperspectral/ multispectral imaging with inline-scan cameras, thermal/UV inspection and laser sorting/marking to deliver real-time composition (i.e. fat/protein/ moisture) and contaminant detection, automating grading and cutting food waste and recalls.
3. **Water, air and soil quality assurance:** Develop spectroscopy with gas and water sensors, distributed fibre sensing or other Photonics and Quantum sensor solutions to provide autonomous, real-time environmental monitoring.
4. **Reliable Optical Sensing in Harsh Field Environments:** Develop rugged, optical sensors that withstand dust, humidity, and temperature extremes while maintaining calibration and data quality.

- **Life Science and Health**

1. **Advanced Optical Spectroscopy, Imaging and Photonic Components:** Develop lab-on-chip and organ-on-chip platforms, OCT, advanced optical spectroscopy, quantitative phase imaging and photoacoustic imaging to improve diagnostic accuracy, allow non-invasive, real-time diagnosis (i.e.

tissue discrimination for cancer detection), and reduce invasive procedures, for example high-throughput live cell imaging and analysis.

2. **Photonic Therapies:** Develop and demonstrate photodynamic and photoimmunotherapy solutions, especially for oncology and wound care.
3. **Laser-Based Photonics Manufacturing and Structuring and Personalised Medicine:** Use photonics, especially laser-based, lithography techniques and 3D printing to create customised microstructures for medical devices and implants, enhancing biocompatibility and performance.
4. **Continuous and Remote Health Monitoring:** Deploy continuous and remote health monitoring systems through connected wearables and photonic-based physiological sensors to support preventive care and early intervention.
5. **Point-of-Care (PoC) Diagnostics:** Developing rapid, portable PoC diagnostic tools integrated with photonic (e.g. surface plasmon resonance, SERS) or quantum sensing technologies for accessible, real-time healthcare delivery.

- **Mobility**

1. **Sensing in Autonomous Driving:** Develop photonic or quantum sensing devices to enhance vehicle navigation.
2. **Energy Saving Illumination:** Improve on existing laser and LED lighting technologies.
3. **Automotive Manufacturing and Fault Detection:** a) Demonstrate photonics- or quantum-enhanced processes in manufacturing of automotive elements such as batteries, b) further develop laser metallurgy, or UV-LED supported curing/hardening processes.
4. **Hydrogen Economy:** Show monitoring, design or production improvements using quantum or photonic technologies in fuel-cells or hydrogen storage.

- **Digital Technologies**

1. **Photonic Integrated Circuits (PIC):** demonstrate miniaturisation of photonic components for use in e.g. computation, communication or sensing.
2. **Photonics and Quantum Sensing in Fault Detection:** Develop procedures and sensing devices to detect faulty components on semiconductor or PIC devices.
3. **Quantum Computing:** Show improvements in hardware or a combination of hard- and software that will lead to reliable and energy efficient quantum computers.
4. **Resilient Communication Networks:** Demonstrate either secure quantum communication links, improvements on photonic communication technology, QKD-components or post-quantum cryptography applications.

It should be noted that SMEs are not required to have Photonics or Quantum as their main area of activity. For example, an SME from any sector may apply in partnership with one, or more, organisations that provide complementary expertise in Photonics or Quantum technologies to jointly develop the proposed solution. In such case, a letter of commitment from the partner organisations will be requested. Up to two SMEs may apply for funding to co-develop a solution, each submitting its own application and clearly identifying their shared objectives and complementary roles.

Selected SMEs will receive tailored support from the PhotonQBoost partners, along with a lump-sum grant of up to €40,000, to test, validate, demonstrate, deploy, develop, or integrate Photonics and Quantum based solutions. The support package may include advisory services, prototyping, pilot testing, demonstrations, as well as free access to and guidance in using testing facilities.

The expected duration of each project funded by the Solutions grant is six months, though minor adjustments in duration are possible when clearly justified in the work plan.

It is expected for beneficiaries of the Solutions grant to participate in one of the project's Matching Missions in 2026. Therefore, we recommend that SMEs also apply to at least one of the Missions grants available in this call and, if selected, consider incorporating the mission participation as a KPI.

The payment schedule will be linked to the achievement of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and milestones jointly defined between the selected SMEs and the PhotonQBoost consortium partners. Payments will be released in instalments based on performance and verification of results, up to 30 days after the approval of each milestone. Partial payments may apply in cases where KPIs are not fully achieved. The indicative payment structure is as follows:

- **KPI Definition (Month 1):** Following the approval of the KPI and milestone plan, each SME will receive an initial payment of €5,000.
- **Mid-Term Review (Month 3):** Up to €20,000 per SME will be released after a successful mid-term assessment, subject to satisfactory progress and KPI achievement.
- **Final Review (Month 6):** The remaining balance (up to € 15,000 per SME) will be paid after the final evaluation, contingent on the fulfilment of the agreed KPIs and milestones.

