BraveTech EU
DefTech Forges

GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

CALL FOR LOCAL ORGANISERS

EUDIS BraveTech EU DefTech Forges

European Commission
In collaboration with
BRAVE1
EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY

Table of Contents

Glossary

DefTech Forges: Intensive, multi-day innovation bootcamps focused on validating and advancing defence-relevant technologies (TRL 4+) through hands-on development and interaction with end-users.

DefTech Forges Consortium: The consortium of organisations responsible for the overall coordination, standardisation, and supervision of the DefTech Forges programme across locations.

DG DEFIS (Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space): European Commission department responsible for EU defence industry and innovation initiatives.

EC (European Commission): The executive body of the European Union responsible for implementing policies and overseeing programmes such as EUDIS.

EDA (European Defence Agency): EU agency supporting defence cooperation and capability development among Member States.

EDF (European Defence Fund): EU funding instrument supporting collaborative defence research and development.

EDF-associated countries: Non-EU countries (e.g. Norway) formally associated with the European Defence Fund and eligible to participate in its actions.

End-users: Defence stakeholders (e.g. armed forces, Ministries of Defence) providing operational insights, requirements, and validation during the programme.

EUDIS (European Union Defence Innovation Scheme): EU initiative designed to strengthen defence innovation and support the development, scaling, and market entry of innovative solutions.

EU (European Union): Political and economic union of Member States participating in EU policies and programmes.

Local Organiser (LO): Entity selected through the call to host and deliver a DefTech Forge at a specific location, responsible for local implementation, logistics, and participant management.

MoD (Ministry of Defence): National authority responsible for defence policy and armed forces.

MS (Member States): Countries that are members of the European Union.

Ownership Control Declaration (OCD)
Document required from private entities confirming compliance with EDF rules related to ownership and control.

Participants: Teams or individuals (startups, SMEs, scaleups, researchers, innovators) taking part in the DefTech Forge to develop and validate defence-related solutions

1. Background and objectives of the Call for DefTech Forges 2026 Local Organisers

As part of BraveTech EU, the DefTech Forges are advanced multi-day defence technology development events that take place multiple times a year to solve the current military technological challenges by offering innovative technology solutions. The main idea of these "Forges" is to bring together individuals and teams from different backgrounds to collaboratively build solutions to predefined thematic challenges by combining existing and new technologies and ideas. The DefTech Forges shall focus on solutions with TRL 4+, addressing the most urgent defence challenges defined by the EU Member States, Norway and Ukraine.

The objective of this Call is to select proficient Local Organisers to host intensive, five-day technology development bootcamps that prepare winning teams for Phase 2 Testing & Evaluation Campaigns.

2. DefTech Forges challenges

2.1. Selection and Operationalisation of Challenges

- Local Organisers are expected to structure their proposals around two or more of the DefTech Forge challenges defined in this Call.
- Application, should clearly indicate which challenge(s) Local Organise intend to address and provide a justification for the selection, including how the proposed focus aligns with their organisational capabilities, available infrastructure, and access to relevant stakeholders. In particular, applicants should explain the practical opportunities they can offer for showcasing, testing, and validating solutions, such as access to testing environments, technical infrastructure, and end-users.
- Following selection, Local Organisers must be prepared to work closely with the DefTech Forges Consortium to refine and, and where necessary, adjust the selected challenges prior to the launch of the Call for Participants.

2.2. Proposed challenges

CHALLENGE 1: TACTICAL BLUE-FORCE TRACKERS & LIFE-SIGN MONITORING

Development of a highly secure, low-probability-of-intercept (LPI) personal tracking system and resilient supporting infrastructure for the line of contact. The solution must reliably transmit real-time geo-location and critical physiological condition data (vitals, trauma status) of dismounted fighters. Key focus areas include low-bandwidth mesh networking, energy-efficient hardware, encryption standards resistant to electronic warfare (EW), and seamless integration into tactical command displays.

CHALLENGE 2: UNATTENDED GROUND SENSORS (UGS) FOR MULTI-DOMAIN DETECTION

Develop a modular network of seismic and acoustic ground sensors capable of automated target classification at the tactical edge. The system must autonomously detect, identify, and track enemy

infantry movements, armored vehicles, and low-altitude UAVs. Solutions should feature low-power edge-AI processing to minimize false alarms and a robust, low-profile data transmission architecture to inject target tracks directly into unified situational awareness platforms.

CHALLENGE 3: SUBTERRANEAN AUTONOMOUS ENGINEERING SYSTEMS

Design robotic or semi-autonomous engineering platforms optimized for the rapid, low-profile underground deployment of critical infrastructure. Systems must be capable of laying tactical communication and power cable lines autonomously or semi-autonomously under battlefield conditions, bypassing surface obstacles to reduce operator exposure. Prototypes must demonstrate a path toward high environmental durability (handling mud, grit, and moisture) and prioritize low acoustic and thermal footprints to evade enemy ground sensors and thermal aerial reconnaissance.

CHALLENGE 4: MULTI-MODE RF SEEKERS FOR STRIKE PLATFORMS

Develop software-hardware suites and miniaturized components for missile and UAV guidance systems targeting moving aerial and surface threats. The architecture must support or modularly adapt to three distinct operational configurations – Passive (homing dynamically on the target's own RF emissions without revealing the hunter's location); Semi-Active (tracking and intercepting targets using reflected signals illuminated by external friendly radar sources); Active: Utilizing a fully self-contained, miniaturized onboard radar transceiver for independent target acquisition and terminal engagement.

