

Call for expression of interest for participation in the Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI) on Hydrogen

Title	Call for expression of interest for participation in the Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI) on Hydrogen
Call announcer (responsible authority)	Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency
Type of the call	National pre-selection for participation in the IPCEI on Hydrogen
Publication date	23rd November 2020
Deadline date	21st January 2021, 3:00 p.m.
Contact	Email ipceih2@siea.gov.sk
Project language	English
Project registration	IPCEI registration form
Accompanying Event	Workshop: Participation in the National Selection Process for “Important Projects of Common European Importance” in the field of hydrogen technologies Date: 26th November 2020

Following the ambitious objective of carbon neutrality in the EU by 2050 and existing IPCEI rules, the European Commission (EC) and member states are in the preparation process of the IPCEI on Hydrogen. In reaction to this initiative, the Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency mandated by the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic opens a call for expression of interest. This call is intended for companies with registered seats in the Slovak Republic wishing to participate in important strategic projects on an European scale through various partnerships throughout the European economic value chain in the field of hydrogen technologies and systems (hydrogen production, hydrogen transmission and distribution, storage, equipment manufacturing incl. electrolyzers and equipment for heavy-duty mobility, industrial applications incl. decarbonisation of industrial facilities, end user driven applications, etc.). For more information see details of the call for expression of interests for participation in the IPCEI on Hydrogen.

1. Call for expression of interest for participation in the IPCEI on Hydrogen

The European union has adopted very ambitious climate targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 and the objective of carbon neutrality in the EU by 2050. Such transition to a low carbon economy requires a differentiated and complementary energy mix with innovative solutions. Hydrogen technology has huge decarbonisation potential for the industry, transport and energy sectors.

Since **Hydrogen technologies and systems** have significant value in achieving the global environment and climate objectives, the European Commission has also declared them as **a key strategic value chain for EU industrial policy**. This also means that hydrogen technologies and systems can be supported as an "Important Project of Common European Interest" according to **Art. 107(3)(b) of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union**. Specific criteria of IPCEI projects are further elaborated in the **European Commission's Communication no. 2014/C**

188/2. One of the main features of IPCEI is that **projects involved can be aided up to 100% of the funding gap** on the basis of a large set of eligible costs.

The Slovak Republic also recognizes the strategic nature of the hydrogen technologies, but at the same time is aware that such economic transformation represents an enormous challenge given the significant capital required. In order to face this challenge and to secure resources for such transformation projects in the Slovak Republic, the **Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency mandated by the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic opens this call for expression of interest to be involved in IPCEI on Hydrogen.**

The purpose of this call for expression of interest is not only to get a list of interested stakeholders who could be direct participants in the IPCEI on Hydrogen, but also to identify other potential projects in the field of hydrogen technologies and systems who could potentially become indirect participants in the IPCEI on Hydrogen¹.

Basic characteristics of the eligible applicants and IPCEI projects are as follows:

- **registered seat of the company:** Slovak Republic
- **project scale:** large-scale important strategic projects on the European scale through various partnerships throughout the European economic value chain (i.e. production, transport, various industry applications).
- **project relevance:** project proposals must be relevant for the development of a green hydrogen value chain within the EU and have to contribute to the goal of carbon neutrality in the EU. Project proposals have to be in line with the goals of Hydrogen strategy for a climate-neutral Europe.

Selected projects which fulfill IPCEI criteria will be nominated by the Slovak Republic to be assessed within the IPCEI framework for notification at EC. Subsequently, after successful notification procedure, the project will be supported from the resources of the Slovak Republic, ESIF or other available public resources.

Eligible projects can be implemented in the seven main pillars of IPCEI on Hydrogen, which are as follows:

- Clean Hydrogen Production;
- Hydrogen Transmission and Distribution;
- Hydrogen Mobility Applications;
- Hydrogen Applications in Industry;
- Hydrogen Applications in the Energy Sector;
- Residential Hydrogen Applications;
- Hydrogen Components.

