Regulation for the National BISC-E 2026 Competitions

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Bio-based Industries Consortium (BIC)
14 November 2025

Overview of the Bio-based Innovation Student Challenge – Europe (BISC-E)

The Bio-based Innovation Student Challenge – Europe (BISC-E) aims at encouraging entrepreneurship within the bio-based industrial sectors, collectively referred to as the bio-based economy[1]. The initiative operates through educational institutions at all levels, aiming at integrating entrepreneurial activities into academic curricula. By participating in BISC-E, students with entrepreneurial aspirations are offered a platform to apply their skills and gain valuable experience throughout the process.

Student participation and challenge objectives

BISC-E invites students from Universities of Applied Sciences as well as research universities to develop and present innovative bio-based solutions addressing challenges related to the environment, the economy, or society at large. The proposed solutions should aim for net-zero or even negative greenhouse gas emissions, eliminate pollution, safeguard and promote biodiversity, and generally enhance environmental sustainability. Through these efforts, BISC-E contributes to the progression towards a sustainable and circular economy.

Collaboration and multidisciplinary approach

A core aim of BISC-E is to strengthen cooperation among industry, academia, and government, thus fostering innovation and entrepreneurship towards a more climate-neutral Europe. The challenge emphasises multidisciplinary[2] teamwork, encouraging student teams to work across various fields to generate novel ideas. While participation from students in STEM disciplines is essential, BISC-E also recommends integrating expertise from non-technical disciplines. This interdisciplinary[3] approach broadens perspectives, enhances creativity and increases the feasibility of solutions.

Extracurricular learning and industry engagement

BISC-E serves as an extracurricular training opportunity, exposing students to a wide range of disciplines, cultural perspectives, and innovative insights. Additionally, it acts as a bridge connecting students with industry, providing them with real-world experience and professional networking opportunities.

Article 1 — Purpose and scope

This Regulation establishes the framework for the organisation and implementation of the National BISC-E 2026 competitions in participating countries. It sets out the

[1] The 'bio-based economy' is defined as the bioeconomy excluding agriculture, forestry, fishery, food products, beverages, and tobacco products (see on BIC website: 'European Bioeconomy in Figures').
[2] Involving multiple disciplines, looking at the challenge from own discipline's perspective. Findings are supplementary to each other.
[3] Integrating information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline: disciplines interact and work collaboratively.

principles, conditions, responsibilities, and deliverables before the European BISC-E final.

The National Coordinator (NC) in each country must use this Regulation as the primary reference for preparing and delivering the national BISC-E 2026 competitions. All national competitors (student teams) and relevant external stakeholders must adhere to this Regulation in all matters within their role or participation.

Article 2 — Governance and roles

The Bio-based Industries Consortium (BIC) is the owner of the BISC-E programme and provides strategic oversight. In each participating country, BIC appoints a National Coordinator (NC) institution, typically a university or research organisation, although other institutions or combinations may fulfil the role.

The NC institution delegates the practical coordination of the national BISC-E 2026 competition to one or more appointed representatives. These representatives are responsible for managing the operational delivery of the competition on behalf of their institution, ensuring that all activities are conducted effectively and in accordance with this Regulation. See Article 4 for details regarding the responsibilities of the National Coordinator.

Annually, BIC reconfirms the National Coordinator and its representatives or appoints a new NC if needed. This may be done through an open call for interest addressed to BIC associate members and ICA[4] members.

At the European level, BIC is responsible for systems supporting the competition and for organising the European final.

Article 3 — Competition status and eligibility

General eligibility criteria

To participate in the national BISC-E 2026 competition, teams must consist exclusively of students registered at a higher education institution located in the country where the competition takes place. The National Coordinator (NC) is responsible for verifying eligibility.

Academic levels of participation

Teams may include Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD students, or combinations thereof. Teams composed solely of PhD students are not permitted.