CHALLENGE 5: AUTONOMOUS STRIKE UAS & SWARM COORDINATION

Development of autonomous and semi-autonomous Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) optimized for tactical strike and assault missions. The focus is on advancing smart loitering munitions, resilient FPV attack platforms, and decentralized swarm coordination algorithms that allow multiple aerial assets to collaborate on target hunting and execution with minimal human-in-the-loop dependencies.

CHALLENGE 6: RF SEEKERS & TERMINAL GUIDANCE FOR PRECISION ENGAGEMENT

Design of RF seekers and terminal guidance software to ensure high-probability hits during the final phase of engagement. Solutions must focus on the tight hardware-software integration of guidance packages into micro-munitions and tactical rockets.

CHALLENGE 7: EW-RESILIENT UAS OPERATIONS

Engineering UAS platforms and flight controllers capable of sustaining mission profiles within heavily contested Electronic Warfare (EW) environments. Key focus areas include robust GNSS-denied navigation, anti-jamming communication links, and fail-safe autonomous waypoint recovery protocols when all external signals are severed.

CHALLENGE 8: RAPID BATTLEFIELD ADAPTATION & MODULAR SYSTEMS

Development of agile UAS solutions designed for immediate reconfiguration on the flight line to counter rapidly evolving enemy electronic countermeasures or shifting mission profiles. Teams may address this challenge through hardware modularity (Design of open-architecture, modular airframes or quick-swap payload bays that allow operators to mechanically change sensors, munitions, or components in minutes without specialized tools), software adaptability (Development of field-reprogrammable payloads or software-defined architectures that enable operators to rapidly flash new mission code, update algorithmic countermeasures, or dynamically shift operational radio frequencies on the launch pad) or a combination of both.

CHALLENGE 9: COOPERATIVE ENGAGEMENT & SENSOR-TO-SHOOTER INTEGRATION

Creation of decentralized software frameworks and networking architectures to achieve radical kill-chain compression. The challenge focuses on machine-to-machine (M2M) communication protocols that enable automated multi-drone target handoff – such as a reconnaissance drone instantly routing precise target telemetry directly to an optimized strike drone without manual operator relay

3.DefTech Forges timeline and framework

3.1.Key dates

- Opening of the Call: **1.06.2026**
- Online Info session: **15.06.2026, 13:00 CET**
- Deadline for submitting applications: **15.07.2026 at 23:59h CET**
- Decision on the selected organisers: **30.07.2026** (*selected Local Organisers will be informed in that week, so it is recommended to regularly check email inbox*)
- Signing of the contracts with LOs: **by 15.08.2026**
- Kick-off with the Local Organisers selected: **18.08.2026**
- Call for participants and selection: **14.09-11.10.2026**
- Participants' evaluation and confirmation: **by 28.10.2026**
- **DefTech Forge: 9-16.11.2026 (5 days)**

3.2.DefTech Forge framework

- The DefTech Forge is delivered **on-site by the Local Organiser**, following a standardised programme framework defined by the consortium.
- Over five days, Local Organisers are responsible for facilitating all activities, including participant support, mentoring sessions, and logistics. The consortium provides the overall programme structure, tools, and monitoring to ensure a consistent experience across locations.
- Participants work in an intensive, hands-on environment, interacting with defence end-users, industry experts, and mentors. The programme emphasises **rapid development, iteration, and operational validation**, including testing activities carried out under realistic conditions where applicable.

3.3.Funding

- Selected **Local Organisers will be provided with a lump-sum financial support up to 80 000€** to carry out all the required activities for a successful DefTech Forge implementation.
- An amount of **60,000€ (or 75% of the budget asked) will be paid in advance** as a pre-payment once the Service Agreement has been signed to kickstart the preparations immediately.

- The **remaining 20,000€ (or 25% of the budget asked) will be paid upon** successful completion of the local DefTech Forge, including meeting KPIs, timely submission of the Delivery Report and acceptance of the Report by DefTech Forges Consortium.
- Details about the technical, financial, and timing requirements will be described in the Service Agreement.

3.4.Supporting materials

- Local Organisers and participating teams will **receive comprehensive briefing materials** covering key elements such as event objectives, theme, rules, and evaluation criteria.
- To support engagement and creativity, the materials will also include inspirational case studies, expert insights, and practical resources that teams can use throughout the event.

3.5.IT Platforms

- Each Local Organisers will have direct access to their specific Tally form to manage and view their relevant participant registrations, ensuring full compliance with GDPR regulations.
- Discord will be utilised as the central communication hub, enabling organisers to facilitate real-time networking and provide technical support.
- Additionally, the **DefTech Forges Consortium will support Local Organisers with standardised participant onboarding materials and communication/ promotion resources**.

4.Obligations of Local Organisers

The selected DefTech Forges 2026 Local Organisers will be committed to implement the following tasks during their events:

4.1.Core Operational Responsibilities

- **Event Management:** Organisers hold full responsibility for all activities, including the initial preparations and the overall organisation of the DefTech Forge.
- **Recruitment and Onboarding:** Organisers are expected to use their expertise to reach their communities and secure qualified participants. This includes managing a central 'Call for Participants' to onboard motivated teams.
- **Stakeholder Liaison:** Organisers must engage with and find necessary stakeholders, including relevant defence actors from their local innovation ecosystem.
- **Collaboration with DefTech Forges Consortium:** Local teams must ensure a seamless collaboration with the DefTech Forges Consortium and host their representatives on their location.

4.2.Key Performance Indicators and Commitments

- **Participant Targets:** Each organiser must host 15-20 teams, at their local event.

- **Grant Compliance:** Meeting the participant recruitment target is a KPI commitment included in the Service Agreement and is a mandatory condition for the final grant payment.
- **Vetting and Eligibility:** Ensuring all participants, mentors, and board members are adult citizens residing in the EU, Norway, or Ukraine.

