

European Union Space Startups Funding

NEWSPACEECONOMY.CA
New Space Economy
2026

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Introduction

This reference document presents a structured overview of funding and support mechanisms for space startups in the European Union. The collection brings together ten infographics covering European-level initiatives, research and scale-up instruments, incubation networks, national and local support, funding strategies, and official online resources. The material is arranged to move from a broad view of the funding environment toward specific programmes, support structures, and practical reference points.

The opening infographic outlines the European Union space startup funding landscape, establishing the subject area covered by the collection. It is followed by an overview of CASSINI, identified as the European Commission's space entrepreneurship initiative. The next infographic addresses the EIC Accelerator and STEP Scale Up in relation to EU space startups, while the section on Horizon Europe focuses on space calls for startups. Together, these entries group major European-level funding and support instruments by programme or initiative.

The middle part of the collection examines additional pathways for startup development. It covers CASSINI Challenges and the Business Accelerator, followed by ESA BICs and their role as Europe's incubation network for space startups. The sequence then turns to examples of support provided at the Member State level and to local support available in European space hubs. This progression places European, incubation, national, and local dimensions within the same reference framework.

The final part addresses how an EU space startup can build a funding stack, bringing the preceding categories together as a funding-planning topic. The collection concludes with official websites for EU space startup funding, providing a designated reference section for locating the relevant online sources. Across the ten infographics, the document is organized as a guide to the main funding levels, programmes, networks, and support channels identified by their titles, from the general landscape to specific resources.

Section 1: EU Funding Landscape and Major Programs

4 infographics

This section moves from the overall European funding landscape into the principal EU-wide initiatives and calls available to space startups.

EUROPEAN UNION SPACE STARTUP FUNDING LANDSCAPE

NAVIGATING EU PROGRAMS AND PATHWAYS TO GROW YOUR SPACE VENTURE



1) OVERVIEW

EU space startups often combine EU-level entrepreneurship tools, research calls, access-to-finance programs, and national or local support.



2) KEY EU-LEVEL PATHWAYS

CASSINI



European Commission space entrepreneurship initiative, 2021–2027

EIC ACCELERATOR



Support for deep-tech startups and SMEs with high growth potential

HORIZON EUROPE SPACE CALLS



Research & Innovation calls for collaborative R&D consortia

INVESTEU



Access to finance through financial intermediaries

EUROSTARS



Support for innovative SME collaboration in R&D and innovation

ESA BICS



European Space Agency Business Incubation Centres (BICs)

3) HOW FOUNDERS TYPICALLY USE THEM



IDEA & VALIDATION



ACCELERATION



COLLABORATIVE R&D



COMMERCIALISATION



SCALE-UP



4) IMPORTANT TO KNOW



Most programs are call-based, not always continuously open.



Eligibility and consortium rules differ across programs.



Many startups combine more than one pathway over time.

5) OFFICIAL SOURCES



eusa.europa.eu/cassini-initiative



eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-accelerator_en



funding-tenders.ec.europa.eu



investeu.europa.eu



eurostars-eureka.eu



commercialisation.esa.int

CASSINI – THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S SPACE ENTREPRENEURSHIP INITIATIVE

SUPPORTING SPACE ENTREPRENEURS AND BUSINESSES ACROSS EUROPE (2021–2027)



1) WHAT IT IS

CASSINI is the European Commission's initiative to support entrepreneurs, startups, and SMEs in the space industry, including New Space, during 2021–2027.



2) WHO IT SERVES

BOTH UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM COMPANIES; BUSINESSES USING EU SPACE PROGRAMME ASSETS SUCH AS GALILEO, COPERNICUS, SSA/SST, AND GOVSATCOM.



3) MAIN TOOLS



€1 BILLION
EU SEEDS AND
GROWTH FUND



BUSINESS
ACCELERATOR



HACKATHONS
AND
MENTORING



CHALLENGES



PARTNERING
AND
MATCHMAKING



4) BUSINESS ACCELERATOR

EUROPE-WIDE 6-MONTH ACCELERATION PROGRAMME FOR SPACE STARTUPS AND SCALEUPS.