2.3. Trainings & Services

To strengthen capacities within the Photonics and Quantum sectors, and to enhance the cross-sectoral implementation of these technologies, PhotonQBoost offers a Training & Services Grant of up to €10,000 per SME. This grant aims to support the acquisition of trainings or specialised services focused on resilience and sustainability to help SMEs accelerate their innovation and business development.

Applicants must consult PhotonQBoost's catalogue of advisory services before applying[1], which presents the solutions offered by the project on a free-of-charge basis. The Trainings & Services Grant will only support external suppliers, covering training or services absent from the catalogue or not presently offered by PhotonQBoost partners.

The grant is focused on subcontracting, meaning that travel, equipment, consumables and similar expenses are not eligible. For clarification purposes, examples of activities include but are not limited to:

- Adaptation of business processes
- Feasibility studies
- Software development
- Specialised consultancy or coaching
- Standards and certifications
- Sustainability audits
- Trainings

External services must receive prior approval before acquisition. SMEs are required to submit two quotations for the proposed training or service as part of the application. If obtaining two quotations is not applicable, a clear justification must be provided. Please note that SMEs can apply for the funding of multiple trainings, or the same training for multiple employees.

The grant will be paid after the approved training or service has been completed and upon submission and verification of the corresponding invoice, along with additional evidence of service delivery.

[1] PhotonQBoost, Support Services accessed on 22 October 2025.

2.4. Missions

Up to 40 SMEs will be selected to participate in two Matching Missions in 2026, with a lump-sum grant provided to support participation costs. These missions are designed to strengthen SME engagement within photonics clusters and foster cross-sectoral collaboration, innovation, and networking. Participation in the Matching Missions will provide SMEs with strategic exposure to key players in the innovation ecosystem and insights into how their technologies can contribute to sectoral transformation.

- **Czech Republic**: The first Matching Mission covered by this Open Call will take place in the Czech Republic (Prague and Brno), from March 24th to 26th 2026, focusing on manufacturing and industrial optics.
- **Germany**: The second mission will be held in Germany (Stuttgart), from October 8th to 9th 2026, following the VISION and Quantum Effects Fairs taking place the two days prior, and focusing on the mobility sector.

Each mission will combine visits to the local Photonics and Quantum ecosystem, discovery sessions highlighting the strengths of the local cluster within the target sector, ideation workshops, and matchmaking and networking opportunities.

Selected SMEs will benefit from a structured programme which will be published on the PhotonQBoost website. Prior to the mission, participants will receive detailed information on the host, the agenda, and logistical arrangements. During the mission, SMEs will engage in workshops, site visits, peer discussions, and matchmaking events. Afterwards, PhotonQBoost will provide follow-up support to facilitate partnership formation, and advisory services.

The grant (€610 for the participation in the Czech Republic Mission, and €830 for the German Mission), will be provided as a lump-sum, to cover the costs of participation. Payments will be issued after the conclusion of each mission, subject to verification of participation and submission of a feedback form.

Each participating SME may be represented by a maximum of two team members. SMEs from the hosting countries are not eligible to receive the grant but are welcomed to join the mission. Applicants who are not requesting funding, (e.g. companies, SMEs from the host country, universities, etc.) may also apply to participate. In such cases, selection will be based on an Expression of Interest, which will be evaluated independently from this call, with the final decision made by the PhotonQBoost Matching Mission organisation team.

2.5. Timeline

To facilitate appropriate organisation of the applications, the indicative timeline of the call is presented in the table below.

Phase	Date
Publication of the Open Call	17/11/2025
1st Info Day	09/12/2025
2nd Info Day	08/01/2026
Deadline for Applications	19/01/2026 17:00 CET
Evaluation	20/01/2026 to 16/02/2026
Communication of Results to Applicants	17/02/2026
Legal Validation	18/02/2026 to 05/03/2026
Sub-Grant Agreement Preparation	06/03/2026 to 19/03/2026
Onboarding	01/04/2026 to 30/04/2026

2.6. Financial Support

The present Open Call will provide financial support to third parties in form of grants, with a total budget of €728,000, to be distributed as follows:

Grant	Number of SMEs	Value per SME	Total
Solutions	Up to 15	Up to €40,000	€600,000

Trainings & Services	Up to 15	Up to €10,000	€100,000
Missions	Up to 40	€610 (CZ) or €830 (DE)	€28,800

No beneficiary (selected SME) will receive more than the total of €50,000 under all PhotonQBoost's Open Calls. While the awarded amount may be lower, it will not exceed this limit and will be aligned with the complexity of the proposed application.