5.Participants and their journey

5.1.Profile of Participants

DefTech Forges are open to a broad range of innovators capable of contributing to defence-relevant challenges. Participants typically include **startups, scale-ups, SMEs, mid-caps, research teams, and independent innovators**, provided they are able to propose solutions at **TRL4 or above**.

The programme actively encourages participation from:

- Non-traditional defence actors
- Defence developers
- Cross-border teams, particularly ***joint EU–Ukraine collaborations***

Participants are expected to combine **technical competence, operational understanding, and strong motivation** to engage in a results-oriented environment alongside defence end-users, industry experts, and mentors.

5.2.Application and Selection

- The participant journey begins with an open call, followed by a standardised selection process ensuring fairness and consistency across all DefTech Forge locations.
- Participant registration will be managed through Tally, while the selection and attendance confirmation processes will be handled directly via email by DefTech Forges Consortium, and then handover to Local Organizers to ensure personalised communication.
- Selection is carried out in the following steps. First, applications are checked for admissibility and completeness; only fully submitted applications containing all required information are accepted, while incomplete applications are rejected. Second, eligibility is verified in accordance with EDF/ EUDIS rules, including criteria related to citizenship, residence, and age. This verification is based on applicants' self-declarations and subsequent checks conducted by the Local Organiser.
- Applications that pass these stages are then evaluated and ranked based on the relevance and innovation of the proposed solution, its operational value, and the capability of the team. Scoring follows standardised criteria and is recorded centrally to ensure comparability and transparency.
- Selection board is composed of representatives of the DefTech Forges Consortium, the European Defence Agency, Brave1, and the Local Organisers, and is approved by the European Commission.
- Applicants are ultimately assigned to one of three categories: selected participants, reserve list (waitlisted), or non-selected. The final selection results are consolidated and validated by the DefTech Forges Consortium and require formal approval from the European Commission before invitations are issued.

5.3. Onboarding and Preparation

- The onboarding and preparation phase is **implemented by the Local Organiser**, with guidance from the DefTech Forges Consortium to ensure consistency and quality across locations.
- Selected teams enter a preparation phase designed to ensure readiness before the start of the DefTech Forge. Local Organisers are responsible for distributing onboarding materials and managing communication with participants, while leveraging the centrally provided templates, guidance, and tools.
- Participants receive a comprehensive information package covering the programme format, challenges, evaluation criteria, and practical arrangements. They are required to confirm their participation within a defined deadline, with Local Organisers managing confirmations and coordination.
- To support preparation and communication, Local Organisers onboard participants into a **shared digital collaboration environment**, provided and structured by the consortium. This enables access to materials, interaction with organisers, and early engagement with other participants.

5.4. Matchmaking and Team Support

- Matchmaking is coordinated at the programme level by the DefTech Forges Consortium and **implemented locally by the Local Organiser**, ensuring both consistency and local relevance.
- It begins prior to the event, with Local Organisers supporting team formation and encouraging strong collaboration – particularly between EU and Ukrainian participants – based on guidance and formats provided by the consortium.
- During the programme, Local Organisers facilitate the connection of each team with relevant experts and mentors. Each team is assigned a **lead mentor**, in line with the centrally defined matchmaking framework, ensuring that support is aligned with the team's technical focus and development needs. The process combines structured mentor assignment with flexibility, allowing teams to engage with a broader pool of experts.

6. Attraction of participants to the DefTech Forges

The attraction of participants to the DefTech Forges is implemented through a **coordinated approach between the DefTech Forges Consortium and the Local Organisers**, ensuring both **pan-European reach** and **strong local engagement**. The objective is to maximise the number and quality of applications while ensuring equal access to information and a consistent participant experience across all locations.

6.1. Central Information Sessions

To ensure that all potential applicants receive the same high-quality information, the DefTech Forges Consortium organises **central online information sessions**. These sessions provide a comprehensive

overview of the programme, including its objectives, structure, application process, eligibility rules, and expectations for participants.

6.2. Local Organisers' Webinars

- As part of these efforts, Local Organisers will be **required to host at least 1 virtual information session or webinar in English**.
- The Local Organisers' webinars should highlight local strengths and excellence as well as improve the skills of the already registered participants with training. Also, Local Organisers will have some autonomy to tailor topics if they align with the theme and challenges of the DefTech Forges, the implementation team guidelines and are approved by DG DEFIS.
- Each session must include an information point to address questions about the initiative and actively promote registrations and a promotional point to gain registrations
- These Local Organisers' webinars must be conducted in English to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all participants. However, additional sessions in local languages are permitted to cater to regional audiences, provided they align with the consortium's guidelines and are approved by DG DEFIS.

6.3. Pre-Event Meetups and Community Building

- To strengthen the participant pipeline and improve the overall quality of applications, the Consortium and Local Organisers jointly organise **pre-event DefTech Forge meetups**, typically hosted in the local geography.
- These meetups serve as an important **early engagement and community-building step**, allowing potential participants to better understand the programme and prepare effectively. They combine several practical functions: introducing the DefTech Forge format and expectations, enabling early matchmaking between participants, and connecting innovators with defence stakeholders and ecosystem actors.
- Local Organisers are responsible for the implementation of these events, including venue, logistics, and participant outreach, while the Consortium provides the **standardised format, agenda structure, and core messaging**. This ensures consistency across locations while allowing for adaptation to local ecosystem strengths.
- Meetups bring together a wide range of stakeholders, including startups, SMEs, researchers, defence end-users, and industry representatives. This creates an early opportunity for teams to receive feedback, refine their products, and build partnerships, including **collaboration between EU and Ukrainian participants**.

