

Preliminary Programme

ESIL Croatia Deep Tech Masterclass

Exploring the innovation journey from deep tech research to deep tech ventures
School of Dental Medicine, University of Zagreb
Wednesday, 15 April 2026

08:30 – 09:00

Registration and morning coffee

Arrival of participants, registration and informal networking.

09:00-09.20

Introduction

Welcome to the ESIL Croatia Deep Tech MasterClass and introduction to the objectives of the day.

Speakers:

*Mirna Marović, President, Croatian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (CVCA);
ESIL Croatia Local Leader*

*Danijela Marović, Vice Dean for Business, Infrastructure and Projects, School of Dental
Medicine, University of Zagreb*

Andrea Di Anselmo, President & Co-Founder, META Group

09:20 – 10:30

Block 1 – Framing research into an innovation journey (30 minutes)

This module will introduce foundations on how to translate research results stemming out from publicly funded research into innovation projects and ultimately into deep tech ventures. At the earliest stage, STEM researchers often struggle to visualise the innovation journey and translate their research activities into a credible innovation narrative.

This session will help them to address key questions such as:

- Why am I doing this research?
- Is there a need I would like to fulfil outside the lab?
- Who else do I need to involve to address this need?
- What are the key elements to be considered in an EIC and similar projects?
 - Excellence vs impact vs implementation.

Speaker/ presentation:

Andrea Di Anselmo, President & Co-Founder, META Group

Discussion on cases (30 minutes)

The session will present cases and recommendations on how to embed exploitation and commercialisation already at the research proposal stage and how to address them during the project lifetime of research projects.

Discussants:

Tomislav Capuder, Vice Dean for Research and Innovation, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing (FER), University of Zagreb

Representative Faculty of Food and Biotechnology and/or Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture

Representative of the School of Medicine, University of Zagreb

Matija Srbić, Managing Director at deep-tech venture builder Nuqleus and EIC Accelerator Jury Member



Reginald Vossen, President at Business Angels Europe, CEO at Business Angels Network Flanders, Business Angel, ESIL Archangel for Croatia, TBC

Moderator:

Mirna Marović, President, Croatian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (CVCA); ESIL Croatia Local Leader

Andrea Di Anselmo, President & Co-Founder, META Group

10:30 – 11:45

Block 2 – Writing a proposal with execution in mind (40 minutes)

The module addresses how to embed the innovation journey directly into the proposal-writing phase, ensuring that impact, market orientation and long-term exploitation are integral parts of project design. While proposals are rich in technical content, they frequently lack a clear articulation of market relevance, impact pathways and exploitation logic. This gap results in missed opportunities within Pathfinder and Transition schemes and weak foundations for future venture creation.

The session will address:

- Pathfinder vs Transition objectives and TRL positioning.
- Structuring proposals around the Impact framework.
- Designing credible impact, exploitation and validation pathways.
- Framing scientific novelty as a future market opportunity.

This session will include:

- Exercise on proposal writing.

Speaker/ presentation:

Andrea Di Anselmo, President & Co-Founder, META Group

Discussion on cases (35 minutes)

This session will focus on the practical aspects of intellectual property strategy, technology transfer and the creation of spin-off companies from research institutions.

Discussants:

Radoslav Ostermann, Professional Advisor for Knowledge Transfer, Ruđer Bošković Institute
Stjepan Dolić, Co-Founder, Luxyon, next-gen photovoltaics company, spin-off from Ruđer Bošković Institute

Reginald Vossen, President at Business Angels Europe, CEO at Business Angels Network Flanders, Business Angel, ESIL Archangel for Croatia

Moderator:

Renata Brkić, Managing Partner, Feelsgood Capital Partners; ESIL Croatia Local Leader, Andrea Di Anselmo, President & Co-Founder, META Group

11:45 – 12:10

Morning coffee break

12:10 – 13:15

Block 3 - Building the foundations of the spin-off (30 minutes)

The module will present how to approach investors, how to build long-term relationships, and how to transform scientific narratives into compelling business opportunity stories.

Once funding is secured and execution is almost completed, the innovation teams prepare themselves for the next steps needed to increase TRL and enter the market. A major bottleneck arises when public funding ends and private capital becomes essential to fuel the deeptech venture. Researchers often lack exposure to investor logic, have limited knowledge and access



to Business Angel networks, and are unprepared to present their projects as investable business opportunities. This step will address:

- Preparing for post-grant funding.
- The role of BA (expertise, network and funding).
- Angel group (working with the “spin-off” from the first formal funding round) transition.

Speaker/ presentation:

Reginald Vossen, President at Business Angels Europe, CEO at Business Angels Network Flanders, Business Angel, ESIL Archangel for Croatia

Discussion on cases (35 minutes)

Discussants will present how research teams can structure investor-ready narratives, what milestones and KPIs investors look for, and when founders should start engaging with venture capital investors and business angels.