5) WHY FOUNDERS USE IT

- ✓ EARLY VISIBILITY
- ✓ MENTORING
- ✓ INVESTOR ACCESS
- ✓ COMMERCIAL GROWTH
- ✓ COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



6) IMPORTANT TO KNOW

ACTIVITIES OPEN ON DIFFERENT SCHEDULES; FOUNDERS SHOULD MONITOR THE LIVE OPPORTUNITY PAGES.



7) OFFICIAL SOURCES



[euspa.europa.eu/
cassini-initiative](https://euspa.europa.eu/cassini-initiative)



[euspa.europa.eu/opportunities/
for-startups/business-accelerators/
cassini-business-accelerators](https://euspa.europa.eu/opportunities-for-startups/business-accelerators/cassini-business-accelerators)



[defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/
cassini-space-entrepreneurship-initiative-
access-finance_en](https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/cassini-space-entrepreneurship-initiative-access-finance_en)



[euspa.europa.eu/
cassinichallenges](https://euspa.europa.eu/cassinichallenges)

EIC ACCELERATOR AND STEP SCALE UP FOR EU SPACE STARTUPS

EU FUNDING AND INVESTMENT TO HELP SPACE INNOVATIONS GROW

1 WHAT THE EIC ACCELERATOR DOES



SUPPORTS STARTUPS AND SMES TO DEVELOP AND SCALE UP INNOVATIONS WITH MARKET-CREATING OR MARKET-DISRUPTING POTENTIAL.

2 WHO CAN APPLY



SINGLE STARTUPS AND SMES; INDIVIDUALS INTENDING TO LAUNCH AN SME; SMALL MID-CAPS CAN APPLY FOR EQUITY ONLY.

3 FUNDING



- GRANT COMPONENT BELOW €2.5 MILLION
- EQUITY INVESTMENTS UP TO €10 MILLION
- COACHING, MENTORING, AND NETWORKING.

4 STEP SCALE UP



INVESTMENTS BETWEEN €10 MILLION AND €30 MILLION FOR STARTUPS, SMES, AND SMALL MID-CAPS.

5 WHY SPACE FOUNDERS USE IT



- DE-RISK HARDWARE AND DEEP TECH
- MOVE FROM TRL 6-8 TOWARD COMMERCIAL SCALE
- LEVERAGE THE EIC FUND AND NETWORKS.

6 IMPORTANT TO KNOW



- APPLICATIONS USE CUT-OFF DATES AND ARE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE.
- SOME APPLICANTS CHOOSE BLENDED FINANCE WHILE OTHERS CHOOSE EQUITY ONLY.

7 OFFICIAL SOURCES



eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/eic-accelerator_en



eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/step-scale_en



eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities_en



HORIZON EUROPE SPACE CALLS FOR STARTUPS

HOW STARTUPS CAN INNOVATE, COLLABORATE AND GROW THROUGH EU FUNDING



1 WHAT IT IS:

HORIZON EUROPE FUNDS RESEARCH AND INNOVATION THROUGH COMPETITIVE CALLS PUBLISHED ON THE EU FUNDING & TENDERS PORTAL.



2 WHERE SPACE FITS:

SPACE TOPICS ARE COMMONLY FOUND WITHIN CLUSTER 4, DIGITAL, INDUSTRY AND SPACE.



3 HOW STARTUPS PARTICIPATE:

USUALLY AS PART OF COLLABORATIVE CONSORTIA WITH COMPANIES, UNIVERSITIES, RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS, AND PUBLIC USERS.



