



European Media and Immersion Lab

D2.1 – FSTP Text and Application Procedure

WP2 – Call Setup and Administration

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Abstract

This document will describe the set up the Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP) calls I and II. It presents the information given about the calls and procedures (preparation activities of the call, application form, general requirements, criteria and expectations for the funded FSTP projects. The information about the publication of the calls and funding timeline of the FSTP calls are also listed.



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1 Introduction

EMIL's - the European Media and Immersion Lab – **main objective is to set up a dedicated XR Media Lab** to foster innovation and new solutions in the field of XR Media. By opening two calls for funding support for the third parties (FSTP), EMIL will gather the best existing or nascent XR projects in Europe and develop new XR technologies, methodologies, and tools for radically new applications, services, and products close for commercialisation. EMIL cooperates with contemporary XR media research and development offering open research and technical services and EMIL network for the use of industries like media, gaming, healthcare, manufacturing, fashion, architecture, publishing, education, urban planning, agriculture, environmental planning, cultural heritage and art.

To do so, **EMIL will support and execute two calls for European based XR technology developers and content creators.** The EMIL consortium partners will support and guide the funded Financial Support for Third Parties (FSTP) projects towards their goals. The EMIL network is an open network looking for new members and growth and it will also entice more members through the two FSTP calls, providing funding in the range of 250.000-500.000€ per selected project, with indicative duration of 15 months to ensure focused effort. FSTP-funding is aimed at projects by outstanding technology developers, media innovators, SMEs, academia and others that enable new ways of creative storytelling and interaction through immersive media technologies. The total funding to be provided to all applicants by EMIL is 5.600.000€.

EMIL's FSTP calls I and II will be carried out in the light of the same basic principles which govern European Commission calls:

Excellence. The proposal(s) selected for funding must demonstrate a high quality in the context of the topics and criteria set out in the call.

Transparency. Funding decisions must be based on clearly described rules and procedures, and all applicants should receive adequate feedback on the outcome of the evaluation of their proposals.

Fairness and impartiality. All proposals submitted to a call are treated equally. They are evaluated impartially on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants¹;

Confidentiality. All proposals and related data, knowledge and documents are treated in confidence.

¹ In the frame of any restrictions provided for in the call



Efficiency and speed. Evaluation of proposals and award of the financial support should be as rapid as possible, commensurate with maintaining the quality of the evaluation, and respecting the legal framework.

2 Preparation Activities

2.1 Call announcement for recipients of financial support

Project **acronym:** EMIL

Project **grant agreement number:** 101070533

Project **full name:** EMIL – European Media and Immersion Lab

EMIL – the European Media and Immersion Lab project, co-funded from the European Union’s Horizon Europe (HORIZON) programme under grant agreement No 101070533 and The UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), foresees as an eligible activity the provision of financial support to third parties, to achieve its own objectives.

EMIL invites proposals especially for areas related to the core competences of the consortium partners (please see the figure below) and the four Lighthouse projects that reflect the expertise and supporting infrastructure of EMIL. However, XR-project proposals that are not directly related to these four areas will also be considered.

2.2 Thematic areas

EMIL project invites proposals especially for areas related to the core competences of the consortium partners and the four Lighthouse projects that reflect the expertise and supporting infrastructure of EMIL. However, XR-project proposals that are not directly related to these four areas will also be considered. In the below table we provide brief descriptions of the core competences and the thematic



tracks of the EMIL.





				
Smart Garments	●			
Haptics	●	●		
Interactive and Immersive Audio	●		●	●
Cultural Heritage	●	●	●	●
Digital Tourism	●		●	
Urban Planning & Architecture	●			●
Transportation & Automotive (infotainment & urban mobility)	●		●	●
Embodied Interaction	●	●	●	
Remote/robotic XR interaction	●	●	●	
Interactive Technologies for Learning	●	●	●	
Psychology, brain and cognition	●	●	●	●
Rehabilitation & Digital Health	●	●	●	
Motion Capture	●	●	●	●
Narrative Storytelling	●		●	●
VFX	●	●		●
Virtual Production	●	●		●
Artificial Intelligence	●	●	●	●
Communication & Networks	●		●	●

Figure 1. Core competences of the consortium partners.

