

EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian region /EUSAIR/ POPRI youth 2026

Contest rules

1. DESCRIPTION

Young students from 10 EUSAIR countries will gather for the sixth time to showcase their best national entrepreneurial ideas at a prestigious competition. Organized by Primorski Tehnološki Park (Slovenia) and Center for Knowledge Management (CKM) (North Macedonia), the event will be held alongside the EUSAIR Forum 2026. Supported by the European Commission and the governmental institutions of Slovenia and North Macedonia, the initiative benefits from the Facility Point project under the IPA ADRION program.

EUSAIR POPRI youth 2026 is also organized in close cooperation with other technology parks, incubators and schools of EUSAIR countries, namely Local Economic Development Agency Auleda Vlore, Albania, ICBL – Innovation Centre Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina), ZICER (Croatia), CONFCOOPERATIVE FVG (Italy), Science and Technology Park (Montenegro), CKM – Center for Knowledge Management (North Macedonia), Republic of San Marino Innovation Institute (San Marino), STEP-C (Greece) and Business Incubator Novi Sad (Serbia).

The EUSAIR POPRI youth event consists of:

- a/ a competition for the best business idea,
- b/ an event where young people meet business representatives, and
- c/ the Award ceremony.

2. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants are young students who:

- Will compete in **two different categories**:
 - a) High-school students or young people aged between 14 and 18 years old;
 - b) University students or young people who are between 18 and 29 years old on the day of the EUSAIR POPRI Youth Event. Participants who have met the requirements and have reached the age of 29 during the national qualifications can also take part in the international competition, as this is a continuation of the process.Participants **do not have an established business** for the entrepreneurial idea they are competing with.
- Are **citizens of one of the 10 Adriatic-Ionian countries**, namely Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, San Marino, Serbia and Slovenia; The competition is open also to young participants who are permanent residents of the countries mentioned above.
- Members of the Slovene minority in neighboring countries can compete only as Slovene citizens (included in national POPRI competition).
- Apply as an **individual or a group (up to 5 members)** with the business plan (prescribed form), respecting the deadline (**defined every year separately**). As a group they have to **nominate at maximum 2 (two) team members to present the business idea in front of jury members.**
- Each EUSAIR country is represented by **one team of high-school students and one team of university students**. The team of high-school students is led by an adult/mentor/teacher¹ (obligatory in case of minors). There will be 2 teams per country, 20 teams or 40 young active participants (2 team members presenting the business idea).

Any applicant not fulfilling the eligibility criteria will not be able to participate in the application process and will not be taken into consideration in any further procedure connected to the

¹ **Mentors/teachers can guide** students in designing a business model, prototyping and giving an oral presentation, but they are not team members. Students are autonomous and independent of mentors. Responsibility for the safety of participants in case of journey and during the competition rests with the companions/mentors and participants themselves.

event. Technology parks/incubators/schools will ensure that teams meet eligibility criteria prior the submission of the application and Primorski tehnološki park will check compliance after the submission of the application when uploaded to the special platform hosted by the Primorska technology park.

3. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Primorski tehnološki park and the institution of the yearly event (part of the Forum) inform institutions of other EUSAIR countries (identified technology parks/incubators/schools and EUSAIR national coordinators) about the course of the competition and all key steps, including the information about the opening of the application procedure.

Primorski tehnološki park notifies other partners about the opening and closing dates of the platform. **Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.**

The candidates apply as individuals or as a group composed of maximum 5 members. **Only two (2) team members of the group shall be identified to present the business idea and are taking part of the EUSAIR POPRI youth events at the EUSAIR Forum.**

The application and all the requested documents shall be submitted via **e-platform** (available for all partner technology parks/incubators/schools as they will be the only channel for official communication) in English language. Applications can be uploaded by young selected participants (by partner institutions) by themselves.

The on-line application consists of:

- a) general application e-form with information of the individual/team/mentor, school, country, consent of parents regarding the publication of personal data and photos, ownership and publication of business ideas – all for the purposes of the competition, nomination of two members of the team for presenting the business idea;
- b) business plan (template) containing analysis of the existing market, analysing potential buyers, suppliers, current competition, the culture of the market regarding the product, potential future competitors, and potential substitute technologies. It should describe the product or service, its target market, expected price, promotional plans, and how it will be delivered to the customers. It should also include staffing and facilities plans, as well as ultimate profit goals and
- c) ppt presentation (template) to be used while pitching.

Applications that cannot be accepted:

- Submitted by persons working for the European institutions or within the institutions of EUSAIR;
- Scientific theses and publications;
- Business ideas already supported and financed by EU funds or those that have already been awarded by a European institution;
- Business ideas already existed and implemented by any company;
- Submitted manually or by post, incomplete or in multiple parts;
- Not submitted via e-form by EUSAIR technology parks/incubators;
- Not submitted in English language.

Individual or/and team can apply only once (one single application).

The applicants will receive a confirmation email once they have successfully submitted the application.