7. Eligibility criteria for applicants

7.1. Who can apply?

This Call is open to **qualified organisations capable of delivering high-quality DefTech Forge activities** in line with the objectives of the European Union Defence Innovation Scheme.

7.1.1.Eligible Applicants

a. Any **private or public entity** may apply, provided that it:
   - Is **legally established in an EU Member State or another EDF-associated country**, in accordance with Article 5 of Regulation (EU) 2021/697;
   - Is **not subject to control by a non-associated third country or entity** (Article 9 compliance);
   - Ensures that **all infrastructure, facilities, assets, and resources used for the implementation of the DefTech Forge are located within the EU or EDF-associated countries**.

b. Applicants should note that **eligibility compliance will be verified not only during evaluation but also after selection**, and additional supporting information or documentation may be requested at a later stage.

7.1.2. Joint Applications

a. Multiple organisations may **jointly apply as co-hosts** of a DefTech Forge. In such cases the consortium must designate **one coordinating organisation**;

b. The coordinator is solely responsible for: preparing and submitting the application, acting as the main contact point, ensuring coordination between partners;

c. Applications **must be submitted by the designated coordinator on behalf of all participating entities**.

7.2.Technical and organisational requirements

To be considered eligible, **applicants must comply with all following technical and organisational requirements**:

REQUIREMENT	ASSESSMENT BASIS	EVIDENCE SUBMITTED

Suitable physical venue available for the hosting of the DefTech Forge and its participants	▪ Main stage with screens and speakers where people gather around with capacity for 100+ people ▪ **Capacity and space:** Ability to comfortably accommodate **100+ participants**, including dedicated working areas and separate rooms for online activities and mentoring sessions. ▪ **Testing setup:** Availability of a reliable testing environment, including a stable electricity supply, adequate workstations, and appropriate technical infrastructure to enable teams to safely test, refine, and iterate on their solutions. ▪ Catering area able to facilitate to 100+ people, can be done in maximum three shifts if needed ▪ Snacks & coffee area available throughout DefTech Forges ▪ Minimum 3 qualified people to host and	▪ Presenting hosting venue, inc. the names of the location, photos and a clear explanation how to venue will meet requirements ▪ CVs for the 3 key people hosting and facilitating the event
Reliable and fast internet connectivity capable of running smooth, uninterrupted video calls and video streaming with 100+ people	▪ Fast stable internet connection of at least 100Mb/s upload and download. With latency no higher than 2s. ▪ A secondary internet line / connection option in case the main fails *(acceptable under eligible cost)*	▪ Self-declaration by applicants, with supporting technical evidence on demand
Communication and promotion capability	▪ A marketing/communications specialist with experience in digital marketing and communications, and in producing professional level marketing products ▪ Suitable channels for promotion with demonstrated audience and reach: social media, website, newsletters, etc. ▪ Content creation capabilities, with an on-location professional photographer and videographer. ▪ Dissemination and communication strategy plan	▪ Document detailing the dissemination and communications strategy ▪ Report on their social media channels and website with recent analytics ▪ Presentation with examples of relevant communications products ▪ CV of the marketing/ communications specialist

Access to stakeholders in the defence sector & established partnerships	▪ Ability to ensure participant access to appropriate testing facilities, testing equipment, databases or other material and technical resources supporting the maturation of products, solutions or prototypes during the DefTech Forge. ▪ Established or planned partnerships with entities from the innovation ecosystem and/or public sector to support the DefTech Forges, including contributions such as technical mentoring, access to testing or validation infrastructure, or complementary prizes or support measures in addition to those awarded by the European Commission. ▪ Organiser's capacity to ensure the meaningful involvement of Ukrainian stakeholders, including mentors, end-users, and operational	▪ Description of available or accessible testing and technical resources, including ownership or access arrangements. ▪ List of partner organisations and a brief description of their intended contribution to the DefTech Forge. ▪ Where available, letters of intent, memoranda of understanding or equivalent documentation demonstrating partner engagement.

ORGANISATIONAL REQUIREMENTS
▪ Previously has organised at least 1 hackathon, multi-day bootcamp, accelerator (all TRL 4+) or similar form of open innovation programmes with a minimum of 50 participants and 10 startups / innovation teams with at least MVP when entering the event.
▪ Project teams consist of minimum 3 people inc. a project manager, marketing manager and event production manager. CVs attached to the application. At least 1 of these people should be present at the physical event and least one person must have experience in the field of defence.
▪ Measures for mitigating possible risks in considering the time, date and location for their country in means of influencing the participation numbers
▪ The Local Organisers must demonstrate awareness of and capacity to comply with applicable security and data protection requirements, including GDPR and European Commission guidance.

7.3.Eligible proposals

To be considered eligible, proposals must be submitted via the Tally platform **no later than 15 July 2026 at 23:59 CET** and must include the following components:

a. **Technical Project Description**
   - A complete and clearly structured proposal (maximum 10 pages) prepared using the provided template.
   - The document must include: the local promotion and outreach plan, a description of venue capabilities, and the partnership and ecosystem engagement strategy.
   - It must also contain a **venue description**, presenting hosting venue with photos and clear explanations demonstrating how each venue meets the required conditions.

b. **Resumes (in English):** CVs of the three key team members responsible for delivery (e.g. Project Manager, Marketing Manager, Event Manager), demonstrating relevant expertise in **defence, innovation, and programme management**.

c. **Ownership Control Declaration (OCD)**

- **Private entities** must submit a duly completed, signed, and scanned Ownership Control Declaration using the template provided in Tally. This document confirms establishment in an eligible country and independence from control by non-associated third countries.
- **Public entities** are exempt from submitting the OCD but must provide official documentation confirming their status as a public body under the law of **an EU Member State or another EDF-associated** (e.g. legal statute, official act, or registration document).

d. **Partnership Evidence:**
   - A list of at least **four key regional research and innovation stakeholders and defence end-users**, including a brief description of their expected contribution to the DefTech Forge (e.g. mentoring, infrastructure, testing, outreach).
   - Where available, supporting documentation such as Letters of Intent or Memoranda of Understanding should be included.