4 TYPICAL ROLES FOR STARTUPS:

- TECHNOLOGY PROVIDER
- PAYLOAD OR SUBSYSTEM SPECIALIST
- DATA AND AI COMPANY
- PILOT DEMONSTRATOR
- COMMERCIALISATION PARTNER



5 WHY FOUNDERS USE IT:

- COLLABORATIVE R&D
- DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS
- PARTNERSHIPS
- EUROPEAN VISIBILITY
- ACCESS TO LARGER MULTI-PARTNER PROJECTS



6 IMPORTANT TO KNOW:

- MANY CALLS ARE CONSORTIUM-BASED RATHER THAN SINGLE-COMPANY GRANTS
- APPLICATION WINDOWS, ELIGIBILITY, AND TOPICS VARY BY CALL
- CHECK THE PORTAL FOR LIVE OPPORTUNITIES



7 OFFICIAL SOURCES:

- funding-tenders.ec.europa.eu
- research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities
- research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/1c306673-1596-4097-89d7-abce45ae6ddd_en



Section 2: Challenges, Incubation, and Regional Support

4 infographics

These infographics progress from challenge-based Cassini support through Europe-wide incubation and then to member-state and local space-hub assistance.

CASSINI CHALLENGES AND BUSINESS ACCELERATOR

EU SPACE DATA, REAL-WORLD IMPACT, AND GROWTH FOR STARTUPS AND SCALEUPS

1



CASSINI CHALLENGES

a competition using EU Space data and assets to help entrepreneurs solve real-world problems.

2



2026 EDITION

the 2026 competition offered winners a **€100,000** prize each.

3



TRACK RECORD

across successful editions, CASSINI Challenges has fueled **149 winners**.

4



BUSINESS ACCELERATOR

Europe-wide 6-month acceleration programme focused on commercial growth for space startups and scaleups.

5



WHY FOUNDERS USE THESE TOOLS

- ✓ NON-DILUTIVE SUPPORT
- ✓ MARKET VALIDATION
- ✓ COACHING
- ✓ INVESTOR VISIBILITY
- ✓ ECOSYSTEM CONNECTIONS

6



IMPORTANT TO KNOW

the 2026 competition is closed; founders should stay tuned for the next edition and monitor official pages.

THE PATH: FROM CHALLENGE TO GROWTH



1. COMPETITION OPENS

Challenges are published with real-world themes.



2. APPLY & BUILD

Startups develop solutions using EU Space data and assets.



3. EVALUATION

Expert jury assesses impact, innovation, and feasibility.



4. WIN & SCALE

Winners receive €100,000 each and gain visibility across Europe.



5. ACCELERATE

Join the 6-month business accelerator to grow and commercialize.



6. CONNECT & GROW

Access investors, partners, markets, and the European ecosystem.



OFFICIAL
SOURCES



CASSINI CHALLENGES
euspa.europa.eu/cassinichallenges



PRESS RELEASE – COMPETITION OPEN
euspa.europa.eu/pressroom/press-releases/cassini-challenges-competition-open



CASSINI BUSINESS ACCELERATORS
euspa.europa.eu/opportunities/for-startups/business-accelerators/cassini-business-accelerators

ESA BICS — EUROPE'S INCUBATION NETWORK FOR SPACE STARTUPS

SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURS. BUILDING SPACE BUSINESSES. STRENGTHENING EUROPE.



1) WHAT ESA BICS ARE

ESA Business Incubation Centres form the largest business incubation network in Europe.



4) WHO IT IS FOR

ENTREPRENEURS USING SPACE TECHNOLOGIES OR SPACE DATA TO CREATE COMMERCIALY VIABLE BUSINESSES.

2) SCALE OF THE NETWORK



37
CENTRES

ACROSS
23
COUNTRIES



3) WHAT FOUNDERS GET

- ✓ €60,000 EQUITY-FREE FUNDING
- ✓ ESA TECHNICAL EXPERTISE
- ✓ BUSINESS SUPPORT
- ✓ ACCESS TO A BROAD NETWORK



5) WHY IT MATTERS FOR EU FOUNDERS

- ✓ EARLY INCUBATION
- ✓ TECHNICAL CREDIBILITY
- ✓ LOCAL SUPPORT
- ✓ A LAUNCHPAD INTO WIDER EUROPEAN FUNDING PATHWAYS



6) IMPORTANT TO KNOW

ESA IS A COMPLEMENTARY EUROPEAN PATHWAY ALONGSIDE EU INSTITUTIONS; LOCAL ESA BIC HOSTS DIFFER BY COUNTRY.