This rule is intended to encourage multidisciplinary collaboration and promote the integration of diverse academic perspectives within each team.

[4] The Association for European life science universities

Team composition and leadership

Team must have 3-6 members and designate a team leader for communication with the NC and BIC.

Supervision requirements

Each team must have one primary supervisor employed by the host institution.

If the team includes students from multiple universities, it may appoint additional supervisors from those other universities.

Supervisors may be lectors, postdoctoral researchers, or professors (assistant, associate, or full) and are responsible for:

- guiding and advising the team, and
- ensuring that team activities align with academic principles and institutional rules.

Supervisors are not considered official team members.

Participation rules

- Each student and supervisor may join only one team.
- At least two team members must attend NC meetings; the NC may specify meetings where the team leader must attend.
- Participation is free of charge.
- A university may register multiple teams.

Geographic scope

The BISC-E 2026 competition is open to all EU Member States and the Associated Countries[5].

Article 4 — Responsibilities of the National Coordinator

Key Responsibilities of the National Coordinator

The National Coordinator (NC) is responsible promoting, organising, administering, and reporting on the national BISC-E 2026 competition.

Promoting the competition

The NC is responsible for actively raising awareness of the BISC-E 2026 competition. This involves encouraging eligible student teams from higher education institutions across the country to participate, thereby maximising engagement and ensuring a diverse pool of applicants.

[5] Associated to the European framework programmes. See: list of participating countries in Horizon Europe.

Registering student teams

The NC manages the registration process for student teams. This includes verifying that all participants meet the eligibility requirements and are officially enrolled in a higher education institution within the country. The NC ensures that only qualified teams are accepted to take part in the competition.

Organising the national competition

The NC is tasked with organising the various stages of the national competition. This includes setting target dates for key steps such as the submission of 'expressions of interest' by student teams, overseeing the official registration process, and planning the national pitch competition. Additionally, the NC nominates members of the national jury, coordinates all related activities, and provides support to the participating teams throughout the process.

Programme and budget management

The NC prepares a programme and budget. Sharing these with BIC will facilitate possible assistance.

Selecting the national winner

The NC oversees the jury process, ensuring it is conducted fairly and transparently. The jury is responsible for evaluating the proposals according to pre-set criteria (see **Annex 1**) and selecting one team to represent the country at the European stage of the BISC-E 2026 programme.

Reporting on the national competition

The NC is responsible for sending the required information on the national competition to BIC (See **Annex 4**) to allow BIC to monitor and evaluate the progress of BISC-E across Europe. This facilitates the BIC coordinator of BISC-E to report to the BIC board on the progress of BISC-E, securing continued support by the BIC board and members to the BISC-E programme.

Timeline of national BISC-E competitions

The NC is free to set up the steps in the national BISC-E competition to best fit national education programmes, and to dates of events in the country to which the NC can possibly link the national BISC-E final. Timeline (typical):

Actions by the National Coordinator	**Timing**
Expressions of interest	November 2025 – January 2026
Official registrations	January – February 2026
National competition	February – June 2026
Reports to BIC	End June 2026
National winner dossier to BIC	15 July 2026

Structure of the National BISC-E competition

Each national BISC-E competition consists of student teams from at least two different universities. These teams present their proposals to a national jury, which evaluates each submission based on established criteria (see **Annex 1**). It is possible for a single university to be represented by more than one student team.

The challenge for student teams

Student teams must develop an innovative bio-based product or process that addresses a relevant technological, environmental, or societal challenge. Teams may select a challenge of their choice; however, opting for a challenge proposed by industry is encouraged, as it can enhance collaboration and strengthen relationships between academia and industry.

Proposals are particularly favourable when the proposed solution has been tested at laboratory scale or beyond, as such validation provides insight into its feasibility and potential integration into the current or emerging bio-based industry and bioeconomy.