2.2.1 Wearable Haptic Interfaces for XR

Adding tactile sensations to XR has proved to enhance the immersive experience and has attracted tremendous attention from both academia and industry. EMIL develops smart garments (e.g., gloves and shirts) that combine vibrotactile, electrotactile and potentially also chemical stimulations to implement various tactile sensations and integrate stimulations into textiles. We will open source the designs of our smart garments and will provide open APIs for (re)configuring and (de)activating tactile sensations.

FSTP projects in this area are expected to focus on XR experience design utilizing the smart garments developed by EMIL or new designs of smart garments that provide different types of tactile sensations.



In either case, the proposed designs are expected to be prototyped and evaluated through user tests. Each FSTP project is free to choose any type of XR applications for demonstration and is encouraged to demonstrate the interplay between tactile sensation and other sensory modalities.

2.2.2 Affective Exergaming in Virtual Environments

Virtual environments hold great promise in supporting users to be physically active. EMIL is developing technologies to enable gamified exercise ("exergames") in an effective and motivating manner, e.g., allowing users to interact naturally in virtual environments by cycling on an exercycle or running and jumping on the spot. Besides physical activity, our technologies make it possible to measure how users feel ("affect") and to adjust and optimise virtual environments accordingly. We demonstrate the value of these technologies in VR exergames for sports training and rehabilitation, optimising the user experience to be both physically engaging and emotionally motivating.

Possible FSTP projects include VR experiences that engage users through physical activity, e.g., for sport, rehabilitation and entertainment, and affective VR experiences such as interactive narratives.

2.2.3 Group-oriented Spatial AR

The common type of AR experiences, based on smartphones or tablets, is often difficult to adopt by users and is isolating, which breaks the group user experience (UX) of visitors in public spaces such as museums, culture centres, heritage sites, schools, etc. Headset-based AR is also considered to be isolating as well as high cost, lacks robustness, and presents hygiene issues that have become obvious during the pandemic. We expect novel approaches to group-based AR experiences for public spaces that: keep the sense of group UX; do not force all users in a group to use a device; and allow a situated, shared, co-located experience. Proposals of such AR experiences for public spaces may take advantage of UPF's novel World-as-Support paradigm and the device that implements it, the AR Magic Lantern. The SDK will support rapid prototyping of experiences for this platform and will allow the proposal of novel augmentation of content and meaning for contexts such as learning, digital tourism, heritage transfer to younger generations, storytelling, increase of interest for historical knowledge, etc.

2.2.4 Narrative Immersive Media Productions including Location Based Experiences (LBE)

A solid narrative structure builds the foundation for any successful media production. In this context we are expecting FSTP proposals with strong emphasis in Animation, Digital Actors, Visual Effects including Virtual Production, Interactive Installations, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality and Game formats utilizing latest technological advancements to tell compelling stories. Running such productions is supported by an ecosystem of hard- and software tools to optimize workflows while preserving maximum creative freedom.

The scalable LBE created within the EMIL project tells a compelling story by means of visual and



physical immersion. LBE by nature is restricted to dedicated hardware and spatial constraints, therefore the experience is planned in different scales as: individually seated, individually in a room scale environment and as a group experience in a large room scale environment. LBE and existing toolsets are expected to foster and blossom FSTP projects with strong narrative elements in XR.

2.2.5 Open track

Open track is for the proposals for VR, AR or MR productions or development projects that do not fall into any of four thematic areas mentioned above. We expect to see radically different approaches with innovative and surprising content productions, applications, and services of extended reality such as Virtual Productions utilizing latest achievements in real-time graphics for VFX and character centric applications including animated assistive services where believable facial animation of humanoids are essential.

3 General Requirements for FSTP projects

The EMIL funding calls will be open to all legal entities located within an [EU member state](#) or in a [Horizon Europe \(HE\) associated country](#). The applicants must possess a validated Participant Identification Code (PIC) granted by the European Commission (EC) at the time of signing an FSTP agreement. The proposals should include a plan on how they can benefit from the expertise and/or infrastructure of EMIL lab nodes.

3.1 Requirements for eligibility of applicants

The proposal must be submitted by a legal entity located within an [EU member state or in a Horizon Europe \(HE\) associated country](#). The applicant must be eligible to receive HE funding.

