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# EIC

# Work Programme

# 2021

European Innovation Council (EIC) established by the European Commission, under the Horizon Europe programme (2021-27)

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# Who should read this document

The EIC aims at **identifying and supporting breakthrough technologies and game-changing innovations** with the potential to scale up internationally and become market leaders. It supports all stages of innovation from R&D on the scientific underpinnings of breakthrough technologies, to validation and demonstration of breakthrough technologies and innovations to meet real world needs, to the development and scaling up of start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

This document is the annual work programme for the European Innovation Council (EIC) funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. It is the legal document which sets out how the EIC will allocate its funding for the corresponding year. It is prepared following the advice of the EIC pilot Advisory Board and adopted by the European Commission.

Financial support is provided through three main instruments: the 'Pathfinder' for advanced research on breakthrough / game-changing technologies; 'Transition' for transforming research results into innovation opportunities; and the 'Accelerator' for individual companies to develop and scale up breakthrough innovations with high risk and high impact. All EIC funded projects and companies, as well as selected applicants, have access to a range of Business Acceleration Services providing access to leading expertise, corporates, investors and ecosystem actors. The EIC also provides additional activities such as prizes.

**Potential applicants**, and those interested in the EIC in general, can find more information, including the background to the EIC mission, organisation and practical guidance, on the EIC website:

*[*http://ec.europa.*eic.eu – INSERT NEW WEBSITE URL]*

**Potential applicants** who wish to apply for EIC funding will need to apply through the EU Funding & Tenders Portal. This contains all the information necessary as well as details of the relevant **National Contact Point** who can provide information and personalised support in native language at:

*https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home*

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# I - Introduction

## Key features of the EIC work programme

This is the first work programme for the European Innovation Council (EIC). It builds on the experience of the EIC pilot under Horizon 2020 and on the advice from the EIC pilot Advisory Board. In accordance with the Horizon Europe legislation, this work programme implements the following key features.

***Integrated, agile support across the full innovation spectrum from early stage research to start-up and scale-up.***

The funding and support is organised into three main funding schemes: the EIC Pathfinder for advanced research to develop the scientific basis to underpin breakthrough technologies; the EIC Transition to validate technologies and develop business plans for specific applications; and the EIC Accelerator to support companies (SMEs, start-ups, spin-outs and in exceptional cases small mid-caps) to bring their innovations to market and scale up. In each case, the direct financial support to innovators is augmented with access to a range of Business Acceleration Services.

Linkages between these funding schemes will be maximised through proactive management (see below) and new approaches, such as additional grants to ongoing Pathfinder projects (Section II.1), a Marketplace to connect preliminary and final research results with entrepreneurs and investors (Section V), and the Fast Track scheme from Pathfinder and Transition to enter the Accelerator (Annex 4).

This work programme has been prepared in coordination with the Horizon Europe strategic plan [1] and work programme, and in particular the part on European Innovation Ecosystems, with the aim of integrating the direct support to innovators through the EIC with improvements to the overall European ecosystem. The EIC will also link with other major funding programmes including the European Research Council (ERC), the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), and InvestEU.

***A balance between open funding and challenge driven funding.***

The majority of funding[2] will be awarded through open calls with no predefined thematic priorities ('Open Funding'), and these are presented in Section II. The Open Funding is designed to enable support for any technologies and innovations that cut across different scientific, technological, sectoral and application fields or represent novel combinations.

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe_en
[2] As far as MFF budget is concerned (i.e. not taking into account NGEU budget).

The challenge driven approach is presented in Section III ('EIC Strategic Challenges') and provides funding to address specific technological and innovation breakthroughs. These challenges take into account EU priorities for transitioning to a green, digital and healthy society, as well as the overall strategic planning for Horizon Europe, and the inputs of stakeholders, experts and the EIC pilot Advisory Board.

Projects must comply with the 'do no significant harm' principle[3] of the EU Sustainable Finance Taxonomy.[4] This means in particular that EIC funding will not be awarded to projects that contravene the objectives of the Green Deal,[5] including any proposal dedicated to increase the efficiency of fossil fuels and related technologies for example.

*Tailored approach to proposals evaluation*

The EIC approach to the evaluation of proposals is tailored to the objectives of each of the EIC funding schemes.  In particular for higher technology, business and market readiness levels closer to market funding, greater emphasis is put on face to face interviews with applicants and a simplified binary scoring (GO/ NO GO).

For the EIC Pathfinder, which supports science-towards-technology breakthrough research, the evaluation follows a peer review method where proposals are evaluated, scored, and ranked by experts based on weighted criteria and thresholds (see Section II.1 below)

For the EIC Transition, which funds innovation activities that go beyond the experimental proof of principle, proposals will first be evaluated remotely, scored and ranked based on criteria and thresholds. For the top ranked applicants which are invited to the face to face interview, the jury will decide based on a binary scoring (GO/NO GO) (see Section II.2 below).

For the EIC Accelerator, which supports high risk/high gain innovations to go to the market and scale up, proposals will be evaluated remotely and at face to face interviews based on a binary scoring (GO/NO GO)[6] - see Section II.3 below.

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[3] 'Do no harm' principle. Projects are considered to significantly harm (taking into account, if appropriate, the production, use and end of life of their products and services): a) climate change mitigation, where the project leads to higher greenhouse gas emissions as compared to typical standards in similar economic activities sectors; b) the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources, where the project is detrimental to the good status of bodies of water or marine waters; c) the circular economy, including waste prevention and recycling, where the project generates more waste or uses more natural resources (including non-renewable energy sources) as compared to typical standards in similar economic activities sectors, or where the long-term disposal of waste may cause significant and long-term harm to the environment; d) pollution prevention and control, where the project leads to a significant increase in the emissions of pollutants into air, water or land, as compared to typical standards in similar economic activities sectors; e) the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems, where the project is significantly detrimental to the conservation status and resilience of ecosystems, habitats and species
[4]https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/banking-and-finance/sustainable-finance/eu-taxonomy-sustainable-activities_en
[5] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en
[6] In line with Article 25.3 and Article 26.2 of the Horizon Europe legislation

*Proactive project and portfolio management by EIC Programme Managers*

Support awarded by the EIC, and in particular in Pathfinder, is more than one off funding of a research project. By covering the full innovation cycle, whenever possible EIC intends to push results to higher Technology Readiness Levels (TRL). Whilst Pathfinder beneficiaries will bear no obligation regarding the development of innovation as part of their project, the EIC will encourage and stimulate further maturation of preliminary findings and results by providing guidance but also additional and continuous support including financial.

Moreover, EIC takes a proactive approach of project and programme management to develop business and technology-based visions. It is assisted by EIC Programme Managers,[7] whose task is to identify, develop and implement such visions and to nurture potential market-creating innovation out of EIC funded projects and activities. Proactive management applies to Pathfinder, Transition and Accelerator projects and consists of the following:

- Applications for funding will need to define a number of milestones that will be used to periodically review progress. Reviews will assess whether the activities foreseen to reach the milestone have been completed and will consider the results and outputs against the overall objectives. The reviews will be undertaken with the support of independent experts, and overseen by EIC Programme Managers for projects within their portfolios.

- Following the reviews against milestones, the EIC support may be continued on the same basis, reoriented or, if the project has lost economic or technological relevance or not met agreed milestones, it may be suspended or even terminated. Reviews may also result in changes to ongoing or planned milestones and deployment of some Business Acceleration Services including additional coaching days and access to crucial expertise. For Pathfinder and Transition projects, reviews may also involve an assessment to submit an application directly to the EIC Accelerator under the Fast track procedure (see Annex 4) or to submit an application for additional grants (see Annex 6). In addition to the reviews, the EIC funded projects and companies will be expected to keep the EIC regularly informed of progress and pre-alerted in case of difficulties.

- EIC funded projects may be included in one or more thematic or challenge-based portfolios of projects, providing the projects with a productive setting in which to advance their ideas. For EIC Strategic Challenges (Section III), the portfolio will reflect the scope of the challenge. Projects funded through open calls (Section II) may be requested to join one or more of these portfolios. The portfolios will be overseen by EIC Programme Managers and the relevant EIC funded projects and companies may be requested to participate in portfolio activities together with other projects or initiatives (examples of portfolio activities can be found in Annex 6).

- EIC Challenge Portfolio's objectives and roadmap are defined and proposed by the EIC Programme Manager, following close consultation with beneficiaries of the actions of the

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[7] Programme Managers are temporary staff of the European Commission or its Executive Agencies.

Portfolio and, where appropriate, with other interested members of the EIC Community and other third parties. In order to take into account relevant changes in science and innovation or the Portfolio's achievements or consistency, Challenge Portfolio's objectives and roadmap may be revised. Based on any such revision, the granting authority may request to amend the action's objectives, milestones and deliverables in accordance the Grant Agreement. If the action has been selected under a Challenge-based call for proposals, and where no amendment can be agreed upon, the granting authority may suspend or terminate the action in accordance with the Grant Agreement.

- EIC Portfolio activities are identified and developed by EIC Programme Managers in consultation with the beneficiaries of the actions in the EIC Portfolio, and where appropriate with other interested EIC Community members and third parties. They aim at developing cooperation within the Portfolio in order to achieve its objectives or those of its actions, enhance research, prepare transition to innovation and stimulate business opportunities, and strengthen the EIC Community. Such activities may cover participation to conferences, workshops or meetings, experience and data sharing, and participation to any relevant EIC Business Acceleration Services events.

# Policy of open access and Intellectual Property Rights

EIC funding for Pathfinder **will apply provisions to ensure open access** to scientific publications and promote the uptake of research results.

Moreover, the EIC aims to stimulate the cross-fertilisation and exploitation of results from EIC supported projects. Therefore, Pathfinder and Transition projects may be requested by EIC Programme Managers to actively share information about results (including preliminary findings), within their portfolio and with other relevant EIC projects and EIC Fund vetted investors. The goal is to stimulate and nurture potential innovation out of Pathfinder or Transition results and explore pathways to further development. This exchange of information between beneficiaries will be without prejudice to their own legitimate interests to exploit the results or findings. To ensure full confidentiality, such sharing will be subject to non-disclosure obligations regarding confidential results, with beneficiaries retaining the right on a case by case basis to fully disclose or not their intellectual property.

Without prejudice to ownership of results (including preliminary findings) by Pathfinder and Transition result owners, their inventors will be entrusted with appropriate access for the purpose of any further development and exploitation they may want to undertake. As such these inventors will be eligible to additional financial support and services offered by EIC. These additional obligations are further detailed in Annex 7.[8]

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[8] In accordance with Article 35 of Horizon Europe

# Summary of main calls in 2021[9]

| | Who can apply | What for | Open calls (Section II) | | Challenge driven calls (Section III) | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | Call deadline(s) | Indicative Budget(EUR million) | Challenges | Call deadline(s) | Indicative Budget(EUR million) |
| *Pathfinder* | **Consortia** of at least three different independent legal entities (e.g. research organisations, universities, SMEs, industry) established in at least 3 different eligible countries. **Single applicants** may be able to apply for Pathfinder challenges according to the call specifications. | **Grants of up to EUR 3 million (open) or EUR 4 million (challenge driven)** (or more if properly justified) to achieve the proof of principle and validate the scientific basis of breakthrough technology (TRL 1-4) | 19/5/2021 | 170.10 | 1. Awareness inside<br>2. Tools to measure & stimulate activity in brain tissue<br>3. Emerging Technologies in Cell & Gene Therapy<br>4. Novel routes to green hydrogen production<br>5. Engineered living materials | 27/10/2021 | 133.60 |
| *Transition* | **Single applicants** (SMEs, spin-offs, start-ups, research organisations, universities) or **small consortia** (two to 5 partners). Applications must build on results from eligible Pathfinder, FET or ERC Proof of Concept projects | **Grants of up to EUR 2.5 million** (or more if properly justified) to validate and demonstrate technology in application-relevant environment (TRL 4 to 5/6) and develop market readiness | 22/9/2021 | 61.00 | 1. Medical devices<br>2. Energy harvesting and storage technologies | 22 September 2021 | 40.85 |
| *Accelerator* | **Single Start-ups and SMEs** (including spin-outs), **individuals** (intending to launch a start-up/ SME) and in exceptional cases small mid-caps (fewer than 500 employees) | **Blended finance**: **up to EUR 2.5 million grant component** for technology development and validation (TRL 5/6 to 8); **EUR 0.5 - 15 million investment component** for scaling up and other activities.<br>*Grant only/grant first* under certain conditions.<br>*Investment component only* for small mid-caps or as follow up to grant only (i.e. for SMEs, including start-ups) | Any time (short applications) Full applications by 9/6/2021; 6/10/2021 | 601.60 | 1. Strategic Health and Digital Technologies<br>2. Green Deal innovations for the economic recovery | Any time (short applications) Full applications by 9/6/2021; 6/10/2021 | 507.20 |

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[9] This table provides a simplified overview. All applicants need to read the relevant sections for the full information on eligibility and conditions for funding.

# Specific objectives

The overall objective of the EIC is to identify, develop and deploy high risk innovations of all kind with a particular focus on breakthrough, market-creating and deep-tech innovations. It aims to support the rapid scale up of innovative technologies and companies (mainly start-ups and SMEs) at EU and international level along the pathway from ideas to market. In this context the EIC is also an initiative contributing the EU technology sovereignty.

Following the recommendations of the EIC pilot Advisory Board, the EIC support aims to achieve a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Those that relate to the work programme include:

- Supporting impact-oriented companies of which over 90% addressing Sustainable Development Goals. This KPI will be addressed in particular through the Accelerator call targeting Green Deal innovations.

- Crowding in of co-investments and follow-up investments in EIC funded companies of 3-5 times the level of EIC funding. This KPI will be addressed in particular through the EIC Accelerator blended finance / equity (-like) support and the role of the EIC Fund, as well as through the Business Acceleration Services for other projects.

- Effectively promoting the bridging of research to deployment across EIC activities. This KPI will be addressed through all EIC instruments (Pathfinder, Transition, Accelerator) and supported through proactive management, the EIC Marketplace and the Business Acceleration Services.

- Achieving a balanced portfolio across geographical regions and with at least 35% of EIC portfolio companies led by women.

To progress towards the last of these KPIs a number of specific actions are implemented through this work programme.

For improving **gender balance and promoting women innovators**:

- At least 40%[10] of the EIC Board, the Investment Committee of the EIC Fund, EIC juries and EIC expert evaluators will be women, with the objective to reach 50%;

- The companies invited to the face to face interviews with the EIC Accelerator juries will be selected on the basis of excellence,[11] while aiming at having 40% with female CEOs;

- The Business Accelerator Services will include specific services for female founders.

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[11] For any applicant to be considered for interview, they must meet all the evaluation criteria at all of the previous steps of the selection process

These measures are complemented by actions in the European Innovation Ecosystems work programme to promote women across the innovation ecosystem.

For improving **balance across geographical regions**, and in particular the 'widening' countries[12] defined in Horizon Europe:

- National Contact Points and the Enterprise Europe Network will provide additional target support services for applicants from 'widening' countries

- Applicants to the EIC Accelerator that receive a GO on their short applications will receive [3] days of coaching to prepare their full applications. This is expected to be particularly beneficial to those applicants from regions with less support available.

- The companies invited to the face to face interviews with the EIC Accelerator juries will be selected on the basis of excellence,[13] while aiming at geographical diversity by including companies from a wide range of countries.

- Applicants awarded the 'Seal of Excellence' will have access to EIC Business Accelerator Services and support to access other sources of funding, including from the Structural Funds.

These measures are complemented by actions in the European Innovation Ecosystems and the Widening parts of the Horizon Europe work programme.

# Outlook for 2022 and future years

The EIC has been set up as an agile organisation and the activities are expected to evolve and develop in each annual work programme based on advice from the EIC Board, experience from implementation, and the dynamics of the world of innovation.

The main provisions of the Open Funding calls (Section II) are expected to remain relatively stable to provide a significant level of predictability for applicants, while incorporating necessary improvements. In the current work programme, applicants to the EIC Accelerator may only request equity for the investment component. In future years, the investment component may also include reimbursable advance, loan guarantees and other forms of

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[12] According to Article 2(15a) of the draft Regulation establishing Horizon Europe, following the agreement between the EP and Council on 11 December in view of the adoption of the legal act, 'widening countries'/ 'low R&I performing countries' are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, for the whole duration of the Programme. For associated countries, the list of eligible countries will be defined based on an indicator and published in the Work Programme. On the basis of Article 349 TFEU, legal entities from Outermost Regions will be also fully eligible.

[13] For any applicant to be considered for interview, they must meet all the evaluation criteria at all of the previous steps of the selection process

financial instruments. The Transition call is relatively novel, and as such may be subject to more important changes including a broadening of the eligibility criteria.

The topics identified for the challenge-driven calls (Section III) will evolve, with new topics identified in subsequent annual EIC Work Programmes, with the possibility of some topics identified in this Work Programme to be complemented with additional funding. Throughout the year, the EIC will organise various discussions and events to help identify the most promising emerging topics for the challenges, and EIC Programme Managers are expected to play a central role in this process.

A number of instruments have not been introduced in this work programme as further preparatory work is needed to design and implement them. This includes Inducement Prizes[14], further actions to support procurements of innovation, and the EIC Fellowship scheme.

The EIC will aim to develop partnerships with other EU and national initiatives that support disruptive technologies and breakthrough innovation. Where relevant, financial support may be provided through EIC work programmes, for example for partner organisations to proactively seek out and support innovators to apply for EIC funding, or provide follow up support and services. In particular, such support may be foreseen for the European Institute of Innovation and Technology and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities,[15] and to the Enterprise Europe Network.[16]

# Glossary

The **EIC Board** oversees the strategy and implementation of EIC activities and provides advice on EIC work programmes. It comprises 15-20 leading innovators and innovative researchers, including a President, and is appointed by the European Commission. The EIC Board[17] is due to be established in early 2021 following an open call for expressions of interest. The EIC Board members are subject to strict rules concerning conflicts of interest and confidentiality.

The **EIC Fund** manages the investment component of EIC Accelerator blended finance awarded to companies. Within the mandate given by the Commission following the evaluation process, investment decisions[18] (and their related conditions and management) are taken by the **EIC Fund's Board of Directors** following recommendations by the **Investment Committee** which comprises seasoned external practitioners and investors. This process is  guided by the

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[14] The EIC Horizon Prizes on 'Innovative Batteries for eVehicles', 'Fuel from the Sun: Artificial Photosynthesis', 'Early Warning for Epidemics', and 'Low-Cost Space Launch' are still due to be awarded in 2021.
[15] Pilot actions have been funded with four KICs from the pilot EIC work programme under Horizon 2020, and future support to EIT KICs will be assessed based on these pilots.
[16] The Enterprise Europe Network is funded under the Single Market Programme and is due to be reestablished in 2021. Support from the EIC will be additional and will be specific to EIC activities.
[17] The 2021 EIC work programme followed advice provided by the EIC pilot Advisory Board.
[18] In the context of the investment component of a blended finance project or of an investment only project.

EIC Fund's Investment Strategy[19] which includes objectives to crowd in other investors as investments are de-risked. No investment decision can be taken without the agreement of the Commission representatives at the EIC Fund's Board of Directors who are guaranteeing the achievement of the political objectives of the EIC Accelerator scheme.

The **EIC Forum** is a platform bringing different innovation drivers and levels of governance closer together to discuss openly and informally relevant policy issues.[20] The policy recommendations and activities of the EIC Forum will aim at supporting and complementing initiatives undertaken in Horizon Europe.

The **EIC funded projects and companies** are the consortia, institutions and/or companies named in an EIC grant agreement or EIC contract to receive EIC funding (from either Pathfinder, Transition or Accelerator programmes). In the grant agreements and contracts, the companies or the applicants' legal entity (including but not limited to research and technology organisations) are called 'beneficiaries'. The EIC model grant agreements and contracts are available on the EIC website.

**EIC Programme Managers** are high level experts in their field that are appointed to work in the EIC for a limited duration to develop visions for breakthrough technologies and innovations, and to proactively manage portfolios of projects to achieve these breakthroughs. The EIC Programme Managers are subject to strict rules concerning conflicts of interest and confidentiality.