The grants will be disbursed following a lump sum approach. This means that the funding is distributed gradually, subject to meeting specific outcomes and milestones, rather than administrative justifications of time and/or expenses. It should be noted that the funding, managed by the PhotonQBoost partners, is provided under the Horizon Europe Programme and remains the property of the EU until the final payment has been completed.

2.7. Eligibility Criteria

To participate in the present Open Call, applications must meet specific eligibility criteria to ensure alignment with the project's objectives and the Horizon Europe funding framework. This section outlines the eligibility conditions for applicants.

It should be emphasised that an application will only be considered if it satisfies all eligibility criteria, without exception. Proposals failing to meet any of the eligibility criteria will be automatically rejected.

a) The SME exists as a legal entity.
b) The SME meets the European Union's definition of a Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise[2].
c) The SME was established before July 17th, 2025.

[2] European Commission, SME definition, accessed on 07 November 2025.

d) The SME is registered in a European Union Member State, or Horizon Europe Associated Countries[3].
    - Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.
    - Horizon Europe Associated Countries: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Egypt, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Korea, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland[4], Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.
e) All the required fields in the application form are completed in English, and all documentation required in the application form is provided.
f) The SME and its representatives have no conflict of interest with PhotonQBoost consortium partners.
g) For the Solutions Grant: the solution must be between TRL 4 to 8.
h) For the Missions Grant: the SME must not be legally established in the host country of the respective mission.
i) The proposal has not already been partially or fully funded by another open call.
j) The proposals do not exceed the funding request upper limit of € 50,000 per SME.

2.8. Data Protection

PhotonQBoost requires access to Personal and Entity Data in order to process and evaluate applications. Sploro will act as the Data Controller for all data submitted

[3] European Commission, Updates on the association of third countries to Horizon Europe, accessed on 07 November 2025.

[4] Applicants established in Switzerland may apply as though Switzerland were already associated; however, they will only receive funding if the Association Agreement is signed by the time of award. European Commission, Bilateral Cooperation: Science and Technology Agreements with non-EU countries, accessed on 22 October 2025.

through Sploro's platform for the purpose of this Open Call. To ensure the safety and security of this data, Sploro's platform has been designed and operates under strict compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR). Therefore, all applicants are required to accept Sploro's platform terms to ensure full coverage. For more information regarding the data privacy policy and security measures implemented by Sploro, please refer to their website at https://sploro.eu/privacy-policy/.

Essential data may be shared with consortium partners and/or project associates, ensuring confidentiality and integrity, solely for the purpose of fulfilling the evaluation of the proposal and delivery of the programme's services. Additionally, relevant personal and organisational data may be shared with service providers, other selected beneficiaries, and/or mission organisers, strictly to facilitate logistical coordination and participation in PhotonQBoost related activities.

2.9. Language

English is the official language of the PhotonQBoost project. All documentation, deliverables, reports, and communications must be prepared and submitted in English. All project-related meetings, workshops, trainings, and programme activities will be conducted exclusively in English. Participants are responsible for ensuring that any internal documentation, technical specifications, or supporting materials used during the programme are accessible in English when requested.

2.10. Absence of Conflict of Interest

Applicants must not have any real or potential conflicts of interest during the selection process or during the implementation of the project activities. This includes financial ties, personal relationships, or any situation that could affect impartiality. All potential conflicts will be reviewed by the PhotonQBoost selection committee. If a conflict is confirmed, the application may be disqualified. Please

note that PhotonQBoost partners, their affiliates, staff, and subcontractors are not eligible to apply or receive funding, in line with European Commission rules.

2.11. Ethical issues

PhotonQBoost adheres to the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity[5]. All applicants are required to accept the privacy policy and declaration of honour during submission. Prior to submission, applicants should carefully review their proposals to ensure they meet high ethical standards. Failure to comply may result in disqualification.

For further guidance, applicants are encouraged to consult the EC document "How to Complete Your Ethics Self-Assessment"[6].

[5] ALL European Academies. 2017. European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity

[6] European Commission. 2021. How to Complete Your Ethics Self-Assessment

3. Application Submission

3.1. Application Form

Applications for the Open Call should be sent exclusively through the form available in the Open Call Platform, which is accessible via the link below:

- https://cascadefunding.sploro.eu/apply/program/photonqboost-open-call-2-2025

SMEs are invited to apply for any or all the available grants. The application form is divided in four different sections: 1. Contact information; 2. Organisation Information; 3. Grants; 4. Eligibility Self-Declarations. Please note that questions differ for each grant type.

