INTRODUCTION

The INNOCORE Challenge (hereinafter, "Initiative") is an initiative developed within the Project INNOCORE – “Core Technologies for Education and Innovation in Life Sciences” (hereafter, "Project") funded in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme for KA2 Strategic Partnerships (Project No: 2019-1-IT02-KA203-063391, https://innocore-project.eu/).

Promoters of the Initiative are the beneficiaries of the Project (hereinafter, “InnoCore Consortium”) coordinated by University of Trento, Italy (hereinafter, “UniTrento”), that will lead the administrative management of the call.

The Project aims to build an innovative T-shaped educational and training programme, through academy-industry cooperation, targeted to knowledge-workers along technological innovation and life sciences research infrastructures organized in Core Facilities. Core Facilities provide opportunities to be hubs of innovation as they enable: i) sharing of ideas and expertise on a specific cutting-edge technology across several research topics; ii) convergence of academic research and specific industrial demands as core facilities provide their services not only to principal internal investigators but also to external company users; iii) training diverse stakeholders (including MSc and Ph.D. students, post-docs and principal investigators) on advanced technologies. The Project integrates:

- courses on core technologies in life sciences using blended education methodologies;
- business-oriented practices and training specific for the life science domain;
- the delivery of a digital certification for the recognition of competences.

The Project and the Initiative will involve the InnoCore Consortium members, namely:

- UniTrento (Italy);
- University of Coimbra (hereinafter, “UC”, Portugal);
- Centre for Neuroscience and Cell Biology, Coimbra (hereinafter, “CNC”, Portugal);
- CEITEC-Masaryk University of Brno (hereinafter, “CEITEC-MU, Czech Republic”)
- Hub Innovazione Trentino Foundation (hereinafter, “HIT”, Italy);
- Sanipedia S.r.l. (hereinafter, “Sanipedia” Italy);
To achieve its goals the InnoCore project, deploys five main use cases are:

- Innovation Challenge (the Initiative subject of this call), to connect academy, target groups and industry;
- Joint Courses, oriented towards training in core technologies and technological innovation;
- Internships, such as traineeship of academic students for practical training within companies;
- Joint Projects, to foster cooperation between academic research institutes and industrial partners;
- InnoCore Days, events to showcase core technologies, curricula and core facilities.

The Initiative has dissemination, training, and knowledge transfer purposes. Specifically, through this call for applications (hereinafter, “Call”) and Initiative, the Consortium invites Companies to learn about the opportunity to establish cooperation with InnoCore partners, participants, and Core Facilities. Overall, its goal is to allow the participating Companies to

- know the benefits of the use of Core Facilities in Life Sciences as a place of experimentation of innovative processes, technologies and tools;
- an opportunity for professional growth for students and young researchers;
- facilitate collaborative research and cooperation within technological innovation process between academy and industry in biotech and biomedical domains

ART. 1 – AIMS OF THE CALL

This Call is aimed at selecting a maximum of five (5) Challenges launched from Companies in the Life Sciences domain (hereinafter, “Seeker”) for the solution of technological problems and/or questions related to their business, assets or R&D activities that could be addressed by specific knowledge and skills from academic students, scholars and research infrastructures. The activities of the Initiative are mainly carried out by students and young competent researchers in the methodologies described (hereinafter, "Solver"). On the Initiative, the Solvers - mentored by staff scientists from Core Facilities and network’s experts of Innovation (hereinafter, “Mentors”) - will perform group work and discussions with the Seeker company and mentors (hereafter, “Activities”) to the extent of developing and delivering project proposals for valuable solutions to support innovation and meet the Seeker's Challenge (hereinafter, “Solutions”).

Specifically, by way of example, we mean:

- **Challenges**: problems or opportunities in biomedical sector and biotechnologies proposed by the Seeker in the following areas:
  1. Drug Discovery and Screening;
  2. *In vitro* and *in vivo* models for (e.g.) Target identification/validation, Biomarker development, and Drug Discovery;
  3. Imaging and/or Omics Technologies for biotech and/or biomedical applications.