**EIC juries** are panels of independent investors, entrepreneurs, and other external experts, carefully selected by the EIC, who conduct face to face interviews with applicants to the EIC Transition and EIC Accelerator calls as a critical part of the selection process. **Face to face interviews** may take place in either a physical or virtual setting. In cases specified in the call texts, EIC Programme Managers and representatives of the EIC Fund may participate in some juries as specified in the call texts.

**EIC expert evaluators** are external independent experts in their field who assess applications for funding against the criteria defined in the work programme. The EIC expert evaluators are listed in the general database of Horizon Europe expert evaluators.

**EIC expert monitors** are external independent experts in their field who assist the EIC in the monitoring of projects.

**EIC evaluation committees** are panels of **EIC expert evaluators** who evaluate proposals and rank those that have passed the applicable thresholds. In cases specified in the call texts, EIC

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[19] [Insert link to EIC Fund investment strategy].
[20] The EIC Forum will be supported under the 'European Innovation Ecosystems' part of the Horizon Europe work programme.

Programme Managers may participate in some evaluation committees as specified in the call texts.

**EIC business coaches** are independent external experts with entrepreneurial and fund raising background who provide business development insights and improvement guidance to EIC funded projects and companies, and applicants. They are part of the Business Acceleration Services.

The **EIC and SME Executive Agency** is the administrative body of the European Commission which implements all Horizon Europe EIC and EU innovation ecosystems activities and funding, as well as other delegated programmes from the Single Market Programme (COSME pillar, Internal Market and support to standardisation and Consumers) and ERDF (Interregional Innovation Investments programme).

**EIC Community platform** is a platform available to all EIC funded projects and companies, facilitating links to Business Acceleration Services as well as enabling discussions and exchanges.

**The EIC Market Place** is a trusted platform for such sharing in order to cross-fertilize activities and stimulate and nurture potential innovation out of these findings. It will also provide for co-creating new ideas and activities, including but not exclusively for the purpose of applying for additional Pathfinder, Transition or Accelerator support.

**National Contact Points (NCPs)** are appointed by Member States and other countries to provide guidance, practical information and assistance to applicants on all aspects of participation in Horizon Europe.

The **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)** is a network of organisations (chambers of commerce, technology poles, innovation support organisations, universities and research institutes, regional development organisations) that help Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) innovate and grow internationally.

**Deep tech** is technology that is based on cutting-edge scientific advances and discoveries and is characterised by the need to stay at the technological forefront by constant interaction with new ideas and results from the lab. Deep tech is distinct from 'high tech' which tends to refer only to R&D intensity.

**Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs)** provide a guide to the stage of development. TRLs are used in the work programme for guidance, but do not preclude support for non-technological innovations. A strong degree of importance will also be given to market readiness and business readiness, as described in the evaluation criteria of the call texts. The following definitions of TRLs apply, recognising that there are important differences between technological fields:
　　　　TRL1 - basic principles observed

TRL2 - technology concept formulated

TRL3 - experimental proof of concept

TRL4 - technology validated in lab

TRL5 - technology validated in relevant environment

TRL6 - technology demonstrated in relevant environment

TRL7 - system prototype demonstration in operational environment

TRL8 - system complete and qualified

TRL9 - actual system proven in operational environment

**Seal of Excellence**: is a certification awarded to individual SMEs that apply for EIC Transition or EIC Accelerator funding and are assessed to meet the relevant funding criteria. In the case of the EIC Accelerator, Seals of Excellence may be awarded if the proposal meets the first two criteria (excellence and impact) but does not demonstrate sufficient level of risk or the need for Union support under the third evaluation criterion. The Seal of Excellence provides access to Business Acceleration Services and facilitates funding from other sources.[21] It is only awarded to those applicants who give consent to sharing the data about their application with other eligible funding bodies. The grant component of projects awarded a Seal of Excellence are exempt from State Aid when directly awarded by public funding bodies, including management authorities of the EU Structural Funds, under the same funding rates as those applicable to the EIC. The investment component of projects awarded a Seal of Excellence may be supported by other funders, including public funders as long as this does not constitute a State Aid.

**Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)** is a category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. It consists of enterprises that employ fewer than 250 persons; and have either an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million. A full definition is provided in in Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC. Under the EIC, this definition includes start-ups.

**Small mid-cap** means an enterprise employing up to 499 employees.[22]

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[21] Information on funding bodies that recognise and support Seal of Excellence projects is available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/seal-excellence/

[22] Where the staff headcount is calculated in accordance with Articles 3, 4, 5 and 6 of Title I of the Annex of Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC.

# II - Open Funding

*This funding has no predefined thematic priorities and is open to proposals in any field of science, technology or application*

# 1. EIC Pathfinder Open

- Do you have a vision for a future technology that could make a real difference to our lives?
- Do you see a plausible way of achieving the scientific breakthrough that will make this technology possible?
- Can you imagine collaborating with an interdisciplinary team of researchers and innovators to realise the proof of principle and validate the scientific basis of the future technology?

If the answer to each one of these questions is 'yes', then EIC Pathfinder Open may be the right call for you.

## Why should you apply?

You should apply if you are looking for support from EIC Pathfinder Open to realise an ambitious vision for radically new technology, with potential to create new markets and/or to address global challenges. EIC Pathfinder Open supports early stage development of such future technologies (e.g. various activities at low Technology Readiness Levels 1-4), based on high-risk/high-gain science-towards-technology breakthrough research (including 'deep-tech'). This research must provide the foundations of the technology you are envisioning.

EIC Pathfinder Open may support your work, especially if it is highly risky: you may set out to try things that will not work; you may be faced with questions that nobody knows the answer to yet; you may realise that there are many aspects of the problem that you do not master. On the contrary, if the path you want to follow is incremental by nature or known, EIC Pathfinder Open will not support you.

Before applying to this call you should verify that your proposal meets all the following essential characteristics ('Gatekeepers'):
- Convincing long-term vision of a radically new deep-tech that has the potential to have a transformative positive effect to our economy and society.
- Concrete, novel and ambitious science-towards-technology breakthrough, providing advancement towards the envisioned technology.
- High-risk/high-gain research approach and methodology, with concrete and plausible objectives.

EIC Pathfinder Open involves interdisciplinary research and development. By bringing diverse areas of research together, often with different perspectives, terminologies and methodologies, within individual projects and within a portfolio of projects, really new things can be generated and entirely new areas of research can be opened up. It is up to you to compose the team that you need, that you can learn from, and that you can move forward with.

The expected outcome of your project is the proof of principle that the main ideas of the envisioned future technology are feasible, thus validating its scientific and technological basis. Project results should include top-level scientific publications in open access. While your vision is expected to be worthwhile because of its potential for future impact, for instance to create new markets, improve our lives, or address global challenges, these are not expected to be addressed or achieved in the course of your Pathfinder Open project. However, you are expected to take the necessary measures to allow future uptake to take place, for instance through an adequate formal protection[23] of the generated Intellectual Property (IP).

In addition, you are encouraged to involve and empower in your team key actors that have the potential to become future leaders in their field such as excellent early-career researchers or promising high-tech SMEs, including start-ups. Your project should reinforce their mind-set for targeted research and development aimed at high-impact applied results. This will strengthen Europe's capacity for exploiting the scientific discoveries made in Europe throughout the steps to market success or for solving global challenges.

## Can you apply?

This call is open for collaborative research. Your proposal must be submitted by the coordinator, on behalf of a consortium that includes at least three independent legal entities, each one established in a different Member State or associated country and with at least one of them established in a Member State. The legal entities may for example be universities, research organisations, SMEs, start-ups, industrial partners or natural persons. The eligibility of associated countries and third countries is detailed in Annex 3.

Your proposal will only be evaluated if it is admissible and eligible. The standard admissibility and eligibility conditions are detailed in Annex 2.

## What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 170.1 million.

You will receive a grant for a Research and Innovation Action to cover the eligible costs, necessary for the implementation of your project. For this call, the EIC considers proposals with a requested EU contribution of up to EUR 3 million as appropriate. Nonetheless, this does not preclude you to request larger amounts, if properly justified. The funding rate of this grant will be 100% of the eligible costs.

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[23] Formally protected IP gives the IP owner exclusive rights to utilise and or commercialise their innovation or brand. IP rights allow their owners to shape the way they wish to share the results with other entities. Formal IP includes industrial property (patents, trademarks, designs and geographic indications of source) and copyright. See also Section I for more information on the EIC policy of Open Access and IP rights.

Projects funded through EIC Pathfinder (including grants resulting from certain EIC pilot Pathfinder, FET-Open and FET-Proactive calls)[24] are eligible:

- to receive additional grants with fixed amounts of up to EUR 50 000 to undertake complementary activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation or for portfolio activities (see Annex 6);
- to submit an Accelerator proposal via the Fast-Track scheme (see Annex 4).

In addition to funding, successful applicants will receive free access to a wide range of Business Acceleration Services (see Section V).

## How do you apply; how long does it take?

The call deadline for submitting your proposal is 19 May 2021 at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.

You must submit your application via the EU Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal: APPLY HERE [hyperlink] before the given deadline.

Sections 1 to 3 of the part B of your proposal, corresponding respectively to the evaluation criteria Excellence, Impact, and Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation, must consist of a maximum of 17 A4 pages. The standard admissibility and eligibility conditions are detailed in Annex 2, and the eligibility of applicants from third countries in Annex 3.

You will be informed about the outcome of the evaluation within 5 months from the call deadline, and your grant agreement should be signed by 8 months after call deadline.

## How does the EIC decide if your proposal will be funded?

Your proposal will be first evaluated and scored remotely by EIC expert evaluators with respect to the evaluation criteria. The remote score for each evaluation criterion will be the median of the evaluators' scores. The overall remote score will be the weighted sum of the three median scores from the three evaluation criteria.

A rebuttal procedure after the remote phase will provide you with the opportunity to reply within seven calendar days with a strict page limit (maximum two A4 pages) to the evaluators' comments. Your replies cannot be used to alter or add to the content of the proposals, but must strictly focus on responding to potential misunderstandings or errors by the evaluators. Your replies will be made available to the evaluation committee.

The evaluation committee will decide on the final score on the basis of the remote score and the outcome of its consensus discussions, taking into consideration the comments from the rebuttal procedure, if any. These discussions will focus on controversial proposals that have a

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[24] The eligible calls are: FETOPEN-RIA-2014-2015; FETOPEN-01-2016-2017; FETOPEN-01-2018-2019-2020; H2020-FETPROACT-2014; FETPROACT-01-2016; FETPROACT-01-2018; FETPROACT-EIC-05-2019; FETPROACT-EIC-07-2020; FETPROACT-EIC-08-2020.

realistic chance of getting funded (i.e. proposals from an appropriately chosen range above and below the funding threshold). Expert evaluators may be invited to the consensus discussions, in particular for controversial proposals.

The Evaluation Summary Report will comprise the final score, a collation of the comments from individual reports, or extracts from them, a comment that summarises the assessment by the evaluation committee (potentially taking into account the applicants' reply received via the rebuttal) as well as any additional comments, possibly including advice not to resubmit the proposal.

Applications will be assessed according to the following evaluation criteria:

| Evaluation criteria for Pathfinder Open |
|---|
| **Excellence (Threshold: 4/5, weight 60%)** |
| Long-term vision: How convincing is the vision of a radically new technology that has the potential to have a transformative positive effect to our economy and society? |
| Science-towards-technology breakthrough: How concrete, novel and ambitious is the proposed science-towards-technology breakthrough with respect to the state-of-the-art? What advancement does it provide towards realising the envisioned technology? |
| Objectives: How concrete and plausible are the proposed objectives? To what extent are high-risk/high-gain research approach and methodology appropriate for achieving them? |
| Interdisciplinarity: How relevant is the interdisciplinary approach from traditionally distant disciplines for achieving the proposed breakthrough? |
| **Impact (Threshold: 3.5/5, weight 20%)** |
| Innovation potential: How adequate are the proposed measures for protection of results and any other exploitation measures to facilitate future translation of research results into innovations with societal or economic impact? How suitable are the proposed measures for empowering key actors that have the potential to take the lead in translating research into innovations? |
| Communication and Dissemination: How convincing and wide reaching are the proposed measures and plans for public/stakeholder engagement and for raising awareness about the project outcomes, including through Open Science, with respect to their potential to establish new markets and/or address global challenges? |
| **Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Threshold 3/5, weight 20%)** |

| Quality of the consortium: To what extent do the consortium members have all the necessary high quality expertise for performing the project tasks? |
|---|
| Work plan: How coherent and effective are the work plan (work packages, tasks, deliverables, milestones, time-line, etc.) and risk mitigation measures in order to achieve the project objectives? |
| Allocation of resources: How appropriate and effective is the allocation of resources (person-months and equipment) to tasks and consortium members? |

For proposals with the same score, priority will be based on the following factors, in order: higher score under the criterion Excellence; higher score under the criterion Impact; number of applicants that are SMEs; gender balance among the personnel named in the proposal who will be primarily responsible for carrying out the activities; number of Member States and associated countries represented in the consortium; other factors related to the objectives of the call to be determined by the evaluation committee.

# 2. EIC Transition Open[25]

- Have you identified Pathfinder, FET or ERC Proof of Concept project results that could be the basis for ground-breaking innovations and new businesses?
- Is this novel technology ready for the next steps towards its maturation and validation in some specific applications?
- Do you envisage building a motivated and diverse entrepreneur-lead team to develop the idea and increase its market readiness?

If the answer to each one of these questions is 'yes', then EIC Transition may be the right call for you.

## Why should you apply?

EIC Transition funds innovation activities that go beyond the experimental proof of principle in laboratory. It supports both the maturation and validation of your novel technology in the lab and in relevant application environments (by making use of prototyping, formulation, models, user testing or other validation tests) as well as the development of a business case and business model towards the innovation's future commercialisation.

Your proposed activities must include further technology development on the results achieved in a previous project and follow user-centric methodologies to increase chances of the innovation's future success in the market. EIC Transition projects should address, in a balanced way, both technology and market/business dimensions, possibly including iterative learning processes based on early customer or user feedback. These activities should include, subject to the level of maturity of the technology, a suitable mix of research, technology development and validation activities to increase the maturity of the technology beyond proof of principle to viable demonstrators of the technology in the intended field of application (i.e. up to Technology Readiness Level 5 to 6). The activities must in all cases address market readiness towards commercialisation and deployment (market research, business case, prospects for growth, intellectual property protection, competitor analysis etc.) and other relevant aspects of regulation, certification and standardisation, aimed at getting both the technology and the business idea investment-ready.

EIC Transition aims at maturing both your technology and business idea thus increasing its technology and market readiness. The expected outcomes of your EIC Transition Challenge project area) a technology that is demonstrated to be effective for its intended application and b) a business model and business plan for its development to market. It is also expected

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[25] This call applies the Fast Track to Research and Innovation Procedure (FTRI) as defined in Horizon Europe

that that the intellectual property generated by your Transition project is formally protected[26] in an adequate way.

EIC Transition can support a number of different pathways beyond fundamental research, from technology development and product design to business modelling and commercialisation strategy to reach the market. Some non-exhaustive illustrative examples could be the following pathways:

- A focused collaborative project to further develop strategic and high impact technologies towards specific applications while improving also the market readiness. This pathway is likely to require a collaboration among several applicants ('multi-beneficiary approach') including SMEs, research performers and potential users/customers.
- An individual SME (including start-ups, spin-offs) identifies a market opportunity to apply the results of a Pathfinder or ERC Proof of Concept project towards a specific market application. This pathway is likely to require, or lead to, a licensing arrangement with the SME and could also involve a collaboration between the result owner(s) of the Pathfinder/ ERC Proof of Concept and the interested SME.
- A team of innovative researchers within a research or technology organisation who want to turn selected project results into a viable product by looking for a suitable business model or creating a start-up or spin-off company, and which may involve collaboration with the host research or technology organisation.  In some cases, the results may already be relatively close to market or ready for investment (e.g. often with higher TRLs) and would therefore normally not need significant further technological development and hence require lower amounts of funding.

At the end of your Transition project, you should be ready for the next stage, which can be to apply for EIC Accelerator (if you are a SME, including start-ups or spin-offs), to seek other investors or sources of funding, to enter licensing or collaboration agreements with third parties, or other routes to market deployment. In case your project is not led by an SME or commercial partner, the formation and spin out of a new company can be included as part of the activities. You will be expected to describe the intended pathway and route to market in your application, and to specify milestones during the implementation of your project to assess progress along your pathway.

## Can you apply?

As Transition funding is a new scheme, for 2021 it is restricted to applications based on results generated by the following eligible projects:

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[26] Formally protected IP gives the IP owner exclusive rights to utilise and or commercialise their innovation or brand. IP rights allow their owners to shape the way they wish to share the results with other entities. Formal IP includes industrial property (patents, trademarks, designs and geographic indications of source) and copyright. See also Section I for more information on the EIC policy of Open Access and IP rights.

- EIC Pathfinder projects (including projects funded under EIC pilot Pathfinder, Horizon 2020 FET-Open, FET-Proactive) and FET Flagships calls (including co-funded ERANET calls under the FET work programme)[27]
- European Research Council (ERC) Proof of Concept projects

If you are applying on the basis of an eligible project for which the grant is still active, you may apply if the project has been active for at least 12 months (i.e. the start date of the grant is more than 12 months before the date of the Transition call deadline).

If you are applying on the basis of an eligible project which has already been completed, you may apply within 24 months of the completion of the project (i.e. the end date of the grant for the eligible project is less than 24 months from the date of the Transition call deadline)

Your proposal must build on results (demonstrated proof of principle) achieved within an eligible project. You do not need to be a participant, Principle Investigator or result owner of the previous projects, on the contrary new participants are welcome and encouraged to apply. However, you must demonstrate that you are the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) owner or holder, or have the necessary rights to commercialise the IPR of the linked Pathfinder, FET or ERC Proof of Concept project results to be further developed. You therefore must specify in your application the result and relevant IP to be developed, and include written evidence from the relevant owner(s) of the result(s), which confirms the existence of the necessary agreements with you, including on IPR.

You can apply for EIC Transition either as:

- A single legal entity ('mono-beneficiary') if you are an SME or a research performing organisation (university, research or technology organisation, including teams, individual Principle Investigators and inventors in such institutions who intend to form a spinout company). Larger companies (i.e. which do not qualify as SMEs) are not eligible to apply as a single legal entity; or
- A small consortium of minimum two[28] and maximum five independent legal entities ('multi-beneficiary') that may for example include universities, research organisations, SMEs or larger companies, user/customer organisations or potential end-users (e.g. hospitals, utilities, industry, regulatory and standardization bodies, public authorities).

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[27] Eligible projects are those funded under the following calls: FETOPEN-RIA-2014-2015; FETOPEN-01-2016-2017; FETOPEN-01-2018-2019-2020; H2020-FETPROACT-2014; FETPROACT-01-2016; FETPROACT-01-2018; FETPROACT-EIC-05-2019; FETOPEN-04-2016-2017; FETOPEN-03-2018-2019-2020; FETFLAG-03-2018; H2020-FETFLAG-2014 (for projects funded under the related Specific Grant Agreements); projects resulting from a joint transnational call with EU co-funding under any of the QuantERA, FLAG-ERA and ChistERA ERANETs.

[28] Consortia of two must have independent legal entities from two different Member States of Associated Countries, of which one must be from a Member State. Consortia of three of above follow standard rules (See Annex 2)

Your proposal will only be evaluated if it is admissible and eligible (see Annex 2 as well as Annex 3 for eligibility of third country applicants).

## What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 61 million.

You will receive a grant for a Research and Innovation Action to cover the eligible costs, necessary for the implementation of your project.  For this call, the EIC considers proposals with a requested EU contribution of up to a EUR 2.5 million as appropriate. Nonetheless, this does not preclude you to request larger amounts, if properly justified. The funding rate of this grant will be 100% of the eligible costs.