We recommend carefully reviewing the application form before organising the proposal to familiarise yourself with key elements. To facilitate this, a template of the application form is available at the end of this document as **ANNEX 01**.

The absence of any answers or documents will automatically disqualify the application. Applicants are required to ensure that all information provided is accurate and truthful. Should any false information be identified, the application will be automatically disqualified and blacklisted from other PhotonQBoost calls.

Any required documents, and information must be uploaded in English. Submissions done fully or in part in any language other than English will be considered not eligible.

The form can be edited and saved before submission as many times as needed. The deadline for submission of applications is January 19th, 2026, 17:00 CET.

3.2. Helpdesk

Applicants are requested to review the Guidelines for Applicants and verify the project's website, Frequently Asked Questions, and recorded information sessions before resorting to the Helpdesk. If you still have questions after reviewing these resources, please contact the PhotonQBoost support team at:

- photonqboost@eura-ag.de

The Helpdesk is the only official communication channel for this call. Any messages sent through personal emails, social media, or other informal means will not be considered. The Helpdesk will not evaluate proposals or provide advice on the eligibility of applicants.

Requests to the Helpdesk are typically answered within two working days. During peak periods, such as near the submission deadline, the response time may extend to four working days.

Requests submitted less than two working days before the call deadline will not be processed. Lack of receipt of an answer to an inquiry will not constitute grounds for an extension or re-evaluation of an application.

Applicants must maintain professional and respectful communication when engaging with the Helpdesk. Inappropriate behaviour, such as repeated demands, attempts to influence outcomes, or harassment, may result in disqualification.

3.3. Info Days

Info Days are informational webinars in which the current call will be presented in detail to potential applicants. During these sessions, participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and receive direct answers.

Two Info Days are scheduled, taking place on December 09th 2025, 11:00 CET, and January 8th, 2026, 11:00 CET. These events will be widely promoted on the project's

website and social media channels, and prior registration will be required. The sessions will be recorded and made available on the PhotonQBoost project website for further consultation.

3.4. Technical Issues

Applicants are strongly advised to submit their applications at least two days before the deadline to avoid potential technical issues that may arise due to high platform activity.

If you experience any technical issues that prevent submission, report them to the Helpdesk before the submission deadline. Applications or reports received after the deadline will not be considered or investigated.

When contacting the Helpdesk, provide a clear description of the problem, including any error messages, unexpected behaviour, and the steps that led to the issue. Attach a screenshot showing the problem, ensuring the system clock or another timestamp is visible. Include relevant details such as your device, operating system, and browser.

Even if you have a timestamped screenshot showing the error occurred before the deadline, the report must reach the Helpdesk email before the submission deadline to be considered. Technical issues will be reviewed and assessed by the project's technical team, following the same deadlines and conditions outlined in the "Helpdesk" section.

4. Evaluation and Selection Process

This chapter provides a detailed description of the Open Call's Evaluation and Selection process, including the criteria, procedures, and required documentation.

4.1. Selection Process

The selection process consists of the following steps:

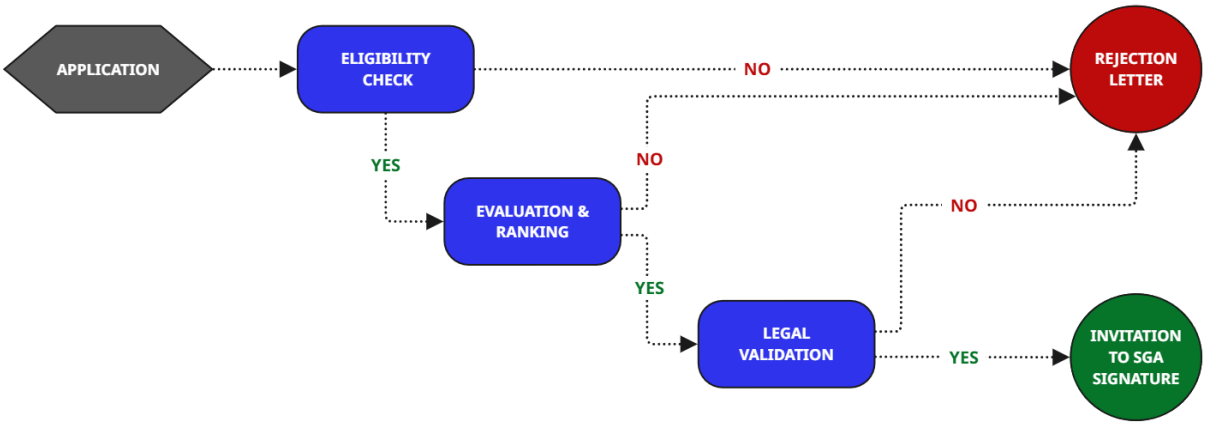

Figure 1 – Open Call Selection Process

4.2. Eligibility Check

During the Eligibility Check, the eligibility criteria of all received applications will be verified by two independent evaluators, each conducting their assessment separately. The results of their respective evaluations will then be cross-checked. Any discrepancies identified will be jointly reviewed to reach a final decision. Proposals that fail to meet any of the eligibility criteria will be automatically rejected. For more information, please see Section 2.7 – Eligibility Criteria.

4.3. Evaluation & Ranking

The evaluation of applications approved during the Eligibility Check will be carried out by two independent evaluators with technical and/or scientific expertise in the fields of Photonics and/or Quantum. Each evaluator will assess every proposal

(Solutions, Trainings and Services, Missions) and assign a score from 0 to 5 for each evaluation criterion: Impact, Excellence, and Implementation. A Quality Evaluation Manager from Sploro will provide support and ensure compliance throughout the entire evaluation process. The criteria for each type of proposal are presented in the tables below.

4.3.1. Evaluation Criteria – Solutions

Criteria	Description	Weight
Impact	• Qualitative and quantitative impact across the triple helix (economic, environmental, and social). • Reductions in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. • Productivity and/or resilience gains. • Impact in the Photonics and Quantum industries.	25%
Excellence	• Technical quality of the presented solution Including brief analysis of State of the Art and/or competitors in the market. • Soundness of objectives and need of the proposed project.	35%
Implementation	• Quality and feasibility of workplan presented. • Quality and capacity of the team in the proposal.	40%

4.3.2. Evaluation Criteria – Trainings and Services

Criteria	Description	Weight
Impact	• Qualitative and quantitative impact across the triple helix (economic, environmental, and social). • Impact on sustainability and resilience of SME. • Impact in the Photonics and Quantum industries.	30%
Excellence	• Technical quality of the presented training or service. • Soundness of objectives and need of the proposed training or service.	30%

Implementation	• Cost/benefit presented, including alternative quotation. • Quality and capacity of the training or service provider. • Feasibility of timeframe for implementation.	40%

4.3.3. Evaluation Criteria – Missions

Criteria	Description	Weight
Impact	Clear motivation and relevance of the mission for the SME's growth, innovation objectives, and potential long-term impact.	30%
Excellence	Technical & scientific expertise of the team, and relevance of the SME's value proposition.	30%
Implementation	Ability to engage effectively with the host ecosystem and foster diversification of partnerships and opportunities.	40%

4.3.4. Scoring System

The evaluators will assign scores for each criterion based on the following scale:

Score	Rating	Description
0	Not Addressed	The response does not address the criterion or is entirely inadequate.
1	Inadequately Addressed	The response is unclear or off topic; significant improvement is needed.
2	Partially Addressed	The response touches on the criterion but lacks detail or clarity.
3	Adequately Addressed	The response meets basic expectations but could be strengthened.
4	Well Addressed	The response is clear and relevant, with only minor improvements needed.
5	Exceptionally Addressed	The response fully meets or exceeds expectations; no improvements needed.

4.3.5. Threshold

To be considered for funding, each proposal must achieve a minimum score of 3 points in each of the three evaluation criteria (Impact, Excellence, and Implementation) and a total score of at least 10 points. Proposals that do not meet these thresholds will be disqualified.

4.3.6. Normalisation

The scores assigned by each evaluator will undergo a normalisation process to remove potential biases and ensure consistency across evaluations conducted by different experts. The normalisation is done as follows:

1. The average score per evaluator is calculated.
2. The overall average score of all proposals is calculated.
3. The deviation factor of each evaluator's average score from the overall average is calculated.
4. The deviation factor is applied to each evaluator respective scores. A normalised score per evaluator is populated.
5. The final score of each application will be calculated as the average of the two normalised scores.

At this stage, the divergence in the normalised scores of two evaluators per application will be verified with the formula "min(Ev1; Ev2) / max(Ev1; Ev2) – 100%". If the divergence is greater than 20%, the original (pre-normalised) scores will be verified using the same formula.

- If the original scores show less than 10% divergence, the average of the normalised scores will be taken as final score.
- If the original scores show more than 10% divergence and the normalised scores show more than 20% divergence, a consensus meeting between the two evaluators will be organised.

