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IUSS
Scuola Universitaria Superiore Pavia

IUSS Call for Ideas 2025

Il progetto EFC - codice progetto SSU2024-00002, finanziato ai sensi dell'art. 11, comma 1, dell'Avviso 594/2024, in favore dei Soggetti attuatori della Missione 4, Componente 1, Investimento 3.4 "Didattica e competenze universitarie avanzate" è supportato dal PNRR, Sotto-investimento "Rafforzamento delle Scuole universitarie superiori. Ne fanno parte: Scuola Universitaria Superiore IUSS - Pavia Capofila; Scuola IMT Alti Studi - Lucca; Scuola Internazionale Superiore di Studi Avanzati (SISSA) - Trieste, e 5 scuole di ateneo - Scuola di studi superiori «C. Urbani» - Università di Camerino; Scuola di studi superiori «G. Leopardi» - Università di Macerata; Scuola di studi superiori «F. Rossi» - Università di Torino; Scuola superiore dell'Università degli studi di Udine e Collegio internazionale Ca' Foscari - Università di Venezia.

1. Background and Objectives

The University School for Advanced Studies IUSS Pavia (henceforth, "**IUSS School**") is dedicated to training highly qualified researchers and professionals who, through an interdisciplinary perspective, are capable to address the complex challenges of our time. In line with its institutional mission, the IUSS School promotes the integration of advanced education, research of excellence and knowledge transfer, with the aim of generating tangible scientific, cultural, social and economic impact.

To achieve this, the IUSS School is committed to creating cross-disciplinary training paths for its doctoral students and to implementing initiatives that enhance the value of research, including entrepreneurship programs that foster practical application, dissemination and social utility.

Within this framework, the "**IUSS - Call for Ideas 2025**," has been launched as part of the "*Educating Future Citizens (EFC)*" project funded by the **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR)**. Coordinated by the IUSS School, the *EFC* project brings together a network of eight Italian Institutions of higher education that are committed to preparing doctoral profiles capable of actively contributing to sustainable development, innovation and social cohesion through advanced training, international mobility, career guidance and knowledge transfer:

- School IMT Alti Studi Lucca
- Trieste International School for Advanced Studies (SISSA)
- "C. Urbani" School of Advanced Studies, University of Camerino
- "G. Leopardi" School of Advanced Studies, University of Macerata
- "F. Rossi" School of Advanced Studies, University of Turin
- University of Udine "di Toppo Wassermann" School of Higher Education
- Ca' Foscari International College of the University of Venice

This initiative is a strategic component of the *EFC* network's joint actions and offers PhD students a concrete opportunity to:

- translate their research into high-impact entrepreneurial ventures;
- develop entrepreneurial and soft skills, with the support of mentors, investors and industry experts;
- internationalize their journey through immersive experiences in global innovation ecosystems such as Silicon Valley;
- collaborate in an interdisciplinary, inter-university context, fostering dialogue among research, industry and society.

Through this call for proposals, the IUSS School aims to select entrepreneurial proposals that address real-world challenges in key sectors for the future such as **Energy & Sustainability, Space and Culture and Creative Industries**, and to guide them along valorization pathways that promote their transformation into concrete, sustainable solutions for new enterprises.

2. Projects requirements and eligibility

All PhD students currently enrolled at one of the *EFC* participating Institutions of Higher Education, together with PhD graduates who obtained their degree within the past 12 months from the same institutions, are eligible to participate in the "**IUSS- Call for ideas 2025**".

Business ideas, whether still at concept stage or already under development, i.e. research results with clear potential for technology transfer and venture creation, will be accepted. Each proposal must be linked to research activities carried out (or competences acquired) during the doctoral programs.

Proposals must necessarily fall within one of the following subject areas of research:

- **Energy & Sustainability**, with special reference to:
 - Alternative proteins
 - Battery recycling
 - Energy storage in grid
 - Efficient green and brown H2 generation
 - Alternative materials for batteries
 - Low energy computing
- **Space**, with special reference to:
 - Nonterrestrial networks
 - Intersat communication
 - Autonomous guidance for in-orbit servicing
 - High Accuracy SARs for Earth Observation
 - Using HO data for healthcare prevention processes
 - In space computing, including orchestration
- **Culture and Creative Industries**

Each proposal must be submitted by a **Proponent**, i.e. a PhD student or recent PhD graduate (≤ 12 months) from one of the *EFC* Institutions (e.g. 37th cycle PhD graduates from SDC of IUSS School). The Proponent may participate individually or with a **Team** comprising other eligible PhD students and/or recent graduates from any *EFC* Institutions. Formation of interdisciplinary teams with complementary expertise is strongly encouraged, as this can maximize the development of the business idea.

3. Content of the Application

Applications must be submitted exclusively via the **online application form**, published on the IUSS School website.

Each application should include the following information:

1. Team profile:

- Full name and affiliation of each member, with the indication of the Proponent
- Key competencies present in the Team
- Missing skills that would strengthen the business idea implementation
- Educational and/or professional objectives linked to the application
- Any previous entrepreneurial experience

2. Business Idea:

- Title and subject area of research
- Addressed sustainable development goals (SDGs)
- Current development stage of the idea
- Description of the business idea (*to be detailed in the "Idea Card - Annex 1"*)

3. Deadline and Submission procedure

Applications must be submitted via the **online form no later than 15:00 CET on 27 May 2025**.

When completing the form, Proponents who select one of the following options describing the idea's stage of development must also upload the "*Idea Sheet - Annex 1*"

- Well-defined idea
- Idea in the early development stage
- Idea in advanced development stage

In case Proponents do not yet have a well-defined idea, the additional option "Idea currently being defined" must be selected and the form submitted by 27 May 2025 anyway. In this case, Proponents must then finalize their idea and upload the "*Idea Sheet - Annex 1*" **no later than 15:00 CET on June 14, 2025** for the application to remain valid.