The projects funded through EIC Transition are eligible:

- to receive additional grants with fixed amounts of up to EUR 50 000 to undertake portfolio activities (see Annex 6);
- to submit an Accelerator proposal via the Fast-Track scheme (see Annex 4).

In addition to funding, projects will receive free access to a wide range of Business Acceleration Services and matchmaking events (see Section V).

## How do you apply; how long does it take?

The call deadline for submitting your proposal is 22 September 2021 at 17.00 Brussels local time.

You must submit your application via the European Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal before the given deadline: APPLY HERE [hyperlink].

Sections 1 to 3 of part B of your proposal must consist of a maximum of 25 A4 pages.

Your application will be evaluated first by EIC expert evaluators. You will be informed about the result of this evaluation, including feedback on your proposal, within 5-6 weeks. If your proposal successfully passes this first evaluation phase (see details below), you will be invited for a face to face interview, which will be organised approximately 8-9 weeks after the call deadline. At the interview you will be assessed by an EIC jury. More detailed information about the format of the face to face interview will be communicated to you in advance of interview. You will be informed about the result of the interview within 2-3 weeks.

If you are successful, your grant agreement will be signed within 6 months from the call deadline (indicative).

## How does the EIC decide if your proposal will be funded?

In a first step, EIC expert evaluators will evaluate and score your proposal against each evaluation criterion (see below). The overall score for each evaluation criterion will be the median of the corresponding scores attributed by the individual evaluators. The total score of your proposal will be the sum of the overall scores from the three evaluation criteria.

Starting with the highest scoring proposal and in descending order, applicants are invited to the second step of the evaluation until a maximum of approximately [xx] applications,[29] or all proposals that passed the evaluation criteria thresholds have been accounted for.

The second step is a face to face interview with an EIC jury. At the interview your proposal may be represented by a maximum of five persons. Only individuals mentioned in the proposal and involved in the future project implementation can represent your proposal at the interview. Representation by other persons is not allowed.

The jury will be composed of a maximum of six members, which may include an EIC programme manager with expertise in your area or managing one of the portfolios your project could be allocated to. During the interview you should convincingly pitch your proposal to the jury, who will ask you questions aimed at clarifying various aspects of your proposal in line with the evaluation criteria (in particular those regarding the quality of the team and the milestones). The jury will recommend your application for funding or not ('GO' or 'NO GO') and will not provide a separate scoring against the criteria.

Applications will be assessed according to the following evaluation criteria, with thresholds applied for the first step and all weighted equally. For the face to face interviews, the jury may ask questions concerning any of the criteria.

| Evaluation criteria for Transition |
|---|
| **Excellence (Threshold: 4/5)** |
| Technological breakthrough: Does the technology have a high degree of novelty compared to other technologies available or in development; to what extent does this novelty create the potential for new applications and functionalities? |
| Technology feasibility: Do the results of the technology demonstration and validation so far indicate the potential for application? |

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[29] A higher number may be invited, for example if several applications receive the same score.

Objectives: Have potential applications been identified and are they plausible? How appropriate are the objectives for the planned technology development and validation of the innovation in relevant application environments?

| |
|---|
| **Impact (Threshold: 4/5)** |

Business and market fit: How well do the activities propose to develop the business model and product features to address commercialisation and other relevant aspects (intellectual property rights, regulation, certification and standardisation)? How will potential users or customers be involved to test potential demand and acceptability?

Economic and/or societal benefits: How effectively can the proposed innovation and its related activities create substantial demand and new European or global markets? To what extent is the proposed innovation expected to generate other positive impacts (employment, societal, environmental, scientific, etc.)?

Entrepreneurship: how suitable are the proposed measures to build a strong and motivated entrepreneur-lead team with necessary competences in technology, product engineering, and business development to bring the innovation to the market?

Partnerships and investment-readiness: How effective are the proposed measures to become investment ready and develop plans to commercialise the project outcomes (including through IP management); have the participants identified key partners willing to be involved?

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|---|
| **Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Threshold 3/5)** |

Quality of the team: To what extent do the applicant(s) bring the necessary high-quality expertise, capabilities and motivation to move decisively towards innovation, create a unique commercial value from the emerging technology and develop an attractive business and investment proposition?

Milestones and Work plan: Is the pathway towards deployment clearly described? Are milestones adequately and clearly defined (measurable, timed, etc.) to track progress along the pathway and towards objectives? How coherent and effective are the work plan (work packages, tasks, deliverables, time-line, etc.), the innovation methods and the risk mitigation methods, in order to reach the milestones and to achieve the project objectives?

Allocation of resources: How appropriate and effective is the allocation of resources (person-months and equipment) to tasks and partners?

You will receive as feedback of the evaluation an Evaluation Summary Report from the first evaluation step. If you have been invited for an interview, you will also receive feedback from the jury.

If your application is from an individual SME and meets all evaluation criteria at the first step but is not selected for funding, it may be awarded a Seal of Excellence. To be eligible to receive a Seal of Excellence' you must give consent in your application that your data can be shared with other funding bodies. EIC juries may recommend that your application does not receive a Seal of Excellence if they find weaknesses in your proposal which were not identified by the expert evaluators.

# 3. EIC Accelerator Open

- Do you have a high-impact innovative product, service or business model that could create new markets or disrupt existing ones in Europe and even worldwide?
- Are you a start-up or a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) with the ambition and commitment to scale up?
- Are you looking for substantial funding but the risks involved are too high for private investors alone to invest?

If your answers to the above questions are 'yes', then the EIC Accelerator may be the right programme for you.

## Why should you apply?

The EIC Accelerator supports companies (principally start-ups and SMEs) to scale up high impact innovations with the potential to create new markets or disrupt existing ones. The EIC Accelerator provides a unique combination of funding from EUR 0.5 to EUR 17.5 million and Business Acceleration Services (see Chapter 4).

The EIC Accelerator focuses in particular on innovations building on scientific discovery or technological breakthroughs ('deep tech') and where significant funding is needed over a long timeframe before returns can be generated ('patient capital'). Such innovations often struggle to attract financing because the risks and time period involved are too high. Funding and support from the EIC Accelerator is designed to enable such innovators to attract the full investment amounts needed for scale up in a shorter timeframe.

The EIC Accelerator is open to innovations in any field of technology or application. However, innovations that harm the environment or social welfare or that are designed primarily for military applications will not be supported.

The EIC Accelerator supports the later stages of technology development as well as scale-up. The technology component of your innovation must therefore have been tested and validated in a laboratory or other relevant environment (e.g. at least Technology Readiness Level 5/6 or higher). The EIC Accelerator looks to support companies where the EIC support will make the company attractive to other investors necessary for the scaleup of the innovation.

## Can you apply?

In order to apply you must meet one of the following eligibility conditions:

- A single company classified as a SME and established within an EU Member State or Associated Country (see Annex 3);

- A single company classified as a 'Small mid-cap' (up to 500 employees) established within an EU Member State or Associated Country, but your application can only be for rapid scale-up purposes (e.g. Technology Readiness Level 9) and only for the investment component; or

- One or more natural persons (including individual entrepreneurs) or legal entities intending to establish an SME of small mid-cap (as defined above) in an EU Member State or Associated Country[30] by the time of signing the Accelerator contract or, in the case blended finance is awarded, at the latest when agreeing on its investment component. However, if you are an individual entrepreneur from a non-associated third country and you are ready to establish an SME (including start-ups) or to relocate an existing SME to an EU Member State or associated country, then you must have done so <u>by the time of submitting a full application.</u> Your company must prove its effective establishment in an EU Member State or Associated Country. The Commission may set specific conditions and milestones in the contract to ensure that the interest of the Union is met.

The standard admissibility and eligibility conditions are detailed in Annex 2 and list of eligible Associated Countries in Annex 3.

There are limitations on the number of times you can submit an application described in the section on resubmission limits below.

If you are currently a participant in an eligible project funded by Horizon Europe or Horizon 2020 then you may be able to apply through your existing project under the Fast Track scheme (see Annex 4). This scheme is managed by the funding body responsible for the existing project and for 2021 it applies to funding bodies managing grants under the EIC Pathfinder and Transition (including EIC pilot 2018-20); ERC Proof of Concept; and Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). Applicants may also be able to apply if they have a project financed by an eligible programme managed by an EU Member State or Associated Country under the pilot Plug-in scheme. The Plug-in scheme to apply to the EIC Accelerator is detailed in Annex 5.

## What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 601.6 million

The EIC Accelerator provides blended finance which is composed of:

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[30] For associated countries other than EEA, this possibility will be subject to the related Association agreements.

- An **investment component** usually in the form of equity[31]. The minimum investment component is EUR 0.5 million and the maximum is EUR 15 million. It is intended to finance market deployment and scale up but may also be used for other purposes (including co-financing or even fully-financing innovation activities). Within the maximum budget awarded by the Commission to the EIC Fund, the terms of investment will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis by the EIC Fund.[32] In the case of equity, investments will not exceed 25% of the voting shares of the company (except where for strategic reasons the Commission subjects its support to the acquisition of a blocking minority). Investments will normally be made with a long average perspective (7-10 years) with a maximum of 15 years ('patient capital'). The Fund's main guiding principles are described in the [Investment Guidelines][33].

- The investment component of the EIC Fund includes direct equity and quasi-equity. It may also provide where appropriate for other type of investments such as convertible loans and aby other debt-related forms of financial instruments. The EIC is designed to fill the funding gap for high-risk innovations to a stage where they can be co-financed or financed under InvestEU or by private investors.  In order to ensure seamless continuity and synergies between the EIC support and InvestEU, the EIC Fund and InvestEU may develop joint risk sharing mechanisms like blended debt and other hybrid instruments, which would be used where relevant to support EIC Accelerator selected companies, in cases of follow-on investment in EIC Accelerator companies or for the benefit of the Seal of Excellence companies. It may also include actions and collaboration to develop matching platforms in close relation with financial intermediaries supported by the InvestEU, also for the Seal of Excellence companies.

- A **grant component** (Innovation and Market Deployment Action) to reimburse eligible costs incurred for innovation activities, including demonstration of the technology in the relevant environment, prototyping and system level demonstration, R&D and testing required to meet regulatory and standardisation requirements, intellectual property management, and marketing approval (e.g. at least Technology Readiness Levels 5/6 to 8). Eligible costs are reimbursed up to a maximum of 70%. The 30% co-financing of these activities and the costs incurred for the commercial introduction of the product or service and full scale up operations (e.g. Technology Readiness Level 9 or above) will not be reimbursed by the grant but can be financed by the investment component. Applicants can choose to request the investment component only and are

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[31] Investments may take the form of direct equity or quasi-equity investment. It may also, when relevant, take the form of a convertible loan or of any debt-related form of finance.

[32] In the case of the investment component, the financial support may be revised following a periodic or final review of an Accelerator project (in line with Article 43(11), second paragraph of the Horizon Europe Regulation), also in light of the terms and conditions established in the investment agreement.

[33] The EIC Fund Investment Guidelines will be published in early winter 2021. They can be found at [insert web address].

not required to request a grant component. Grant-only projects selected under a Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Accelerator call may submit a request for a related investment component under an EIC Accelerator call. Small mid-caps (i.e. companies that do not comply with the definition of an SME but have fewer than 500 employees) are not eligible to receive the grant component. The grant component should normally not exceed EUR 2.5 million but may be for a higher amount in exceptional and well justified cases[34]. The innovation activities to be supported should normally be completed within 24 months but may be longer in exceptional and well justified cases. The grant component may be used for subcontracting, including for activities which are essential for the objectives of the Project.

You may request a **grant component only or grant first** (i.e. maximum EUR 2.5 million to cover TRL 5/6 to 8 and without requesting an investment component for TRL 9) if you have not previously received EIC Accelerator grant-only support. When you apply for grant-only or grant-first support, you will have to include a milestone at mid-term or at the latest 6 months before the end of the project, for the EIC to assess deployment perspectives and capabilities. You may request a grant-only or grant-first support under the following conditions:

- **Grant only:** You can provide evidence that you have sufficient financial means (e.g. revenue flow, existing investors or shareholders) to finance the deployment and scaling up of your innovation. In such a case, you will have to detail in your proposal all elements demonstrating that you possess or are in the process to obtain those necessary resources and financial means to provide for necessary TRL 9 expenditures normally covered by the investment component. Should the above-mentioned milestone assessment show that you do not have the above-mentioned deployment capacities, the grant may be terminated.

- **Grant first:** Your innovation is based on a scientific discovery or novel technology and still requires significant work to validate and demonstrate in relevant environments (e.g. at least TRLs 5/6) in order to properly assess its commercial potential. Such innovations may include, but are not limited to, those based on research results from the EIC Pathfinder and Transition, as well as European Research Council.

Grant-first companies as stated above are eligible for a follow on equity component subject to a milestone assessment attesting that the innovation activities are well under way and that the innovation has the potential for deployment.

If the milestone assessment is positive, you will be:

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[34] The grant amount may, in exceptional cases, be increased during the implementation of the project subject to advice from the EIC Board.

a) required to demonstrate that you have sufficient financial means (e.g. revenue flow, existing investors or shareholders) to finance or any remaining innovation activities and the deployment and scaling up of your innovation; or

b) invited to enter due diligence and negotiations with the EIC fund to receive an EIC equity investment, including to complement any other third party investments if insufficient. Allocation of the equity investment is conditional to the due diligence assessment.

All successful applications will receive, in addition to funding, free access to a wide range of Business Acceleration Services (see Section V).

The Accelerator model contract for the grant component and examples investment component can be found on the EIC website.

## How do you apply; how long does it take?

The application process consists of a number of steps:

- Short applications which may be submitted at any time and which will be evaluated on a first come, first served basis;
- If successful, you will be invited to prepare a full application, where you will have access to support through the EIC artificial intelligence-based IT platform and from EIC business coaches;
- Full applications will first be assessed remotely by EIC expert evaluators. If successful, you will be invited to a face to face interview with an EIC jury as the final step in the selection process.
- If successful at the interview, you will be invited to negotiate an initial contract for the grant component and to start the due diligence for the investment component.

**Short applications:** You may submit a short application at any time via the European Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal that will direct you to the EIC artificial intelligence based IT platform:[APPLY HERE hyperlink]. The short application consists of:

- A 5-page form where you must summarise your proposal and respond to a set of questions on your innovation, your potential market and your team;
- A pitch-deck of up to 10 slides following a set format;
- A (link to a) video pitch of up to 3 minutes where the core members of your team (up to three people) should provide the motivation for your application.

Within approximately 4-6 weeks, you will receive the result of your short application specifying whether or not your application met the criteria to proceed to a full application. In both cases, you will receive feedback from the expert evaluators.

**Full applications:** If your short application is successful then you will be considered as an EIC beneficiary and be entitled to receive in kind support to prepare a full application which can be submitted to one of the cut-off dates within the next 12 months from the date of the response to your short application. You may decide which cut-off to apply to. The cut-off dates for 2021 are:

- 9 June 2021 at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.
- 6 October 2021 at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.

The cut-off dates for 2022 will be specified in the 2022 EIC work programme that is expected to be published in Autumn 2021.

You must prepare your full application on the EIC artificial intelligence-based IT platform, which includes methodology to help you to develop your detailed business-plan and a number of automatic checks and feedback to guide you through the process. The full application consists of that full business plan and full information on you company's finances and structure. You will also need to propose a set of milestones to be used as a basis for the EIC to manage the funding for your innovation.

As in kind support for the development of your full application, you will also receive coaching from one of the business coaches from the EIC Business Acceleration Services. [35] You can only receive this in kind support for a first application and it will not be provided for resubmissions.

The automatic checks and feedback and optional coaching support are designed to help you prepare your application. However, it is your decision how to respond to the feedback and support, and the content of your application is your sole responsibility.

All personal data and information in your application will be kept strictly confidential. However, before submitting your full application, you will be offered the opportunity to share certain data and information with investors who have undergone a prior EIC Fund due diligence process and who may wish to invest in your company or project and assist you in developing your idea into a business plan. You will also be asked for consent to share your data with other funding bodies in case your application is awarded a Seal of Excellence, as a prior condition for such an award.

**Remote evaluation:** Once you submit your full application, it will be assessed remotely against the criteria by EIC expert evaluators. Within 5-6 weeks you will be informed about the result of the remote evaluation and will receive feedback. If successful, you will be invited to attend a face to face interview with an EIC jury.

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[35] The beneficiaries will be invited to select an EIC business coach out of a dedicated data base. The Commission will pay the EIC business coach EUR 1,000 per day, travel and subsistence expenses included, and for a maximum of 3 days, in the form of a lump sum.

**Face to face interviews with an EIC Jury**: All companies receiving a GO from the remote evaluation stage will be invited to the face to face interviews. In case the number of companies to invite exceeds the capacities of the initially planned interview sessions, a first batch of companies will be invited according to the following prioritisation. The remaining batch of companies to interview will be invited to a further set of interviews to be organised before the next cut-off date.

1. All companies that were invited by the jury to resubmit directly to one of the next 2 interview sessions (see table on resubmission limits below);
2. Gender balance: companies with female CEOs (up to 40% of invited companies is reached);
3. Geographical diversity: at least one company for each Member State and Associated Country that is represented in the set of companies, and following this a number of companies proportional to the total number of full applications receiving a GO from each Country;
4. Submission date and time: any remaining companies will be prioritised based on the date and time of their submission.

Face to face interviews will be organised approximately 8-9 weeks after the cut-off date (or longer if there is a need for a further set of interviews). At the interview, you will be assessed by a panel of maximum 6 jury members. EIC programme managers and representatives from the EIC Fund may participate in the interview, but will not be members of the jury and will not take part in the jury's decisions. Detailed information about the format of the face to face interview will be communicated to you in the invitation. You will be informed about the result of the interview within [2-3] weeks.

**Invitation to negotiate grant component and due diligence process:** If you are successful at the interview, you will be invited to negotiate and then sign with the Commission an initial contract that will initially provide for the grant component, which will include a first pre-financing payment on the grant component.

In parallel, if your application included an investment component, the EIC Fund will start the negotiation process to structure the investment agreement (compliance checks, due diligence, syndication of potential co-investors, tranches of investment and related objectives and milestones, etc.).

During this stage, the EIC Fund will also look for other investors. You will be asked for your consent before other investors are contacted or engaged in negotiations.

At the end of this process, which should usually take between 2 to 6 months, an investment component will be agreed. The initial contract (covering the grant component) will be amended to integrate this agreement, and any relevant corresponding changes (e.g. in definitions of milestones) will be incorporated too. The decision on the amount and the terms of the investment component will be taken by the EIC Fund Board of Directors on the basis of

the recommendations made by the Investment Committee and in compliance with the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines. The investment decisions will also be reported to the Programme Committee.

As an outcome of the due diligence process, following a proposal made by the EIC Fund, the Commission may reject the investment in cases of misrepresentation by the applicant or a manifest error in its assessment. In such a case, the Commission may also revise or, in the cases of misrepresentation, terminate your grant agreement.

Should the outcome of the due diligence conclude that the innovation or your company is not yet mature for equity investment, the EIC Fund Board of Directors may recommend to the Commission that you start with the grant component first, and that the investment component will be subject to reaching defined milestones that will be included in the contract for the grant component.

## How does the EIC decide if your proposal will be funded?

The EIC Accelerator is highly selective and only the very best proposals can be funded. Your proposal will be assessed on its merits by leading experts and the Commission will ensure open and fair competition to all eligible proposals submitted.

**Evaluation of short applications:** Short applications will be assessed as soon as they are submitted. The eligibility conditions set out above will be validated by EIC Staff.

Your short application will then be sent to two EIC expert evaluators. These two evaluators' competences will match the area of technology and market application of your innovation. They will have access to analyses (for example on related scientific publications and patents) generated by the EIC artificial intelligence-based IT platform. The evaluators will essentially look at the innovativeness/disruptiveness of your idea, its impact and your team using the criteria specified below.

