SME Access Pilot

FAQ

Who is eligible to apply?

Companies in European Union member states and Horizon Europe associated countries that wish to access Euro-BioImaging services and that are classified as micro-, small- or medium-sized according to the **definitions** by the European Commission.

Projects need to be led by the applicant company and RDI activities be carried out directly by the applicant. Applicants from public research institutions or universities are not eligible to apply. We accept only one application per company.

What type of projects can be funded?

The SME Access Pilot supports short projects, pilots and "try-before-you-buy" access with the purpose of encouraging access to research infrastructure by private companies and demonstrating the impact on their research, development and innovation (RDI) activities.

Supported services include access to cutting-edge imaging instruments, support by skilled operators, technical expertise, technical consultancy, training and/or image data analysis services. Services may be provided on-site, remotely or as a full-service project, depending on your needs.

What type of projects are out-of-scope?

Projects involving the prospective recruitment of human subjects / clinical trials are out of scope. Other projects with regulatory or ethical restrictions such as preclinical imaging can be funded given that relevant permissions are already available or can be obtained within the timelines of the project. Please discuss the feasibility with the service provider.

How do I find the right service and service provider?

Contact the Euro-BioImaging Access Manager at **innovate@eurobioimaging.eu** with a short description of your imaging needs. We will help identify the most suitable technology and service provider, or support you if you already have a preferred facility. Please allow 3–5 working days to schedule the initial consultation.

You will also find all services on the **Euro-BioImaging website**. Please select a technology to see the list of service provider ("Nodes") that are offering this service[1].

[1] Please note that service providers in Hungary are currently excluded from the SME Access Pilot pursuant to Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506, adopted under Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092, according to which Hungarian institutions are currently ineligible to receive funding from the European

If you are already in contact or collaborating with a facility, you are welcome to consult with them directly to prepare your application. If you do not involve the Euro-BioImaging Access Managers, keep in mind that facilities will have to complete the **Feasibility Check Confirmation** template and email it to **innovate@eurobioimaging.eu** before the deadline of **Friday, 13 November 2026, 5pm CET**.

How do I know that my project is technically feasible?

Before submitting your application, you must discuss your project with the selected service provider. They will assess technical feasibility, prepare a cost estimate and submit a **Feasibility Check Confirmation**.

Please note that confirmation of feasibility does not guarantee scientific success or award of the grant, only that the proposed approach is suitable and can be delivered within the project timeframe by the respective service provider.

Until when can I contact Euro-BioImaging regarding my project?

Applicants are expected to make first contact with the access managers or directly with the service provider at the latest by **Friday 16 October 2026, 5pm CEST** in order for the technical experts to assess your service request. We encourage you to make contact as early as possible to receive thorough consultation in time to impact your application. The consultation itself can be carried out up until the submission deadline.

What funding is available?

The SME Access Pilot provides funding of **up to EUR 5.000,-** per project to support access to Euro-BioImaging imaging services. Funding is provided by covering eligible access costs at the selected service provider; it is not a cash grant to the applicant. We expect that short-term pilot or small projects lasting from days to 1-2 weeks can be covered.

What costs are covered?

Funding may be used to cover eligible facility access costs, including:

- instrument access and service provision
- technical expertise and training
- consumables and laboratory animals, where required
- sample access
- image data analysis and data transfer

Funding supports pilot experiments, small-scale projects, service evaluation, and the collection of imaging data for research, fundraising or marketing purposes.

Union. Consequently, EVOLVE project funds cannot be used to pay research costs or facility access fees at affected institutions.

What costs are not covered?

Funding does not cover travel, accommodation or shipping costs incurred by the applicant.

What if my project costs more than EUR 5.000,-?

Projects with estimated access costs above the funding limit may still be eligible. Applicants may contribute their own funding to cover additional costs or to extend the project scope, for example by including follow-up activities or additional samples. Any co-funding should be described in the project budget and must be confirmed before the project starts if the application is successful.

When will the service be delivered?

Projects must be **completed by latest 30 June 2027**. Work can start immediately after the funding decision has been communicated according to the schedule agreed with the service provider. Companies can access a service once or multiple times during the project duration depending on project needs. For pilot projects utilizing co-funding or budget top-up from the applicant, activities covered by the applicant's own funding can continue past the deadline.