More practical information on the preparation of the IPCEI projects in the field of Hydrogen technologies and systems will be also provided during the **Workshop** on “*Participation in the national selection process for IPCEI in the field of hydrogen technologies*”, which will be held on **26th November 2020**.

Attention

Nowadays, the IPCEI on Hydrogen is in the process of its formation at the EU level and officially, there is no IPCEI on Hydrogen yet. The first call at the EU level is planned for the first half of the year 2021. The more specific date depends on the preparedness level of potential participants from the member states.

The primary aim of this call is to collect preliminary information about the interest of Slovak companies to participate in this type of projects and to make a pre-selection process of the potential participants.

¹ Interested companies with projects that do not fulfil the eligibility and compatibility criteria as laid down in the IPCEI Communication might participate in an IPCEI as so-called indirect partners and can thus become part of an IPCEI's ecosystem.

In case of nomination for the participation in IPCEI on Hydrogen, the compliance with the relevant procedures, set by the Slovak Republic and the European Commission, is mandatory. The submission of the required documents for pre-notification and notification procedure at the European Commission remain necessary to take an application into consideration.

2. General eligibility criteria of IPCEI

The call for expression of interest for participation in the IPCEI on Hydrogen follows the applicable regulations set in the European Commission's Communication no. 2014/C 188/2. This Communication sets out the criteria of IPCEI and defines specific conditions, which determines the eligibility of projects. The key conditions are as follows:

- **R&D&I projects** must be of a major innovative nature or constitute an important added value in terms of R&D&I. The project proposed by the company must present strong innovations going beyond advanced technologies and current knowledge in the field (state of the art). Each project should be of significant size/ambition in order to be able to make a significant contribution to major European strategies.
- **Projects comprising industrial deployment** must allow for the development of a new product or service with high research and innovation content and/or the deployment of a fundamentally innovative production process. Regular upgrades without an innovative dimension of existing facilities and the development of newer versions of existing products do not qualify as IPCEI.
- **Environmental, energy or transport projects** must either be of great importance for the environment, energy, including security of energy supply, or transport strategy of the Union or contribute significantly to the internal market, including, but not limited to those specific sectors.
- The potential stakeholders need to be ready to disclose sufficient information to allow other actors to understand the opportunities for cross border cooperation.
- Each project should be available for timely start of the scale-up, including the necessary readiness of management and financial backing.
- The projects directly involved can be aided up to 100% of the funding gap on the basis of a large set of eligible costs.
- The project must involve co-financing by the beneficiary.
- The projects should be developed in cooperation with other companies. The attendance at the IPCEI coordination meetings must be ensured.
- The benefits of the project must not be limited to the undertakings or to the sector concerned but must be of wider relevance and application to the European economy or society through positive spill-over effects which are clearly defined in a concrete and identifiable manner.
- IPCEI participants must not be the subject to an order to recover the aid which has been deemed unlawful and illegal with the internal market pursuant to a previous decision of the European Commission.
- When deciding on potential subsidies, supported companies must not be in difficulty, as defined by the European Commission Guidelines (2014/C 249/01) on State aid for rescue and restructuring of non-financial undertakings in difficulty (point 2.2).

3. Submission of Project Proposals and the approval process

3.1 Submission of Project Proposals at national level

Submitted Project Proposal has to include the mandatory documents listed below. Please follow further instructions provided in enclosed documents. The complete documentation has to be filled in English and submitted online via application IPCEI Registration Form till 21st January 2021, 3:00 p.m.

Mandatory documents to be submitted:

1. **IPCEI Registration Form** - IPCEI Registration Form involves basic information about the company as well as project proposal summary. IPCEI Registration Form has to be filled in and submitted online with attached mandatory annexes 2-5 listed below.

- 2. Project Portfolio** – Project Portfolio is a document with fixed structure provided by the European Commission, where the different aspects of the project are described. For example, project objectives, innovativeness of the project beyond the current “state of the art”, spill-over effects of the project, collaboration within the EU, budget, necessity of the aid, etc.