Each evaluator will assess whether your short application meets each of the evaluation criteria and give a GO or NO GO:

- If both evaluators give a GO for all the criteria, then your short application will be successful and you will be invited to prepare a full application.
- If both evaluators give a NO GO for at least one of the evaluation criteria, then your application is considered unsuccessful.
- If one evaluator gives a GO against all of the evaluation criteria and the other evaluator gives a NO GO for one or more of the criteria, then your application will be sent to two additional evaluators from the pool of evaluators. If at least one of the two additional evaluators gives also a GO against all criteria, then you will be invited to prepare a full application.

**Evaluation of full applications**: Full applications will be assessed following the cut-off dates listed above. This will start with a remote evaluation where your full application will be sent to three expert evaluators, who will be matched against the area of technology and application of your innovation and who will assess your application more in depth against the criteria set out below. They will have access to analyses (for example on related scientific publications and patents, market trends and perspectives, etc.) generated by the EIC artificial intelligence-based IT platform.

Each evaluator will assess whether your full application meets each of the criteria and give a GO or NO GO:

- If all three evaluators give a GO for all the criteria, then your full application will be successful and you will be invited to a face to face interview with an EIC jury.
- If one or more evaluators give a NO GO under any of the criteria then you will not be invited to the interview, but you will be eligible to resubmit an improved application (see Table below).

At the face to face interviews, the EIC jury members will have prior access to your short and full application and the evaluation results. Jury members will also have access to analyses (for example on financial metrics) generated by the EIC artificial intelligence-based IT platform and in certain cases the independent assessment of a specialised expert in the field of science of technology. Such analyses will be made available to applicants after the decision.

Jury members will decide based on your interview and their overall assessment whether your proposal should be funded (GO) or not (NO GO).

If the proposal receives a GO and is recommended for funding, the jury may recommend lowering the grant amount if activities above TRL 8 are detected. Should the jury find the level of risk to be lower than initially identified by the applicant, the jury may recommend another combination of components, including substitution of the grant component by a reimbursable advance.[36] The jury should not propose a higher amount of investment than initially requested.

However, the jury may also make recommendations to be taken into account when negotiating the grant or investment component, including for example on the milestones and the valuation, and on proposed coaching activities.

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[36] Reimbursable advances are not available at the start of 2021 but may be introduced during the course of 2021 in which case the terms and conditions will be made available on the EIC website. Once introduced, they would be considered by the jury in cases where the innovation cycle (market deployment) is short. The amount would be limited to a maximum of EUR 2.5 million and will reimburse up to 70% of the eligible costs of innovation activities. The reimbursable advance will have to be paid back to the EU on an agreed schedule as an interest-free loan. In case you are not able to reimburse or do not want to reimburse, the reimbursable advance shall be transformed into equity. In case of bankruptcy, the reimbursable advance will be considered as a grant and hence written off.

If your proposal receives a NO GO and is not recommended for funding, the jury will decide whether:

A) Your proposal has the potential to be a GO if specific targeted improvements are made, and you will be allowed to resubmit a revised application directly to one of the next two face to face interviews. Such a resubmission will only be permitted once.

B) Your proposal fully meets the excellence and impact criteria, but has not fully demonstrated the need for Union support, including the level of risk needed for Union support, under the third criteria in which case you will be awarded a Seal of Excellence[37] to facilitate funding from other sources and access to EIC Business Acceleration Services.

C) Your proposal is simply rejected as it does not meet the criteria for reasons which were not identified at the remote evaluation stage. In this case you will not be awarded a Seal of Excellence. Your proposal may however be resubmitted directly at the remote stage of one of the following two cut-offs, but will be expected to have made improvements.

Applications will be assessed according to the following evaluation criteria. The jury may focus the interview on any element of your proposal based on the remote evaluation result and its own assessment.

| Evaluation criteria for Accelerator | Stage |
|---|---|
| **1. Excellence** | |
| Breakthrough and market creating nature: Does the innovation have a high degree of novelty – compared to existing products, services and business models – with the potential to create or significantly disrupt markets? | Short and full application |
| Timing: Is the timing right for this innovation in terms of market, user, societal or scientific of technological trends and developments? | Short and full application |
| Technological feasibility: Is the innovation based on a technology or technologies that have been adequately assessed at least in a laboratory environment and relevant environments to characterise the potential and assess the level of risk (at least TRL 5/6)? | Full application only |
| Intellectual Property: Does your company have the necessary Intellectual Property Rights to ensure freedom to operate and adequate protection of the idea? | Full application only |

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[37] Seals of Excellence are only awarded if you have given consent to share data about your application with other eligible funding bodies

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|---|---|
| **2. Impact** | |
| Scale-up potential: Does the innovation have scale up potential, including the potential to develop new markets and impact on the growth of the company? Are the associated financial needs well assessed and realistic? | Short and full application |
| Broader impact: Will the innovation, if successfully commercialised achieve broader societal, economic, environmental or climate impacts? | Short and full application |
| Market fit and competitor analysis: Has the potential market for the innovation been adequately assessed, including conditions and growth rates?  Has a competitive analysis been thoroughly performed, including identification of potential customers and users, definition of unique selling points and key differentiation from competitors? | Full application only |
| Commercialisation strategy: Is there a convincing and well thought-through strategy for commercialisation, including regulatory approvals/compliance needed, time to market/deployment, and business and revenue model? | Full application only |
| Key partners: Have the key partners required to develop and commercialize the innovation been identified and engaged, including their roles/competences and a sufficient level of commitment and incentivisation? | Full application only |
| **3. Level of risk, implementation, and need for Union support** | |
| Team: Does the team have the capability and motivation to implement the innovation proposal and bring it to the market? Is there a plan to acquire any critical competencies which are currently missing? | Short and full application |
| Milestones: Is there a clear implementation plan with defined milestones, work packages and deliverables, together with realistic resources and timings? | Full application only |
| Risk level of the investment: Does the nature and level of risk of the investment in your innovation mean that market actors are unwilling to commit the full amount alone? Is there evidence that market actors would be willing to invest, either alongside the EIC or at a later stage? | Full application only |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Note: Small mid-caps will be expected to provide documentary evidence that their bank has refused the financing needed for the project.* | |
| <u>Risk mitigation:</u> Have the main risks been identified, together with measures to take to mitigate them? | <u>Full application only</u> |

## Limitations on resubmission of applications to the EIC Accelerator

The following limitations on resubmission apply to the EIC Accelerator in 2021 (both Open and Challenge based calls):

| Short applications | |
|---|---|
| If rejected one time | You may resubmit directly to the remote evaluation at one of the following two cut-offs, but will be expected to have made improvements. |
| If rejected second time | No new submission will be allowed for 12 months, at which point you may only submit a new or significantly improved proposal. |
| **Remote evaluation of the full proposal** | |
| If rejected one time | You may resubmit directly to the remote evaluation at one of the following two cut-offs, but will be expected to have made improvements |
| If rejected one time | You may resubmit directly to the remote evaluation at one of the following two cut-offs, but will be expected to have made improvements. |
| If rejected a second time | You will not be allowed to submit another application for 12 months, at which point you may only submit a new or significantly improved proposal to the short application stage. |
| **Face to face interviews with EIC Juries** | |
| If rejected one time but the jury decides your proposal is a potential GO if specific targeted improvements are made | You may be invited to resubmit a revised application directly to one of the next two face to face interviews. Your revised application must address the issues identified by the jury. Such a resubmission will only be permitted once. |

| | |
|---|---|
| If rejected one time (including if awarded a Seal of Excellence) | You may resubmit directly to the remote evaluation at one of the following two cut-offs, but will be expected to have made improvements |
| If rejected a second time | No new submission will be allowed for 12 months, at which point you may only submit a new or significantly improved proposal to the short application stage. |

# III – EIC Strategic challenges

*This funding targets strategic priorities and complements the calls for open funding*

# 1. EIC Pathfinder Challenges

EIC Pathfinder Challenges aim to build on new, cutting-edge directions in science and technology to disrupt a field and a market or create new opportunities by realising innovative technological solutions grounded in high-risk/high-gain research and development.

With each specific challenge call, the EIC will establish a portfolio of projects that explore different perspectives, competing approaches or complementary aspects of the Challenge. The complexity and high-risk nature of this research will require multi-disciplinary collaborations.

A dedicated EIC Programme Manager, who establishes a need-driven strategic plan and actively steers the portfolio towards the goals of each Challenge, oversees a specific EIC Pathfinder Challenge. Projects in a Challenge portfolio are expected to interact and exchange, remaining flexible and reactive in the light of developments within the portfolio or in the relevant global scientific or industrial community. They will progress together towards common goals and create new opportunities for radical innovation.

This section refers to common criteria for all Pathfinder Challenges. Please refer to the description below of each Challenge for specific information, particular requirements and budget.

## Why should you apply?

If you have an ambitious idea to realise the vision of a specific Pathfinder Challenge then this call may be for you. EIC is particularly interested in your ideas for new deep-tech: technology that becomes possible thanks to cutting-edge science in an area of the specific challenge. We are seeking new technological solutions at early stage of development that are new and disrupt the standard practice up to this point. [38]

You should apply if you have a potential project that would contribute to the specific objectives of the respective Challenge. Specifically, your project must aim to deliver, by its end the specific outcomes defined in the respective challenge chapter.

With projects funded under one Pathfinder Challenge, the EIC aims to build a portfolio of coherent projects in the respective area with a medium to long-term business goal and a technology-based strategic plan under the supervision of the EIC Programme Manager. Given that projects funded under one Pathfinder Challenge will be included in the Challenge portfolio, your project, if funded, will be requested to participate in relevant portfolio activities (see Annex 6 for examples of portfolio activities). Therefore, it must plan for portfolio activities (e.g. to overcome market or regulatory barriers, or strengthen an innovation

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[38] In general, the starting point of a proposal answering to a Pathfinder Challenge is around TRL2-4 but TRL levels may not apply easily to all the fields.

community) to be carried out with the other projects of the portfolio and the EIC Programme Manager.

Project outcomes must also include top-level scientific publications as well as an adequate formal protection of the generated intellectual property (IP).

Before you decide to apply, you are strongly encouraged to read the respective Pathfinder Challenge guide that will be published when the call opens on the EIC website and the European Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal. This Challenge Guide will provide you with more information about the specific objectives of the challenge, e.g. a detailed assessment of the state of the art and related (existing) projects in the field, technical information to underpin the objectives, potential societal, economic, environmental impacts if the objectives are achieved; as well as relevant references.

## Can you apply?

In order to apply, your proposal must meet the general as well as possible specific eligibility requirements for a specific Challenge. Please check for particular elements (e.g. specific application focus or technology) in the respective challenge chapter below.

The Pathfinder Challenges support collaborative research and innovation from consortia or applications from single legal entities (unless stated otherwise in the specific challenge chapter). In case of a consortium your proposal must be submitted by the coordinator on behalf of the consortium that includes at least two independent legal entities, each one established in a different Member State (or associated country and with at least one of them established in a Member State). The legal entities may for example be universities, research organisations, SMEs, start-ups, natural persons. In the case of single beneficiary projects, mid-caps and larger companies will not be permitted.

Your proposal will only be evaluated if it is admissible and eligible. The standard admissibility and eligibility conditions are detailed in Annex 2, and the eligibility of applicants from third countries in Annex 3.

## What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 133.6 million which is expected to be allocated in approximately equal shares across the challenges.

You will receive a grant for a Research and Innovation Action to cover the eligible costs, necessary for the implementation of your project, including the portfolio activities.   For this call, the EIC considers proposals with an EU contribution of up to EUR 4 million as appropriate. Nonetheless, this does not preclude you to request larger amounts, if properly justified or stated otherwise in the specific Challenge. The funding rate of this grant will be 100% of the eligible costs.

The projects funded through EIC Pathfinder Challenges are eligible:

- to receive additional grants of up to EUR 50 000 to undertake complementary activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation or for portfolio activities (see Annex 6).
- to submit an Accelerator proposal via its Fast Track scheme (see Annex 4).

In addition to funding, projects will receive free access to a wide range of Business Acceleration Services (see Section V).

## How do you apply; how long does it take?

The call deadline for submitting your proposal is 27 October 2021 at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.

You must submit your proposal via the European Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal: APPLY HERE [hyperlink].

Sections 1 to 3 of the part B of your proposal, corresponding respectively to the evaluation criteria Excellence, Impact, and Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation, must consist of a maximum of 25 A4 pages. See Annex 2 for further details.

You will be informed about the outcome of the evaluation 5 months after call deadline (indicative), and your grant agreement signed by 8 months after call deadline (indicative).

## How does the EIC decide if your proposal will be funded?

After the submission of your proposal it will be evaluated in two steps:

- a remote evaluation by EIC expert evaluators will assess each application separately against the defined evaluation criteria;
- an EIC evaluation committee will consider all proposals passing the first step together in order to assess the best portfolio of projects to achieve the specific objectives of the Challenge. The evaluation committee will be composed of EIC expert evaluators and EIC Programme Managers.

For the first step, your proposal will be evaluated by EIC expert evaluators on each of the following evaluation criteria:

| Evaluation criteria for Pathfinder Challenge |
| --- |
| **Excellence (Threshold: 4/5; weight 60%)** |
| Relevance to the Challenge: How relevant are the project's objectives in contributing to the overall goal and the specific objectives of the Challenge? |

| |
|---|
| Novelty: How novel and ambitious are the proposed technological breakthroughs with respect to the state-of-the-art? How relevant and effective are they in achieving the expected outcomes of the Challenge? |
| Plausibility of methodology: To what extent is the Research, Development & Innovation methodology described in the proposal appropriate to reach its objectives? How plausible is it that the objectives set out in the proposal are achieved within the time span of the project? |
| **Impact (Threshold: 3.5/5; weight 20%)** |
| Potential Impact: To what extent the successful completion of the project may have economic and societal impact and how credible it is argued and quantified (e.g. via KPIs or equivalent)? How appropriate are the expected outcomes of the project to contribute to the potential economic or social impacts of the Challenge? |
| Innovation potential: How adequate are the proposed measures for protection of results and any other exploitation measures to facilitate future translation of research results into innovations with societal or economic impact? How suitable are the proposed measures for empowering key actors that have the potential to take the lead in translating research into innovations? |
| Communication and Dissemination: How convincing and wide reaching are the proposed measures and plans for public/stakeholder engagement and for raising awareness about the project outcomes, including through Open Science, with respect to their potential to establish new markets and/or address global challenges? |
| **Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Threshold 3/5; weight 20%)** |
| Quality of the applicant/consortium [*depends if mono or multi-beneficiaries*]: To what extent do the consortium members have all the necessary high quality expertise for performing the project tasks? |
| Work plan: How coherent and effective are the work plan (work packages, tasks, deliverables, milestones, time-line, etc.) and risk mitigation measures in order to achieve the project objectives? |
| Allocation of resources: How appropriate and effective is the allocation of resources (person-months and equipment) to tasks and consortium members? |

The score for each evaluation criterion will be the average of the individual evaluators' scores. The overall proposal score will be calculated as the sum of the average scores from the evaluation criteria.

All proposals that meet the thresholds defined in the evaluation criteria will be considered in the second step.

As a second step, the evaluation committee will establish a list of proposals to be funded, based on the evaluation scores from the first step, as decided by the committee, and on each proposal's contribution to the setting up of a consistent portfolio of projects. Your proposal should therefore specify which objectives, or aspects of objectives, it addresses taking into account the technical specifications in the Challenge Guide (e.g., potential applications, range and expected outcomes of the projects, and the associated risks for achieving them, TRLs of the different tools and technologies proposed).

Portfolio considerations will be detailed in the Pathfinder Challenge Guide, as it is topic and domain specific. As a general principle, in order to balance out the portfolio, a categorisation of the proposals will be used and the proposals will be allocated to different components or categories. Example of possible categories are: building blocks or subsystems, technical areas and/or competing technologies, risk level, size, budget. A suitable portfolio of proposals to be funded will be selected by the evaluation committee from the highest scoring ones for each category or component and proposed for funding.

The evaluation committee may also propose adjustments to the proposals in as far as needed for the consistency of the portfolio approach. These adjustments will be in conformity with the conditions for participation and comply with the principle of equal treatment.

As a feedback, all applicants will receive a collation of the comments from the individual reports or excerpts from them. Applicants of proposals above threshold assessed further by the evaluation committee will also receive summary comments of the committee's assessment.

## What happens after a project is evaluated and retained for funding?

The coordinator of the proposal will receive a letter announcing the proposal has been retained for funding and the next steps regarding grant agreement signature. Grant Agreement preparation and signature is expected to be finished within three months but shorter timelines may be specified.

The Project Officer and eventually the EIC Programme Manager will contact you and support during the grant signature process. You will be expected to collaborate with the other projects from portfolio and sign an agreement in principle before the project start.

During the execution of the project you will interact continuously with the Project Officer assigned to your project and the EIC Programme Manager, assigned to the Portfolio of your project, who will oversee all the portfolio projects.

## 1.1  EIC Pathfinder Challenge – Awareness Inside

Awareness and consciousness have been high on the Artificial Intelligence (AI) research agenda for decades. Progress has been difficult because it has been hard to agree on exactly what it means to be aware. Most researches would agree though that we do not have any truly aware artificial system yet, that awareness is much more than a sensorial sophistication, and that it is much more than any Artificial Intelligence as we know it. But, what is it then that a user would expect from a service or device that has 'awareness inside'?

Most scientific and philosophical accounts of awareness are based on a human subject perspective and at an individual level. They address the question of what it means for an individual human subject to be aware of, e.g., the environment, time or oneself and how one can assess awareness in this context. The problem is relevant, certainly, since many clinical and cognitive conditions can be linked to awareness issues. The concept is also relevant to emerging technologies as it has been argued, for instance, that humans will not accept robots (or chatbots, or decision support systems) as trustable partners if they cannot ascribe some form of awareness and true understanding to them.

The individual human-centric concept of consciousness hinders the application of awareness as a measurable feature of any sufficiently complex system. The study of awareness in other species and artefacts, or even more elusive concepts such as social awareness require a new perspective applicable to many systems. It can then also serve to attack the inter-subjective state and experience of awareness (i.e., what is it like to interact with an aware robot that, most probably, does not have the same kind of awareness than the human?), or to include non-conscious objects into the sphere of awareness (e.g., to become aware of the time without looking at the watch).

For technologies, awareness principles would allow a step-up in engineering complex systems, making them more resilient, self-developing and human-centric. Awareness is a prerequisite for a real and contextualised understanding of a problem or situation and to adapt ones actions (and their consequences) to the specific circumstances. Ultimately, awareness serves the coherent and purposeful behaviour, learning, adaptation and self-development of intelligent systems over longer periods of time.

### Specific conditions for this challenge

Proposals are expected to address each of the following three expected outcomes

- New concepts of awareness that are applicable to systems other than human, including technological ones, with implications of how it can be recognised or measured. It will require to elucidate the relationship between, among others, complexity and awareness, information structure and representation, the environment and its perception, distributed versus centralized awareness, and time awareness. This will lead to better

approaches for defining aspects of awareness over different temporal, spatial, biological, technological and social scales.

- Demonstrate and validate the role and added-value of such an awareness in an aware technology, class of artefacts or services for which the awareness features lead to a truly different quality in terms of, e.g., performance, flexibility, reliability or user-experience. The specific expected outcome is a proof of principle of technologies far beyond the current state of the art or a laboratory-validated prototype enabling evaluation of the proposed technology's awareness features, relying where relevant on neuroscientific and psychological methods, and possibly in a range of application areas. As examples, projects could investigate the implications of 'awareness inside' for safer robots or self-driving cars, for better resilience of critical infrastructure, in artefacts that compensate for consciousness disorders, in decision support (e.g., for surgery, economics or epidemiology), or for chatbot-based conversation, language learning or translation.

- Define an integrative approach for awareness engineering, its technological toolbox, the needs and implications and its limits, including ethical and regulatory requirements. On this aspect specifically, the projects that will be funded under this challenge are expected to collaborate and contribute to the wider ethical, societal and regulatory debate since, ultimately, new awareness concepts may lead to a redefinition of how we look at the relation between humans, other species and smart technologies. The gender dimension in research content should be taken into account, where relevant, to maximise user experience.

This Challenge is only open to proposals for collaborative projects with at least 3 partners following the standard eligibility conditions.