COMPLEMENTARY
TO EU INSTITUTIONS



LOCAL PARTNERS
YOU CAN TRUST



COUNTRY-SPECIFIC
BIC HOSTS



CONNECTED TO THE
EUROPEAN SPACE ECOSYSTEM



OFFICIAL
SOURCES



[access.esa.int/about-access/
about-scale-up/business-
incubation-centres](https://access.esa.int/about-access/about-scale-up/business-incubation-centres)



[commercialisation.esa.int/article/298/
esa-business-incubation-centres-
esa-bics-empowering-space-start-ups](https://commercialisation.esa.int/article/298/esa-business-incubation-centres-esa-bics-empowering-space-start-ups)



[commercialisation.esa.int/
esa-networks/](https://commercialisation.esa.int/esa-networks/)



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MEMBER-STATE SUPPORT EXAMPLES FOR EU SPACE STARTUPS

NATIONAL INITIATIVES HELP TURN SPACE INNOVATION INTO GROWTH



FRANCE: CONNECT BY CNES



Connect by CNES supports startups and SMEs using space data and technologies.



SPACE TICKET is a route to French Tech Seed.



It provides access to €50,000 to €250,000 convertible-bond financing.



GERMANY: GERMAN SPACE AGENCY AT DLR



DLR funds innovation and transfer projects from the National Programme for Space and Innovation.



DLR_Startup Factory strengthens spin-off support.



LUXEMBOURG: LUXINNOVATION / FIT 4 START



Fit 4 Start offers intensive coaching and mentoring.



Up to €150,000 of equity-free funding, with dedicated space startup support.



HOW NATIONAL TOOLS FIT WITH EU PROGRAMS

THEY COMPLEMENT CASSINI, EIC, HORIZON EUROPE, AND ESA BICS.



OFFICIAL SOURCES

● [cnes.fr/entreprises/
connect-by-cnes](https://cnes.fr/entreprises/connect-by-cnes)

● [cnes.fr/entreprises/
financement-space-ticket](https://cnes.fr/entreprises/financement-space-ticket)

● [dlr.de/en/ar/cooperation-
transfer/innovation-and-
new-markets](https://dlr.de/en/ar/cooperation-transfer/innovation-and-new-markets)

● [dlr.de/en/research-and-
transfer/innovation-and-
transfer/dlr_startup-factory](https://dlr.de/en/research-and-transfer/innovation-and-transfer/dlr_startup-factory)

● [luxinnovation.lu/assess-
and-accelerate/fit4start](https://luxinnovation.lu/assess-and-accelerate/fit4start)

LOCAL SUPPORT IN EUROPEAN SPACE HUBS

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS EMPOWERING SPACE STARTUPS TO LAUNCH, GROW AND SUCCEED



TOULOUSE / AEROSPACE VALLEY



AEROSPACE VALLEY
SUPPORTS STARTUP
PROJECTS.



HELPS FIND
PUBLIC FINANCING.



PROVIDES TAILOR-MADE
ADVICE.



SUPPORTS ENTREPRENEURIAL
DEVELOPMENT IN AEROSPACE
AND SPACE.



MUNICH / MUNICH STARTUP



MUNICH STARTUP IS
THE OFFICIAL STARTUP
PORTAL FOR MUNICH
AND THE REGION.



IT INFORMS, CONNECTS,
AND FOSTERS
INNOVATION.



SERVES AS A FIRST
VIRTUAL CONTACT POINT
FOR TECHNOLOGY-
ORIENTED STARTUPS.



LUXEMBOURG / LUXINNOVATION



LUXINNOVATION SUPPORTS
STARTUPS AND SCALEUPS.



THE FIT 4 START PROGRAMME
OFFERS COACHING,
NETWORKING, AND UP TO
€150,000 EQUITY-FREE
FUNDING FOR SELECTED
STARTUPS INCLUDING
SPACE STARTUPS.



