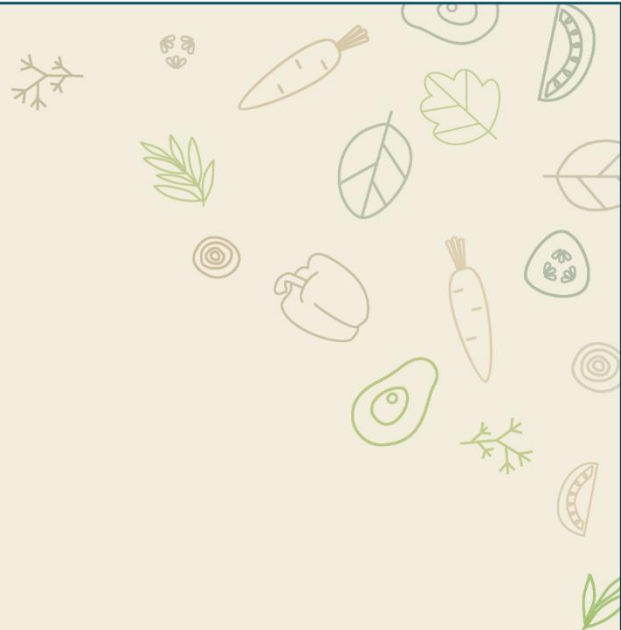




Excel4Pro

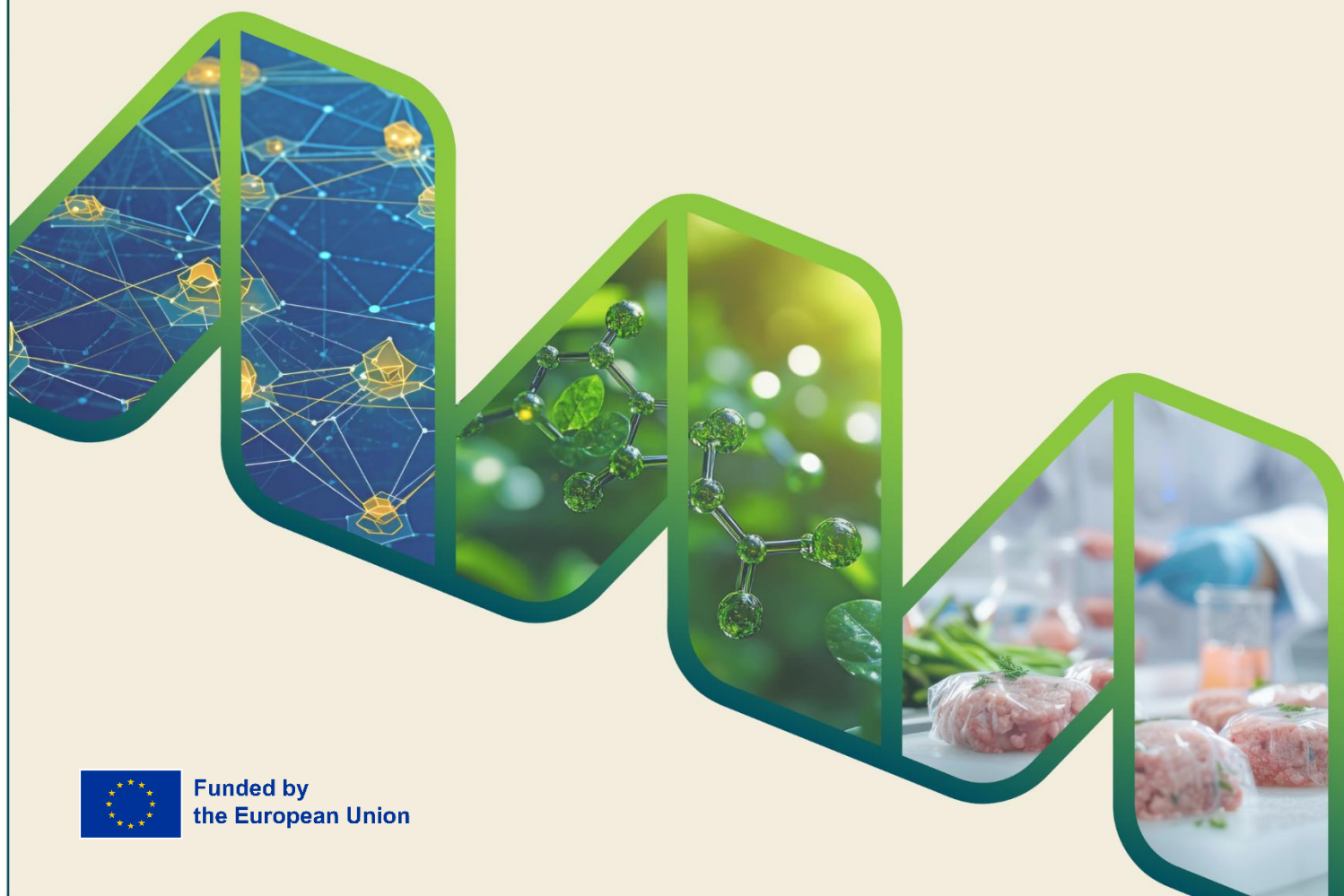
Excellence Hubs. Plant Proteins. Advanced Foods.