- **Solvers activities**: desk and literature research, analyse company’s business processes, discussions with the Seeker company, discussions with mentors, ideation of solutions, use of dedicated databases, prior art search, development of experimental designs. The activities will make use of the following technologies:
  - Genomics Technologies and Next Generation Sequencing;
- Mass Spectrometry, Proteomics and Protein Characterization;
- Advanced Imaging;
- High Throughput Screening and Content;
- Animal models

**Provided Solutions**: Project plan and feasibility study for R&D activities for tackling the Challenge to be performed in collaboration with the Institutes and Core Facilities of the Consortium. The proposed solutions will address scientific, technical, business, ethical and legal requirements of the project.

**Core Facilities**: serve life science researchers providing specialized expertise, services, and access to advanced instrumentation in many fields including genomics, proteomics, metabolomics, electron and light microscopy, high-throughput screening, analysis or sample handling, and synthetic chemistry.

- UniTrento ([https://www.cibio.unitn.it/42/core-facilities](https://www.cibio.unitn.it/42/core-facilities)),
- CEITEC-MU ([https://www.ceitec.eu/core-facilities/](https://www.ceitec.eu/core-facilities/)).

To provide solutions to the Challenges selected, the teams of Solvers will be recruited among students, researchers, and staff of the academic partners of the InnoCore Consortium (UniTrento, UC, CNC, CEITEC-MU) through a specific call that will be launched at the end of the year.

**ART. 2 – MODE OF CONDUCTING THE CHALLENGE**

The INNOCORE Challenge provides that, a group of Solvers dedicated to each selected Challenge will carry out the Activities for the purpose to elaborate a project plan and feasibility study including technical, business, legal requirements for tackling the Challenge (hereinafter, "Results"). The Results may be considered by the parties involved for follow up and further academia-industry cooperation, such as through Joint Projects as defined in the introduction.

Once selected Challenges and group of Solvers, the initiative will be organized according to the following schedule:

- **Wednesday 16th** of March 2022. Kickoff: presentation of the Innocore initiative. Selected companies present their challenges to the Solver groups.
- **From 16th** of March to **23rd** of May 2021. About 11 (eleven) weeks in which the groups will carry out the Activities in autonomy, in collaboration with selected companies, and assisted by Mentors.
- **Wednesday 23rd** of May (afternoon). Final event of Activities with delivery of the Proposed Solutions of the Challenges to the Companies. Results will be presented in private session(s) to the participating Companies, and subsequently, in version abbreviated and without confidentiality content, to an audience of experts invited by the Consortium. The event will be held in Granada (Spain) and will be organized by InnoCore Consortium partner PTS. Costs for the participation to the event of one representative for each Company and invited experts (i.e travelling and subsistence costs) will be covered by the InnoCore Consortium as organizer of the Initiative. In the event that health provisions in force related to the
Coronavirus outbreak in the country hosting the event will not allow the event to be organized in safe conditions in presence, it will be held online and/or as an hybrid event.

An expert commission appointed by UniTrento - as coordinator of the Initiative - and including representatives from UniTrento, Consortium’s partners, external experts, will evaluate projects and solutions presented by each group of Solvers that will be ranked based on the following criteria:

- Criterion 1: ability to perform activities correctly (from 1 to 5 points).
- Criterion 2: completeness and maturity of the results produced (from 1 to 5 points).
- Criterion 3: innovativeness of the results produced (from 1 to 5 points).
- Criterion 4: potential business impact of product results (from 1 to 5 points).
- Criterion 5: effectiveness of the presentation of the results (from 1 to 5 points).

The Solver's group that will receive the highest score in the evaluation ranking will be awarded with a money prize of 3,000 Euro per the winner group. The total amount will be distributed individually and equally to each group member.

In the case of a tie score, the Solver group that will have received the highest score in the most relevant criterion, ranked from criterion 1 to 5 as detailed above will prevail.

