ENLIGHT Thematic Networks (ETN)
Call for Applications- 2025

INTRODUCTION

Empowering academics and stimulating joint knowledge creation is at the core of the ENLIGHT mission**.** The general objective of this call is to widen the bottom-up engagement and challenge-based cooperation between ENLIGHT academics with genuine added value. Specifically, with the following **objectives**:

- Creating sustainable transnational communities of academics, involving PhDs, junior and senior researchers engaged with other local or international partners and stakeholders.
- Generating opportunities for new joint interdisciplinary and challenge-driven research, education and service to society initiatives:
  - To develop sustainable collaborations leading to research initiatives, driving innovation and enhancing societal impact.
  - To develop joint education and training offerings for Bachelor, Master, PhD and Lifelong Learning (LLL), with a variety of formats.
  - To facilitate outreach and collaboration with societal stakeholders.

ENLIGHT is committed to fostering an Open Science culture that enhances the quality, impact, and accessibility of our activities. In line with the UNESCO Recommendations on Open Science, we encourage project proposals that embrace open, collaborative, and transparent practices for the benefit of science and society. To support this, ENLIGHT has established official Open Science principles and also provides a dedicated Open Science toolkit outlining key concepts, services, and tools.

To support the above objectives, the ENLIGHT Alliance has launched calls for ENLIGHT Thematic Networks (ETNs). In this call at least 15 ETNs will be selected.

WHAT IS AN ETN?

An ETN is a community of multidisciplinary academic teams from at least **three** ENLIGHT universities joining forces **around a specific topic with societal relevance and impact.**
ETNs are expected to become sustainable collaboration networks that meet the following criteria:

- **Thematic.** Focused on one (or more) of the six ENLIGHT focus areas.
- **Multidisciplinary**. Bringing teams together from different disciplines to tackle complex challenges.
- **Long-term view**. ETNs should be a long-term strategic collaboration of academics and researchers , with clear added value and to the benefit of all.

- **Leverage effect.** Collaboration within an ETN should be a catalyst for deepening and strengthening collaboration between academics and researchers.
- **Connected to** local and regional ecosystems of public bodies and civil society stakeholders.
- **Opportunity for early career researchers.** ETNs offer a privileged space particularly to early career researchers (ECR) to build their international networks.
- **Age and Gender** balanced. Both ECR and senior academics should play a role in the full spectrum of the ETN Activities.
- **With real transformative impact potential.** ETN's ultimately contribute to addressing societal challenges.

Activities and expected results

As a space for catalysing cooperation, an ETN will conduct **preparatory, coordination and support activities.** For example:
- ➢ Exploratory actions leading to joint initiatives.
- ➢ Organization of meetings and workshops.
- ➢ Mobility and exchange of academics.
- ➢ Outreach and engagement encounters with societal stakeholders.
- ➢ Other activities that are necessary to reach the objectives, excluding research activities and drafting of proposals for external funding which should not be conducted under an ETN).

Specific outputs of an ETN could be new joint seminars, summer courses, thematic conferences, Bachelor (BA), Master (MA) or PhD courses and programmes, co-supervision of PhDs, collaborative transnational projects, citizen science initiatives, mobility programmes, knowledge transfer programmes, leadership and entrepreneurship programmes, etc.

ETN Governance

It is expected that each ETN is co-led. Co-creation and cooperation are driving forces, in order to foster shared strategic vision and balance responsibility among academic teams and partner universities.
There is no "one size fits all" model of governance, each ETN is expected to organize itself as it deems most appropriate .
For management purposes each ETN must include two types of roles:

- **ETN coordinator**, responsible for the compilation of information and documents, submission of the proposal, reporting deliverables, monitoring progress, and representation at alliance review meetings and events.
- **Members,** that may participate in multiple activities, as considered in the ETN action plan. They will be responsive to the coordinator's request for information and documentation. They will be pro-actively engaged in the ETN dynamics as co-creators of the ETN evolution and delivery.

HOW AN ETN WILL BE SUPPORTED

- Each selected ETN under the current call will be allocated with a maximum total **amount of 100.000 €, to be distributed between the partners,** as seed funding for a period of 24 months
    - 100K€/24 months (15 ETNs)
- No budget can be shifted or relocated between partners, i.e. each institution must plan the budget for its own expenses not covering other partner's expenses.
- Each partner's share of the budget will be managed and incurred within their own institution and by its staff members.