UK companies and other UK entities are encouraged to apply, however due to the complexities of the UK-EU research relationship, at the time of writing this document, UK entities are not eligible for funding. This may be subject to change as EMIL is currently exploring whether there is other funding to fund UK entities.

The legal entity must register in the Participant Register before submitting their application, in order to get a [participant identification code \(PIC\)](#) and be [validated by the Central Validation Service \(REA Validation\)](#) before signing the FSTP agreement. The applicant will be asked to provide the validation services all necessary documents. A validated PIC is not a prerequisite for applying, but the PIC must be validated before the funding can be admitted.



Applicants cannot be affiliated with the EMIL consortium partners nor can they be employees of the EMIL partners. All potential conflicts of interest will be assessed carefully.²

Individuals will not be permitted to act as a project coordinator in more than one application.

The applicants submitting a proposal in the second call must not have had a funded proposal in the previous EMIL call.

3.1.1 Financial eligibility requirements for applicants

Financial and viability checks will be made to ensure Horizon Europe funding eligibility. It will be verified that:

1. The applicant is entitled to carry on the business; the applicant is registered in the trade register or in an equivalent register.
2. The applicant's financial resources are sufficient regarding the volume and quality of the procurement.
3. Applicant has paid 1) taxes, 2) pension contributions and 3) social security contributions and is able to effect the payments of any similar social liabilities.
4. All above mentioned requirements apply both to the principal applicant and to possible subcontractors.
5. If subcontractors are being used the funding rules of Horizon Europe must be followed (the best value for money and no conflict of interests).

Documentation:

- A. Applicant's turnover or average magnitude of the business in years 2018 - 2021 (where available) plus a forecast for the project timeframe (2022-2025) was on average at least the value of the proposed FSTP project grant. Financial reports that would include P&L, balance sheet and cash flow shall be attached to the application.³

OR

if the applicant concerned is a new company or entrepreneur, the applicant shall submit the information (the latest balance sheet, a business plan and a statement from the bank) on the basis of which the financial resources can be verified plus a forecast for the project time frame (2023-2025). Reports shall be attached to the application.

- B. Statement of outstanding taxes and certificates of pension and social security contributions shall be attached to the application.

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/protection-eu-budget/conflict-interest_en

³ The profit and loss calculation tool can be used for evaluating the applicant's financial situation: <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do>



3.1.2 Additional Eligibility Criteria

- The submissions must propose future-oriented eXtended Reality (XR) projects; i.e. using Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), Mixed Reality (MR), or similar immersive and interactive technologies. These should propose a clear innovation in the field, whether at a technological level (bringing a technology up from TRL4 to TRL8) or at a content level (providing a novel type of experience with these technologies and media).
- The proposal is submitted before the specific cut-off date deadline as defined in the call;
- The proposal is submitted online through our exclusive application platform as defined in the call;
- The proposal uses the mandatory application template provided by EMIL;
- The proposal is written and submitted in English only;
- Applications must be readable, accessible, and printable.
- Applications should not contain sensitive personal data or trade secrets
- Applicant must be able to validate the content of the proposal if required at a later stage.
- Applicants are discouraged from using subcontractors. They can only be used in special situations. Subcontractors are subject to same eligibility and certification obligations as FSTP applicants themselves.

4 Submission

4.1 Publication of the Call

The EMIL consortium will publish the full call details in the project's own website <https://emil-xr.eu> and the partners' own websites. The basic information about the calls and the link to the application website will be published in Horizon Europe Participant Portal.

The call will remain open for the submission of proposals for a period of two months. If call deadlines will be changed, it will be immediately communicated to the Project Officer for updating the call announcement on the Horizon Europe Participant's Portal. The full call details will be updated on the project's own website and all registered applicants must be informed of the change.

For the convenience of the applicants and the evaluators, a template for the proposal will be set downloadable at the EMIL call website. The template will contain the following categories: A) i) Admin information; name and contacts, financial information of the applicant, ii) The cover page and abstract of the proposal, B). 1. Excellence and relevance including technology used and description of readiness of the project, 2. Quality, relation to EMIL's goals and objectives, what is the novelty of the proposal 3. Implementation, structure of the workplan, working group, support needed. 4. Efficiency, costs, and use of the budget, 5. Impact, and Sustainability, how the activity will be used in the short and long-term.