## 1.2 EIC Pathfinder Challenge – Tools to measure and stimulate activity in brain tissue

Medical devices to measure and stimulate brain activity are emerging as tremendously powerful therapeutic tools that could revolutionise the treatment of brain diseases. Anomalous neuronal electrical signals are present in a wide range of disorders including memory impairment (Alzheimer's), epilepsy, chronic pain, mood disorders, movement disorders (Parkinson's), ischemic cognitive decline (post-heart attack), sensory disorders (hearing loss, tinnitus), cerebrovascular events, aging related neurodegeneration, traumatic brain injury amongst many others.

Unfortunately, existing devices to restore normal patterns of brain activity by stimulation have serious limitations. Invasiveness, limited miniaturisation, poor resolution (with only coarse measurement and stimulation available), limited spatial coverage (not able to monitor or stimulate a sufficient number of neurons) hamper the therapeutic effect or render these solutions unattractive for clinicians and patients.

Yet today's state-of-the art microelectronics and microfabrication are potentially conducive to novel neuro-devices with high levels of miniaturisation, ultra-low power consumption, multi-site sensor/stimulator arrays (linear, planar or 3D with a wealth of geometries) and wireless architectures, leading to  lower risk, shorter recovery times and better patient acceptance.

Further, progress can also be achieved by the discovery of new physical principles for activity monitoring (invasive or non-invasive) and activity modulation. These could explore ultrasound, light (optogenetics or otherwise), mechanical stimulation, local release of neuroactive compounds, ionising radiation, etc.

It is the right time to explore these opportunities and develop novel neurodevices that can be rapidly accepted by clinicians and patients.

Proposals submitted to this call should tackle at least one of the following two challenges:

- A full device with unique features, e.g. targeting a currently untreated disorder, offering unprecedented miniaturisation, low latency closed-loop monitoring-stimulation feedback (if necessary), ultra-low power consumption, low/moderate invasiveness (e.g. compatible with implantation with endoscopic techniques), high-resolution, sustainable, etc.

or

- New or nascent physical principles or methodologies that could be the basis for future brain sensing and/or stimulation technologies, with clear and quantifiable advantages. Focus is on techniques that can offer unprecedented data on brain function or that

allow unprecedented modulation of brain activity for therapeutic purposes or brain-computer interfacing.

## Specific conditions for this challenge

Proposals targeting a full device are strongly encouraged to establish a plausible work plan to realise by the end of the project at least 1) a working prototype device or instrument and 2) pre-clinical data with proof of therapeutic action.

Proposals targeting the discovery of a new mechanism for monitor and/or stimulate are advised to de-risk the work plan by exploring multiple strategies in parallel, merging competing strategies into a single proposal for cost efficiencies and increased likelihood of success.

Consortia considering both targets in a single proposal are advised to carefully analyse whether the high risk inherent to the discovery of new mechanisms or principles could hamper the plausibility of completing a full device hinging on said principles.

All proposals must fully justify the clinical need for the targeted development, and structure the work plan accordingly, towards credible future transition to market. Proposals need to consider the cost-benefit of the targeted technology and demonstrate that the outcome will be acceptable by clinicians and patients.

The gender dimension in research content should be taken into account, where relevant.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

# 1.3 EIC Pathfinder Challenge – Emerging Technologies in Cell and Gene therapy

Cell and gene therapy (CGT) are widely accepted as top biomedical trends for over three years now, and continue to evolve in their use for treating human diseases. CGTs, are expected to increasingly shape the medical treatment and diagnosis, as we are approaching the era of precision medicine. Cell-based therapy is a promising strategy for effective treatment across a wide range of diseases though the focus so far, has primarily been on cancer (e.g. Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell (CAR-T)) therapy made from removing T cells from individual patients, engineer them to be able to recognize and kill cancer cells before re-administer them to the same patient). CAR-T cell therapy is widely regarded as having revolutionised the treatment of some blood cancers. Recent research evidence suggests that cell therapy can effectively apply to solid cancers as well.

Gene therapy, on the other hand, is yet far from having revealed its full potential and, therefore, innovative gene therapies remain a top priority in genomic medicine. Some companies believe that, after having achieved a robust proof-of-concept, clinical development and downstream interaction with regulatory agencies will be easy. The reality, however, is that the whole process from concept to commercialisation, from research to commercial grade viral vector under GMP standards, is a very demanding one, with the constant need for technological improvements to successfully overcome challenges such as increasing accuracy/specificity and scaling up the production or the release of tests that must be completed before use in patients. Finally, combined cell- and gene-based approaches in preclinical studies, is a relatively new bio-trend that is increasingly gaining the interest of cell and gene therapy scientists worldwide.

With this Pathfinder Challenge, EIC strategically aims at reinforcing critical components of the European cell and gene therapy community, such as focused research consortia, start-ups and spinoffs, in their ability to compete and sustain in this fiercely competitive field, full of challenges and obstacles all along the way from discovery to the manufacturing step. Proposals submitted to this call should effectively address exactly that, by proposing convincing technological solutions and/or new breakthrough concepts that go far beyond the current state-of-the-art.

Proposers are invited to submit disease-specific or non-disease-specific proposals, focused on emerging technologies or technological solutions aimed to overcome the current cell and gene therapy challenges in one or several the areas listed below, but without being restricted only to these areas:

Advancing cell therapy manufacturing and products to a clinical stage:

- Advanced technological solutions that can effectively support the GMP manufacturing step of cell therapy e.g. in terms of speed and cost effectiveness
- Novel cell therapy products, targeted to frequent diseases such as, cancer and organ failure but also to less frequent like immunodeficiency disorders that can be used by clinical-stage biopharmaceutical companies.
- Cell therapy technological solutions that can improve important constraints in handling highly concentrated and complex formulations of recombinant biologics, such as, controlled release of therapeutics and injectability.

Improving adoptive cell therapies (CAR-T, TCR, TIL):

- New technological solutions that would help to improve current adoptive cell therapy approaches: i) by lowering the high cost and complexity of the procedure; ii) by overcoming the long known rejection problem observed in the off-the-shelf or allogeneic CAR-T cell therapies; iii) by targeting the CAR into one location, which would take away the variability problem (the CAR randomly goes into the genome of cells resulting in variable levels of potency) and iv) by developing CAR-T based new immunotherapeutic approaches against solid tumours with the use of monoclonal antibodies.

Identifying next-generation cell therapies for cancer:

- New technological platforms that can contribute to identifying next-generation cell therapies for cancer (finding new targets for the engineered immune cells to home in on, or novel source of cells for new therapeutic approaches) as well as improving existing therapies to make them more efficient and safer. The latter could include naive fully functional T-cells.

Applying cell therapy to treat cancer patients in a personalised manner:

- Advanced technological solutions that would enable to apply cell-based therapies to treat patients in a personalised/precision manner. Single cell-based approaches (analysing DNA, RNA, epigenetic marks, proteins, metabolites used in combination with single cell sequencing, single cell imaging and spatial profiling) in particular to allow to map the presence of individual cells in the tumour environment. .
- New technological solutions including lab-grown cancer organoids or organs-on-a-chip which would allow to test the patient's response to various cell therapies and drugs, alone or in combination, prior to the initiation of the treatment, are sought.

Improving the effectiveness and lowering the risks of gene delivery systems (vectors):

- Novel gene therapy approaches using the power of CRISPR-Cas or other molecular machineries leading to more effective and robust gene delivery systems (vectors) and/or more precise and reliable correction of genetic mutations

- Technological approaches that can tackle long lasting challenges in gene therapy (e.g. the transient instead of stable expression of the transfected gene)
- New technological solutions to reduce toxicity, as a result, of administering repetitive doses of viral vector(s) to patients in clinical trials
- New or improved gene delivery vehicles using next generation AAV or other recombinant vectors with the ability to target specific tissue types and persist in non-dividing cells for long periods of time

Improving gene therapy manufacturing processes and production:

- With the first gene therapies on the market and dozens more in trials, the race is on to improve the production and manufacturing processes to deploy gene therapies at scale. Technological solutions are sought to effectively control challenges in the production of viral vectors at the large scales needed to reach the clinical trial step. Speed is critical, yet excessive speed can put product quality, safety, and efficiency at risk

## Specific conditions for this challenge

In order to apply, your proposal must focus on emerging technologies or breakthrough new concept-based technological solution that go far beyond the current state-of-the-art, aimed to overcome cell and gene therapy challenges and obstacles companies are currently being faced with, at the preclinical or clinical level or bio-manufacturing level. Proposers can submit disease or non-disease specific proposals.

Your project must aim to deliver, by its end, at least one of the specific outcomes defined for this challenge. The gender dimension in research content should be taken into account, where relevant.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

# 1.4 EIC Pathfinder Challenge – Novel routes to green hydrogen production

The development of efficient, sustainable and flexible energy systems is a key challenge for Europe's energy decarbonisation and a corner stone of Europe's 2050 climate-neutrality goal, set out in the European Green Deal.[39] In this context, many solutions aimed at increasing cost-duration-efficiency performance of energy systems and using non-critical raw materials are currently under development. Hydrogen (H2) has the potential to become a major energy carrier.[40] Currently H2 is largely produced from fossil fuels, commonly referred to as grey H2, or promising but still expensive blue H2 options, combining methane-to-H2 with carbon capture and storage, or renewable H2 pathways, entirely based on renewable sources. Referring to renewable H2 production, the state of art technology is based on water-electrolysis, with costs still higher than grey hydrogen and production processes affected by the use of critical raw materials.[41]

This Pathfinder Challenge aims at developing novel processes and technologies to produce Green H2, at different scales (from small to large) and with higher flexibility, entirely based on renewable sources and on the use of toxic free, non-critical raw materials. It focuses on the potential of new biological, chemical and physical routes for Green H2 production adopting process circularity, possibly including the co-production of decarbonized chemicals. The specific target is to support the development of innovative technologies and platforms for Green H2 production, including both centralized and or on-demand generation (i.e. at the premises of the end users and for onsite consumption). Reaching these objectives requires multidisciplinary competencies and cross sectorial approaches addressing also environmental, industrial and logistic issues.

## Specific conditions for this challenge

The specific expected outcome is a proof of concept or lab-scale validated innovative Green H2 production technology by programmable and controlled biological, chemical or physical routes without the deployment of fossil fuels, potentially including the use of salt or waste water, air moisture, biomass or the co-production of decarbonized chemicals.

Projects with multidisciplinary and cross sectorial approaches, looking for inspiration, ideas and knowledge in disciplines that are typically not in this kind of research, are particularly welcome. Projects are strongly encouraged to consider the recovery and recycling of by-products and wastes (circular approach), as well as the use of abundant natural resources. The use of toxic-free and non-critical raw materials is mandatory and the projects should include

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[39] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

[40] A hydrogen strategy for a climate-neutral Europe, COM(2020) 301 final (08/07/2020). https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/hydrogen_strategy.pdf

[41] https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/raw-materials/specific-interest/critical_en

a full life cycle analysis of the proposed solutions and their impact on Europe's decarbonisation goals.[42]

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[42] https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/strategies/2030_en

## 1.5  EIC Pathfinder Challenge – Engineered Living Materials

Engineered living materials (ELMs) are composed, either entirely or partly, of living cells. ELMs entirely composed of living cells are called biological ELMs and they self-assemble via a bottom-up process – e.g. synthetic morphogenesis for organoids' production. ELMs only partly composed of living cells are called hybrid living materials (HLMs) and are built with a top-down process with integrated polymers or scaffolds. In both cases, the cellular components extract energy from the environment to form or assemble the material itself, and to adapt its morphology and function to environmental stimuli. This endows these materials with a combination of properties not present in any non-living material: self-regeneration, adaptation to environmental clues, longevity and environmental sustainability. By being alive, ELMs represent a fundamental change in materials' production and performance, enabling new, better or similar functionalities, compared to traditional materials but with decreased costs and environmental impact. ELMs have the potential to transform virtually every modern endeavour from healthcare to infrastructures to transportation.

With this Pathfinder ELMs Challenge the EIC seeks to seize the opportunity to position strategically Europe at the forefront of the ELMs field, which is still in its infancy. This Pathfinder Challenge aims to overcome the technological challenges to harness the engineering potential of nature for materials' production. The specific objectives of this call are to support the development of new technologies and platforms enabling the controlled production of made-on-demand living materials with multiple predictable dynamic functionalities, shapes and scales; and to build a community of researchers and innovators in ELMs. Reaching these objectives requires a research team that strongly integrates, among others and not exclusively, expertise in synthetic biology, materials engineering, control engineering, artificial intelligence, synthetic or engineered morphogenesis as well as ethical, legal and social aspects (ELSA).

Projects under this call are expected to develop technologies for the production of a minimum of two different living materials (i.e. with different applications, scale - 10 x difference- and cellular composition). The specific expected outcomes depending on the choice of the ELM production process (top-down or bottom-up) are:

- a proof of principle of technologies far beyond the current state of the art enabling the production of a minimum of two novel biological ELMs bigger than 1 cm in all dimensions by programmable and controlled synthetic or engineered morphogenesis (whether with eukaryotic or prokaryotic cells);

  or

- a laboratory validated, automatized and computer-aided design-build-test-learn (DBTL) platform far beyond the current state of the art able to produce a minimum of two novel HLMs in multiple scales with enhanced or unprecedented properties.

Projects are strongly encouraged to consider multi-cellular ELMs. They are also encouraged to develop technologies that can be easily generalizable and adapted for the production of a broad range of ELMs from different cells.

Projects funded under this call are also expected to collaborate and contribute to the wider ethical, societal and regulatory debate.

## Specific conditions for this challenge

In order to apply, your proposal must plan to validate the technologies by producing at least two different living materials (i.e. with different applications, scale - 10 x difference- and cellular composition). These must not be a derivative of each other. The material needs to be formed by living cells as per the definition of ELMs in the introduction of this call. Alternatively if a synthetic cell is used, the synthetic cell must have, prior to the start of the project, a demonstrated ability (via a peer-reviewed scientific publication) of cellular reproduction via cell division and adaptation to environmental clues.

Your proposal also needs to define an integrative approach to assess the needs and implications of the technologies and their limits, including ethical and regulatory requirements.

## 2.  EIC Transition Challenges

EIC Transition Challenges aim to leverage the outstanding results of an ongoing or recently finished project in the specific domain of the Challenge and push forward ground-breaking innovations with a clear perspective towards market uptake for specific applications.

For each Transition Challenge, the EIC aims to establish a portfolio of projects that explore different, competing, perspectives or address complementary aspects of the Challenge. A dedicated EIC Programme Manager oversees each Transition Challenge, establishes strategic objectives and actively steers the portfolio towards the Challenge goals.

This chapter describes features of the call that are common to all Transition Challenges, in as far as these are different from EIC Transition Open. It should thus be read in conjunction with the relevant headings in the Transition Open. For challenge specific information and requirements, including budget, please refer to the specific Transition Challenge chapters below.

### Why should you apply?
EIC Transition Challenges fund activities to mature a technology beyond the experimental proof of principle in laboratory and to develop the business case for the market uptake of the technology in an innovation for a specific application or set of applications that address the objectives of the challenge. As such, projects must address the twin development of technological and business aspects. The expected outcomes of your EIC Transition Challenge project are a technology that is demonstrated to be effective for its intended application, together with a business model and business plan for its development to market.

For more details, please refer to the same heading under Transition Open.

### Can you apply?
As Transition Challenges funding is a new scheme, for 2021 it is restricted to applications based on results generated by EIC Pathfinder projects (including from H2020 FET-Open, FET-Proactive, FET Flagships and ERANET calls) and ERC Proof of Concept grants, as specified in the Transition Open Section II.2.

You can apply for EIC Transition Challenges either as:

- A single legal entity ('mono-beneficiary') if you are an SME or a research performing organisation (university, research or technology organisation, including   research teams, individual Principle Investigators and inventors in such institutions who intend to form a spinout company). Larger companies (i.e. which do not qualify as SMEs) are not eligible to apply as a single legal entity; or
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- A small consortium of minimum two[43] and maximum five independent legal entities ('multi-beneficiary') that may for example include universities, research organisations, SMEs or larger companies, user/customer organisations or potential end-users.

Your proposal will only be evaluated if it is admissible and eligible (see Annex 2 as well as Annex 3 for eligibility of third country applicants).

## What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 40.85 million, of which EUR 30 million will be funded through Next Generation EU as this call contributes to the objectives to rebuild a greener, more digital and more resilient Europe.

The total indicative budget is expected to be allocated in approximately equal shares across the challenges.

You will receive a grant for a Research and Innovation Action to cover the eligible costs, necessary for the implementation of your project.  For this call, the EIC considers proposals with a requested EU contribution of up to a EUR 2.5 million as appropriate. Nonetheless, this does not preclude you to request larger amounts, if properly justified. The funding rate of this grant will be 100% of the eligible costs.

The projects funded through EIC Transition are eligible:

- to receive additional grants with fixed amounts of up to EUR 50 000 to undertake portfolio activities (see Annex 6);
- to submit an Accelerator proposal via the Fast-Track scheme (see Annex 4).

In addition to funding, projects will receive free access to a wide range of Business Acceleration Services (see Section V).

## How do you apply; how long does it take?

The call deadline for submitting your proposal is 22 September 2021 at 17.00 Brussels local time.

You must submit your application via the European Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal before the given deadline: APPLY HERE [hyperlink].

Sections 1 to 3 of part B of your proposal must consist of a maximum of 25 A4 pages.

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[43] Consortia of two must have independent legal entities from two different Member States of Associated Countries, of which one must be from a Member State. Consortia of three of above follow standard rules (See Annex 2)

For more details, please refer to the same heading under Transition Open.

## How does the EIC decide if your proposal will be funded?

In a first step, four expert evaluators will evaluate and score your proposal against each evaluation criterion. The second step is a face-to-face interview with an EIC jury.

For more details on the criteria and process, please refer to the same heading under Transition Open.

## 2.1 EIC Transition Challenge – Medical Technology and Devices: from Lab to Patient

EU-funded early-stage Research on novel Medical Technologies and Devices is uncovering unique opportunities to benefit patients and support clinicians.

Yet transitioning from a proof-of-concept result to a level of technological maturity appropriate for clinical evaluation poses significant technical, financial, business and operational challenges to innovators in the field.

The early-stage devices must often evolve substantially, being recast with electronics, software, materials, ICT system operating environments and processes compliant with the appropriate safety standards, e.g. IEC60601, ISO10993, etc. and suitable for future manufacturing with appropriate quality levels, etc. in line with ISO13485.

Moreover, thorough safety and efficacy validation of Medical Technologies and Devices in a clinical setting is necessary to advance towards regulatory compliance, to fully gauge the potential of the technology jointly with clinicians and patients and to motivate private-sector involvement.

Medical Technology and Devices businesses are also facing long and capital intensive product development cycles, complex regulatory procedures, slow market uptake requiring the support of key opinion leaders and intensive follow-up with early adopters. As a result, in addition to a mature technology, a well thought-out and realistic exploitation path with emphasis on achieving market traction as proof of both clinical and market potential of the idea is needed.

### Specific conditions for this challenge

Proposals submitted to this transition challenge call should aim to:

- perform the necessary R&D to advance from an existing proof-of-principle technology to a mature version ready to initiate clinical evaluation.
- develop an exploitation strategy, qualitatively and quantitatively outlining the proposed path to patient and describing an investable proposition.

Proposals submitted to this call can target any technology addressing important health needs in the direct clinical treatment and care of patients. A non-exhaustive list of illustrative examples includes: infectious and respiratory disease management, brain or nerve monitoring and stimulation technologies, high-tech endoscopes and smart catheters, surgical robots, perinatal support technology, radically portable dialysis, artificial pancreas for diabetes control, minimally invasive heart surgery, portable PET and MRI, drug delivery/eluting biomaterials, point-of-care non-invasive screening devices, etc.

The gender dimension in research content should be taken into account, where relevant.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

The starting point in the project should be a preliminary prototype of a medical device or technology that demonstrates, in a lab or preclinical context, the essential features that underpin the disruptive nature of the innovation (TRL 3-4).

