

EU|BIC Criteria

Preamble

The purpose of the EU|BICs CRITERIA is to provide an assurance that EU|BICs meet industry standards in terms of their service offering and performance. This assurance is important to stakeholders, EU|BICs themselves (e.g. by helping to identify management priorities) and to clients.

The EU|BICs Quality Mark can either be granted to an organisation as a whole or to a specific department or business unit of an existing organisation. In the latter case, the criteria apply to that specific department. It can also be granted to organisations or departments which operate on more than one site, as long as the label is given to the organisation or department responsible for ensuring that the EU|BIC criteria are fully implemented on all sites.

For both organisations, as a whole, or departments of an existing organisation, the criteria that must be met to be awarded the EU|BIC label are grouped under six headings: (1) EU|BIC Mission, (2) EU|BIC Organisation, (3) EU|BIC Services, (4) Continuous improvement, (5) Compliance to the EU|BIC quality process, (6) Visibility of the EU|BIC Trademark.

1. EU|BIC Mission

Certified EU|BICs promote, stimulate and develop innovative start-ups, scale-ups and/or SMEs through the delivery of smart and comprehensive detection, ideation, incubation and acceleration processes, with the goal of contributing ultimately to regional/local economic development, competitiveness and growth.

EU|BICs hold a mission of both public and private interest. Indeed, EU|BICs contribute extensively to regional development, by creating wealth and generating jobs, while supporting directly the private sector through specialised services.

While engaging in the innovation sphere, it is up to each EU|BIC to take into account the innovation typologies that it wishes to pursue, in accordance with the needs expressed by the local realities. All types

of innovation as reported by the general theory, can be associated to an EU|BIC, such as (but not exclusively):

- product innovation
- non-tech innovation
- technological innovation
- business model innovation
- process innovation
- social

Innovation

2. EU|BIC Organisation

EU|BICs must be able to demonstrate that they:

- Focus on a specific and well-defined catchment area. The scope of an EU|BIC is, local and/or regional. However, provided the occurrence of specific circumstances, the scope can be widened to the national or international levels (e.g. for responding to specific geographical and demographical territorial conformations, for internationalization and soft-landing support services). More than one EU|BIC can serve a same region, provided there is a clear case justifying it (e.g. different EU|BICs serve different sectors, different EU|BICs complement the incubation service value chain, EU|BICs are not sufficiently resourced to cover the whole catchment area).
- Ensure that their role is acknowledged by the relevant public authorities in their catchment area.
- Ensure that an active partnership with both the public and the private sectors is in place.
- Co-ordinate/integrate their activities with those of other business support organisations to ensure the seamless delivery of a complementary and comprehensive range of facilities and services in the catchment area.
- Are financially sustainable with an allocated budget and own profit and loss account.
- Have identifiable premises (an EU|BIC may be hosted by a bigger organisation) and a clear identity and branding as an EU|BIC that differentiates them from other business support organisations in the catchment area.
- Engage with clients through formal contractual agreements at some point of the service delivery process.
- Are managed professionally and autonomously, have a dedicated team of a very minimum of three full time staff equivalent, appropriately qualified, experienced and involved in the core activity of business support as e.g. business advisors and coaches – of which one must be the manager/CEO with overall responsibility for the EU|BIC. At least one member of the staff must be English-speaking.

3. EU|BIC Services

EU|BICs should ensure the delivery of a seamless incubation and acceleration entrepreneurship service value chain, therefore engaging in the delivery of the appropriate mix of services to potential entrepreneurs, start-ups and/or SMEs. EU|BICs must make sure that they properly fit in the innovation ecosystem of the catchment area, and ensure local resources are not wasted through the duplication of services. Hence, **signposting is a key service of an EU|BIC.**

Entrepreneurship stimulation: EU|BICs may attract and stimulate innovators and potential entrepreneurs through the activation of targeted entrepreneurship stimulation actions aimed at energising the territories and at creating a relevant deal-flow, such as (not exclusively):

- promotional events
- web presence and social media networking

- awards and competitions
- technical events (e.g. Boot camps and Hackathons)
- ambassador networks (e.g. through the Alumni)
- local, national, and international partnerships (e.g. with universities, research centres and industry for spin-off creation)