The proposals submitted should be solely based on original works by the applicants and their foreseen developments are free from third party rights, or they are clearly stated.

All IPR created by the applicants via the funding they receive from EMIL will remain the applicants' property.

4.2 Application procedure

The calls will be published on the EMIL website (<https://emil-xr.eu>) and the EU Participant Portal. The EMIL website links to the call website at <https://emil-xr.aalto.fi/>. The aggregate call related information on the previously mentioned websites will include the following documents:

- Call text: it provides the scope and objectives of the current call.
- Guide for Applicants: important information to meet the call requirements.
- Proposal Template: a separate proposal template in Microsoft Word format to help you prepare your proposal, produce a PDF and upload it as part of application. It is mandatory to use the provided template and the limits of the text to enable the equal treatment of the proposals.
- Additional supporting documents to help applicants in the preparation of their proposal.

All useful documents, including the current Guide for Applicants as well as all necessary templates to prepare and submit a proposal are publicly available on the EMIL website: <https://emil-xr.eu>

All costs arising to submissions to EMIL calls, shall be borne by the applicant.

4.3 Questions prior to submission of proposals

Questions related to the preparation of a proposal can be sent by email to: call@emil-xr.eu. The questions can only be clarifications about the call text and its annexes, or about the eligibility of a proposal and its applicant/s. The EMIL consortium will under no circumstances provide advice on proposals' contents. Relevant questions and answers will be made available publicly on the EMIL project website as a FAQ.

4.4 Management structure of evaluation of proposals

The EMIL Programme Committee (PC) will coordinate the lifecycle of the calls and funded FSTP projects. The PC consists of the scientific leaders of EMIL and the EMIL content manager. The PC will ensure that the calls and FSTP management are conducted according to the EC Horizon Europe guidelines and adhere to the EU standards of transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest and confidentiality, based on the guidelines established in Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022 13. *General Annexes* and in articles 6.2.D.1 and 9.4 of the *Annotated Model Grant Agreement (MGA)*.



The PC will be assisted in its duties by the FSTP Projects' support that will help to ensure the technical and production viability of the projects during the assessment stage and will take care of the needed resource coordination, facility training and technical support during the production period of the FSTP projects.

The evaluation of proposals with regards to their content will be carried out by an Independent Expert Panel (IEP), which will be composed of three experts from the fields of XR media, gaming, AV publishing, education, art and other relevant communities (further details on this may be found in deliverable D4.2 "EMIL's Guide to Evaluation of FSTP Projects").

5 Contract and obligations of the grantees

The European Commission will be informed about third party projects selected for funding, as the EC must verify them prior to the publication of the calls' outcomes. The evaluated, ranked and verified proposals subject to fund will be invited to negotiate and sign FSTP agreements. The funded applicants will be required to sign an FSTP agreement with the coordinator of EMIL, the agreement will establish the FSTP partner obligations and will extend all required obligations concerning open science, information, record keeping, confidentiality, conflict of interest, and ethics to the beneficiaries.⁴ It will also ensure that all bodies mentioned in [Article 25 of the HE Grant Agreement](#) have the right to carry out checks, reviews, audits, and investigations on FSTP recipients and to audit the payments received.

5.1 Checkpoints and reporting

The reporting structure will include:

- Opening Report and Kickoff (FSTP M1): This early report will verify that the start of the project is energetic, adequately embraced, and in the correct direction to avoid delays and failures at month M6 which could compromise the project.
- Progress Reports (FSTP M6 and M12): The FSTP will be requested to submit an internal progress report for each reporting period, as well as financial reports on FSTP-M6 and FSTP-M12.
- Project Presentations (FSTP M6 and M12): The FSTP funded projects will be requested to meet roughly every six months at a designated node. They will have to present their progress

⁴ Please see the HE Grant Agreement: Articles 12 (conflict of interest), 13 (confidentiality and security), 14 (ethics), 17.2 (visibility), 18 (specific rules for carrying out action), 19 (information) and 20 (record-keeping) also apply to the third parties receiving the support (recipients).



both from technical as well as conceptual standpoints. This will allow them and us (at EMIL) to have a clear idea on their progress according to their schedule in their work plan. This is combined with the networking events.