What are my obligations as grantee?

Each awarded applicant will need to complete a feedback survey and submit a short, non-confidential report within 1 month of project completion, but no later than 31 July 2027.

When and how do I submit my application?

Submit your completed application as a single PDF by email no later than **Friday, 13 November 2026, 5pm CET** to **innovate@eurobioimaging.eu**. You may update your application until the deadline. If multiple versions are submitted, only the last version will be considered.

What do I need to submit?

You must submit the completed **SME Access Pilot Application Form** as a single PDF by sending it to **innovate@eurobioimaging.eu** no later than **Friday, 13 November 2026, 5pm CET.**

The form consists of three parts:

- PART A – Administrative information, project description, requested services and expected business impact. This is the core of your application.
- PART B – Technical feasibility, project plan, estimated costs and any safety, ethical, regulatory or confidentiality considerations (completed with input from the service provider).
- PART C – Eligibility and consent questionnaire.

During the initial consultation, your chosen service provider needs to submit a **Feasibility Check Confirmation** directly to Euro-BioImaging to confirm that the service can be delivered based on the information provided by you.

Your application is only complete if both documents have been received before the deadline.

Where can I find the project proposal template and applicant guidelines?

SME Access Pilot Application Form

Feasibility Check Confirmation

SME Access Pilot Applicant Guidelines

Can I submit more than one application?

No, only one application per company can be submitted. However, you may update your application until the deadline by resubmitting. If multiple applications are submitted, only the last version will be considered.

How are applications evaluated?

Applications are evaluated against four criteria:

1. **Need for facility access** – Is access to the requested imaging service justified and appropriate for the proposed project?
2. **Feasibility** – Is the project plan realistic, the methodology suitable, and can the project be completed within the available time and resources?
3. **Innovation impact** – Will the pilot generate meaningful technical value and innovation impact for the applicant company?
4. **Sustainability** – Is the project likely to encourage future use of advanced imaging services and/or lead to longer-term collaboration?

Each criterion is scored on a scale from 0 to 5

5 Excellent – Fully meets the criterion with no significant weaknesses.
4 Good – Meets the criterion with only minor weaknesses.
3 Average – Adequately meets the criterion but has some weaknesses.
2 Satisfactory – Partially meets the criterion with significant weaknesses.
1 Poor – Serious deficiencies.
0 Ineligible / Not competitive.

Applicants that have not previously used a Euro-BioImaging facility receive a bonus of 3 points.

The individual scores are added to produce a total score ranging from 0 to 23. Eligible applications are ranked according to their total score. The 10 highest-ranked proposals will be selected for funding (or more until funding is depleted). If two or more applications

receive the same total score, priority will be given first to new Euro-BioImaging users and then to applicants that contribute with their own funding to exceeding the EUR 5.000,- funding cap or longer term collaborations.

Are first time Euro-BioImaging users prioritised?

Any start-up or SME is eligible to apply. However, one of the objectives of the call is to encourage new private sector users to access our biological and biomedical imaging services. First-time Euro-BioImaging users will be awarded a bonus of 3 additional points towards their evaluation score, and their application will be prioritised for funding in case of equal total score. For details, please refer to the **SME Access Pilot Applicant Guidelines**.

When will I be informed of the outcome of my application?

You will be informed of the outcome of your application by email no later than **Friday, 11 December 2026 EOB**.

Who will be able to see my application?

Proposals will be assigned to access managers from Euro-BioImaging to support the identification of the right service provider.

Applicants are required to consult with the service provider to allow assessment of technical feasibility, but the amount of information that will be disclosed to the service provider is up to the applicant based on their need for technical advice. In some cases, access managers might invite more than one service provider to the consultation.

Access managers, technical experts at the service provider and reviewers are bound by confidentiality agreements. Each project will be reviewed by three reviewers. Reviewers will have to disclose any potential conflict of interest before starting the review process.

Who can I contact with further questions about my application?

For any general questions about the SME Access Pilot please contact **innovate@eurobioimaging.eu**.