Definition of a bio-based product

A bio-based product is one that is wholly or partially derived from renewable biological sources[6]. These sources may include plant, forestry, animal, or marine/aquatic origins, as well as gaseous biogenic carbon or bio-waste[7]. The product can be based on a 'drop-in chemical'[8] or a 'dedicated chemical'[9] resulting from a bio-based process, and may be an intermediate, semi-finished, or final product.

Definition of a bio-based process

A bio-based process exclusively utilises bio-based feedstock, employing biotechnological, chemical, mechanical, physical, or other suitable technologies, or a combination thereof. Such processes may produce intermediate or final products that, preferably, offer a higher economic value compared to fossil-based alternatives.

Special conditions and exclusions

- Proposed projects must not have a negative impact on the food chain.
- Proposals using food and feed side or residual streams as feedstock should aim to increase the effectiveness and competitiveness of the food/feed industry.
- The development of a new food or feed ingredient from these or other sources is permitted. However, projects focused on the development and production of a final food and/or feed product are not eligible under this programme. This distinguishes BISC-E from the ECOTROPHELIA competition, which specifically covers food innovation.

[6] See EN 16640:2017.
[7] See https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/waste-and-recycling/biodegradable-waste_en.
[8] Chemically identical to an existing fossil-based chemical that has established markets.
[9] Produced via a dedicated pathway and does not have an identical fossil-based counterpart.

- The innovation proposed by teams may, but does not have to, replace an existing fossil-based product or process.
- Individual work undertaken solely as part of an MSc thesis is not eligible for entry into BISC-E.
- Student teams may omit details of any aspects of their proposal that are subject to a patent process from the project dossier submitted for the competition.

Intellectual Property

The confidentiality of materials submitted as part of the BISC-E competition is strictly maintained. Access to presentations, dossiers, and any personal or private information related to BISC-E is limited exclusively to the jury and the NC.

All intellectual property (IP) rights and associated know-how contained within the submitted materials remain with their original owners. The act of submitting these materials does not confer or transfer any IP ownership rights to the organisers, jury, sponsors, or BIC. This ensures that proprietary innovations and concepts developed by teams are fully protected.

Furthermore, any new intellectual property or know-how—referred to as 'foreground IP'—generated by student teams during their participation in BISC-E will belong to the students themselves. Students retain the right to protect or publish these results. Such decisions should be made in close consultation with the supervisor at the host institution, ensuring the appropriate management of any resulting IP.

Adherence to deadlines

The NC must meet all BIC deadlines, including submitting the national winner dossier by 15 July 2026.

Article 5 — Engagement of industry, government and stakeholders

NCs are encouraged to involve industry and government representatives. BIC will facilitate these connections by leveraging its industry members and the States Representatives Group (SRG) of the Circular Biobased Europe Joint Undertaking (CBE JU).

Industry participation may include challenges for student teams, mentorship, jury roles (subject to conflict-of-interest considerations), feedback, and modest financial contributions.

In addition, government representatives may contribute by increasing the competition's visibility at the national level and offering financial or other forms of support.

Existing models of successful cooperation with industry and government at the national level should be considered as examples of good practice for others to follow.

Article 6 — National evaluation and winner selection

The NC is responsible for establishing the national evaluation procedure, which must be consistent with the guiding principles set by BIC. To ensure fairness and standardisation, the evaluation criteria, detailed in **Annex 1**, are uniform across all participating European countries and will also be applied in the European final.

Each participating country has the flexibility to choose the most suitable format for its national pitch event. This event may be organised in a digital, hybrid, or physical setting, depending on national preferences and practical considerations.

BIC encourages NCs to enhance the profile and reach of the competition by aligning the national final round with an existing national or international event scheduled within the country in 2026. Such alignment can increase the competition's visibility and garner additional support.

One national winner is selected. The NC must submit the national winning team dossier to BIC by 15 July 2026, as specified in **Annex 2**. This documentation is essential for the national winner's participation in the European final.