ART. 3 – APPLICATION SELECTION PROCEDURES


Applicants must complete the for il all its sections and fields and send it by email at the email address [innocore-project@unitn.it](mailto:innocore-project@unitn.it) by Thursday 9th December 2021 at 23.59 CET at the latest. Applications received after the deadline indicated above or whose form is not complete in every part marked as mandatory will be considered ineligible.

A Commission appointed by UniTrento and involving representatives from Consortium’s partners will select the most suitable Challenges and the related proposing Company to be engaged in the Initiative. The eligibility criteria used by the Commission are as follows:

1. Innovativeness of the product and its context of use (score: 1-5).
2. Potential impact of the application of Activities on the performance of the Challenge, on its own production process, and on the company's business (score: 1-5);
3. Feasibility (score: 1-5):
4. Motivations, expectations, and objectives of Product innovation that push the company to apply for the Challenge (score: 1-5).

To be eligible, the proposed Challenge must obtain a minimum score of ten (10).
Once the ranking has been drawn up, the Commission will select the five (5) challenges that will get the best score. If the same Company submits more than one eligible Challenge, only the Challenge with the highest score will be considered.

Applicants will receive an email notification regarding the results of the Commission selection process by 3rd of December 2021.

Companies whose challenges will be selected may withdraw their participation in the Initiative by giving notice by email writing at the address innovcore-project@unitn.it within 5 days of receipt of such communication. In this case, the participation in the Initiative will be proposed to the Company whose Challenge is in the following ranking position in the final evaluation list.

During the Initiative, the references of the selected Challenges and related Companies will be published on the dedicated web page.

ART. 4 – MARKS

Selected Companies participating in the Challenge grant the Consortium a free and non-exclusive license to use their trademark for the communication purposes related to the Initiative. Similarly, the Consortium grants participating Companies the same license to use its trademark, free of charge and non-exclusive. Such use must be exclusively for the promotion of the Challenge, for which the brands may be used on websites, as well as in relation to any product, service, event or advertising material, including the use in the context of the INNOCORE project.

The participating Companies and the Consortium mutually acknowledge and accept that the respective brands and marks are and will remain exclusive property of their respective owners and that no provision of this Notice is intended to confer any rights to such marks, outside of what provided in the previous paragraph. Therefore, the participating Companies and the Consortium will not be able to sell, sublicense or otherwise dispose of the other brands and marks, in the absence of written consent from the other party.

The participating Companies will provide their own brand and marks in vector format or in image format different from the vector with at least 300 dpi.

ART. 5 – CONFIDENTIALITY

UniTrento and the Consortium undertake to keep the data and information included in the application form confidential except for data and information needed for communication activities of the Initiative (i.e. company name, website URL, reference sector, brief description of entrepreneurial activity and name of Product), which can be freely disseminated in connection with the needs of promotion of the Challenge. UniTrento and the Consortium also undertake to keep the results confidential.

Given the confidential nature of the data and information referred to above, UniTrento and the Consortium commit themselves to likewise, to (i) not disclose them in any way and in any form, subject to different written consent, even partial, of the company concerned; and (ii) not to use them for purposes other than those strictly necessary for participation in the Challenge.

UniTrento and the Consortium undertake to impose this duty of confidentiality also on its employees, collaborators and consultants, as well as to all those who, due to participation in the Initiative as a Solver or members of the Commissions will be aware of such data and confidential information.
This confidentiality restriction remains for two (2) years from the date of commencement of the Challenge.

**ART. 6 – NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

Not later than one week prior to the start of its first event, all the participants to the Initiative (Companies, Solvers, Mentors and Consortium representatives) will be asked to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA). The signature of the NDA is mandatory to participate in the Initiative and its events.

In the framework of the Initiative, applicant Companies will be invited to undersign the InnoCore Terms of Reference (available at the link: https://webmagazine.unitn.it/en/news/cibio/99913/innocore-challenge) that illustrates and regulates the participation of third parties to the InnoCore use cases and activities as detailed in the introduction. Participating Companies are free to engage in one or more use cases, besides the Initiative, as relevant for their activities and business.