Eligible costs can include:
- Purchase costs:
    - Travel, accomodation, subsistence
    - Other goods, works and services: consumables and supplies (other than office equipment), service for meetings/seminars, services for communication/ dissemination, website, other
- Staff costs: for staff employed by an ENLIGHT partner university
- Subcontracting costs: are to be avoided and should in any case be limited

Costs that are **not eligible**:
- Scientific equipment
- Office equipment and supply
- Fellowships and scholarships for theses
- Costs related to drafting proposals for external funding
- Entertainment costs
- Indirect costs

ETNs will be supported by relevant experts from each participating university who will help academics to extend collaboration opportunities and connections, while allowing autonomy to achieve the expected outputs and outcomes.

HOW ETNs ARE SELECTED

Each ENLIGHT Thematic Network must apply using an application form (Annex I) with due attention to the following eligibility and selection criteria:

Eligibility criteria

- *Network composition.* ETNs must be composed of teams of academics belonging to at least three ENLIGHT partner universities.
- *Thematic scope.* ETNs should be aligned with one or more of the six ENLIGHT focus areas.

- *Budget distribution*: A maximum of 40% of the total requested budget can be assigned to each partner.

Evaluation criteria

1. **Quality and relevance (30%).** The submission should clearly describe the ambition and added value of the network and how it contributes to: (a) addressing challenges in the focus areas as well as (b) building, diversifying, and creating added value for ENLIGHT, contributing eventually to give rise to new joint initiatives of research, education, service to society, and global outreach.
2. **Network and Team composition (20%).** Network composition, interinstitutional balance, complementarity of capacities, plan to incorporate new teams from other ENLIGHT universities and potential engagement of external stakeholders in the future. Pool of senior and junior academics, and interdisciplinary, intergenerational and gender balance.
3. **Feasibility (20 %).** Degree of alignment of well-defined objectives, duly designed working plan, described tasks, and distribution of funding relative to the ETN objectives and work intensity of each team.
4. **Expected outputs and desired impact (30%).** Clarity and ambition of expected outputs, outputs aligned with the objectives, and their leveraging effect and impact on the alliance and beyond, and outline of monitoring and evaluation of the progress and impact of the Network.

Selection procedure

As a first filtering process, applications are checked on formal criteria to confirm their eligibility.

Eligible applications will go through a **three-step procedure**.

STEP 1: Independent reviewers consisting of representatives from all ENLIGHT universities will evaluate and assign scores to proposals following the evaluation criteria (quality and relevance, network and team composition, feasibility and expected outputs).

STEP 2: A joint committee composed of ENLIGHT project coordinators from all ENLIGHT universitieswill prepare lists of proposals taking into account the scores by evaluators, balancing participation and coordination of ENLIGHT partners, balancing the focus areas, and also taking into account a balanced total budgetary division among the ENLIGHT partners.

STEP 3: An executive committee, composed of the vice-rectors for research and innovation/ research directors of the ENLIGHT universities, will make the final decision among the different scenarios proposed, considering the top 20% of the evaluated proposals, unless the combination of variables does not yield institutional balance in terms of participation and budget.

MONITORING & REPORTING

ETNs will report their activities after 12 months (see annex II Activity Report Template) to follow-up their progress and introduce their planning for the next 12 months. Intermediate workshops between ETNs can be organized to promote cooperation, mutual learning and sense of collective purpose.

Additionally to the reporting, each team of the ETNs is encouraged to hold periodic meetings with support staff of their institution, who will assist them.

APPLICATIONS

Applications must be submitted by the Coordinator of the ETN through the online ETN application form /using the pdf forms at the **ENLIGHT website**.

Applicants are recommended to consult with their local ENLIGHT office prior to submission to ensure feasibility, and to consult the FAQ on the ENLIGHT website.

Call published	**1 April 2025**
Applications submitted by	**30 June 2025**
Evaluation and selection	**August – October 2025**
Final selection	**15 October 2025**
Communication of results	**End of October 2025**
Start of initiatives	**1 November 2025**

Disclaimer:

Obtaining ENLIGHT funding does not exempt recipients from adhering to institutional procedures for educational initiatives. All necessary institutional approvals and processes must be followed, especially in cases involving joint programmes.