The endpoint deliverable in the project should be a completely functional version of the technology suitable in its end-of-project state for clinical validation (TRL 5-6), supported by a sound and implementable exploitation strategy.

For this Challenge, the EIC considers proposals with a requested EU contribution of up to a € 2.5 million and a duration of up to 3 years as appropriate. Nonetheless, this does not preclude you to request larger amounts or different duration, if properly justified.

## 2.2 EIC Transition Challenge – Energy harvesting and storage technologies

Innovative technologies for efficient, low cost, sustainable, compact and flexible energy harvesting, conversion and storage are crucial to reach the Green Deal targets of decarbonised energy systems while achieving the transition to secure and affordable energy. EU-funded early-stage research on innovative energy technologies is uncovering unique opportunities for systems integration of advanced and sustainable energy harvesting and storage technologies.

Efficient, sustainable, high density and low cost energy storage technologies are a key to enable increasingly high penetration of intermittent renewable energies. Energy storage facilitates cross sectoral coupling, integration of multiple energy vectors, and is a key asset for active demand response strategies and development of smart energy communities with end-user engagement. The most important barriers to storage technologies are high investment costs, efficiency, dynamic performance/fast response capabilities and sustainability (raw materials and overall life cycle). In addition, in several cases there are also regulatory framework bottlenecks and a lack of a viable business case.

Energy storage includes a broad range of technologies, with different characteristic features in terms of energy density, response capability, duration of charging/discharging, etc. Similarly, energy harvesting covers many different sources and scales (from portable to utility scale). In order to maximally benefit from these harvesting and storage technologies, a systems approach is needed that combines harvesting and storage or that integrates a specific storage technology into a comprehensive application-specific solution. To reach the EU clean energy goals, it is necessary to deploy harvesting and storage technologies in different applications, eventually optimizing infrastructural investments, as well as supporting the transition from passive customers to prosumers.

In order to capitalise on and deploy the EU deep tech know-how in energy harvesting and storage technologies, strategic choices beyond Li-based batteries are needed. In particular, *electrochemical technologies* not using critical or toxic materials or alternative solutions based on *power to heat to power* concepts, or *on solar energy conversion to decarbonized fuels* and combined/hybrid storage are particularly promising. These technologies could be developed for utility scale, distributed or portable micro-scale applications, and stationary or mobile uses.

The proposals are expected to develop energy storage technologies or combined energy harvesting/storage technologies ready for investment and business development, with the perspective to capture specific systems integration opportunities.
Some non-exhaustive and illustrative examples of energy storage technologies integration for stationary applications are the retrofit of fossil power plants, waste heat recovery, demand

response and strategies for enhanced flexibility and stability of energy systems, buildings or industrial processes integration.

**Proposals are expected to address at least one of the following:**

− Innovative technologies and systems combining energy harvesting and storage, which are efficient, clean, high energy density and low-cost, integrated for stationary or mobile applications.
− Innovative concepts and techniques for the combined harvesting and storage of solar energy (in the form of heat or solar fuels), geothermal or waste heat, including topics such as long-term thermal storage, cooling and cryogenic storage, building integrated solutions, thermo-electricity, advanced heat transfer, power to heat to power, and thermo-mechanical energy storage and conversion
− Advanced materials and devices for electro-chemical storage (other than Li-Ion batteries), at utility scale, mobile or distributed/micro scale level, also integrated to PV/wind energy systems or for other intermittent sources. Concepts that offer the potentials for high flexibility, high energy density, efficiency, low-cost, made of toxic-free and non-critical raw materials, should be harnessed to make them usable for specific applications.

## Specific conditions for this challenge

Transition activities foreseen in this Transition Challenge will aim to have impact on sustainability, using non critical and non-toxic raw materials and ensuring circular approaches and/or a high degree of recyclability in the whole lifetime, and on financial and business level, preparing a detailed plan to exploitation supported by a sound business model and identifying any regulatory hurdles that need to be addressed.

Proposals can address applications ranging from stationary (utility vs small scale vs stand-alone) to transport (for example electric mobility or solar fuels) to portable and micro scale applications.

Expected results are prototypes or demonstrators operating in relevant environment conditions combined with a sound business plan and business model. Given that the costs of such activities in this challenge tend to be high, budgets of above €2.5 million may be accepted if duly justified.

# 3.   EIC Accelerator Challenges

The EIC Accelerator Challenges supports companies (principally start-ups and SMEs) to scale up high impact innovations with the potential to create new markets or disrupt existing ones in identified areas of strategic relevance. Like EIC Accelerator Open (Section II.3), the EIC Accelerator Challenges focus on innovations building on scientific discovery or technological breakthroughs ('deep tech') and where significant funding is needed over a long timeframe before returns can be generated ('patient capital'). The EIC Accelerator Challenges is open to innovations in the specific fields of technology or application described by the specific challenges below (III.3.1 and III.3.2). However, innovations that harm the environment or social welfare or that are designed primarily for military applications will not be supported.

## What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 507 million, of which EUR 398.9 will be funded through Next Generation EU as this call contributes to the objectives to rebuild a greener, more digital and more resilient Europe.

The total indicative budget is expected to be allocated in approximately equal shares across the challenges.

If as a result of the face-to-face interviews:

- the entire indicative budget initially dedicated to funding the Challenge related proposals is not allocated, the remaining balance will supplement the budget to be allocated to funding the Accelerator Open call;
- the entire indicative budget initially dedicated to funding the Accelerator (Open) call is not allocated the remaining balance will supplement the budget  to be allocated to funding Accelerator Challenges call;
- both the entire indicative budgets  dedicated to funding the Accelerator Open and the Accelerator Challenges calls are not allocated, the remaining balance will be allocated to indicative budgets of subsequent cut-off dates.

If successful you will receive a grant for an Innovation and Market Deployment Action to cover the eligible costs, necessary for the implementation of your project.  Support may be provided in the form of blended finance (combining grant of up to EUR 2.5 million and investment component of between EUR 0.5 and EUR 15 million) or grant only/ grant first support as set out in EIC Accelerator Open call (Section II.3).

In addition to funding, if you are successful you will receive free access to a wide range of Business Acceleration Services (Section V)].

## How do you apply; how long does it take?

The application process consists of the same steps set out for the Accelerator Open call (Section II.3), namely:

- Short applications which may be submitted at any time and which will be evaluated on a first come, first served basis;
- If successful, you will be invited to prepare a full application, where you will have access to support through the EIC artificial intelligence-based IT platform and from EIC business coaches;
- Full applications will first be assessed remotely by EIC expert evaluators. If successful, you will be invited to a face to face interview with an EIC jury as the final step in the selection process.
- If successful at the interview, you will be invited to negotiate an initial contract for the grant component and to start the due diligence for the investment component.

You are invited to submit your full application to the following deadlines:

- 9 June 2021 at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.
- 6 October 2021 at 17.00.00 Brussels local time.

## 3.1   EIC Accelerator Challenge – Strategic Digital and Health Technologies

- Are you developing a technology that can give rise to innovative business models and new processes, and the creation of smart products and services?
- Does your company aim for a leading position globally in this technology?
- Is this technology important for European welfare and economic development, and where this is a risk of over dependence on non-associated third countries to access the technology?

If so, the Strategic Technologies topic of the EIC Accelerator may support your endeavours.

As set out in the Economic Recovery and Resilience plan[44], strategic technologies are taking on a new importance in terms of technological sovereignty. Europe needs to preserve its capacity to act autonomously by building value chains for strategically important technologies in Europe, and to avoid situations where it is dependent on other regions for access to such technologies.

Furthermore, strategic technologies present enormous growth potential for Europe. They allow European industries to retain competitiveness and capitalise on new markets as well as determine Europe's position in the global market. They underpin the shift to a greener economy, are instrumental in modernising Europe's industrial base, and drive the development of entirely new knowledge-based industries. Their importance makes them a key element of European industrial policy[45] and they are increasingly contributing towards meeting today's most pressing societal challenges.

With this EIC Accelerator challenge, the EIC seeks to support start-ups and SMEs that are developing strategic technologies or innovations based on these technologies, in order to be ahead of the evolution of these technologies and capture the competitive advantages they can yield, accelerating their deployment and adoption within value chains.

This challenge targets high-risk, high-potential SMEs (including start-ups and spin-outs) from any sector provided that they are potential leaders in the technologies identified in this challenge.

### Why should you apply?

Applicants must contribute to enhance Europe's leadership and strategic autonomy in key technologies as well as to build competences and access to such technologies in Europe.

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[44] https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en
[45] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0102

You should apply if you believe that your company has the potential to be a global leader in developing strategic technologies in one of the following areas:

- **Digital technologies:** devices, methods, systems as well as working principles, processes, and standards which apply to the ICT technology industry such as advanced high performance computing, edge computing, quantum technologies, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, block-chain, cloud infrastructure technologies, and technologies for the Internet of Things.
- **Healthcare technologies**: AI-driven tools for early diagnosis; point-of-care diagnostics; novel approaches in cell and gene therapy, in particular for cancer; development of novel biomarkers for clinical prognosis, patient stratification or monitoring purposes across a wide spectrum of disorders; bioprocessing 4.0 (digitalisation across stages of biodevelopment in biotech/biopharma industry); healthcare intelligence services; and e-health solutions for healthcare systems, medical practice and Intensive Care Units;

Your proposal must clearly describe the contribution that your project makes towards increasing Europe's leadership in one or more of the above mentioned strategic technologies.

Activities supported could include, for instance, product/service development, trials, optimisation, prototyping, validation, demonstration and testing in real world conditions, and market replication. Essential actions for the innovation project can be subcontracted.

You must base your proposal on a strategic business plan and specify the project's success criteria and milestones as well as expected outcomes.

You must pay particular attention to IP protection, licencing and ownership, and you must present convincing evidence or measures to ensure the possibility of commercial uptake ('freedom to operate'). Moreover, you must address relevant regulatory and standardisation issues.

## Can you apply?

In order to apply you must meet the same eligibility conditions as set out in the EIC Accelerator call (Section II.3) above as well as the standard admissibility and eligibility conditions as detailed in Annex 2 to this Work Programme.

This challenge specifically concentrates on the strategic technologies defined above.

## How does the EIC decide if your proposal will be funded?

The evaluation process is the same as for proposals submitted to the Accelerator Open call, including as regards the limitations on resubmission (Section II.3).

All companies receiving a GO from the remote evaluation stage will be invited to the face to face interviews. In case the number of companies to invite exceeds the capacities of the initially planned interview sessions, a first batch of companies will be invited according to the following prioritisation. The remaining batch of companies to interview will be invited to a further set of interviews to be organised before the interviews of the next cut-off date.

1. All companies that received a GO for the Challenge but were not in the priority list for the previous face to face interview session or were invited by the jury to resubmit directly to one of the next 2 interview sessions (see table on resubmission limits in Section II.3);
2. Priority areas:
   - At least 40% of SMEs/start-ups invited to the interview phase to be addressing priority areas for digital technologies.

   - At least 40% of SMEs/start-ups invited to the interview phase to be addressing priority areas for health technologies

3. Gender balance: companies with female CEOs (until at least 40% of invited companies is reached);
4. Geographical diversity: at least one company for each Member State and Associated Country that is represented in the set of companies, and following this a number of companies proportional to the total number of full applications receiving a GO from each Country;
5. Submission date and time: any remaining companies will be prioritised based on the date and time of their submission.


All of the **evaluation criteria** established for the EIC Accelerator Open call (Section II.3) will apply. In addition, applications will be evaluated against an additional criterion for 'Impact':

| Additional criterion to be assessed under 2. Impact | |
|---|---|
| Strategic Impact on Digital or Health Technologies: Does the innovation have the potential to be a strategically important technology for Europe, in terms of welfare of citizens or relevance to economic development?<br><br>*Your proposal must describe this impact in relation to the priority areas set out for this call.* | Full application |

# 3.2 EIC Accelerator Challenge – Green Deal innovations for the Economic Recovery

- Do you have a game-changing, market-creating innovation contributing to the goals of The European Green Deal?
- Does your company aim to deliver a meaningful impact towards sustainable development?

If so, the Green Deal topic of the EIC Accelerator may support your endeavours.

In December 2019, the Commission launched its European Green Deal strategy, setting very ambitious goals for making Europe a climate-neutral and circular economy by 2050 and consequently calling for massive public and private investments in transformative green technologies. Furthermore, in September 2020 the Commission released its Communication 'Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition', which lays down targets for an economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions reduction of at least 55% by 2030 (as compared to 1990 levels) and a general increase in the share of renewable energy of around 38.5% and an increase in energy efficiency of around 36% in terms of final energy consumption, all by 2030.

The Recovery Plan for Europe, launched in May 2020, addressed the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, embraced the European Green Deal's objectives, and underlining the need for decarbonising energy-intensive industries, boosting renewable energy production, making transport smarter and more sustainable, increasing energy efficiency in buildings and protecting and restoring biodiversity and natural ecosystems, inter alia, all while boosting resilience and economic competitiveness.

This EIC Accelerator challenge will fund transformative green innovations, which contribute to the goals enshrined in the European Green Deal strategy and the Recovery Plan for Europe. This call will complement and be coordinated with activities supported by other relevant pan-European public-private and public-public partnerships for circular bio-based solutions, green hydrogen, batteries or low-carbon industries. In particular it will focus on disruptive and breakthrough innovations by SMEs and start-ups. This will also contribute to the implementation of various EU-wide initiatives, including the New Industrial Strategy for Europe regarding the decarbonisation and modernisation of energy-intensive industries, the Renovation Wave for more energy-efficient buildings, the Biodiversity Strategy, the Farm to Fork Strategy or the Circular Economy Action Plan.

This EIC Accelerator challenge will contribute to the European Green Deal goals by nurturing and supporting the scale up of next generation low-carbon technologies and supporting European companies willing to become global technology leaders able to transform the world. Game-changing, breakthrough technologies combined with innovative business models, will be a key feature.

## Why should you apply?

Your project must support the Green Deal implementation by significantly contributing to at least one of the following sustainability goals:

- Increasing the EU's climate mitigation and/or adaptation ambition;
- Supplying clean, affordable and secure energy;
- Transitioning of industry to a clean and/or circular economy (including waste prevention and/or recycling);
- Building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way;
- Accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility;
- Transition to a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system;
- Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, (including nature based solutions that provide co-benefits for climate adaptation and mitigation);
- Realising a zero pollution ambition and a toxic-free environment.

Within the Green Deal goals, specific priority is given to projects relating to key innovations for the green economic transition as identified in the Recovery Plan for Europe[46] [47]. In that particular regard, at least 50% of the companies selected for the interview phase must have submitted proposals relating to one the following areas:

- **Batteries and other energy storage systems**: breakthrough innovations related to the various segments of the strategic battery value chain, from critical raw materials to recycling, and comprising other energy storage systems such as chemical as well as physical storage technologies (including ultracapacitors), for use on stationary as well as transport applications.
- **Green Hydrogen:** breakthrough innovations to produce and store renewable hydrogen at different scales, from centralized to on demand, as well as for different applications ranging from stationary to transport, overall contributing to the goal of a carbon-neutral economy.
- **Renovation:** breakthrough innovations that accelerate the growth of the renovation market for making residential, commercial and public buildings more energy efficient, notably by bundling supply and/or demand through innovative technologies, financial schemes or business models.
- **Low carbon industries**: breakthrough innovations contributing to the de-carbonisation of energy-intensive industries, including solutions on electrification, circularity and industrial symbiosis industrial processes, the use of carbon capture storage and utilisation technologies or the digitisation of industrial processes.

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[46] Commission Staff Working Document on Identifying Europe's recovery needs, SWD (2020) 98 final, page 17
[47] Guidance to Member States on their national Recovery and Resilience Plans, SWD (2020) 205 final, page. 18-19.

You must base your proposal on a strategic business plan and specify the project's success criteria and expected outcomes. You must pay particular attention to IPR strategy, and you must present convincing evidence or measures to ensure the possibility of commercial uptake (often known as 'freedom to operate'). Moreover, you must address regulatory and standardisation issues.

Proposals must describe the project's contribution to the implementation of at least one of these Green Deal goals, using where possible quantitative impact assessments. Furthermore, apart from substantially contributing to one or more of the above-listed objectives, proposals must not cause significant harm to any of the following EU taxonomy environmental goals as explained below.

### *Significant harm to environmental objectives*

Project are considered to significantly harm (taking into account the production, use and end of life of their products and services):

a) climate change mitigation, where the project leads to higher greenhouse gas emissions as compared to typical standards in similar economic activities;

b) the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources, where the project is detrimental to the good status of bodies of water or marine waters;

c) the circular economy, including waste prevention and recycling, where the project generates more waste or uses more natural resources (including non-renewable energy sources) as compared to typical standards in similar economic activities, or where the long-term disposal of waste may cause significant and long-term harm to the environment;

d) pollution prevention and control, where the project leads to a significant increase in the emissions of pollutants into air, water or land, as compared to typical standards in similar economic activities;

e) the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems, where the project is significantly detrimental to the conservation status and resilience of ecosystems, habitats and species.

## Can you apply?

In order to apply you must meet the same eligibility conditions as set out in the EIC Accelerator call (Section II.3) above as well as the standard admissibility and eligibility conditions as detailed in Annex 2 to this Work Programme.

The EIC Accelerator supports the development of business concepts into market-ready innovations (new or breakthrough technologies, products, processes, services and business models) and their rollout.

This Green Deal Challenge specifically focuses on those innovations that fuel the societal transition towards a carbon-neutral economy while supporting EU's competitiveness and leadership in green technologies.

The Challenge targets high-risk, high-potential small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (including start-ups) from any sector provided that their proposal contributes to Green Deal goals (as explained above).

## How does the EIC decide if your proposal will be funded?

The evaluation process is same as for proposals submitted to the Accelerator Open call (Section II.3)

All companies receiving a GO from the remote evaluation stage will be invited to the face to face interviews. In case the number of companies to invite exceeds the capacities of the initially planned interview sessions, a first batch of companies will be invited according to the following prioritisation. The remaining batch of companies to interview will be invited to a further set of interviews to be organised before the interviews of the next cut-off date.

1. All companies that received a GO for the Challenge but were not in the priority list for the previous face to face interview session or were invited by the jury to resubmit directly to one of the next 2 interview sessions (see table on resubmission limits in Section II.3);
2. Priority areas: at least 50% of SMEs/ start-ups invited to the interview phase to be addressing priority areas described above in: Batteries and energy storage; Green Hydrogen; Renovation; Low carbon industries.
3. Gender balance: companies with female CEOs (until at least 40% of invited companies is reached).
4. Geographical diversity: at least one company for each Member State and Associated Country that is represented in the set of companies, and following this a number of companies proportional to the total number of full applications receiving a GO from each Country.
5. Submission date and time: any remaining companies will be prioritised based on the date and time of their submission.

All of the **evaluation criteria** established for the EIC Accelerator Open call (Section II.3) will apply. In addition, applications will be evaluated against an additional criterion for 'Impact':

| Additional criterion to be assessed under 2. Impact | |
|---|---|
| 1. Does the innovation have the potential to make a significant impact on at least one of the Green Deal goals? | Full application |

| *Your proposal must describe this impact in relation to the Green Deal goals set out for this call, including a description of the estimated quantitative impacts.* | |
|---|---|

# IV – EIC Prizes

# 1. EU Prize for Women Innovators

**Objectives and scope**

Though there are more women than men in Europe, only 16% of European start-ups are founded or co-founded by women, and a mere 6% have all-female founding teams. As a result, female creativity and entrepreneurial potential are a majorly underexploited source of economic growth and jobs.

With the EU Prize for Women Innovators, the EU celebrates the women behind game-changing innovations, and the female entrepreneurs leading innovative companies. In doing so, the EU seeks to raise awareness of the need for more female entrepreneurs, and create strong role models for women and girls everywhere.

The EU Prize for Women Innovators is awarded to the most talented women entrepreneurs from across the EU and countries associated to Horizon Europe, who have founded a successful company and brought innovation to market. The prize is launched and managed by the EIC Executive Agency[48], and the winners are chosen by an independent expert jury.