The consensus meeting will be overseen by the Quality Evaluator Manager. The application's new score will be the score agreed by the evaluators in that meeting, and normalisation will not be applied. If a consensus cannot be reached, a third evaluator will review the application, and the final score will be the average of the three evaluations. In this case, the score will not be normalised.

4.3.7. Ranking

The ranking of applications will be established based on the final normalised scores. In the event of a tie, proposals will be prioritised according to the following order: 1. Higher score on the Impact criterion. 2. Higher score on the Implementation criterion. 3. Proposals with the highest representation of women in the team. Based on the number of available grants, applications will be categorised as follows:

- **Pre-Selected:** Successfully selected for funding (15 for Solutions, 15 for Trainings and Services, 40 for Missions).
- **Reserve List:** Shortlisted as backup candidates in case others withdraw (3 for Solutions, 3 for Trainings and Services, 16 for Missions).
- **Not Selected,** with the following specific statuses:
  - Approved but not selected: Met all requirements but not funded due to budget limitations.
  - Under threshold: Evaluated but did not meet the minimum scoring criteria.
  - Non-eligible: Failed the eligibility check.

An Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) will be created per proposal including individual comments per evaluator. Each of the experts will fill in a SWOT matrix per proposal underscoring one strength, one weakness, one opportunity and one threat of the submitted proposal. The ESR will be a compilation of those.

At this stage, the results will be communicated to all applicants through the ESR. It should be noted that each application may be deemed eligible for one, multiple, or none of the three grants (Solutions, Trainings and Services, and Missions).

4.4. Appeals Procedure

The PhotonQBoost consortium has instituted an appeals process to ensure all applicants are treated fairly and transparently throughout the evaluation of their proposals. This process is designed to address concerns applicants may have about procedural errors during the evaluation or issues related to the eligibility check results.

If an applicant believes that there has been a factual error in how their proposal was assessed, which could potentially impact the final funding decision, or if they believe that the results of eligibility checks are incorrect and do not adhere to the Open Call rules, the following procedure is available:

1. Complaints must be submitted within five (5) calendar days from the date of receiving the evaluation results via the photonqboost@eura-ag.de email, including a detailed explanation and clear evidence of the alleged error.
2. The PhotonQBoost Team will thoroughly investigate complaints to determine if a re-evaluation of the proposal is justified. A decision will be communicated within no more than twenty days from the date of receiving the complaint, provided that all required information has been submitted. If this timeline cannot be met, the applicant will be informed of the delay and given a new decision date.
3. In instances where re-evaluation is deemed necessary, the outcome will directly replace the initial score without undergoing normalisation or any other adjustment process. This clause is specifically designed to expedite the appeal resolution and prevent delays in the project's timeline.

Applicants should note that differences of opinion or subjective judgments are not valid grounds for appeal. To maintain process efficiency, each proposal is allowed a single appeal, and the decision reached at the end of the appeal process is final, closing any further discussion regarding the evaluation.

The PhotonQBoost Open Call Team will not comment on or reinterpret the evaluators' opinions or scores unless a factual error is clearly identified.

4.5. Legal Validation

Before confirming the final list of accepted applicants, a detailed validation of the legal entities is performed. Pre-selected participants will be contacted via email and requested to submit the necessary documentation to ensure compliance with PhotonQBoost and the European Commission's cascade funding requirements. The indicated deadline for this stage is March 5th, 2026. SMEs that fail to respond or do not submit the complete documentation within the specified deadline will be considered non-qualified and therefore excluded from the selection process. The documents required for legal validation include:

- **Identification document:** Scanned copy of the signatory's identification card or passport.
- **Power of attorney:** Proof of the signatory's authority to represent the SME.
- **Company registration certificate:** Extracts from the official company register, official journal, or equivalent documents showing the organisation's name, legal address, and registration number.
- **SME declaration form:** Form based on the European Commission's standard template, allowing PhotonQBoost to verify the SME's ownership structure and financial figures.
- **Financial Identification Form:** Form identifying the bank account to which funds will be transferred, signed by both the organisation's legal representative and the bank representative. Alternatively, a recent bank statement showing

account ownership will be accepted instead of the bank representative's signature.

