

About the program

1. What has been the motivation behind the foundation of the ESA BICs?
2. What is different about ESA BIC Switzerland in comparison to the other ESA BICs in Europe?
3. Who is the contact person in charge of ESA BIC Switzerland?
4. Who is involved in ESA BIC Switzerland?
5. How can the network of partners/corporates/research etc. can be used?
6. How many start-up companies are supported?

About the incubation process

7. How long is the incubation period?
8. Can one only join the Incentive Phase or directly the Incubation Boost phase?
9. Does a start-up have to stay the full two years in the program?
10. Has a second proposal to be written to enter Phase 2 of ESA BIC?

About the support offered

11. What support can I expect from the ESA BIC Switzerland program?
12. What does the financial support consist of?
13. What does the technical support consist of?

About the application

14. How long does it take to become an incubatee at ESA BIC Switzerland?
15. What criteria do the applicants have to fulfil?
16. Is there an application template for ESA BIC Switzerland?
17. Are there any deadlines on applying?
18. How can I have my idea evaluated?
19. Is there a jury to which I/we can present our start-up and proposal?
20. If I am not sure if my business/start-up is in scope or out of scope, whom should I contact?
21. Do I need to have a registered company to apply to ESA BIC Switzerland?
22. Can you state some reasons why applying start-ups do not get selected? In other words: what is important to ESA with regards to applying start-ups?
23. Can I re-apply in case my first application has been rejected?
24. What are the evaluation criteria?

About the funding

25. When does the funding under the co-funding scheme have to take place?
26. Are there limitation on how I can use the granted funding?

Other questions

27. Can technology from the US be used in ESA BIC start-ups?
28. How much time do I have to register the company?
29. Does ESA take any equity in my company?

1. What has been the motivation behind the foundation of the ESA BICs?

The goal is to support start-ups and entrepreneurs to transfer space technology into non-space sectors (spin-off) or to better use existing space infrastructure and data (downstream). Alternatively start-ups and entrepreneurs can use technologies from earth for an application related to space (spin-in).

2. What is different about ESA BIC Switzerland in comparison to the other ESA BICs in Europe?

- You can receive up to 200k Euro non-dilutive funding from ESA
- We have a very broad industry and research network of partners that you can benefit from. <http://esabic.ch/partners/>
- Last, with ESA BIC Switzerland you are not bound to one location; it is a nationwide program and therefore a virtual incubator.

3. Who is the contact person in charge of ESA BIC Switzerland?

The ESA BIC team, from ETH Zurich, is responsible to set up and manage ESA BIC Switzerland. Please address any questions related to this program to startups@esabic.ch.

4. Who is involved in ESA BIC Switzerland?

ETH Zurich has the operational lead, supported by Venturelab . In addition, startups can benefit from our partnerships with 50+ renowned industry- and research partners.

5. How can the network of partners/corporates/research etc. be used?

All other research & industrial partners: the ESA BIC Switzerland team and your Key Account Manager will facilitate access to these companies or universities. Companies can be a technical expert for you, could be your development partner, could be your future customer, could provide contact to a certain potential partner/customer. The opportunities are plentiful!

6. How many start-up companies are supported?

ESA BIC Switzerland has the capacity to support up to 10 (new) companies every year.

7. How long is the incubation period?

The incubation period can last up to two years.

8. What support can I expect from the ESA BIC Switzerland program?

Financial, technical and business support, and access to our extensive Swiss and international network. Another major advantage is the community of other start-ups and entrepreneurs, which is specifically perceived as one major benefit of the program by our alumni and incubatees.

9. What does the financial support consist of?

The financial support can go up to 200k Euro and is paid out in multiple tranches, tied to your achievement of milestones. Each tranche needs to be matched in a 1:1.5 ratio with funding from third-party sources. This means that over the 2 years you must provide funds of a total of 300k Euro from own or third party sources.

We and our investor network will support in finding the matching funds if needed.

10. What does the technical support consist of?

You can receive up to 80 hours of technical support during the program. The support our technical partners provide includes manpower/expertise/consulting, test facilities, special equipment, etc. Most of it will be for free with the exception of usage/tests on very expensive facilities, e.g. of PSI.

11. How long does it take to become an incubatee at ESA BIC Switzerland?

The evaluation process takes about two to three months from the application deadline to the start of your incubation.