In the "Women innovators" main category, three prizes are awarded to the women who, in the opinion of the jury, have excelled in all award criteria and stood out amongst the other applicants. A fourth prize is awarded to a promising 'Rising Innovator' aged 30 or younger. Applicants can apply for the prize in the main category or the Rising Innovator category, but not both.

**Eligibility criteria:**

All applicants must comply with the following eligibility criteria to participate:

1. The applicant must be a woman.
2. The applicant must be an ordinary resident in an EU Member State or a country associated to Horizon Europe.
3. The applicant must be the founder or co-founder of an existing and active innovative company registered at least two years before the submission deadline.
4. Applicants that have already received an EU or Euratom prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.

Applicants for the 'Rising Innovator' prize must be aged 30 or younger on 1 January 2021. There is no age limit to apply for the main category, although applicants who meet the eligibility criteria for both categories can only apply for one.

**Award criteria:**

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[48] The European Commission will adopt the rules of contest for the prizes.

The prize is awarded to the applicants who in the opinion of the jury best address the following criteria:

1. **Breakthrough innovation** – the company founded or co-founded by the applicant provides a truly innovative product or service.
2. **Impact** – the product or service addresses a specific societal need or challenge, with significant benefits to citizens and to the economy.
3. **Inspiration** – the applicant has shown active leadership and has played a pivotal role in the success of the company. The applicant has the potential to inspire others.

The jury will review and score eligible applications, and invite the shortlisted applicants to a hearing in front of the jury members to defend their application. This hearing may take place remotely.

Further details on the evaluation and award criteria, as well as promotional activities, will be specified in the rules for this contest published at the launch of the yearly contest. For the common 'Rules of Contest for Prizes' please see the Funding and Tenders Portal.

**Expected results:**

The prize will boost public awareness of the potential, importance and contribution of women to the innovation ecosystem and create strong role models, inspiring other women to become innovators themselves.

**Type of Action**: Recognition Prize

**Indicative Timetable**:

| Stages | Indicative period |
|---|---|
| **Opening of the contest** | First quarter of 2021 |
| **Deadline for submission of applications** | Second quarter of 2021 |
| **Award of the prize** | Third or fourth quarter of 2021 |

**Indicative Budget for 2021 Edition**[49]:

| Category | Amount |
|---|---|
| **'Women Innovators' main category** | EUR 300 000 (Three prizes worth EUR 100 000 each) |

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[49] Legal basis: EU Prize for Women Innovators 2021 foreseen in the Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2018 – 2020 – 'Science with and for Society' (European Commission Decision C(2020)6320 of 17 September 2020).

| 'Rising Innovator' category | EUR 50 000 |
| --- | --- |

# 2.  The European Capital of Innovation Awards (iCapital)

Cities are faced with most severe societal and sustainability challenges, but do also have the means to develop and apply effective innovative solutions. They are the place where ideas, people, public and private actors meet and engage among themselves to improve the quality of citizens' lives. They are the natural playground where breakthrough innovation flourish and nourish. They provide ground to experiment new technologies and products in a real environment, their interaction with people and their added-value.

**Objectives and Scope**

The traditional city innovation ecosystem is opening up to new models of innovation engaging citizens. An increasing number of cities are acting as test beds for innovation and run citizens-driven initiatives to find solutions for their relevant societal challenges.

The public domain is particularly challenged with finding effective ways to ensure the mainstreaming of these practices into the ordinary urban development process. Successful practices are particularly crucial to enhance the city's capacity to attract new resources, funds and talents to stimulate the growth of breakthrough innovations.  Moreover, collaboration and strengthening synergies among innovation ecosystems boost cities' development and resilience to tackle urban challenges.

For this reason, the European Capital of Innovation Awards will recognize the cities' role as catalysers of the local innovation ecosystem and will stimulate new activities aimed at boosting game-changing innovation.

**Categories**

In 2021, the European Capital of Innovation Awards will feature two categories. The first one, the **European Capital of Innovation category**, would include cities which have a population of minimum 250 000 inhabitants and, based on the below cumulative criteria, would reward the winner with EUR 1 million and two runners up with EUR 100 000 each one.

The second and newest category, the **European Innovative Rising City category**, would include towns and cities which have a population of 50 000 and up to 249 999 inhabitants; and, based on the below cumulative criteria, would reward the winner with EUR 500 000 and two runners up with EUR 50 000 each one.

Each application must contain a specific endorsement to apply signed by the city Mayor (or the equivalent highest political representative).

**Eligibility criteria**

1. The candidate cities must be located in one of the EU Member States or in a country associated to Horizon Europe.
2. For the category of European Capital of Innovation, the candidate city must have a population of minimum 250 000 inhabitants. In countries where there are no such cities, the biggest cities are eligible and can only apply to a single category, provided that their population is of minimum 50 000 inhabitants. The candidate cities for the European Innovative Rising City category must have a population of 50 000 and up to 249,999 inhabitants.
3. Winners of former European Capital of Innovation Awards editions, as well as runners-up of the edition organised one year prior to the current edition are not eligible. This does not apply to previous finalist cities.
4. Applicants that have already received an EU or Euratom prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.

**Award criteria**

The award is launched and managed by the EIC Executive Agency [50]. For this yearly competition, six prizes will be awarded after closure of the contest to the applicants who, in the opinion of the jury, best address the following cumulative criteria:

1. **Experimenting** – innovative concepts, processes, tools, and governance models proving the city's commitment to act as a test-bed for innovative practices, while ensuring the mainstreaming of these practices into the ordinary urban development process.

2. **Escalating** – accelerating the growth of highly innovative start-ups and SMEs by establishing innovation friendly legal framework, creating an environment that stimulates growth, private and public investments, resources and talents; and driving innovation demand through efficient innovation public procurement. The city is expected to provide details on concrete results of the showcased initiatives.

3. **Ecosystem building** – unlocking cities potential as local innovation ecosystem facilitators by fostering synergies among different innovation ecosystem players, from public, industry, civil society, citizens to academia, to contribute to the development of an innovation ecosystem within the city.

4. **Expanding** – acting as a role model for other cities by supporting the dissemination and replication of tested solutions that boost the local innovation ecosystem; by promoting mutual learning, knowledge transfer and capacity building; and by enhancing cooperation and

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[50] The European Commission will adopt the rules of contest for the awards.

synergies between cities that are front-runners in driving the local innovation ecosystem, and those that are still exploring and testing their role as innovation enablers.

5. **City innovative vision**: applicants should demonstrate their long-term strategic vision/plan, highlighting the innovative initiatives that have positively contributed to the transformation of the city and which will further support the development of a robust and sustainable innovation ecosystem.

The jury will review and score eligible applications, and invite the shortlisted applicants to a hearing in front of the jury members to defend their application. This hearing may take place remotely.

Further details on the evaluation and award criteria, as well as promotional activities will be specified in the rules for this contest published at the launch of the yearly contest. For the common rules of contest for prizes, please see the Funding and Tenders Portal.

**Expected results**

A European prize to the most innovative cities ecosystems. The award will raise the profile of the cities that have developed and implemented innovative policies; established frameworks that boost breakthrough innovation; enhanced the city attractiveness towards investors, industry, enterprises and talents; helped to open up connections and strengthen links with other cities, promoting the replication of best practices in the innovation field; enhanced citizens' involvement in the decision-making process; and supported cities resilience.

**Type of Action:** Recognition Prize

**Indicative budget:** the following 2021 budget will be allocated as follows:

| European Capital of Innovation | EUR 1 000 000 |
|---|---|
| European Capital of Innovation 1st runner-up | 100.000 |
| European Capital of Innovation 2nd runner-up | 100.000 |
| European Innovative Rising City | 500.000 |
| European Innovative Rising City runner-up | 50.000 |
| European Innovative Rising City runner-up | 50.000 |

**Indicative timetable of contest(s)**

| Stages | Date and time or indicative period |
|---|---|
| Opening of the contest | First quarter of 2021 |

| Deadline for submission of application | Second or third quarter 2021 |
|---|---|
| Award of the prize | Fourth quarter of 2021 |

# 3. The European Innovation Procurement Awards

**Objectives and scope**

Public and private procurement represent an untapped potential to stimulate the demand for innovation. The public and private sectors could offer new opportunities for suppliers, and provide better, more efficient services. Therefore, innovation procurement would boost transforming research into innovative solutions targeted at societal needs, and support innovative companies to commercialise their ideas.

The European Innovation Procurement prize aims to recognise public and private buyers across Europe in their efforts to promote innovation procurement and the innovative ways the solutions are procured. It also aims to emphasise the importance of close buyer – supplier cooperation in bringing the innovative solutions to market. This prize complements other EIC initiatives aimed at supporting and fostering innovation procurement in the European Union.

**Categories**

In 2021, the European Innovation Procurement Awards will feature the following three categories:

- **Innovation procurement strategy award**: to reward long-term strategy/action plan that triggers different innovation procurements and sustainable solutions and practices.
- **Facing societal challenges award:** to reward innovative procurement practise aimed to face covid-19 pandemic[51].
- **Procurement leadership award**: to reward the outstanding individual(s) who empower(s) their team to succeed and trigger innovation procurement practices.

Each category would reward the winner with EUR 75 000 and one runner-up with EUR 25 000.

**Eligibility criteria**

1. Eligible applicants are any public and/or private procurer, as well as individuals/natural persons, located in one of the EU Member States or in an Horizon Europe Associated Country
2. The awarded procurement practice must have taken place in the EU Member State or in an Associated Country
3. The awarded procurement practice must relate to completed or ongoing initiatives started by 1 January 2017

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[51] This is a specific societal challenge selected for 2021.

4. Applicants that have already received an EU or Euratom prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.


**Award criteria**

The award is launched and managed by the EIC Executive Agency[52]. The prize will be awarded after closure of the yearly contest, to the applicants who, on the opinion of the jury, best address the following cumulative criteria:

1. **Transformation** – adapting procurement practices towards innovation procurement, by introducing new processes and tools, by promoting the establishment of an innovation friendly legal framework towards sustainable growth and development.
2. **Uptake** – the innovative way of procuring the solution is replicable and scalable, and, at the same time, contribute to achieving more efficient and effective services. Special attention should be paid to the promotion of best practices and to the efforts to share knowledge across stakeholders within the different territories, and to support capacity building.
3. **Collaboration** – the proven track of collaboration that led to the procured solution. Promotion of synergies and cooperation between actors from different countries and at different state of maturity in procurement practices.
4. **Societal impact** – practices with a positive quantitative and qualitative impact on society and people, with especial emphasis to the support of digital transformation and green deal priorities.


The jury will review and score eligible applications, and invite the shortlisted applicants to a hearing in front of the jury members to defend their application. This hearing may take place remotely.

Further details on the evaluation and award criteria, as well as promotional activities, will be specified in the rules for this contest published at the launch of the yearly contest.  For the common rules of contest for prizes, please see the Funding and Tenders Portal

**Expected results**

The awards would stimulate innovation procurement; acknowledge and support the efforts done by procurers, SMEs and start-ups to bring products to the market in the innovative way; and build a community of European procurers to share, work together and inspire each other in the design of innovative procurement processes, and particularly in the delivery of public services.


**Indicative timetable of contest(s)**

| Stages | Date and time or indicative period |
|---|---|
| | |

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[52] The European Commission will adopt the rules of contest for the awards.

| Opening of the contest | Second quarter of 2021 |
|---|---|
| **Deadline for submission of application** | Third quarter of  2021 |
| **Award of the prize** | Fourth quarter of  2021 |

**Type of Action:** Recognition prize

**Indicative budget:** the following 2021 budget will be allocated as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Innovation procurement strategy award winner** | EUR 75 000 |
| **Innovation procurement strategy award runner up** | **EUR 25.000** |
| **Facing societal challenges award winner** | **EUR 75 000** |
| **Facing societal challenges award runner up** | **EUR 25.000** |
| **Procurement leadership award winner** | **EUR 75 000** |
| **Procurement leadership award runner up** | **EUR 25.000** |

# 4.    The European Social Innovation Competition[53]

**Objectives and scope**

The Competition aims at stimulating social innovation's potential to provide solutions to societal challenges and foster sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe. It will directly support ideas best illustrating this rational. It will engage citizens, businesses (including start-ups) in a large range of sectors, as well as universities, business and engineering schools, thereby creating new connections, sources of sustainable growth and meaningful job opportunities.

The competition has a yearly thematic focus, related to different societal challenges. Applicants are invited to submit their proposals independently of its degree of maturity. All ideas related to the annual theme are welcome, and we particularly encourage concept or early stage ideas as well as those that have begun the prototyping stage.

**Categories**

The prize jury will review and score eligible applications, and shortlist a maximum of 30 applicants. During a period of four months, these semi-finalists will be supported with training, mentoring and coaching, including through the Social Innovation Academy[54], in order to develop their ideas towards reaching implementation and market stages.

Afterwards, on the basis of the development plans submitted by the semi-finalists, the jury will select 10 finalists and propose 3 winners in the category of 'Challenge Prize', rewarding with EUR 50 000each one.

Moreover, one 'Impact Prize' of EUR 50 000 will also be awarded to the project which has developed the best impact methodology and demonstrated the best results amongst the semi-finalists from the previous year. The impact prize is open for the participation of all semi-finalists of the previous edition, who will also receive training and coaching to support them to further gear their idea towards impact.

The Competition provides other benefits for semi-finalists and finalists, such as visibility for the ideas and networking opportunities, namely through the Alumni network.

**Eligibility criteria**

1. The applicant must be a legal entity (including single persons or group of legal entities except public administrations) located in one of the EU Member States or in an Horizon Europe Associated Country.

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[53] The final text of this Award is still pending of further revision.
[54] Supported by the service contract SI.XXXX (reference  will be added when  contract signed (December 2020)

2. Ideas and proposals from all sources, sectors and all types of organizations including for-profit, non-for-profit, or private companies are welcome.

**Award criteria**

The prize will be awarded, after closure of the contest, to the applicants who, in opinion of the jury, best address the following cumulative criteria in the dedicated prize category:

For challenge prize category:

1. **Degree of Innovation** - the degree to which any new product, service or model addresses unmet needs more effectively. The idea must be new and innovative within its given socio-economic and geographical context;
2. **Impact -** the potential of the proposal to tackle the competition challenge. The applicant must demonstrate how the proposed solution will contribute to solving the challenge;
3. **Sustainability**- the financial and environmental sustainability of the proposal
4. **Scalability and replicability** - the idea's potential to scale and be replicated, be it at regional, national, European or global level.

For the impact prize:

1. **Quality and clarity** of the theory of change and of the impact measurement methodology with relevant indicators developed by the applicant;
2. **Demonstrated results** over the previous year, on the basis of the chosen indicators.

Further details on the evaluation and award criteria, as well as promotional activities, will be specified in the rules for this contest published at the launch of the yearly Competition. For the common Rules of Contest for Prizes please see the Funding and Tenders Portal.

**Expected results**

The Competition aims at raising awareness about social innovation across a wide audience in Europe, sparking the creation of new socially innovative ideas across Europe, creating a network of like-minded practitioners across Europe and supporting semi-finalists to transform early stage ideas into structured businesses. More specifically, the prize money aims at providing a further incentive to the development of the winners' ideas to become fully fledge impact driven businesses.

**Indicative timetable of the competition**

| Stages | Date and time or indicative period |
|---|---|
| • **Opening of the 2021 contest** | First quarter of 2021 |

| | |
|---|---|
| • **Deadline for submission of applications for 2021 contest** <br> • **Announcement of the 30 semi-finalists of 2021 edition** | Second quarter of 2021 |
| • <br> • **Submission of detailed plans by semi-finalists of 2021 edition** | Third quarter of 2021 |
| • **Opening of the impact prize category of the 2020 edition** <br> • **Deadline for submission of applications for impact prize category of the 2020 edition** | Third quarter of  2021 |
| • **Award of the challenge prize of edition 2021 & impact prize of edition 2020** | Fourth quarter of  2021 |

**Type of Action: Recognition Prize**

**Indicative budget:** the following 2021 budget will be allocated as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Challenge prize category** | **EUR 150.000 ( 50.000 x 3 winners)** |
| **Impact prize category** | **EUR 50.000** |

# V – EIC Community and Business Acceleration Services

# 1. EIC Business Acceleration Services global offer

## Why these activities?

The EIC support goes far beyond funding and it aims at supporting the emergence of and accelerating EIC innovations and growth of top deep tech companies. In order to further leverage EIC investments, as EIC funded researcher, innovator or entrepreneur you will be provided with access to a range of tailor-made **EIC Business Acceleration Services (BAS)** at any stage of development of your activities and of EIC research and innovation cycle. The EIC uses its pan-European reach to connect you with partners from all around Europe, across borders and will also contribute to further develop the innovation ecosystem in Europe.

## Who can benefit and what services are offered?

All the EIC beneficiaries (from the EIC Accelerator, EIC Transition, EIC Pathfinder and Women TechEU[55] programmes) have access to BAS. Some of the  services will also be made available to EIC Accelerator applicants (invited to prepare a full application), to companies receiving the Seal of Excellence [56] as well as to innovators and companies coming from other European or national initiatives that have entered into a specific agreement with  the EIC.

The services described above are available through the EIC Community platform or provided through the EIC Fund or partner organisations.

The EIC BAS are structured around three main pillars:

- ***Access to coaches, mentors, expertise and training***

EIC researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs will be able to benefit from tailor-made coaching, mentoring, expertise and training delivered by specialised providers and adapted to their innovation stage.

**Business coaching[57]** focuses on providing tailor made insights on business development shortcomings and guidance to improve the performance. Coaching topics cover the entire

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[55] The Women TechEU programme is due to be implemented under the 'European Innovation Ecosystems' part of the Horizon Europe work programme.

[56] Seal of Excellence companies will have access to all BAS services except those linked to the direct management of the project like investor mentoring provided alongside management of the EIC equity and access to expertise.

[57] At the start of the programme, business coaching will be provided by coaches from the pool established for Horizon 2020.  The EIC will extend this pool through specific calls for expression of interest based on needs of applicants, Seal of Excellence and funded companies or projects.

entrepreneurial and innovation endeavour from challenging the value proposition and business model, IP management, improving strategy and investor business case, building the team and leadership, to international expansion. **Mentoring** aims to develop fit-for-purpose business and leadership skills such as resilience, tenacity and strategic insight of the individual founders and CEOs. The impact is especially high when mentors share their own experience with business innovation and fundraising.

Coaching and Mentoring are delivered by qualified, experienced business coaches, entrepreneurs, investors. Specific mentoring will be provided for companies receiving EIC blended finance in coordination with the management of the equity component by the EIC Fund. When looking for co-investors, the EIC Fund will also incentivise other investors to provide mentoring tasks and independent advice to the company.

As part of the proactive portfolio management by Programme Managers, **access to specific expertise, trainings, incubation or acceleration** will be provided to meet individual needs of the EIC funded projects and companies and their innovations. Such services provided by professional service providers and ecosystem partners could include: expertise in the area of Intellectual Property protection, legal & financial advisory, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), certification and standardisation, competition analysis, and assistance in negotiations. In addition, access will be provided to relevant entrepreneurial and innovation/IP strategy trainings, prototyping workshops, business plan development oriented summer schools, boot camps, incubators and accelerators.

The deployment of such services will be subject to recommendation from the project review, the Programme Manager or EIC Fund, if a similar service cannot be provided by national or European initiatives, e.g. EEN or the European IP Helpdesk.

Access to specific expertise and training or acceleration services will mainly be provided through a pool of certified innovation ecosystem actors and service providers.

Regarding business coaching, EIC Accelerator applicants invited to submit a full application, Seal of Excellence companies and all EIC funded projects and companies will receive 3 coaching days. Additional coaching days for EIC funded projects and companies will depend on the project review and input from Programme Managers. Coaches can also assist in the delivery of other BAS services and can assist Programme Managers in portfolio management.