Discussants:

Renata Brkić, Managing Partner, Feelsgood Capital Partners; ESIL Croatia Local Leader

Božidar Pavlović, Partner, Aymo Ventures

Monika Mikac, Managing Partner, N Vision Ventures

Hrvoje Zlatac, Croatian Business Angels Network (CBAN)

Moderator:

Mirna Marović, President, Croatian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (CVCA);

ESIL Croatia Local Leader, Reginald Vossen, President at Business Angels Europe, CEO at Business Angels Network Flanders, Business Angel, ESIL Archangel for Croatia

13:15 – 14:15

Networking lunch & open coaching session

An opportunity for informal networking and discussion among researchers, founders, investors, and ecosystem stakeholders, accompanied by a light lunch.

In parallel, in a dedicated room, an open coaching session with Andrea Di Anselmo will be available for masterclass participants. Researchers and students are invited to join freely, ask targeted questions, and receive practical feedback on their ideas, projects, and entrepreneurial paths.

This parallel session is designed as an interactive and accessible coaching moment, offering tailored guidance in a more focused setting, while the broader networking lunch continues.

Coach:

Andrea Di Anselmo, President & Co-Founder, META Group

14:15 – 15:15

Block 4 - Presenting a deeptech investment opportunity (30 minutes)

This module will introduce how to pitch a research result. This session will explain how to prepare for a pitch considering what investors think, which questions they ask, and how they assess opportunities in practice.

Speaker/ presentation:

Reginald Vossen, President at Business Angels Europe, CEO at Business Angels Network Flanders, Business Angel, ESIL Archangel for Croatia

Discussion on cases (30 minutes)

Discussants will present challenges on building a team, validating technology, raising initial capital and navigating the path from research project to venture-backed company.

Discussants:

Dora Adanić, Operations Director at Genera Research, project OsteoGrow, TBC



*Founder of a spin-off company originating from the Ruđer Bošković Institute, TBC
Startup founder supported by Nuqleus, TBC
Startup founder supported by the Croatian Business Angels Network ecosystem, TBC*

Moderator:

*Mirna Marović, President, Croatian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (CVCA);
ESIL Croatia Local Leader,
Reginald Vossen, President at Business Angels Europe, CEO at Business Angels Network
Flanders, Business Angel, ESIL Archangel for Croatia*

15:15 – 15:30

Afternoon coffee break

15:30 – 16:30

Startup and research team pitch session

Selected research teams and early-stage startups will present their projects and receive structured feedback from investors and ecosystem experts. The goal of this session is to provide practical guidance on technology positioning, market validation and investment readiness.

Format:

- 5 selected teams
- 5 minute pitch per team
- 5 minute feedback and discussion
- Minimum two questions from Feedback Panel, and final voting with the following smile face votes: 😞 😐 😊 😄 (fail, improvement needed, great, fabulous)

Feedback panel:

*Matija Srbić, Managing Director at deep-tech venture builder Nuqleus
Božidar Pavlović, Partner, Aymo Ventures
Marijan Mumadžiev, Croatian Business Angels Network (CBAN)
Mirna Marović, President, Croatian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (CVCA);
ESIL Croatia Local Leader and Business Angel Investor
Andrea Di Anselmo, President & Co-Founder, META Group
Reginald Vossen, President at Business Angels Europe, CEO at Business Angels Network
Flanders, Business Angel, ESIL Archangel for Croatia*

Moderator:

Renata Brkić, Managing Partner, Feelsgood Capital Partners; ESIL Croatia Local Leader

16:30 – 17:15

Block 5 - How to engage with Croatian deep tech ecosystem

The module will introduce participants on concrete steps to strengthen collaboration between universities, research institutes, venture builders and investors in Croatia.

Discussion on cases:

Discussants:

*David Matthew Smith, PhD, General Director, Ruđer Bošković Institute, TBC
Hrvoje Meštrić, Director of the Directorate for Science and Technology at the Ministry of
Science, Education and Youth, TBC
Marija Jerkić, Director of Equity Investments at Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and
Development (HBOR), TBC
Želimir Kramarić, Member of the Board of Directors, the Croatian Agency for SMEs, Innovation
and Investments (HAMAG-BICRO), TBC
Matija Srbić, Managing Director at deep-tech venture builder Nuqleus and EIC Accelerator Jury
Member*



Moderators:

*Renata Brkić, Managing Partner, Feelsgood Capital Partners; ESIL Croatia Local Leader,
Andrea Di Anselmo, President & Co-Founder, META Group*

17:15 – 17:20**Closing remarks**

Summary of key takeaways from the Masterclass and next steps for strengthening the research-to-venture pipeline in Croatia.

*Mirna Marović, President, Croatian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (CVCA);
ESIL Croatia Local Leader*