Article 7 — National communication and branding

NCs must use BISC-E identity guidelines, including the name 'BISC-E 2026'. National language versions may be added, but the English name must remain visible. Institutional logos may be included if BISC-E identity remains prominent. See details in **Annex 3**.

To enhance outreach efforts and engagement with universities and students across the country, BIC encourages NCs to establish a dedicated national BISC-E website. This platform will serve as a central hub for information and updates about the competition at the national level. Additionally, BIC will facilitate greater visibility by providing a link to each national website from its own official website.

The use of social media is also strongly encouraged to reach students and other stakeholders. Notably, as of BISC-E 2025, several countries have effectively utilised LinkedIn accounts and posts to attract student participation and to showcase the achievements of student teams vying for the national title. These initiatives are recognised as examples of good practice and may serve as useful models for other countries to consider.

Article 8 — National winner dossier submission

The NC must submit the national winner dossier to BIC by 15 July 2026, following the structure in **Annex 2**. Late submissions may not be considered for participation in the European Final. BIC will confirm receipt of the dossier.

Article 9 — Participation in the European BISC-E 2026 Final

The Bio-based Industries Consortium (BIC) organises the European final, expected between mid-September and mid-October 2026.

All national winning student teams will participate in the first round, an online event during the second half of September 2026.
The top five teams from the first round compete in person, around mid-October 2026, in an event co-located with a BIC industry members' networking event, offering additional opportunities for engagement and exposure.

National Coordinators (NCs) must ensure that their respective national winning teams are adequately prepared to participate in the European final. This preparation must include full compliance with all logistical and administrative requirements as specified by BIC.
If a national winning team cannot participate in the European final, the NC may nominate the runner-up team in consultation with BIC.

The evaluation process for the teams competing in the European final is established by BIC and is described in a separate dedicated regulation, separate from the present document.

Article 10 — Entry into force and amendments

This Regulation is effective upon publication to NCs (date mentioned on first page). BIC may make technical adjustments and will communicate them as relevant.

Article 11 — Applicability

This Regulation applies exclusively to the National BISC-E 2026 competitions. In case of conflict, this Regulation prevails.

Article 12 — Closing Provision

Matters not addressed may be decided the NC, consistent with BISC-E principles. BIC retains the authority to interpret the Regulation.

Annex 1 — Evaluation Criteria

Criterion	Description
Innovation	Novelty and originality
Technological / technical quality	Clarity and feasibility of the technological approach
Sustainability impact	GHG reduction, circularity, resource efficiency
Economic / business potential	Market potential and value creation
Communication quality	Clarity, structure, and persuasiveness of the pitch

NCs may include additional national sub-criteria, provided they do not contradict the criteria listed above.

Annex 2 — National winner dossier template

Detailed structure defining required content for the dossier submitted by 15 July 2026.

Cover page:

Participating country information
- Country
- Name of NC institution (formal entity)
- Name(s) of NC representative(s)

Team information
- Team name
- Supervisor's name
- Supervisor's position

Team members (students) information
- Names and field of study
  - Mark the team leader (and include email address; phone)
- University / education institution(s) of each
- Education stage(s) (Bachelor / Master / PhD); or recently graduated

Document sections:

1. Short description of the innovation
   - For communication purposes
2. Introduction and explanation of the innovative aspect
   - Problem/challenge statement – why relevant to address it
   - The innovation to address the challenge
     - Including the proposed bio-based aspects
   - Sustainability aspects (detail environmental impacts as described under Section 4)
   - What's new versus existing/other solutions, if any
   - supported by illustrations
3. Technological/technical description of the project
   - Production process of a product or process scheme of a process
   - Feedstock(s) and mass balances
   - The bio-based materials and/or technologies used
   - Estimated process energy use
   - Process / technology concept
   - Main novelty / innovation element(s)
   - TRL (Technology Readiness Level) estimate (if applicable)