8. The evaluation process

8.1. Eligibility check and preparations

a. Once the Call closes, the evaluation phase will first start with the **eligibility check** and will then move to the assessment of the proposals, scoring, and ranking of the applications (based on the evaluation criteria described below).

b. First, applications are reviewed for **admissibility and completeness** on a pass/fail basis. This includes verifying timely submission, use of required templates, and inclusion of all mandatory documents. Minor clarifications may be requested within a defined timeframe, but incomplete applications are not evaluated further.

c. Second, **eligibility is verified**, also on a pass/fail basis. The consortium checks compliance with the participation rules, including establishment in an eligible country and requirements related to ownership, control, and location of resources. This may include reviewing declarations, performing checks against EU sanctions lists, and addressing any identified concerns through a formal process.

d. Only eligible applications proceed to the **qualitative evaluation phase**, conducted by a **Selection Board composed of minimum independent experts** experienced in innovation programmes, hackathons, or startup support schemes, supported by two reserve members. The European Commission representatives may participate where appropriate.

e. To ensure fairness and transparency, all evaluators will sign a **declaration of absence of conflict of interest** before reviewing applications. If a conflict is identified, the evaluator is replaced by a reserve expert.

f. During evaluation, applications are scored independently using **standardised scoring grids and predefined criteria**. Evaluators provide scores along with concise written justifications, ensuring consistency and comparability across all proposals.

g. The results are consolidated into a **ranked list of applications**, which forms the basis for final selection and, where applicable, the creation of a reserve list.

8.2.Evaluation Criteria

Evaluations will be fair, impartial, transparent and carried out in a standardised/consistent manner following the below-outlined evaluation criteria, thresholds and weights will be the following:

CRITERIA	SCORING	THRESHOLD	WEIGHT
Capability to ensure digital collaboration between the DefTech Forge locations, the possibility for individuals to join the event at a remote location, and experience in the use of ICT technologies, and event location well located and reachable by public	**1-2 p – inadequate:** Limited or no provision for digital collaboration or remote participation; insufficient ICT experience; event location poorly connected or difficult to reach by public transport / no transport provided by Local Organisers. **3-4 p – poor:** Basic ICT tools proposed but limited integration across locations; remote participation possible but poorly supported; accessibility of venue acceptable but not well justified. **5-6 p – fair:** Adequate digital collaboration setup enabling coordination between locations and limited remote participation; proven use of standard ICT tools; event location reasonably accessible by public transport and suitable for the event format **7-8 p – good:** Robust digital collaboration model supporting seamless interaction between locations and remote participants; strong ICT experience demonstrated through prior events; well-located venue with good transport connectivity and logistical suitability. **9-10 p – excellent:** Highly reliable, well-tested digital infrastructure enabling full hybrid participation and cross-location collaboration; advanced ICT experience clearly evidenced; event location optimally positioned, easily reachable or transportation by organisers provided, and fully aligned with operational and participant needs.	6	33%

The level of inclusion and support from contributing partners (companies, universities, incubators, accelerators, other public entities)	**1-2 p – inadequate:** Few or no partners identified; partner roles unclear or purely nominal; no demonstrated value added to participants or event delivery. No consideration of Ukrainian stakeholders, or no credible plan to identify, engage, or involve Ukrainian mentors, end-users, or operational experts. **3-4 p – poor:** Some partners listed, but engagement is shallow or poorly defined; limited relevance to defence innovation ecosystem; partner contributions weakly linked to DefTech Forges objectives. Ukrainian stakeholders may be mentioned, but their involvement is vague, limited, or not operationally integrated into the programme. **5-6 p – fair:** Relevant partners identified across at least part of the innovation ecosystem; roles and contributions defined at a basic level (e.g. mentoring, outreach, facilities); partnerships credible but limited in scale or depth; few defence related actors involved. Ukrainian stakeholders are identified but their engagement is limited or not fully structured, with unclear integration into core programme activities. **7-8 p – good:** Strong mix of relevant partners (end-users, defence industry, academia, public sector, innovation actors); clear and concrete contributions to the DefTech Forge (mentoring, infrastructure, expertise, prizes, follow-up support); partnerships enhance participant value and event quality. Ukrainian stakeholders (e.g. mentors, end-users, operational experts) are meaningfully included, with a clear approach to their engagement and contribution to programme activities. **9-10 p – excellent:** Highly integrated partner ecosystem with defence-relevant actors and end-users actively embedded in the DefTech Forge design and delivery; clear commitments with tangible added value (live testing access, end-user involvement and feedback, scale-up pathways, potential future collaboration plans); partnerships significantly strengthen outcomes and continuity beyond the event. Ukrainian stakeholders are systematically integrated across the programme, with a well-defined approach for identifying, engaging, and embedding mentors, end-users, and operational experts into core activities, significantly strengthening operational relevance and overall	6	33%