For the purpose of this call for expression of interest for participation in the Hydrogen IPCEI, it is necessary to elaborate only selected chapters. Please follow the instructions stated directly in the Project Portfolio Template. Project Portfolio Template is a part of IPCEI Registration Form.

- 3. Estimated Project Budget** – Estimated Project Budget reflects estimated project investments (OPEX and CAPEX) within the individual years of the project realisation. Please follow the instructions specified directly in the Estimated Project Budget. Estimated Project Budget Template is a part of IPCEI Registration Form.
- 4. Solemn Declaration** – Based on the Solemn Declaration, the Company declares that the company meets basic rules set by the European Commission’s Communication 2014/C 188/2 as well as rules set by Section 8a para. 4 of the Act no. 523/2004 Coll. on Budgetary Rules of Public Administration and on Amendments to Certain Acts. Template of Solemn declaration is a part of IPCEI Registration Form.
- 5. Project Summary** – Translation in the Slovak language.

Submission of the above mandatory documents shall make it possible to assess the potential of projects with respect to the criteria of IPCEI set by the European Commission’s Communication 2014/C 188/2.

Other supporting materials and links

- IPCEI Registration Form
- Project portfolio template
- Estimated project budget
- Solemn Declaration
- Project Summary
- Test undertaking in difficulty
- Summary of DG Comp non-papers
- List of existing Consortia in the field of Hydrogen IPCEI
- [European Commission’s Communication no. 2014/C 188/2](#)
- [European association Hydrogen Europe](#)
- [European Hydrogen Week](#)
- [A hydrogen strategy for a climate-neutral Europe](#)
- [European Clean Hydrogen Alliance](#)

3.2 Pre-selection process at the national level

Each Project Proposal submitted with complete requested documentation will be assessed by an appointed Committee. The assessment will be made in line with terms and conditions defined for IPCEI projects under the European Commission’s Communication 2014/C 188/2.

3.3 Submission and the approval process at the level of European Commission

After the assessment at national level, the eligible Project Proposals will be nominated as direct participants for participation in IPCEI on Hydrogen at the EU level. When the relevant IPCEI on Hydrogen is opened by the European Commission, the nominated candidates shall be involved in pre-notification and notification procedures at European Commission.

After the pre-notification, i.e. after the official submission of project files to the European Commission, the European Commission will start the process of their assessment. Please note that since documents

requested at the stage of pre-selection process do not constitute a final project documentation, the involved authorities may request additional information from nominated candidates. The phase between the pre-notification and notification is used to assess the submitted projects and clarify all open issues related especially to the quality of the Project Portfolio, financial data on eligible costs, funding gap identifying the aid amount, the necessity and proportionality of aid, the form of aid proposed etc. as defined by the European Commission's Communication 2014/C 188/2. After such assessment, the notification phase itself will be smoother and the Commission will be able to adopt the final decision in a shorter time period. During the pre-notification and notification stage, the IPCEI participants have to be able to provide documents, which sufficiently justify their participation in IPCEI on Hydrogen and the need for requested state aid.

The pre-notification may involve several rounds of revisions before final approval by the European Commission and launch of IPCEI project status. Based on experience from previous IPCEI, this process may take approximately one year till a final decision is issued by the European Commission.

3.4 Ex-post step at the national level

After the notification procedure at the European Commission is successfully completed, IPCEI direct participants shall apply for funding within the calls open at national level. If the company does not succeed in notification and will be in the position of indirect partner within IPCEI on Hydrogen, the company shall still apply for funding under available national funding schemes.

4. Deadlines

Interested companies can submit their Project Proposals, in the provided format, until **21st January 2021, 3:00 p.m.**

5. Contacts

Questions related to the subject can be addressed to:
Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency
Email: ipceih2@siea.gov.sk

Answers to frequently asked questions as well as updated information will be published on the webpage siea.sk.

6. Confidentiality

All parties involved in this call for expression of interest for participation in the IPCEI on Hydrogen make a commitment to ensure the confidentiality of any and all documents and information sent as a result of an application related to this call, regardless of result of pre-selection process.