- Final Report (FSTP M12-15): The FSTP projects will be evaluated at the end of their execution periods. The FSTP projects will deliver a final report that will be integrated by EMIL with the rest. EMIL will then provide an evaluation of these reports as a complete overview of the call.
- To support open science, EMIL will encourage FSTP projects to share their results through the Horizon Results Platform, after IPR and exploitation considerations have been addressed, in order to support the widest possible impact for supported projects.

Any communication or publication by the funded applicants shall clearly indicate that their project has received funding from the European Union, the EMIL project and Horizon Europe displaying the EU logo on all printed and digital material, including websites and press releases.

Funding will be provided according to the budget agreed in the FSTP agreement. It will be paid in three parts to the grantee after the completion of appropriate project stages. Funding will be provided based on the detailed cost estimate submitted as part of the application package. The eligible cost categories include personnel costs, travel costs, materials, and other costs, in line with the Horizon Europe financial guidelines and eligible costs. Please refer to chapter 6 “Payments”.

6 Project execution

The selected FSTP projects must have a clear execution plan to be executed in 15 months. Each funded project will be assigned a direct tutor who will be the main contact between the FSTP project, EMIL services, and Lighthouse projects. The tutor will also provide concrete weekly support of any issues that may arise, such as logistics access to technology or infrastructures, contacts for solving issues, and conceptual guidance (within a limited number of maximum weekly hours that will be discounted after every support provided). Nonetheless, the FSTP grantees have the final responsibility of executing the daily work defined in their work plan and must provide the sufficient and adequate workforce to undertake their tasks and achieve their goals within the project's granted budget.

In addition to the financial funding, the following will be provided to the FSTP grantees as negotiated in the FSTP agreement:

- The FSTP grantees will also have a set of local mentors, mainly experts from the node related to the thematic area chosen by the FSTP project. These mentors will support specific aspects of the project and use of infrastructures and technology (also to a limit of monthly hours).



- The FSTP projects will also have access to technical personnel of the node as a global underlying support. In addition, the grantees will also have the sporadic support of experts from other nodes, through online meetings together with their tutor, whenever their expertise can help move the FSTP projects forward.
- By demand, the nodes will also provide FSTP grantees with a business mentor to help them to define their business plans of the FSTP project. The nodes will also provide FSTP grantees with a business mentor according to individual project demand, helping them to define their business plan.
- EMIL will hold networking events organized in a hybrid mode (a combination of in person and virtual) to provide a rich context for FSTP projects to be demonstrated and their teams to network with other Content and Media Industries stakeholders. The organisation of these events will rotate among the different nodes.
- FSTP grantees will also benefit from EMIL's existing network of industrial and scientific supporting institutions and may hence be invited to new future collaborations and to yearly events such as FMX (Baden-Württemberg), Sonar (Barcelona), etc., to disseminate their projects and obtain feedback from public exposure.

The FSTP grantees will be asked to participate in at least the kick-off, the workshops, and the showcase, but eventually to other events, too, organised by the EMIL consortium. All the events will happen primarily on site, but depending on the nature of the event, remote participation may also be possible. The projects may need to allocate budget for the possible traveling.

6.1 Payments

Selected projects will be funded in accordance with the budget negotiated in the FSTP agreement. The grant amount will be transferred to the grantee in three stages (please see below). To support transparency and the implementation of the third-party projects, the financial support will be provided following specific deliverables and based on the evaluation of the project reports. Complete financial reports on the projects will be required in conjunction with the reporting deadlines associated with the payment schedule. If a participant does not provide the relevant reports and financial data on time (or upon request) the coordinator will have the right to suspend the payments of funding until the issue is resolved.

To avoid cash-flow problems the EMIL Consortium intends for payments to FSTP recipients to coordinate with the EC provision of funding to the EMIL Consortium. The precise schedule of payments to third parties will be made clear and agreed upon in the FSTP agreement signed by each third-party project. In principle, a first payment of 40% will be made after the contract is signed and the second payment 40% will be paid after an accepted interim report. The final payment 20% will be paid at the end of the project after the accepted final report and receipt of funds by EMIL from the Commission. Please refer to “Checkpoints and reporting” in chapter 5.