- **Tax Identification Number:** Copy of a document proving VAT registration or another valid tax identification number.
- **Financial documentation:** Audited balance sheet and profit and loss accounts for the last three closed financial years (if applicable), as well as the most recent CAP table, showcasing the shareholding distribution of the SME.
  - In the case of linked or associated companies, additional information such as consolidated accounts, group structure, or parent company data may be requested.
  - If the company has not yet closed any financial years, estimates should be provided.
  - In the absence of audited financial statements, the applicant may provide a **Declaration of Authenticity of Financial Information** confirming that the submitted data is identical to that filed with the relevant authorities.
- **Participant Identification Code (PIC):**
  - For entities with a validated PIC number: The PIC number and a screenshot from the Funding & Tenders Portal evidencing the organisation type selected as a beneficiary.
  - For entities without a validated PIC number: The Legal Entity Form[7] for private companies, which is a standard EC template required for EU funding eligibility.

Templates and detailed instructions will be provided to guide applicants in preparing and organising the required documents. SMEs that successfully complete the validation process will be classified as "selected" and subsequently invited to sign the Sub-Grant Agreement.

[7] European Commission, Identification Form – Private Law Body, accessed on 22 October 2025.

4.6. Sub-Grant Agreement preparation

To formalise the responsibilities of all parties involved, a contractual Sub-Grant Agreement will be signed between the selected applicants and the PhotonQBoost consortium, represented by the project coordinator, EurA PT.

The Sub-Grant Agreement will address all relevant legal aspects, including the special clauses derived from Horizon Europe cascade funding rules, the payment schedule and associated conditions and milestones, as well as general provisions outlining the rights and obligations of both the PhotonQBoost consortium and each sub-grantee, and Intellectual Property Rights.

Once the Sub-Grant Agreement has been signed, applicants will be formally recognised as beneficiaries and will be eligible to participate in the PhotonQBoost programme.

4.7. Beneficiaries' Responsibilities

Selected organisations receiving support under PhotonQBoost are indirect beneficiaries of Horizon Europe funding and must comply with specific obligations set by the European Commission and the PhotonQBoost consortium, such as (but not limited to):

Conflict of Interest: Beneficiaries must avoid any situation that could compromise impartiality due to personal, financial, or professional interests. Any real or potential conflict must be reported immediately to the PhotonQBoost coordinator, who may request corrective measures. Non-compliance may result in contract termination or reimbursement of funds.

Data Protection and Confidentiality: All personal data will be processed in line with the General Data Protection Regulation. Applicants must consent to data collection for application evaluation, project management, and compliance monitoring. Data may be shared with the EC, consortium partners, evaluators, and audit authorities

such as the European Anti-Fraud Office and the European Court of Auditors. Beneficiaries have full GDPR rights (access, rectification, erasure, etc.) and can contact lopd@sploro.eu for any inquiries or to withdraw consent (which may impact participation). Data will be:

- Used only for relevant purposes.
- Retained only as long as necessary.
- Protected with appropriate technical and organisational security measures.
- Handled confidentially during and for five years after project completion.

Promotion and Visibility of EU Funding: Beneficiaries are required to promote their participation in PhotonQBoost and acknowledge EC funding in all related communication, in compliance with the Operational Guidelines for Recipients of EU Funding[8]. Any promotional materials (e.g. websites, social media, presentations, leaflets, deliverables, etc.) must include the EU emblem and the funding statement, both clearly displayed.

Information rights: The EC and PhotonQBoost reserve the right to publish the following information about the beneficiaries of the Open Call:

- SME names, country of origin, and project purpose.
- The funding received and final outcomes.
- Project summaries, relevant visuals, and publication references.

Beneficiaries must ensure they have rights to share this information and may request exemptions if disclosure could harm commercial or academic interests.

Financial Monitoring and Audits: The EC may carry out financial audits at any time, directly or through external auditors. Beneficiaries must retain and provide access

[8] European Commission. 2021. Operational Guidelines for Recipients of EU Funding

to all supporting documents and deliverables for up to five years after project completion.

Open Data and Public Disclosure: Funded organisations will be listed on PhotonQBoost's public channels (e.g. website, social media). Funding amounts will be reported under the project's deliverables and published in an open access repository, in line with transparency and open data.

4.8. Onboarding

The programme described in this Open Call is planned to begin in April 2026, except for the Matching Mission to Czech Republic, planned for March 2026. Selected participants will be contacted by the PhotonQBoost team after the signing of their respective Sub-Grant Agreements to schedule an onboarding session, during which the activity details will be discussed bilaterally, key performance indicators (KPIs) will be established, and a work plan will be defined.

