



Scale2Connect

Guide for Applicants

Scale2Connect Deep Tech Accelerator Programme

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1. What is Scale2Connect?

Scale2Connect is a European project funded under Horizon Europe (Grant Agreement No. 101214553, HORIZON-EIE-2024-CONNECT-02). The project strengthens academia-industry collaboration and accelerates deep tech entrepreneurship in emerging innovation ecosystems in Southern Europe and Latin America.

Consortium partners

Partner	Role	Country
Envolve Entrepreneurship	Coordinator	Greece
Universidad de Málaga (UMA)	Partner	Spain
Universidade Católica Portuguesa (UCP)	Partner	Portugal
Universidad Abierta Para Adultos (UAPA)	Partner	Dominican Republic
Octa Insight (OI)	Partner	Norway

For more information about the project, please visit the Scale2Connect project website: <https://scale2connect.eu/>.

2. What does the Accelerator Open Call offer?

The Scale2Connect Accelerator is a free, three-month acceleration programme for deep tech startups and academic spin-offs based in three target regions. The programme combines structured workshops, one-to-one mentoring, and access to an international innovation-hub network, culminating in an online Demo Day in front of investors and industry representatives.

Open Call — At a Glance

- **15 deep tech startups and spin-offs** selected for the full programme (5 per region)
- **12 weekly online workshops**, from problem discovery and IP to funding readiness and pitching
- **Dedicated one-to-one mentoring** from entrepreneurs, industry experts, and academics
- **Access to Octa Insight's innovation-hub network**, connecting founders beyond their home ecosystem
- **Online Demo Day** — live digital pitch to investors and industry representatives
- **Ongoing Alumni Network membership** after the programme ends

Open Call Timeline & Key Dates

Milestone	Date
Open call launches	01/10/2026
Applications close	23/10/2026, 17:00 CEST
Regional shortlisting & central evaluation	24/10/2026 – 01/11/2026
Cohort announced	02/11/2026
Accelerator programme runs	Dec 2026 – Feb 2027
Demo Day (online)	Mar 2027
Alumni network onboarding	Spring 2027

3. Who can apply, and how?

3.1 Eligible applicants

Applicants must be independent startup teams or academic spin-off teams. Applicants are not required to have incorporated a legal entity at the time of application. The following criteria are applied:

Criterion	Requirement
Regional basis	The founding team (or the majority of it) is based in one of the three eligible regions (see 3.2).
Thematic focus	The venture operates in a deep tech field, e.g. artificial intelligence, Beyond 5G/connectivity, robotics, advanced manufacturing, or related emerging technologies.
Development stage	The venture has a working prototype, MVP, or demonstrable proof of concept. Idea-only submissions are not eligible.
Commitment	The team is available for the full duration of the programme and can commit time to weekly workshops and mentoring sessions.
Applicant type	Both independent startups and university spin-offs are welcome to apply.
Growth stage	Ventures already generating revenue or holding prior investment remain eligible, provided they are still in an active growth/scaling phase.

Scale2Connect particularly encourages applications from women-led ventures and ventures led by one or more members of underrepresented groups, in line with the programme's commitment to gender balance and inclusion.

3.2 Eligible regions

The Scale2Connect Accelerator Programme is regionally focused. We are looking for innovators from Spain (Andalusia region, including Málaga), Portugal (Lisbon region) and the Dominican Republic (Santiago de los Caballeros region).

3.3 Application process

Step	Action	Details
1	Review this Guide and the Open Call	Confirm your venture meets all eligibility criteria in Sections 3.1–3.2.
2	Complete the online application form	Submit via: https://forms.monday.com/forms/f31d0c9e3bc0ed85d5869e059415c5ad?r=euc1
3	Await confirmation	You will receive an automated confirmation once your application is submitted.

3.4 Other application requirements

- **Complete application:** all mandatory fields must be answered. Incomplete applications may be disqualified.
- **Submission channel:** applications must be submitted exclusively via the official application form. Applications sent by other means will not be accepted.
- **Deadline:** the deadline is 23/10/2026 at 17:00 CEST (Brussels time). Late submissions cannot be accepted, regardless of cause, so please apply well in advance.
- **Language:** applications can be submitted in English, Spanish or Portuguese.

4. How will applications be evaluated and selected?

4.1 Eligibility check

All applications are first screened against the eligibility criteria in Sections 3.1–3.2. Non-eligible applications are excluded from further evaluation.

4.2 Selection process — overview

Selection follows two evaluation stages: regional shortlisting by the local academic partner, then central evaluation by Envolve and Octa Insight. All applicants are then notified of the result.

Stage	Who	What happens
1. Regional shortlisting	Regional academic partner (UCP / UMA / UAPA)	Each partner reviews applications from its own region only, checks them against the eligibility criteria (Sections 3.1–3.2), and shortlists eligible applications to forward for central evaluation.
2. Central evaluation	Envolve & Octa Insight (jointly)	Shortlisted applications from all three regions are scored against the evaluation criteria below and ranked per region.
3. Notification	Envolve	The final cohort (15 startups, 5 per region) is announced and all applicants are notified by email.

4.3 Stage 1 — Regional shortlisting

1. Each regional academic partner receives and reviews all applications submitted from its own region.
2. Applications are checked against the eligibility criteria in Sections 3.1–3.2; non-eligible applications are excluded at this stage.
3. Each partner shortlists a set number of eligible applications from its region to forward to the central evaluation stage.
4. Shortlists, together with basic eligibility notes, are submitted to Envolve ahead of the central evaluation stage.