The implementation of the initiative will include sharing of knowledge, expertise, know-how and more in general background intellectual property of the parties involved. Nothing in this call and the aforementioned agreements, shall allow any party involved to claim any right on background intellectual property rights of any other party.

Any kind of intellectual property deriving from the activities carried out in the framework of the Initiative is joint property of the selected Company proposing the specific problem, and of the Solvers (students, PhD students and researchers) of which IPR are regulated by the Institute(s) of the Consortium (University of Trento, University of Coimbra, University of Masaryk-CEITEC, CNC-Coimbra) they are affiliated to. The Companies shall be granted on separate agreements with priority in the right of exploitation of the intellectual property generated.

The results of the Initiative are project proposals developed by the Solvers for the Seekers for technological projects and or solutions that may be implemented in collaboration with the Consortium’s Core Facilities. Accordingly, any specific management, license and/or cease of any possible nascent intellectual property rights arising from the implementation of these project, as a follow up of the Initiative, will be negotiated in separate agreements in good faith by the parties involved, through the support of the technology transfer office(s) of the Institute(s) of the Consortium involved in the joint IP.

**ART. 7– ABSENCE OF GUARANTEES. EXEMPTION OF LIABILITY**

The results are presented by the Solvers and accepted by the company "as is". Neither UniTrento, Consortium Partners nor Solver provide any statement or guarantee that the results (i) are of a specific technical quality; (ii) are suitable for a particular purpose; (iii) do not violate third party rights or positions subjective legal protection.

Neither UniTrento, Consortium Partners nor the Solver take any responsibility for the correctness, validity, originality and quality of the results, which will be considered in complete autonomy by the company.
The participating companies expressly exempt Unitrento, Consortium Partners and the Solvers from any direct damage, indirect, incidental, consequential, punitive or moral deriving from participation in the Challenge or from the use of the results.

**ART. 8 – PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA**

Pursuant to art. 13 of the GDPR 2016/679, we inform you that all the data that will be held by UniTrento in carrying out the procedure provided for in this Notice, they will be used exclusively for the purposes specified therein and will be processed with the aid of information systems in full compliance with the aforementioned legislation. The data will not be communicated or disclosed to third parties external to the project consortium besides those participants involved in the Initiative. The owner of the treatment is UniTrento, in the person of the legal representative pro tempore, which you can contact for the exercise of the envisaged rights, including the right of access to data, integration, correction and cancellation.

To view the complete information, refer to the Information on the processing of personal data of the participants in events organized by UniTrento, available at the weblink: https://www.unitn.it/alfresco/download/workspace/SpacesStore/c6325568-7876-4b07-a792-8739aa528edf/Information_participants_events_UnitTrento.pdf.

**ART. 9 – AUTHORIZATION TO PUBLISH YOUR OWN IMAGE**

The participating companies endeavor to obtain all possible authorizations from the subjects that will represent them and attend the Challenge so that UniTrento and Consortium partners can publish their image with any form of support (print, websites, and the like) for the sole purpose of promoting and publicizing the Challenge. The Consortium agrees not to use any image in such a way that it may harm or impair personal dignity or in any case for purposes other than those indicated therein and / or contrary to the law.

**ART. 10 – TREATMENT OF PRIZES**

The initiative is to be considered part of the category “projects or studies in the commercial or industrial field, in which the awarding of the prize to the author of the chosen work is in the nature of a consideration for the performance of the work or represents recognition of personal merit or a title of encouragement in the interest of the community” pursuant to art. 6 D.P.R. 26 October 2001, no. 430.

**ART. 11 - FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

Information and forms relating to this call for proposals are available on the website innocore-project.eu. It is also possible to contact the following email address innocore-project@unitn.it to obtain further information and clarifications.

Trento (Italy), 21/10/2021