12. What criteria do the applicants have to fulfil?

The key criteria are:

- Start-up not older than 5 years
- A clear connection to some space technology/know how/patent
- Your company has to be registered in Switzerland (latest by the time of contract signature)
- Willingness to develop and scale your business, minimum in Europe (ESA is a European organization ;-)

13. Is there an application template for ESA BIC Switzerland?

Yes, you find all relevant information regarding the application on our website <http://esabic.ch/application/>. We strongly recommend submitting first a 2-pager in order to receive feedback from the team on your proposal before you invest time in writing a full proposal. You get the relevant documents via the button “get the 2-pager template”.

14. Are there any deadlines on applying?

This is a permanent Open Call, but some deadlines apply: there are 2 jury sessions per year and your proposal, once submitted, will be included in the next jury session due. See our website www.esabic.ch for jury session dates.

15. How can I have my idea evaluated?

- Fill out the 2-pager form.
- You will receive a pre-evaluation within 2 weeks.
- If you get a positive feedback from us, please fill out the full application proposal template
- Submit your proposal before the next deadline.
- We will then check whether your idea meets the formal requirements (do not miss out on formal aspects with ESA! The cover letter and all the details required there are essential...).
- If it does, you can be asked to present your company at a jury session
- Your proposal will then be accepted or rejected

During all of this, the ESA BIC Switzerland team is at your disposal should you have any questions, doubts or need help.

16. Is there a jury to which I/we can present our start-up and proposal?

Yes. The jury consists of representatives of ESA, the Swiss Space Office, ETH Zurich, Venturelab and industry representatives and investors.

Those applying start-ups which fulfill all of ESA's formal requirements and demonstrate their “space connection” well, move on to the jury session. There, every start-up presents approx. for 10mins and has 15mins Q&A with the jury. After this a decision is taken, and communicated within a few days.

17. If I am not sure if my business/start-up is in scope or out of scope, whom should I contact?

Please write your question to startups@esabic.ch and we will get back to you shortly.

18. Do I need to have a registered company to apply to ESA BIC Switzerland?

No, you do not need to register your company before the evaluation meeting. You will, however, need to do so in Switzerland before signing the incubation contract.

19. Can I only join the Incentive Phase or directly the Incubation Boost phase?

No. One has to pass through the Incentive Phase first, before being eligible for the Incubation Boost phase. In other words: the Incentive Scheme is the “entry ticket” for the Incubation Boost.

20. Can you state some reasons why applying start-ups do not get selected? In other words: what is important to ESA with regards to applying start-ups?

Some of the reasons are:

- First of all: you have to have the formalities complete and correct, that ESA requires, as an organization funded by several states (example: you need to sign your application). These are more demanding than for other application procedures, and we are happy to help you there!
- Lately, ESA becomes more demanding and clearer on the “space connection” that a start-up has to clearly portray in their application. Also on this, if you have doubts, contact us early and we are happy to discuss with you whether your space connection is strong enough.
- ESA wants to see ambitious entrepreneurs/start-ups. If your interest is to stay a 1-2 person, small start-up focused on the Swiss market only, this program might not be for you. ESA wants to see ambitions for international expansion, at least on some European scale.
- A business case building on ESA/ESA missions being the only customer would be considered very weak and might be a reason for not being selected.
- A spin-off of a larger company, where the larger company still holds 50% or more is not eligible.

21. Can I re-apply in case my first application has been rejected?

Yes. In fact we usually encourage you to re-apply actively if you have the potential to become an ESA BIC CH start-up in the future.

22. What are the evaluation criteria?

The evaluation criteria are the following: Formal Aspects, Background & Experience, Business Case, Technology, Activity Proposal, Space Connection. More detail will be available in the support documentation of the Open Call.

23. When does the funding under the co-funding scheme have to take place?

You need to provide proof of pro-rata matching funds at every review / checkpoint meeting with ESA BIC Switzerland (roughly every 6 months)

24. Are there limitation on how I can use the granted funding?

Yes. The funding has to be used for projects or concrete strategic goals. Using the grants for personnel cost only is not accepted. More detail on this you will find in the Open Call documents.

25. Does a start-up have to stay the full two years in the program?

No, you can voluntarily drop out of the program at any time. Any payment of funds will be stopped in this case

26. Has a second proposal to be written to enter Phase 2 of ESA BIC?

Yes, you need to submit a second proposal, incl. an updated business plan, after passing the Mid-Term Review.

27. Can technology from the US be used in ESA BIC start-ups?

There are no specific limitations from ESA regarding US technologies, however please consider that your business and business case could be negatively impacted in case export restrictions (ITAR) apply to this technology.

28. How much time do I have to register the company?

If your company is not already registered in Switzerland you will have approx. 5 weeks in between being selected for ESA BIC CH and signing the incubation contract with ESA BIC CH.

29. Does ESA take any equity in my company?

No, ESA does not take any equity in your company.