Pre-incubation: EU|BICs may undertake a rigorous pre-incubation phase to take the most promising innovative ideas and potential entrepreneurs to the start-up level. The pre-incubation phase should be conducted to ensure that:

- the innovation is applicable (proof of concept)
- the innovation is wealth generating (proof of business)
- the innovation is producible (proof of technology)
- the team is fitting the mission (team appraisal)

To ensure the seamless delivery of the pre-incubation phase, an EU|BIC should deliver services to the entrepreneurs, such as (but not exclusively):

- risk analysis
- financial simulation/forecasting
- team appraisal
- innovation diagnostics
- technology assessments
- business modelling
- business planning
- training (general and/or thematic)
- access to early-stage funding (e.g. seed funding, government grants, loans, crowdfunding, business angels)
- IP consultancy

Incubation: EU|BICs may provide support to start-ups during the incubation phase, to ensure growth and local positive impact. Incubation services should be provided to start-ups for a finite amount of time per their needs and the sectors they are engaged in.

EU|BICs should make sure that they have:

- an entry strategy enabling the selection of the most promising start-ups based upon pre-determined criteria;
- an exit strategy ensuring that a proper turnover of supported start-ups takes place after the completion of the incubation programme.

The incubation phase consists of the delivery of many services tailored to the needs of the start-ups, such as (but not exclusively):

- support at creation (legal and procedural)
- coaching primarily by the EU|BIC's own staff or through the use of outsourced professional consultants
- housing in appropriate premises within an incubator (if available)

- technological support through facility labs – if available (e.g., 3D prototyping, Internet of Things, simulation facilities, etc.)
- mentoring primarily through the establishment of a Mentor network
- access to markets (local and international)
- networking opportunities
- access to funding (e.g. business angels, venture capital, bank loans)
- access to open innovation schemes of large corporations
- support in the development of Research and Development projects

Post-incubation: EU|BICs may ensure proper follow-up through the delivery of scale-up support services to companies who have completed the incubation process, such as (but not exclusively):

- access to funding
- access to international markets
- business to business and business to consumer support
- project development
- access to open innovation schemes
- clustering

Services to established SMEs: EU|BICs may carry out innovation-related services targeted to established SMEs and aimed at securing their positioning on the markets, such as (not exclusively):

- training
- innovation diagnostics
- business innovation coaching / advisory services
- access to funding
- access to international markets
- business to business and business to consumer support
- technology searches
- project development
- access to open innovation schemes
- clustering

4. Continuous Improvement

EU|BICs are committed to continuous improvement, which they pursue by undertaking at the minimum the following activities:

- the review of the EU|BIC activities and performance using the common indicators identified in the EU|BIC self-assessment questionnaire;
- the definition and monitoring of any other performance indicators as deemed appropriate and as required by stakeholders and clients;
- the regular monitoring of client satisfaction (e.g. through the implementation of customer satisfaction surveys).

5. Compliance to the EU|BIC quality process

The EU|BIC Quality System is based on a mix of a web-based self-assessment tool, a peer-to-peer evaluation/audit system, and the consultation of a dedicated appointed body, the EU|BIC Quality Mark Committee. EU|BICs must comply with the EU|BIC Quality Process. In particular, they must:

- complete and submit the online self-assessment questionnaire on an annual basis, by the given deadline;
- facilitate on-site evaluation visits by EBN experts and provide all the information requested;
- implement the decisions of the EU|BIC Quality Mark Committee.

The provision of the data through the online self-assessment questionnaire is vital to:

- enforce quality assurance;
- reinforce the reputation of the network, through the elaboration of the Annual Impact Report;
- enable benchmarking actions and the calculation of key statistics, charts and other performance reports;
- feed the knowledge-based database facilitating networking among the members of the community of EU|BICs.

6. Visibility of the EU|BIC Trademark/Certificate

EU|BICs must ensure that the EU|BIC Trademark is made properly visible on the EU|BIC's communication material, such as:

- EU|BIC's website (visible on the home page)
- EU|BIC's headed-paper, business cards and any other relevant form of communication
- EU|BIC's presentations in public conferences

EU|BICs must make visible the EU|BIC certificate in the premises of their organisation. If premises are composed of more than one office, certificates should appear in all the offices.

This is the latest version of the EU|BIC Quality Mark Criteria as approved by the EBN Board of Directors on February 2017.