Submission of the form constitutes the Proponent's declaration that all information is accurate and that the terms of admission, selection and evaluation in this call are fully accepted. Incomplete, non-compliant or late applications, or those sent via channels other than the official form, will be rejected.

4. Initiative implementation

All Proponents/Teams who submit **eligible applications by May 27, 2025**, including those who will finalize their applications by June 14, 2025 under the "*Idea currently being defined*" option, will be invited to the following residential training event:

"From Research to Business: Bridging Knowledge to Market," to be held on **June 6 and 7, 2025** at UniverMantova (Mantua).

This event will introduce participants to the entrepreneurial potential of academic research, providing useful knowledge and tools for developing business ideas for high societal impact. The detailed program will be available on the call webpage. Attendance at the training event is strongly recommended as it will help participants to refine and finalize their business ideas.

All proposals submitted by the stated deadlines will enter a three-stage evaluation process (see *Section 5 "Selection and Evaluation Criteria"*). After stage 1, up to **50 projects** will advance to an intensive mentoring and training track; following that, the **10 highest-ranked projects** become finalists, from which the winners will be identified, according to the criteria established in the present call.

5. Selection and Evaluation Criteria

The selection of business ideas will be entrusted to an Expert Commission appointed by Rectoral Decree of the IUSS School and composed of leading figures from the innovation ecosystem, including industry experts, academics, investors and venture capitalists. The Expert Commission will operate with full autonomy and discretion, in strict compliance with confidentiality obligations and with the provisions of this call.

The selection process is divided in 3 distinct stages:

Stage 1. Preliminary assessment of applications (max. 50 points)

All admissible proposals will be evaluated by the Expert Commission based on the following criteria:

- Clarity, completeness and feasibility of the proposal: *max. 10 points*;
- Degree of innovation and competitive advantage: *max. 10 points*
- Value creation and expected economic, social or environmental impact: *max. 10 points*;
- Motivation and skills of the Proponent/Team: *max. 10 points*

Bonus: attendance at the residential training event will earn an additional *10 points*

The assessment will be completed by the end of June 2025. A ranking list will be issued and **up to 50 projects** will advance to Stage 2.

Stage 2. Mentoring and venture building (max. 30 points)

The 50 shortlisted projects will have access to a four-month program of mentoring with investors and industry experts. Depending on each project's nature and maturity, the Commission will assign one possible mentoring path:

- **Shared path** - online interactive workshop series *"From Research to Business: Making Sound New Companies"* (four sessions, July–October 2025);
- **Customized path** - one-to-one advanced coaching sessions.

At the end of the mentoring program, the Expert Commission will award each project **up to 30 points**, based on the following criteria:

- Evolution and maturation of the idea: *max. 10 points*
- Quality of the work done and final prototype/idea: *max. 10 points*
- Ability of the Proponent/Team to take in input and act on it: *max. 10 points*

The **10 projects** with the highest scores will pitch their business idea at the final event on **13 November 2025** at Venice International University - VIU (Venice).

Stage 3. Final pitch (*maximum 20 points*)

During the final pitching event, the 10 finalist projects – grouped by topic area - will deliver a pitch followed by a question-and-answer session.

Pitches will be evaluated by a jury of investors, experts and industry professionals based on the following criteria, **for a maximum of 20 points**:

- Clarity and effectiveness of the presentation: *max. 5 points*;
- Consistency between vision and proposed solution: *max. 5 points*;
- Ability to convey the business value to external stakeholders: *max. 5 points*;
- Quality of the answers provided to the jury: *max. 5 points*.

The final score will be determined by the sum of the scores across all stages (*max 100 points*).

The final event will also feature a round-table dedicated to the discussion between VCs, corporates and spin-offs, and will conclude with the announcement of the winners of the "**IUSS - Call for ideas 2025**".

6. Award and Opportunities

The total value of the prize is €15,000, allocated as up to a maximum of **6 individual fellowships € 2,500** each for members of the winning Teams.

At least 2 Teams (consisting of 3 members each) will be awarded; additional Teams will be awarded until fundings are exhausted.

The fellowship will cover costs of the participation to a five-day immersion experience in Silicon Valley, organized in collaboration with the international Silicon Valley Fellowship network. Travel and accommodation costs will be also reimbursed.

The five-day experience will take place in the San Francisco Bay Area where participants will meet investors, founders, mentors and leading academics, gaining first-hand exposure to one of the world's most vibrant innovation ecosystems and consolidating the skills acquired through the "IUSS – Call for Ideas 2025."

In addition, the 10 finalist projects may be referred to investors and venture capitalists for potential access to *Proof of Concept* or seed funding.

7. Request for information

For more information, contact the IUSS School's U.O. Rapporti con le imprese e impatto at impatto@iusspavia.it, indicating in the subject line [IUSS - Call for ideas 2025] or consult the call webpage on the IUSS School website.

8. Protection of privacy

Personal data will be processed in accordance with **EU Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR)** and used solely for the purposes of this call. Data provision is mandatory for participation. Full information is available at: <https://www.iusspavia.it/it/protezione-dati-personali>. Participants may exercise the rights set out in Articles 15–22 of the GDPR (access, rectification, erasure, objection, etc.).

9. Confidentiality and intellectual property

All information contained in the application forms will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and used exclusively for the purposes of this present call. Intellectual property matters, without prejudice to any third-party rights, are governed by the applicable legislation and by the regulations in force at each applicant's home institution.