DefTech Forges communication and promotional plan quality; the commitment on the number of active participants	**1-2 p – inadequate:** Communication and promotion plan is vague, generic, or poorly structured; target audiences not clearly defined; channels and timing unclear; unrealistic or unsupported participant number commitments; no evidence of prior outreach capability **3-4 p – poor:** Basic communication approach outlined, but limited targeting and weak channel mix; participant numbers plausible but not well justified; limited evidence of mobilisation capacity; risks to outreach effectiveness not addressed **5-6 p – fair:** Clear communication plan with defined target groups, channels, and timeline; realistic participant commitments supported by local ecosystem reach; basic monitoring indicators included; plan meets minimum expectations but lacks strong differentiation **7-8 p – good:** Well-structured, proactive promotion strategy combining central and local outreach channels; strong targeting of relevant profiles; credible and ambitious participant commitments backed by evidence (networks, past events); clear KPIs and mitigation measures **9-10 p – excellent:** Highly targeted, data-driven communication strategy aligned with DefTech Forges objectives; strong multi-channel execution plan; excellent mobilisation capacity demonstrated through past results; ambitious yet fully credible participant commitments with clear tracking and contingency planning	6	33%

The specific detailed elements associated with each evaluation criteria will be the following:

CRITERIA	
Capability to ensure digital collaboration between the DefTech Forge locations, the possibility for individuals to join the event at a remote location, and experience in the use of ICT technologies, and event location well located and reachable by public transport	▪ **Capability for onsite delivery and organisational setup:** Assessment of the organiser's track record in delivering defence hackathons or open innovation programmes. Verification that the required competencies (Project Management, Event Production Management, and Marketing Management) are covered, that responsibilities are shared across at least two team members, and that at least one team member demonstrates confirmed experience in the defence domain. ▪ **Quality of digital collaboration:** Assessment of the proposed approach to enable collaboration across DefTech Forge locations and remote participation, Evaluation of the adequacy of proposed ICT tools, infrastructure, and technical setup to support high quality hybrid participation. ▪ **Appropriateness of the physical location and facilities:** Assessment of the suitability of the venue to host participants, mentors, and evaluation committee members, including capacity, accessibility (e.g. proximity to public transport or provision of transport), and overall logistical setup. ▪ **Adequacy of testing resources:** Assessment of the availability and quality of resources provided to participants to test, and validate their solutions onsite, including technical equipment, tools, and supporting infrastructure. ▪ **Appropriateness of the proposed budget:** Assessment of the extent to which the proposed budget is realistic, coherent, and aligned with the planned activities, ensuring sufficient resourcing for the successful implementation of the DefTech Forge.

The level of inclusion and support from contributing partners (companies, universities, incubators, accelerators, other public entities)	▪ **Excellence of the ecosystem engagement plan:** Assessment of how local and regional innovation actors, space/defence stakeholders, and sponsors are leveraged to support the DefTech Forge. Appropriateness of the plan for securing partners and sponsors, as well as the amount of sponsorship that will be required and how it will be allocated; how relevant actors from the defence end-users (Ministry of Defence or Defence innovation agencies) are involved in the DefTech Forge? Specification of actors the team will partner with and the plan for securing them as partners ▪ **Relevance and quality of mentors and Evaluation Committee members**: Assessment of access to qualified defence and technical mentors, as well as the composition of the Evaluation Committee, tasked with supporting and assessing participating teams. The application should clearly explain how appropriate profiles with relevant sector-specific expertise are identified and secured. A list of already confirmed mentors and Evaluation Committee members, if available, should be provided. ▪ **Eligibility and Compliance Vetting:** Appropriateness of the plan to confirm that all participants, mentors, speakers, and selection board members are adult citizens residing in EU Member States, Norway, or Ukraine. Quality of explanations regarding partnerships with local authorities for this vetting process. ▪ **Engagement of Ukrainian stakeholders:** Particular attention will be given to the presence of confirmed Ukrainian mentors and experts, the relevance of their expertise, and the mechanisms put in place to incorporate their input into mentoring, challenge framing, and solution validation.
DefTech Forges communication and promotional plan quality; the commitment on the number of active participants	▪ **Excellence of the communication and outreach strategy**: Assessment of implemented activities and initiatives designed to attract 15-20 teams. Review of channel selection, social media strategy, and alignment with the previous campaigns/websites provided. ▪ **Quality of promotional materials and branding**: Appropriateness of the preliminary list of promotional items (posters, rollups, badges, etc.) and the clarity of how each item contributes to effective event communication. ▪ **Excellence of the program and participant engagement:** Quality of the envisioned location-specific program. Assessment of activities proposed to foster active participation, encourage engagement, and manage the general organization of the DefTech Forge within the given timeline.

The **threshold** for each criterion will **be 6 out of 10** and will be weighted as indicated above. The **total weighted score for all criteria will be out of 100 points**. The **total threshold score is 60**. Only the applications above the minimum threshold (6 out of 10 for each criterion) will be eligible for selection.

8.3.Final selection and contracting

a. Following the evaluation and scoring process, the **Selection Board, together with the European Commission**, holds a **consensus meeting** to agree on the final selection of Local Organisers.

b. Where necessary, **interviews with pre-selected applicants** may be conducted prior to the final decision to clarify key aspects of the proposals.

c. The final selection is based on the ranking of applications, with the **two highest-scoring proposals selected**, ensuring that the chosen DefTech Forge locations are hosted in **different EU Member States or EDF-associated countries**.
d. In addition, up to **two applicants are placed on a reserve list**. These may be invited to replace selected organisers in case of withdrawal, failed validation, or non-compliance during the contractual process.
e. Once the selection is confirmed in coordination with the Contracting Authority, **notification of results is sent to all applicants**. Selected organisations receive an **official award letter**, which initiates the formal onboarding and contracting phase.
f. Selected organisations are required to **formally confirm their participation** and provide any additional documentation needed to validate eligibility. This information is reviewed by the consortium and, where required, forwarded to DG DEFIS for final confirmation.
g. Upon successful validation, the consortium proceeds with the **contract signature process**. The contract defines technical and organisational requirements, roles and responsibilities, reporting obligations, and deliverables and compliance conditions.
h. All Local Organisers must formally commit to complying with the programme rules, including communication guidelines, security requirements, and reporting procedures, before starting any implementation activities.