Acceleration Programme:

Call for Applicants

Excel4Pro Team

05 October 2026



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Project Information

PROJECT ACRONYM	Excel4Pro
PROJECT NAME	Strengthening the Capacity of Excellence Hubs of Türkiye, Greece, and Ukraine to Support Innovation Ecosystem of Novel Foods Based on Plant Proteins
PROJECT No.	101186662
TOPIC	HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-07-01
TYPE OF ACTION	HORIZON-CSA
COORDINATOR	TURKIYE BILIMSEL VE TEKNOLOJIK ARASTIRMA KURUMU (TUBITAK)
START DATE	January 1st 2025
DURATION	48 months
WEBSITE	www.excel4pro.eu
PROJECT OVERVIEW	Addressing current challenges and shortcomings, Excel4Pro aims to support, with underpinning research and knowledge exchange, the capacity of the national Excellence Hubs of Türkiye, Greece, and Ukraine as a regional launch pad for plant-protein-based novel food economies.

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1. Accelerate Your FoodTech Innovation with Excel4Pro

Are you developing an innovative solution in the **FoodTech or agri-food sector**?

The **Excel4Pro Acceleration Programme** is designed to support entrepreneurs, researchers, start-ups and innovation-driven teams in developing promising FoodTech solutions and strengthening their pathway towards validation, commercialisation and market uptake.

Organised within the Horizon Europe-funded **Excel4Pro project**, the programme combines **entrepreneurship and sector-specific training, tailored mentoring, expert support and a final Demo Day**, bringing participants together with expertise from across the Excel4Pro consortium and the wider FoodTech innovation ecosystem.

The programme will be implemented through **two acceleration cycles. Applications are now invited for the first cycle of the Excel4Pro Acceleration Programme.**

1.1 Focus Area

Applications should demonstrate clear relevance to **FoodTech and/or agri-food innovation**.

The programme particularly welcomes solutions addressing areas such as:

- Plant-Based Proteins and Novel Foods;
- Food Processing and Product Development;
- Agri-Food Innovation;
- Bioprocessing and Fermentation Technologies;
- Digital and Enabling Technologies for FoodTech;
- Sustainable Food Technologies and Packaging;
- Other innovative technologies and solutions supporting the FoodTech and agri-food ecosystem.

1.2 Who can apply

Applications should demonstrate clear relevance to **FoodTech and/or agri-food innovation**.

The programme is open to:

- Individual entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial teams;
- Researchers and research teams;
- Students and student teams;
- Start-ups and spin-offs;
- SMEs developing innovative solutions relevant to the FoodTech and agri-food sectors.

Applicants **do not need to have an incorporated company** at the time of application.

The programme primarily targets participants from the three core Excel4Pro hubs **Türkiye, Greece and Ukraine** while applications from other European countries are also welcome.

The programme particularly encourages **early-stage innovations**, including solutions at idea, proof-of-concept, prototype and MVP stages.

Solutions within **Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 3–6** constitute the programme's primary target. However, TRL 3–6 will **not be applied as a strict eligibility threshold**.

1.3 Programme Structure – Cycle 1

The Excel4Pro Acceleration Programme provides a progressive support pathway consisting of **three main stages: Training, Mentoring and Demo Day**.

1.3.1 Stage 1: Acceleration Training Programme

Applications will first undergo an **eligibility check**.

All applicants meeting the eligibility requirements will be invited to participate in the Excel4Pro Acceleration Training Programme. There is **no predetermined maximum number of participants for the training stage**.

The programme will consist of a total of 8 training sessions:

- **2 Entrepreneurship Training Sessions**
- **4 Sector-Specific Training Sessions**
- **2 General Awareness Training Sessions**

Training activities will address key areas relevant to the development of FoodTech innovations, including entrepreneurship and business model development, FoodTech technologies and product development, market validation, commercialisation, regulatory considerations, funding and internationalisation.

The programme will be delivered in a **hybrid format**, with training sessions predominantly organised online to facilitate participation from different countries. Where feasible, selected physical activities, visits or ecosystem engagement opportunities may also be organised.

The common working language of the Training Programme will be **English**.

Participation Requirement

Participants are expected to actively engage throughout the Training Programme. A minimum attendance rate of **75% - at least 6 out of 8 training sessions** - will be required **for successful completion** of the Training Programme and for consideration for the subsequent Mentoring Programme.