4. Environmental impacts of the innovation (include basic calculations to support any claimed benefits)
    - Greenhouse Gas (GHG) impact / CO_2 aspect
    - Biodiversity protection and enhancement
    - Circularity creation or increase
    - Resource efficiency
    - Product life cycle / process resource chain.
    - Input, output, and residual streams.
    - Comparison with conventional product or process (where applicable)
5. Economic viability, societal relevance, business opportunities
    - Business model canvas with explanation
    - Value chain positioning
    - Quantitative and qualitative market analysis
    - Stakeholder(s) involved (if any)
    - Cost benefit analysis
    - SWOT analysis
    - Photos or graphics illustrating the concept

A Word template is available in the BISC-E room.

Annex 3 — Branding and visual identity

Naming conventions, logo usage, national language rules, and visual identity requirements.

1. Naming convention
    - The programme must always be referred to as 'Bio-based Innovation Student Challenge – Europe (BISC-E)'. When referencing the year, use the format 'BISC-E 2026'. The year should be visible in all communications related to this edition.
2. National language use
    - NCs may translate the programme name into their national language in addition to the English name, provided the English name and abbreviation 'BISC-E' remain visible, and 'BISC-E 2026' is clearly displayed.
    - Example of acceptable format: 'BISC-E 2026 — National Competition – [Country Name / National Language Version]'
3. Use of logos (BISC-E and BIC)
    - Use the official BISC-E and BIC logos as provided by BIC.
    - Do not alter colours, distort, or modify shapes.
    - Avoid adding filters, shadows, overlays, or other aesthetic changes.
    - Do not place logos over photographs or busy backgrounds.
    - Institutional logos may be added provided that 'BISC-E 2026' remains visually prominent and all logos are clearly separated.
4. Priority of identity
    - In all communications related to the national competition, 'BISC-E 2026' must be the primary programme identity. Institutional branding should be secondary.

Annex 4 — National reporting template

Country details, participation data, student profiles, partners involved, jury composition, and qualitative observations for the report submitted by end June 2026.

Country information

Field
Country
Name of NC institution (formal)
Name(s) of NC representative(s)
Contact email(s)

Participation overview

Indicator
Total number of teams registered
Total number of students participating
Number of universities / HEIs involved
Number of industry partners involved (if any)
Number of government / SRG actors involved (if any)

Student profile

Degree level
Bachelor
Master
PhD

Student discipline / field profile

Discipline / field
Biological sciences
Chemical / materials sciences
Process / engineering
Business / economics / management
Digital tools / IT / AI
Communications / Arts
Other (specify)

Prizes / awards (€ or otherwise) to participants / winners and sponsors

Prizes / awards / sponsors
To winning team (if any) / sponsor
To second place team (if any) / sponsor
To third place team (if any) / sponsor
Other prizes / awards (if any) / sponsor

National jury (not more than six)

National jury members

Name
Organisation / employer (if any)
Position in organisation / employer

Additional qualitative information (optional)
Maximum 150 words. Observations may include national interest or engagement level, involvement of new actors (industry, government, SRG), feedback highlights, and lessons learned.

A Word template is available in the BISC-E room.

Annex 5 — Optional supporting content

Suggested slide blocks explaining BISC-E, its purpose, benefits, and outcomes.

Slide: What is BISC-E?

- Bio-based Innovation Student Challenge – Europe
- European programme owned by BIC
- Students propose innovative bio-based solutions
- Encourages creativity, interdisciplinarity, and entrepreneurship (applied innovation)

Slide: Why join BISC-E?

- Create and pitch an innovation
- Engage with real-world industry perspectives
- Connect with government / SRG actors
- Visibility for young talents
- Potential participation in European Final

Slide: Who is involved?

- Universities (as NCs)
- Industry (mentors, judges, connectors)
- Governments / SRG (policy visibility, support)
- BIC (European level system and Final)

Slide: Outcome

- One national winner
- National winners participate in the European BISC-E 2026 Final