9.Local Organisers' onboarding

Right after the selection process has finalised and the selected DefTech Forges organisers have been informed and validated, the following onboarding and supporting activities will be launched for them:

- **Kick-off and Meetings**: At the beginning of the process, selected Local Organisers will participate in a kick-off meeting where expectations, roles and responsibilities will be defined. Subsequent onboarding meetings will delve into the details of materials, tools and support.
- **Ongoing Coaching and Communication**: Following the initial onboarding, the DefTech Forges Consortium will maintain continuous contact with the selected Local Organisers through regular bi-weekly coaching calls and check-ins.
- A dedicated communication channel, will be established to facilitate ongoing discussions, troubleshooting and information sharing. Peer-to-peer learning sessions will be included in the coaching to stimulate the sharing of best practice across various locations and countries.
- **Accessible Online Guides**: In addition to meetings and coaching, Local Organisers will have access to comprehensive written guides available online. These guides will serve as a reliable reference point, offering clarity on the DefTech Forges activities and procedures.
- **Standardised Templates and Materials**: Standardised templates and materials will be provided to reduce the administrative burden on Local Organisers. By offering ready-to-use resources for marketing, communications, and coordination, Local Organisers can focus on value-added tasks like participant, mentor, and partner engagement.

- **Shared cloud space**: The DefTech Forges Consortium will provide the awarded Local Organisers with a dedicated shared space in SharePoint to ensure that every organisation has access to shared information, can work in a secure system and collaborate with the Consortium in all the necessary inputs needed during the preparation, execution of the DefTech Forge.

10.Support to applicants

- Interested applicants may contact DefTech Forges2026 Open Call for organisers' helpdesk on info@bravetecheu-deftechforges.eu at any time if they wish to receive further information on the procedures, terms, and conditions.
- DefTech Forges implementation team fully complies with the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) on the protection of natural persons with regards to the processing of personal data and the free movement of such data. The DefTech Forges consortium is responsible for the personal data processing, under automated and analogical means, from its collection, through its organisation and storage, up to its deletion. The DefTech Forges Consortium keeps a continuous and thorough registry of all its personal data processing activities. The applicants´ data will be retained in S-CIRCABC.
- Applicant data will be retained in the DefTech Forges project archives for the duration necessary for the implementation and management of the application related activities. Personal data will not be transferred to third parties or to countries outside the EU/EEA unless adequate data protection safeguards are in place in accordance with applicable legislation.

Annex 1: Technical Project Description

DEFTECH FORGES
Technical Project Description

Please complete the sections below, keeping the headings unchanged and using the designated response areas. Ensure responses are clear, concise, and evidence based. Before submitting remove the instructions.
Please note the page limits for each section – content exceeding these limits will not be evaluated

1. OPERATIONAL CAPACITY, ICT & DELIVERY (Max 10 pages)

1.1. Organisational capacity, team structure, and implementation approach

Describe your experience organizing defence-focused engineering events, multi-day bootcamps, accelerators (TRL 4+), or similar forms of open innovation programs and hybrid events. Explain how you will successfully run the BraveTechEU DefTech Forge within the given timeline, covering all execution phases from initial partner/sponsor/ mentors' recruitment, participant outreach, pre-event informational webinars, through to the onsite coordination and technical delivery of the 5-day intensive program. Please also describe how the allocated budget (maximum EUR 80,000) and the specific funding schedule align with your organization's current financial capacity. Finally, present your core team, providing brief profile descriptions that highlight their specific competencies, roles, and technical or managerial experience.

1.1.1. Partner / Consortium Presentation

Please present the applicant organization and, where applicable, the consortium or delivery partners proposed for the DefTech Forge. The response should clarify roles, responsibilities, relevant experience and added value for the programme.

1.1.2. Organisational Capacity, Team Structure and Implementation Approach

Please describe the organizational capacity, proposed team structure and implementation approach for delivering the DefTech Forge.

NO.	NAME	TEAM ROLE	DELIVERY EXPERIENCE	RESPONSIBILITIES	LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT
1.					
2.					
3.					

1.2. Digital infrastructure

Describe the technical and digital readiness of the proposed event setup, focusing on the infrastructure available to support reliable connectivity. Your response should explain how you will ensure access to fast, stable internet

connection with at least 100 Mb/s upload and download speed and latency not exceeding 2 seconds. Please also describe the backup connectivity solutions that will be in place (e.g. secondary internet line or alternative connection) to ensure continuity in case of failure of the primary network, in line with eligible cost provisions.

1.3. Venue selection and event infrastructure

Describe the proposed event location, highlighting the factors that ensure their overall quality and logistical suitability. Provide venue information, including photos, and a clear explanation of the venue meets the required technical and organisational standards. Describe the available infrastructure in detail, including participant capacity, working spaces, breakout rooms, internet connectivity, audiovisual equipment, security arrangements, accessibility (including public transport), and overall suitability for hosting a defence innovation event. Your response should also explain the measures that will be implemented to ensure a seamless and secure digital experience for participants, considering the digital connectivity eligibility requirements.