1.3.2 Stage 2: Tailored Mentoring Programme

Following completion of the Training Programme, participants who wish to continue to the mentoring stage will be invited to submit a short **Mentoring Interest and Update Form**.

Candidates will be evaluated by the **Excel4Pro Acceleration Programme Selection Committee** based on:

- Their initial application form;
- Their pitch deck;
- Training attendance and engagement; and
- The Mentoring Interest and Update Form.

Following the evaluation, **10 participants/ventures** will be selected for the Mentoring Programme.

Each selected beneficiary will receive **8 hours of tailored mentoring**, corresponding to a total of **80 mentoring hours during the first acceleration cycle**.

Mentoring support will be tailored to the individual needs and development priorities of each beneficiary. Depending on these needs, participants may work with different experts from the Excel4Pro consortium and wider ecosystem in areas such as but not limited to the thematic below:

- Technical and product development;
- Business model development;
- Market and customer validation;
- Regulatory pathways;
- Commercialisation;
- Funding opportunities;
- Investment readiness;
- Internationalisation and market access.

One-to-one mentoring sessions may be conducted in another language where mutually agreed between the mentor and beneficiary.

1.3.3 Stage 3: Excel4Pro Demo Day

Following the mentoring period, all 10 mentoring beneficiaries will be invited to submit an **updated/final pitch deck**, reflecting the progress achieved throughout the acceleration process.

The Selection Committee will evaluate the final pitch decks and select **at least 5 participants/ventures** to participate in the **Excel4Pro Demo Day**.

The Demo Day will provide selected participants with an opportunity to:

- Present their innovations to relevant FoodTech ecosystem actors;
- Showcase the progress achieved through the programme;
- Connect with industry, research and innovation stakeholders;
- Explore potential collaboration and follow-up opportunities.

The Demo Day is planned as a **physical event**, with further details to be announced during the programme.

1.4 What will be the main takeaways?

By participating in the Excel4Pro Acceleration Programme, you will have the opportunity to:

- Strengthen your entrepreneurial and business development capabilities;
- Improve your understanding of FoodTech-specific technical and market challenges;
- Refine your customer problem, value proposition and business model;
- Develop your market validation and commercialisation strategy;
- Gain insights into relevant regulatory requirements;
- Explore funding, investment and internationalisation opportunities;
- Access expertise from the Excel4Pro consortium and wider FoodTech ecosystem;
- Develop and strengthen your pitch deck;
- Receive **8 hours of tailored mentoring** if selected for the Mentoring Programme;

Gain the opportunity to present your solution at the **Excel4Pro Demo Day** if selected.

1.5 Post-Programme Opportunities

Beyond training and mentoring, selected participants may also have the opportunity to benefit from **additional non-financial support** offered through the Excel4Pro consortium and its wider innovation ecosystem.

Depending on participant needs and the availability of consortium partners, these opportunities may include:

- Access to relevant laboratory, research or pilot-scale facilities;
- Technical follow-up and expert support;
- Technical and industry visits;
- Introductions to relevant industry partners and potential collaboration opportunities;
- Business development and investor-readiness support;
- Guidance on relevant funding opportunities;
- Internationalisation support;
- Networking and matchmaking with FoodTech ecosystem actors;
- Visibility through relevant Excel4Pro dissemination and ecosystem activities.

Specific support opportunities will be confirmed during the programme based on **participant needs, partner availability and the nature of the selected solutions**.

1.6 Indicative Timeline

Programme Stage	Indicative Period
Call for Applications Opens	5 October 2026
Application Deadline	30 November 2026, 23:59 CET
Eligibility Check	December 2026
Notification of Eligible Applicants	By 25 December 2026
Acceleration Training Programme	January–March 2027
Mentoring Interest & Update Form	End of March / Early April 2027
Selection of 10 Mentoring Beneficiaries	April 2027
Tailored Mentoring Programme	May–July 2027
Final Pitch Deck Submission & Evaluation	July–August 2027
Excel4Pro Demo Day	August–September 2027

Exact training dates and further programme details will be communicated to eligible participants.

1.7 How to Apply

Applicants should complete the official **Excel4Pro Acceleration Programme Application Form** and submit all required information.

As part of the application, candidates will be required to provide an **initial pitch deck** presenting their innovation or venture.

- **Applications Open:** 5 October 2026
- **Application Deadline:** 30 November 2026, 23:59 CET

To apply for the Excel4Pro Acceleration Programme, please [click here to access the application form](#).

Applications will initially be assessed through an **eligibility check rather than a competitive ranking process**. All applicants meeting the eligibility requirements may participate in the Training Programme.

Please note that participation in the Training Programme **does not automatically guarantee selection for the Mentoring Programme or the Excel4Pro Demo Day**.



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