4.4 Stage 2 — Central evaluation

Shortlisted applications are evaluated jointly by Envolve and Octa Insight against the following criteria:

Criterion	Description	Weight
Deep Tech Relevance	Fit with the programme's deep tech focus areas (AI, Beyond 5G, robotics, advanced manufacturing).	25%
Development Stage & Feasibility	Maturity and credibility of the prototype/MVP; realistic path to a demo-ready product by Demo Day.	25%
Market Potential	Clarity of target market, value proposition, and scalability.	20%
Team Capacity & Commitment	Complementarity of skills; ability to commit to the full programme.	20%
Diversity & Inclusion	Women-led ventures and ventures led by one or more members of underrepresented groups.	10%

Scoring scale

Score	Assessment
0	Fail — not addressed, or cannot be assessed due to missing information.
1–2	Poor — significant weaknesses.
3	Good — broadly addressed, some weaknesses remain.
4	Very Good — well addressed, minor improvements possible.
5	Excellent — all relevant aspects successfully addressed.

Tie-breaking: where two or more applications in the same region receive the same total score, they are ranked by their scores on the evaluation criteria in the following order of priority: (1) Deep Tech Relevance, (2) Development Stage & Feasibility, (3) Market Potential, (4) Team Capacity & Commitment, (5) Diversity & Inclusion.

4.5 Stage 3 — Notification

Once the central evaluation is complete, the top-ranked applications in each region form the final cohort of 15 (5 per region). The cohort is announced on 02/11/2026, and all applicants, selected and non-selected, are notified of the result by email.

4.6 Appeals

Applicants who believe the eligibility criteria were not correctly applied may request a review by writing to Scale2Connect@envolveglobal.org within 3 working days of

receiving their result. Appeals should focus on procedural matters, not on the merits of evaluation scores.

5. What happens after selection?

Selected startups will be contacted directly by the Scale2Connect team and will be asked to confirm their participation ahead of the programme's launch in December 2026. Confirmation steps are expected to include:

- Notification of selection results by email
- Confirmation of participation and availability for the programme dates
- An onboarding session with the programme team and mentors

6. The Accelerator Programme and its requirements

6.1 Programme phases

Phase	Activity	Timing
Phase 0	Open Call & Selection	Oct – Nov 2026
Phase 1	Onboarding	Late Nov / early Dec 2026
Phase 2	Weekly Workshops & Mentoring	Dec 2026 – Feb 2027
Phase 3	Demo Day Preparation & Pitch	Feb – Mar 2027
Phase 4	Demo Day (online)	Mar 2027
Phase 5	Alumni Network Onboarding	Spring 2027

6.2 What is included

- Weekly online workshops on key aspects of deep tech venture development
- Regular one-to-one mentoring from experienced entrepreneurs, industry experts, and academics
- Progress check-ins with the programme team throughout the acceleration period
- Access to established innovation-hub networks through Octa Insight
- A place at the online Demo Day, presenting to investors and industry representatives
- Ongoing membership in the Scale2Connect Alumni Network after the programme ends

6.3 Workshop topics

The programme includes 12 weekly online workshops, delivered by Envolve and the other consortium partners and designed for early-stage deep tech ventures. The indicative topics are:

#	Workshop topic
1	From Research or Idea to Startup: Understanding the Deep Tech Venture Journey
2	Problem Discovery: Identifying a Real Market Need
3	Customer Discovery and Stakeholder Interviews
4	Value Proposition Design for Deep Tech Solutions
5	Market Mapping: Customers, Competitors, and Ecosystem Actors
6	Technology Readiness and Feasibility: What Can We Build Now
7	Business Model Basics for Early-Stage Deep Tech Startups
8	IP, Research Results, and University Spin-off Basics
9	Building an MVP or Proof of Concept Roadmap
10	Funding Readiness: Grants, Investors, and Non-Dilutive Support
11	Pitching Deep Tech: Explaining Complex Innovation Clearly
12	Demo Day Preparation: Storytelling, Feedback, and Next Steps

7. What else is important to know?

7.1 Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

Solutions developed by participating teams are expected to remain entirely owned by the teams themselves; the Scale2Connect consortium does not claim rights over participant IP.

7.2 Conflicts of interest

Applicants must disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest with the Scale2Connect selection process, including any direct financial or organisational relationship with a consortium partner.

7.3 Data protection

Application data will be collected via the online form and processed by the consortium for the purposes of application review and, if selected, programme participation, in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Please read the [Scale2Connect Privacy Policy](#).

7.4 Confidentiality

Any information shared during the application stage will be treated as confidential by the Scale2Connect team and evaluators.

7.5 EU funding visibility

Selected startups are asked to acknowledge EU funding in communication and dissemination activities related to their participation in the programme, using the following text:

“Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the granting authority. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.”

7.6 Checks and reviews

The European Commission and other competent EU bodies may carry out checks, reviews, audits or investigations related to the implementation of the programme, both during the project and after it ends, in line with the terms of the Grant Agreement.

8. Relevant links and contacts

Resource	Link / Contact
Project website	https://scale2connect.eu/
Open Call application form	https://forms.monday.com/forms/f31d0c9e3bc0ed85d5869e059415c5ad?r=euc1
Contact email (Open Call)	Scale2Connect@envolveglobal.org

Annex 1: Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
Deep tech	Ventures built on significant scientific or engineering advances, e.g. artificial intelligence, advanced connectivity, robotics or advanced manufacturing
Demo Day	The closing online event of the programme, where participating teams pitch to investors and industry representatives
GA	Grant Agreement
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679
MVP	Minimum Viable Product — the first version of a product with just enough features to be usable by real customers, who then provide feedback for future development
PoC	Proof of Concept — an early demonstration that an idea or technology is feasible, typically produced before an MVP
Spin-off	A venture created to commercialise research or technology developed at a university or research organisation