1.4. Testing facilitation approach

Explain how you plan to facilitate testing during the DefTech Forge. Clearly indicate which challenges you intend to address and why, including how these choices align with the available opportunities for showcasing and testing solutions within the proposed environment. Describe the practical mechanisms, means, physical testing environments, or specialized platforms put at the disposal of the participants to securely test, troubleshoot, and validate their hardware or software configurations onsite. Your response should detail how teams will mature their products during the 5-day format, highlighting your access to specialized laboratories, technical databases, validation infrastructure, or testing equipment.

1.5. Budget overview and general expenses

Please provide a realistic, justified, and structured budget overview for the organization and delivery of the DefTech Forge. Your budget figures must be completely exclusive of VAT and aligned with your proposed activities and implementation plan. The total requested budget for the organization and delivery of the DefTech Forge may not exceed EUR 80,000, excluding VAT.

Please fill in the comprehensive budget table below:

NO.	BUDGET CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED AMOUNT, EXCLUDING VAT (EUR)
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

6.			
7.			
		Total forecasted budget	

Additional explanation / justification

2. THE LEVEL OF INCLUSION AND SUPPORT FROM CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS (Max 5 pages)

2.1. Engagement of ecosystem partners, sponsors, and defence stakeholders

Describe how you will ensure the active participation of key defence-sector stakeholders, such as Ministries of Defence, Armed Forces, procurement agencies, defence innovation bodies, or defence academies, as end-users, practitioners, and contributors. Explain how you will coordinate with and leverage complementary support within the network, including Ukrainian operational input and mentors where relevant, to strengthen delivery.

In addition, describe how you will engage and leverage the relevant regional innovation ecosystem to support the DefTech Forge, including local and regional innovation actors, industry, academia, and technical experts. Your response should outline your overall strategy for identifying, securing, and involving partners and sponsors, and explain how these collaborations will contribute to the delivery of the event, technical validation of solutions, and the long-term impact of the programme.

Finally, describe how ecosystem partners, sponsors, and defence stakeholders – including Ukrainian contributors – will be engaged before, during, and after the DefTech Forge, specifying their expected roles and contributions. Where possible, provide examples of potential target companies that could be interested in participating in the programme.

Please fill in the following table with all relevant stakeholders:

NO	NAME OF THE STAKEHOLDER	TYPE OF RELATION (E.g. Collaborated in past hackathons; collaborated in past R&D and innovation projects)	FORESEEN ROLE DURING DEFTECH FORGE / CONTRIBUTION EXPECTED
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

2.2. Participant eligibility verification and compliance approach

Describe your approach to verifying the eligibility of all participants, including teams, team members, mentors, speakers, and evaluation committee members, ensuring that they are adult citizens residing in EU Member States, Norway, or Ukraine.

Your response should outline a robust, step-by-step verification process to ensure full compliance with the European Defence Fund (EDF) eligibility requirements. This should include measures to confirm that all entities involved in the action – such as organisers, partners, infrastructure, facilities, and resources – are located within eligible territories and are not subject to control by non-associated third countries or entities.

Please explain how you will collaborate with relevant local authorities, ministries, or official bodies to support and validate this screening process.

In addition, describe how you will manage the collection, verification, and secure handling of information, including confidentiality measures, data protection practices, and procedures for handling sensitive data.

3. DEFTECH FORGES COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTIONAL PLAN (Max 10 pages)

3.1. Communication and outreach strategy

Provide a detailed description of the communication and outreach strategy you will implement to attract 15–20 teams at TRL 4 and above to the DefTech Forge.

Your response should explain the target audiences, key messages, and overall approach to promoting the programme, ensuring broad visibility and strong engagement across relevant innovation and defence communities. Describe the communication channels you will use (e.g. social media, partner networks, newsletters, events, and direct outreach), as well as the role of ecosystem partners in amplifying the outreach. Please outline the digital communication approach, including the social media platforms to be used (e.g. LinkedIn, X/Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) and the type of content to be produced (e.g. posts, videos, webinars, testimonials). List any confirmed or potential partners who will support outreach efforts and describe their expected contribution. Finally, describe the monitoring and tracking framework you will use to assess outreach effectiveness (e.g. application numbers, engagement metrics) and outline a contingency plan to strengthen communication efforts in case initial participation levels fall below expectations.

Please complete the table below with the main communication channels or actions you intend to use.

NO.	CHANNEL / ACTION	PARTNERS	ESTIMATED BUDGET

3.2. Promotional Materials and Branding Approach

Describe the promotional materials and branding approach proposed for the DefTech Forge, explaining how these elements will support visibility, professionalism, and a consistent BraveTechEU DefTech Forge identity.

Please indicate a preliminary list of promotional items you intend to use (e.g. posters, roll-ups, backdrop banners, badges, T-shirts, etc.) and explain, for each item, its purpose and how it will contribute to communication, outreach, and participant engagement.

Your response should demonstrate how the selected materials will ensure a coherent and recognisable visual identity across all touchpoints, both online and onsite, while supporting participant experience and stakeholder visibility.

Note: The BraveTechEU DefTech Forge consortium will support the design of all promotional materials to ensure alignment with the overall project branding.

Please complete the table below with the main promotional and branding materials you intend to use.

NO.	PROMOTIONAL / BRANDING MATERIAL	PURPOSE	ESTIMATED QUANTITY	ESTIMATED BUDGET

3.3. DefTech Forge programme and participant engagement approach

Provide an overview of the DefTech Forge programme you plan to deliver at your location, explaining how it will encourage engagement and support the active participation of 15–20 teams at TRL 4 and above.

Your response should describe the overall programme structure and participant journey, including a clear outline of the five-day schedule, day-by-day activities, and operational flow. Explain how participants will be introduced to the challenges, supported in developing their solutions, and guided toward the final outputs.