HOW LOCAL SUPPORT HELPS



SOFT LANDING



NETWORKING



GRANTS AWARENESS



INVESTOR ACCESS



MENTORSHIP



ECOSYSTEM VISIBILITY



OFFICIAL SOURCES

• aerospace-valley.com/en/support-your-startup-project • aerospace-valley.com/en/innovation-and-finance • munich-startup.de/en/about • luxinnovation.lu/assess-and-accelerate/fit4start • luxinnovation.lu/knowledge-hub/space

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Section 3: Funding Strategy and Official Resources

2 infographics

The final subject-matter section provides practical guidance for combining funding sources and directs readers to official websites for further research.

HOW TO BUILD A FUNDING STACK FOR AN EU SPACE STARTUP

A PRACTICAL ROADMAP TO MOVE FROM IDEA TO SCALE

1 IDEA / VALIDATION



- LOCAL ECOSYSTEM SUPPORT
- INCUBATORS
- ESA BICS

2 EARLY EU SPACE SUPPORT



CASSINI TOOLS SUCH AS:

- CHALLENGES
- ACCELERATOR
- HACKATHONS
- MENTORING

3 COLLABORATIVE R&D



HORIZON EUROPE
CONSORTIUM
PROJECTS



4 SINGLE-COMPANY SCALE SUPPORT



EIC ACCELERATOR
BLENDED FINANCE
OR EQUITY

GRANT + EQUITY

5 NATIONAL / MEMBER-STATE SUPPORT



- CNES
- DLR
- LUXINNOVATION
- AND SIMILAR NATIONAL TOOLS

6 SCALE-UP CAPITAL



- EIC STEP SCALE UP
- INVESTEU-BACKED FINANCE
- PRIVATE INVESTORS

7 REPEAT AND COMBINE CAREFULLY



FOUNDERS OFTEN
LAYER PROGRAMS
OVER TIME.



IMPORTANT
CAUTIONS



NOT EVERY PROGRAM
CAN BE STACKED
FREELY.



DEADLINES AND
ELIGIBILITY
DIFFER.



CONSORTIUM
RULES MAY
APPLY.



ALWAYS REVIEW
LIVE CALL
DOCUMENTS.

OFFICIAL
SOURCES



euspa.europa.eu/
cassini-initiative



eic.ec.europa.eu/
eic-funding-opportunities/
eic-accelerator_en

STEP
SCALE UP

eic.ec.europa.eu/
eic-funding-opportunities/
step-scale_en



funding-tenders.ec.europa.eu



commercialisation.esa.int

OFFICIAL WEBSITES FOR EU SPACE STARTUP FUNDING

A REFERENCE DIRECTORY OF KEY PROGRAMS AND PORTALS

1 EU SPACE ENTREPRENEURSHIP



CASSINI INITIATIVE

euspa.europa.eu/cassini-initiative



CASSINI BUSINESS ACCELERATORS

euspa.europa.eu/opportunities/for-startups/business-accelerators/cassini-business-accelerators



CASSINI CHALLENGES

euspa.europa.eu/cassinichallenges

2 STARTUP AND SCALE-UP FUNDING



EIC ACCELERATOR

eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/eic-accelerator_en



EIC STEP SCALE UP

eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/step-scale_en



EIC FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities_en

3 RESEARCH CALLS



EU FUNDING & TENDERS PORTAL

funding-tenders.ec.europa.eu



HORIZON EUROPE RESEARCH-AND-INNOVATION PORTAL

research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding

4 ACCESS TO FINANCE



INVESTEU

investeu.europa.eu



EUROSTARS

eurostars-eureka.eu

5 EUROPEAN INCUBATION AND ECOSYSTEMS



ESA BUSINESS INCUBATION CENTRES

access.esa.int/about-access/about-scale-up/business-incubation-centres



AEROSPACE VALLEY

aerospace-valley.com/en



MUNICH STARTUP

munich-startup.de/en



LUXIINNOVATION

luxinnovation.lu

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