4. SELECTION PROCEDURE

The applicants will first have to pass the **eligibility criteria** as mentioned under point 2.

Next steps are focused on the review of the **quality criteria** divided in two steps; at **step 1** the jury reviews written applications and all prescribed documents in advance, prior to the competition. **Step 2** is verbal presentation/pitch that takes place in front of the jury on the day of competition.

Primorski tehnološki park, Slovenia will, together with CKM, North Macedonia, choose together members for the international jury, separately for each category. The jury is composed of at least three (3) experts from the startup community and is appointed separately for high school students and university students.

The jury will review **written applications together with all requested documents (filled templates)** in advance, prior to the competition and listen to the **pitches** at the event as such.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

EUSAIR POPRI Youth is a process of entrepreneurial learning that culminates in a competition held at the Forum. However, the learning journey itself, knowledge exchange, collaboration, and other important dimensions, is equally significant. **Therefore, it is essential that the entire process is engaging and stimulating for young participants.**

In the evaluation process, the primary focus will be on the **participants' understanding of the problem and their entrepreneurial way of thinking**. In addition, attention will be given to how effectively they identify opportunities, develop ideas, and propose feasible solutions.

The jury's decision is based on the criteria: the potential of the business idea; understanding the problem and matching the solution with the problem; knowledge about typical customers; coherence between business model segments/chapters; originality and logical, entrepreneurial thinking; the production and use of Minimum Viable Product (MVP); research on customers and other stakeholders, performance, team and general impression.

The business model and the oral presentation are evaluated with points according to pre-prepared criteria. In case two or more teams have the same number of points, the team with the highest total points of the business model segment wins, then the sum of points from the MVP - Minimum Viable Product segment and then the sum of points for the oral presentation.

The jury assesses business models in written form during the first round of the competition. This phase involves only a partial evaluation, as the assessment continues in the second round when teams present their business models at the event itself (pitch). Jury members may adjust and change the distribution of scores across individual categories from the first round during the event.

Highly insufficient: 1 point; Insufficient: 2 points; Partially adequate: 3 points; Adequate, though incomplete: 4 points; Good: 5 points; Very good: 6 points; Excellent: 7 points	CUSTOMERS, THEIR PROBLEMS and NEEDS and EXISTING ALTERNATIVES	SOLUTION and UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION	WAYS TO CUSTOMERS/MARKETING, REVENUE FLOWS and COST STRUCTURE	MVP (prototype) and INTERACTION WITH CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS	PERFORMANCE, TEAM AND GENERAL IMPRESSION, FEASIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTING THE BUSINESS IDEA	SUMM OF THE POINTS
team or business idea	grades 1 - 7	grades 1 - 7	grades 1 - 7	grades 1 - 7	grades 1 - 7	max 35 points

In addition to the evaluation criteria, the [following rules](#) apply to ensure fair and consistent assessment of all teams:

1. Teams must present their business ideas without reading directly from their scripts or slides to maintain a dynamic and engaging presentation. PPT slides and scripts should serve only as supporting tools to complement the pitch.
2. Short performances or sketches (e.g., role-plays) will not be awarded additional points. The evaluation must focus solely on the business model's content, feasibility, and delivery.
3. If a project or business model appears to be substantially created using ChatGPT or other AI tools, the jury should score accordingly, taking into account the originality, depth of analysis, and the team's ability to customize and expand on the AI-generated content.

[THE PITCH DAY](#)

The pitch session of **up to 5 minutes**, on which PowerPoint presentation shall be used, is performed in English language. **Q&A (5 minutes)** follows the formal presentation of the business idea.

- Students will present their projects as a business pitch to the members of the jury, using a PowerPoint presentation (pdf format). Each team will have 5 minutes, no more!
- **Do NOT use videos, animations or links** in order not to affect the course of the presentation!
- It is HIGHLY recommended to bring/show models or prototypes of any product or technology you may be offering as a part of presentation.
- A computer (operating with Windows) with a projector and a screen will be available for students to use.
- Mentors are allowed to be present at the pitching session during judging sessions.

[6. NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS](#)

The jury will take into consideration written documents (documents applied on the platform), as well as verbal presentation of the business model. Best business ideas of each category or candidates for the winners will be announced during the EUSAIR Forum in May 2026.

7. TIMETABLE

- ❖ **15 April 2026** - Opening date of registration and submission of business ideas by using the platform of Primorski tehnološki park
- ❖ **4 May 2026 (noon)** - Closing date of registration and submission of business ideas by using the platform of Primorski tehnološki park
- ❖ **4 May 2026** - Eligibility criteria will be checked by Primorski tehnološki park and STEP-C (in cooperation with identified technology parks)
- ❖ **5 May 2026** - Business ideas will be submitted to the jury (evaluation of the written presentation)
- ❖ **19 & 20 May 2026**; EUSAIR young entrepreneurs' contest (EUSAIR Forum)