5. ANNEX01-Application Form Template

1. Contact Information

1.1. Main Contact Information

- First name:
- Last name:
- E-mail:
- Phone number & country code:
- Position / role:

1.2. Legally Responsible Contact Information

- First name:
- Last name:
- E-mail:
- Phone number & country code:
- Position / role:

2. Organisation Information

- Organisation legal name:
- Organisation short name:
- Country:
- Legal address:
- Website:
- VAT number / Tax registration number:
- Registration date:
- Describe your SME, including its core products, services and activities and explain its connection, or interest in the Photonics or Quantum technology fields. Highlight any relevant applications, technology interests, or ongoing initiatives:

3. Grants

- Which grant(s) are you applying for?

  □ Solutions

  □ Missions

  □ Trainings and Services

3.1. Solutions

- Solution title:
- Solution Technology Readiness Level:
- Solution short description:
- Describe how the solution will improve your SME's sustainability, resilience and productivity, and explain how it will generate measurable economic, environmental, and social benefits, including improvements in energy efficiency, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and positive impacts on the Photonics and Quantum industries:
- How innovative is your proposed solution compared to the current market, competitors and state of the art?
- Describe your work plan for achieving the project outcomes, including key activities, resources, team members, and timeline:
- Include a Power Point presentation of up to 15 slides to support your application (optional):
- If applicable, include a letter of commitment from organisations that are supporting your application:

3.2. Missions

- Which mission(s) are you applying for?

  □ Czech Republic (Prague and Brno, March 24-26, 2026 – Manufacturing and Industrial Optics)

  □ Germany (Stuttgart, October 8-9, 2026 – Mobility)
- Describe your motivation to participate in the mission(s), considering your SME's innovation goals and expected outcomes:
- How does your SME's activities and value proposition align with the mission's thematic focus?
- Describe your team and its ability to generate synergies and partnerships. Include the names and a short introduction of the participants (max 2 per mission):

3.3. Trainings and Services

- Thoroughly describe the requested training or service, specifying the scope, price, and provider:
- If applicable, include an external link to the training or service:
- Describe the relevance of the proposed training or service in addressing your SME's current needs and objectives:
- Describe how the training or service will be implemented in your SME, considering the impacted personnel, and timeframe:
- What are the expected qualitative and quantitative impacts of the training or service, including its contribution to your SME's sustainability, resilience, and to the photonics/quantum sectors?
- Include two quotations for your training or service. If not applicable, please justify why.
- Justification:

4. Eligibility Self-declarations (Yes or No)

- Are you a small and medium-sized enterprise according to the European Commission SME definition (Recommendation 2003/361/EC16)?
- Is your entity legally established in an EU Member State or a Horizon Europe Associated Country?
- Has your organisation been legally registered for at least 6 months prior to the Open Call deadline?
- Are you submitting only one application form under this Open Call on behalf of your organisation?
- Can you confirm that your organisation is not a consortium partner or subcontractor involved in the PhotonQBoost project?
- Can you confirm that this proposal is unique, and has not received duplicate funding?
- Do you consent to data processing under Sploro's GDPR policy?

4.1. Declaration of Honour (Yes or No)

- By submitting this form, I hereby certify that:

  The information provided for this project is truthful, correct and complete.

  The information concerning the legal status in the Application for my organisation is correct and complete and concurs with the stipulations outlined in the Guidelines for Applicants.

My organisation commits to comply with the eligibility criteria set out in the call for proposals for the entire duration of the action.

My organisation:

• Is committed to participate in the action;

•Has stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain the activity throughout the action and to provide any counterpart funding necessary;

• Has or will have the necessary resources needed to implement the action;

My organisation:

• Is NOT subject to an administrative sanction (i.e., exclusion or financial penalty decision).

My organisation is NOT in one of the following exclusion situations:

• Bankrupt, being wound up, having the affairs administered by the courts, entered into an arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or subject to any other similar proceedings or procedures;

• In breach of social security or tax obligations.

My organisation (or persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant): are NOT in one of the following exclusion situations:

• Guilty of grave professional misconduct;

• Committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking;

• Shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement or grant decision;

• Guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No 2988/95;

• Created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social, or other legal obligations in the country of origin (including creation of another entity with this purpose).

My organisation is NOT subject to a conflict of interest in connection with this grant and will notify - without delay - any situation which could give rise to a conflict of interests.

My organisation has NOT and will NOT, neither directly nor indirectly, grant, seek, obtain, or accept any advantage in connection with this grant that would constitute an illegal practice or involve corruption.

My organisation has not received any other EU grant for this project and will give notice of any future EU grants related to this project.

My organisation is aware that false declarations may lead to rejection, suspension, termination or reduction of the grant and to administrative sanctions (i.e., financial penalties and/or exclusion from all future EU procurement contracts, grants, prizes and expert contracts).