



Application Guideline

Who we are

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) belongs to a family of multilateral development banks. Our main mission is to help businesses and economies thrive through financial investments, business services and involvement in high-level policy reform, promoting entrepreneurship and resilience. EBRD operates in [almost 40 economies](#), helping them to transition to market economies. We invest over €15 billion a year into a mix of small, large private firms, local banks and microfinance institutions, venture capital and public sector. Our aim is to provide the right financing and a strong valuable partnership to help these bodies grow and develop their own skills.

The Bank is unique in its outreach to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Not only do we reach over 200,000 SMEs annually through +€1.24 billion in direct and indirect financing, but we also provide business advisory services to over 2,400 small businesses a year across our regions, as well as we provide training to thousands of SMEs. Moreover, we extended our focus, beyond SMEs, to the early-stage business space, investing in a number of young venture capital funds in the regions and mobilising know-how through the Star Venture Programme.

Through the Star Venture Programme, the EBRD aims at identifying high potential start-ups and to mobilise globally sourced expertise to help these nascent firms to scale up rapidly. Star Venture leverages a dedicated network of mentors and advisers to channel a whole range of bespoke advisory services and industry best practices to start-ups to support them improve their business model, expand to new markets and raise necessary investment for development and expansion. The programme aims to bridge the gap between emerging businesses and potential investors by fostering investment readiness and facilitating matchmaking opportunities. EBRD is also supporting accelerators to build their capacity to better serve start-ups so to benefit the wider entrepreneurial ecosystem. Currently, the programme operates in 26 countries within the EBRD's Countries of Operation, supporting over 750 technology start-ups and 33 local accelerators.

The Star Venture Programme was launched in the Western Balkans in 2019. Since then, the programme has established a collaboration with selected regional accelerators and deployed local advisory support to enhance the start-up ecosystem. So far, the programme has supported [57 high-potential start-ups](#) and [24 regional partner accelerators](#). The programme is run by EBRD and jointly funded by Luxembourg through the EBRD Small Business Impact Fund and EU – Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF).





What we offer

The programme will be delivered on a competitive basis and selected enterprises will join a cohort of dynamic venture teams in an intensive and tailored 24-month Scaling Programme. The programme engagement includes - but is not limited to - strategic innovation business diagnostic workshops, advisory projects, mentorship, business matching with different types of stakeholders/investors, regional and international expansion, fundraising support, and business matching and investor pitching events. The areas of support and intervention will depend on the competencies and needs of the individual enterprises and could include:

Support Area	Support Input Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy and Planning • Engineering, Technical Solutions and Business Model improvements • Fundraising, Financial Management and Financial Reporting • ICT and Digitalisation • Innovation, IPR and Licencing • Internationalisation and Scaling • Lean and Agile Processes • Governance and Compliance Expertise • Marketing, Communications and Sales • Operations and Quality Management • Organisation, Leadership and HR • Pitching, Equity and Investor Relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to all commercial consulting & technical skills as required • Introductions to investors, funders and credit sources • Negotiating, Valuations, Term Sheets & Investment • Cash-flow Management & Operational Planning • Identification, evaluation, introduction & negotiation with potential customers, suppliers and channel partners • Entering international markets and establishing international business entities • Developing & Implementing Marketing & Sales Plans

Eligibility

We are looking to support and engage with high-potential, innovative, growth-oriented start-ups, meeting [EU criteria on SMEs](#), based in one of WB6 countries that demonstrate the potential to scale rapidly and to attract finance. They will be supported by a suite of tailor made advisory instruments based on their specific business need. The programme looks for registered private enterprises that fulfil the following criteria:

- A proven innovative technology-based solution or innovative business model;
- A large market opportunity;
- A strong competitive advantage;
- Less than 10 years since company registration;
- Demonstrating that the beneficiary is majority-owned by citizens of EBRD countries of operations;
- Managed to substantially increase revenues within 3 years of business operations.

Interested companies are asked to submit an online application following the guidance under “Application process”.





Timeline (for early 2025 intake)

Programme Stage	Timeline (Tentative)
Application deadline	25 February 2025
Preliminary selection notification / Invitation to pitch	07 March 2025
Company pitch sessions and Final selection announcement	End of March / beginning of April 2025

Application process

Please check for more info about the programme and the application link (under “How to Apply”) at our website: <https://www.ebrd.com/starventure/overview>, and submit your application form **by 25 February 2025 COB**. Before you fill out the application, please ensure that your company's financial data (official or open form) and pitch deck (PDF) are ready to be uploaded. Please fill in the form as accurately as possible.

Further information

Once companies are shortlisted, they will be asked to pitch their presentation to an international panel of experts and investors in the final round of selection. It is therefore important that applicants provide as many details under each section of the application as possible, and also clearly present why and how the company, its product/solution and strategy are best placed to exploit and scale within the identified market opportunity. For tips on how to deliver the perfect 5 minutes pitch, but also how to prepare your deck as part of the application process, we have prepared for you the following presentations:

<https://vimeo.com/522333873/97d41ed428> and
<https://vimeo.com/521896436/15e613ac07>

For the additional information and clarifications, please contact Dejan Tonic, (tonicd@ebrd.com). Further assistance with the preparation of applications will be provided by the EBRD Western Balkans local teams and regional partner accelerators as part of regular **weekly Open Doors group sessions, which will be held every Friday 11am CET** starting from January 31, 2025 until the deadline, hosted on:

Microsoft Teams

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 361 545 785 295

Passcode: bw2hb9HR

Please contact us for additional information and keep in touch.