- ***Access to global partners (leading corporates, investors, procurers, distributors, clients)***

The BAS facilitate cooperation and co-creation with international business partners: leading corporates, investors, procurers, distributors, clients. This includes exploration of commercialisation potential with industry, dedicated and impact focused matchmaking events (e.g. Corporate Days, Procurers Days), venture client model, structured pilot & trials collaborations with corporates and private and public innovation procurers.

EIC funded SMEs will be offered a specific support when expanding to new markets within Europe and abroad in form of participation to global business trade fairs, visiting major European innovation hubs and specific soft landing programmes.

The EIC with support of the EIC Fund will facilitate collaboration with (co-) investors for the EIC Community. The service will be supported through a dedicated matching platform, for both investments and tailor-made services including mentoring, strategic advice, curated presentation to investors' networks as well as investment readiness preparation and pitching sessions.

The most mature and promising EIC funded companies will be able to benefit from curated services, tailor made to their needs connecting them to top level corporates and investors, supporting them to raise further funding or succeed in an Initial Public Offering.

Unless specified otherwise, all above services are open to all EIC funded projects and companies and other members of the EIC Community based on an application and, when relevant, selection process for each event or service. The process involves a publication about the service on the EIC Community, an application by interested EIC company or project and depending on the type of service, a pre-selection by business partners/experts can be applied.

- *Access to innovation ecosystem and peers*

The EIC ambition is to engage partners from across the European innovation ecosystem within the EIC Community (see below), in order to benefit from cross-fertilisation and diversity inspiring innovation and creativity. It aims to stimulate unprecedented and unforeseeable encounters between peer inventors, researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs as well as other actors from the ecosystem, including corporates, investors, business angels, mentors and coaches, innovation procurers, innovation agencies, business associations, clusters, accelerators, incubators, technology transfer offices and many more.

The EIC Community rely on the **EIC Community platform:** an exclusive, virtual meeting place, where EIC funded projects and companies can connect with their peers and leverage potential business partnerships complemented by Community activities. It will host matching and collaboration features including partner search, groups, as well as stories and event calendars.

A new tool will be the development of an **EIC Marketplace (see Chapter VI – Section 4)** that will collect and organise information on preliminary findings and results generated by EIC projects and proactively makes this information, together with supporting services and

expertise, available to potential partners, investors and entrepreneurs that could take the results further or incorporate in their innovations.

Another feature within the EIC Market Place and EIC Community platform will enable any EIC Community member to post a challenge and ask the Community to provide solutions.

To further strengthen the BAS' scope and provide even more tailored services EIC also seeks for **partnerships with ecosystem partners** bringing in specific experience, specific expertise or access to a specific networks in certain innovation areas. Such collaboration could include exchange of information, co-organisation of specific EIC events (e.g. pitching events or specific trainings, bootcamps, summer schools), data mining or mapping service e.g. of tech infrastructure, piloting plants and test-beds. It also aims to extend, in a cost-efficient manner, the support for EIC funded projects and companies to a range of existing and effective services, implemented by the European Commission and also by specific entities at Member States and Associated Countries level; In particular the EIC will seek for operational synergies with EEN, national and regional clusters, the European IP Helpdesk, Start-up Europe, EIT KICs, national innovation agencies, NCPs' networks, top European accelerators and incubators, business and investors associations.
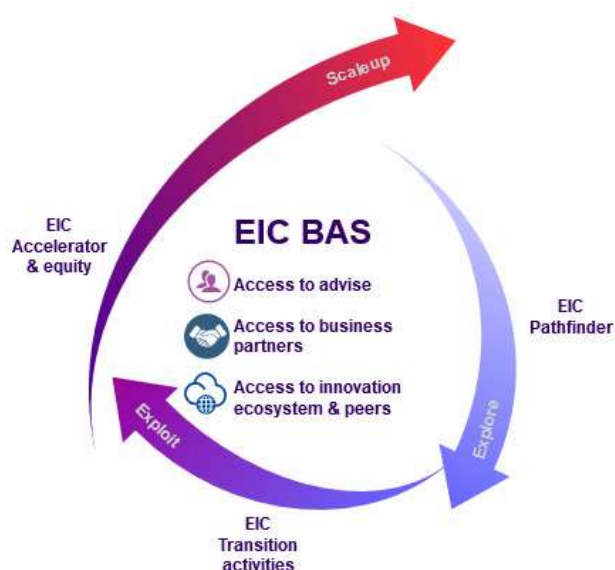
Potential partnerships can take the form of a win-win collaboration or in some specific cases directly being made via (co)funding to the organisers.

Overall, a specific focus will be given to support promising green innovations as well as EIC funded SMEs reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Women innovators, including those supported under the Women TechEU programme will be offered a targeted leadership and development programme including coaching.

## Budget and implementation

The described activities are implemented through multiannual contracts, some of them initiated under Horizon 2020. The 2021 budget includes following activities:

EUR 10 million for coaching to be implemented through expert contracts [or a lump sum financial contribution of EUR 3000 per module of 3 days of coaching services] awarded to EIC Accelerator applicants invited to submit a full application, Seal of Excellence companies,

Women TechEU companies, and all EIC funded projects and companies, including women innovators supported with specific BAS leadership actions.[58]

EUR 4.1 million for investor mentoring to be implemented by the EIC Fund. EUR 2 million for soft landing and scale up support for EIC funded companies outside Europe to be implemented by the EIC Fund.

EUR 6.5 million for other BAS for the duration of 2-4 years through public procurements to be launched in third quarter of 2021. The actions will focus on:

- **Access to expertise and trainings-** The objective is to provide EIC funded projects and companies with targeted expertise and/or services like trainings, acceleration and incubation services to meet their individual needs on their way to commercialisation and scale up. Expected results: further exploitation of results generated under EIC projects, including creation of spin-offs. The delivery would imply launching of a new framework contract for a duration of 3 years and maximum indicative global amount of EUR 4.5 million.

- **Support through ecosystem partners.** The objective of this action is to provide EIC funded companies and projects with enhanced tailor-made business support services from existing public or private acceleration actors, bringing in specific experience, specific expertise or access to a specific networks in certain innovation areas or sectors. The possible actors include accelerators, incubators, innovation agencies and other actors. Expected results: commercialisation of EIC funded innovations and scale up of EIC funded companies. The indicative budget is €2 million.

Co-creation with public buyers of innovations, data management and IT tools, and support through the Enterprise Europe Network is detailed in the Section VI 'Other Actions'.

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[58] Coaching 2021 budget may also be used for the Horizon 2020 EIC legacy projects

# VI – Other Actions

# 1.    Communication, outreach, events

The success of the EIC lies in attracting highly innovative and diverse companies and researchers that can generate fast and high growth, as well as co-investors and global corporates that can further maximise the impact of EIC support.

The objective of this action is to prepare and implement the communication and outreach activities for the EIC as well as for a continuous campaign to strengthen the reputation of the EIC towards stakeholders, potential applicants, policy-makers, and the broader innovation ecosystem. This action covers the design of the strategy, the development and maintenance of the EIC website and other information channels and the generation of relevant content and materials. In addition, it allows for EIC participation in key events, including the EU Research and Innovation Days, a dedicated annual EIC Event, stakeholder events to contribute to future EIC work programmes, as well as other outreach and stakeholder engagement actions including expert training events.  This should allow the EIC to become a prominent voice in the ongoing debates relevant to innovation policy in Europe and globally. The communication and outreach campaign should generate awareness and impact at international, European, national, regional and local levels. Furthermore, the action will provide outreach and training to EIC expert evaluators and jury members.

**Type of action:** Public Procurement action

**Indicative timetable:** 2021

**Indicative budget:** EUR 1 500 000

# 2.    Honoraria and expenses of the European Innovation Council (EIC) Board

As highly qualified, specialised, independent advisors appointed following an open and transparent procedure, the members of the EIC Board will be remunerated for the services they offer.

Remuneration is justified on the grounds of members' personal commitment and their work providing high-level strategic advice to the Commission and bringing prestige and visibility to the EIC.

Remuneration will be proportionate to the specific tasks to be assigned to EIC Board members and it will closely mirror compensation schemes for other EU, international or national entities of similar nature. Remuneration will take the form of honoraria for their effective participation at the Board's plenary meetings. It will be accompanied by a compensation for travel and other expenses ('per diem').

1. The rules on the compensation of the members of the EIC Board (other than its President) are the following: Honoraria of members of the EIC Board other than the President, as well as their travel and subsistence expenses (per diem), will be paid by the dedicated implementation structure in charge of the EIC Work Programme. Honoraria will be paid irrespective of the length (i.e. number of days) of the meeting, and will be governed by the provisions of the individual expert contract in accordance with points 2 to 7.

2. The honoraria of the members referred to in point 1 will be:

   (b) EUR 2 000 for full attendance at a plenary meeting, and;

   (c) EUR 1 000 for partial attendance.

4. Payments will be authorised by the Director of the dedicated implementation structure or his deputy on the basis of an attendance list validated by the EIC Board President and the Director of the dedicated implementation structure or their deputies. The attendance list shall indicate if each member attended the entire meeting (full attendance) or only part of it (partial attendance).

5. For other meetings than plenary meetings, the dedicated implementation structure will, where appropriate, reimburse those travel and subsistence expenses necessary for members of the Board to carry out their activities in accordance with their contract and the Commission's rules on the compensation of external experts[59].

6. In the case of participation at plenary meetings through the use of telematics or remote communication, the duration of the communication link shall count as a physical presence at the meeting for the purpose of establishing the appropriate honoraria.

7. The maximum number of paid meetings must not exceed twelve meetings, including plenary meetings, in total per year.

8. The honoraria and travel and subsistence expenses will be paid from the operational budget indicated in the Work Programme.

**Type of action**: Expert contracts.

**Indicative budget**: EUR 500 000 from the 2021 budget.

# 3. Foresight and analysis of emerging technologies and innovation trends

In order to stay on the cutting edge and to make informed choices regarding priority areas, the EIC needs to possess strong capacity for detecting early signals of emerging trends in

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[59] Commission Decision C(2007) 5858.

technology and innovation, and for positioning its portfolio with regard to the current context. This capacity is particularly important to support proactive management by EIC Programme Managers and to identify potential new areas where EIC challenge driven funding should be considered or where Programme Managers may be needed.

### *3.1 Foresight*

This action will reinforce the capacity to apply state of the art foresight methodologies and data mining tools for scanning the horizon of science and innovation in order to identify the early signals of emerging technology and innovation.

**Type of action**: Scientific and technical services by the Joint Research Centre

**Indicative timetable**: Second quarter of 2021.

**Indicative budget:** EUR 0.2 million from the 2021 budget

### *3.2 Key emerging trends*

This action will complement the functionality of the EIC tools (such as its AI-based tool and EIC Market Place (see Other Action 4) and will reinforce the capacity for identification and targeted foresight of key emerging trends in technology and innovation as well as supporting mutual learning with other similar initiatives within Europe and in third countries, such as the United States, for promoting breakthrough technologies and disruptive innovations.

**Type of action**: Public Procurement

**Indicative timetable**: Second quarter of 2021.

**Indicative budget:** EUR 0.8 million from the 2021 budget

# 4. EIC Data management and Information systems

The objective of this action is to provide the IT development and maintenance resources for the EIC Data Management and Information systems built to collect, consolidate, curate and contextualise key data and information coming from internal and third party sources, including using Artificial Intelligence.

Expected results: dynamic, flexible and reactive management of EIC activities, based on high quality and real time strategic and operational insights. The developed system would allow data-driven decision-making processes and business intelligence strategy. Furthermore, these information systems combined with existing Commission corporate platforms should also become key to the efficient and effective delivery of services and data to EIC funded projects

and companies and stakeholders, including EIC Market Place. Finally, they should allow to provide to relevant Member State authorities an enriched data service on innovative companies and projects in their respective countries and regions, thus contributing also to the 'European Innovation Ecosystems' activities of 'Innovative Europe'.

### *4.1 Developing EIC artificial intelligence-based processes and the EIC Market Place*

4.1.1 – Artificial intelligence-based services in support of EIC operations.

From the onset of the implementation of Horizon Europe, as a pilot limited to 2021 acquired by the EIC Fund, the EIC will deploy the services an artificial intelligence-based tool in support of Accelerator  (at submission and evaluation stages). Subject to the positive experience of this pilot, the EIC will acquire similar services for the period 2022-2027, but enlarged to all other EIC instruments and activities and extended to include additional services in relation to portfolios and projects management and support to the EIC Fund.

Further synergies with national and regional programmes will be sought so as to share some of these services (i.e. orientation, diagnostic, EIC Market Place …) with interested innovation agencies to overall enhance support to innovation across the Union.

4.1.2 – The EIC Market Place.

Among these additional Artificial intelligence-based services, the EIC will acquire services for an « EIC Market Place » to foster the further exploitation of preliminary findings and results generated under EIC projects.

The aim is to make sure that no opportunity gets lost for creating added-value for European companies and citizens, based on results from EIC support (mainly Pathfinder and Transition, including the predecessor Future and Emerging Technology programme, and where relevant from Accelerator including the Horizon 2020 SME instrument). Currently, such results (disclosed/patented or not) often require new partnerships or efforts to be exploited as innovations. Their originators may not be aware of all existing opportunities at the time results are generated and their value may become clear only much later. Moreover, their potential often increases when results are combined, transferred to other areas of applications, or viewed in light of new needs and opportunities.

The starting point for the EIC Market Place is hence to make information about preliminary findings and results available at any stage of their generation, findable by - though not necessarily disclosed to - any potentially interested Party, and to incentivise and support further transactions.

The EIC Market place will offer the following main features:

- A trusted platform for EIC companies and project partners to share information on their preliminary findings and results, whether or not protected, in view of maximising their potential use, stimulate cross-fertilisation or serendipity effects within the EIC Community, as foreseen by their grant agreement or contract with the EIC. As a baseline it will provide an intelligent and secure way to register formal and informal results from EIC support, traceably linked to the unique knowledge, skills and community members that generated them, to selectively disclose them and to prepare and support transactions based on them;

- AI-based detection functionalities and co-creation platform and tools with the purpose of stimulating cross-fertilization and innovation out of the results, inventors, innovators and investors will have the possibility to interact, develop and agree on new research, innovation or market deployment actions to be presented to EIC for support, or to other funding sources, or to be directly taken up by market operators. This feature will build on a two-tier approach:
  - access to information on unprotected preliminary findings and results will be limited to EIC beneficiaries, inventors and vetted investors bound by non-disclosure obligations. This module will provide for a high level of protection of such data to the benefit of their owner, allowing for their proper advertisement and selective management of disclosure. It will also provide for Artificial Intelligence-based functionalities of pre-detection and matchmaking, based on supply but also on demand.
  - a more broadly open module, for the dissemination of protected results and publications, and backing those BAS activities directed at further leveraging industrial partnerships and supporting technology transfer of results generated by EIC projects.
- Supporting services to allow EIC Programme Managers to proactively manage their portfolios and liaise with EIC companies and project partners. It should support them when steering portfolios and developing or adjusting their roadmap, by assessing qualitative data on scientific, technology and market trends (business intelligence), but also by building on the results made available by EIC companies and projects and interactions and transactions on these. That platform will also be open to stakeholders at large, in order for EIC Programme Managers to consult them on portfolio objectives and any other matters relevant to the EIC.

Links with other tools available at European level, like the Horizon results platform, and with similar platforms at national or institutional levels should be considered (to avoid duplication or the inefficiencies of several sub-markets without connections), while making explicit the EIC's unique positioning and value proposition from operating this Market Place at the European level.

In developing the specification for the EIC Market Place, the EIC will benefit from the input of the External advisory group on 'tech to market' activities (see Section 7).

### *4.2. EIC Data and IT systems integration*

Following up on the ongoing work and taking into account the future AI based services and Marketplace, the EIC IT and data management systems developments will focus on the following key components:

- Improve and expand the IT tools and interfaces built to support the daily operations management of EIC stakeholders.
- Expand the integration of EIC IT tools with other relevant IT systems, including those of the European Commission, EIT KICs, EU MS and regional ecosystems, relevant EU programmes and third parties (i.e. national business registries, granting and procurement platforms etc.).
- Ensure continuous access to relevant, accurate and fresh data sources for the systems above, connecting to high quality data services from EU Institutions, EU Member States and third parties. Acquire data from external sources to improve intelligence on relevant scientific, technological and market trends
- Further expand the existing back-office IT tools and improve the EIC data collection and transformation capabilities ensuring higher quality and reliability of data made available across all the above-mentioned systems.
- Further improve and expand the matching tools developed to help the EIC funded projects and companies in finding partners and relevant support to their activities and projects.
- Update and improve the EIC online community platform to facilitate business development, networking activities and the establishment of communities of practice (see Section V) for EIC funded projects and companies.
- Further develop and expand the event management tools as a critical component of effective events for EIC funded projects and companies and stakeholders (including Corporates, public procurers)
- Further improve expert management tools in support to the services to the EIC funded projects and companies (incl. coaches, mentors, experts etc.)
- Support capacity development and learning for SMEs on-line and through academy training events.
- Improve integration and seamless user experience across all the above tools.
- Ensure proper user support for all the tools made available

The above developments will follow, as much as possible, the principles of open source code and open data standards ensuring that both the tools and data generated can be reused by other institutions, EU Member States and relevant third parties.

**Type of action:** Public procurement action, including through use of existing IT framework contracts.

**Indicative budget and timetable**:

- AI-based tool, including the EIC Market place: EUR 8 million from 2021 budget
- EIC Data and IT integration: EUR 2 million from 2021 budget.

# 5. External expertise for monitoring, ethics and policy advice

The EIC uses external independent experts for ethics review, for the monitoring of ongoing projects[60] and to receive policy advice on the optimal achievement of the EIC objectives, as well as the implementation and proactive management of EIC activities including for support to BAS activities and the EIC Programme Managers. The EIC also reimburses the costs of applicants invited to attend face to face interviews during the evaluation of their proposals.

**Type of action:** Expert contracts.
**Indicative budget:** EUR 4.6 million from the 2021 budget.

# 6. Capacity-building and transnational cooperation for National Contact Points (NCPs)

**Expected outcomes**

- Improved professionalisation/skills of NCPs across Europe, helping to simplify access to Horizon Europe calls, lowering the entry barriers for newcomers, and raising the average quality of proposals submitted.
- Harmonised and improved trans-national cooperation between NCPs.
- Enhanced support to NCPs and potential applicants in widening countries and countries that participate at lower levels in the share of proposals and projects.
- Increase the participation of women.
- Assist in developing a pan-European Innovation Ecosystem.

**Scope**

- Proposals should aim to facilitate trans-national co-operation between National Contact Points (NCPs) with a view to identifying and sharing good practices and raising the general standard of support to programme applicants.

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[60] Including projects financed by the EIC pilot phase under Horizon 2020

- Special attention should be given to enhancing the competence of NCPs, including helping less experienced NCPs rapidly acquire the know-how built up in other countries.
- The consortium should have a good representation of experienced and less experienced NCPs.
- Proposals should address the diversity of the EIC-EIE stakeholders (researchers, innovators, SMEs, start-ups, investors) and support schemes.
- Proposals should enhance synergies across different parts of Horizon Europe the, for instance with the ERC and the EIT, as well as with InvestEU and Structural Fund programmes.
- Proposals should pay particular attention and facilitate collaboration with the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) and European Innovation Ecosystem stakeholders.
- The proposal should cover the whole duration of Horizon Europe.

**Eligibility and evaluation criteria**

The following additional eligibility criteria apply:

- Applicants must be Horizon Europe national support structures (e.g. NCP) responsible for the European Innovation Council (EIC) and European Innovation Ecosystems and officially nominated to the Commission, from a Member State or Associated Country or any third country associated to Horizon Europe.
- Only in case and as long as Horizon Europe structures would not yet be officially nominated, national support structures responsible for the European Innovation Council (EIC) and European Innovation Ecosystems nominated for Horizon 2020 would be eligible.
- The granting authority can fund a maximum of one project.

**Type of action:** Coordination and support action (CSA).

**Indicative timetable:** Q3 2021.

**Indicative budget:** EUR 4 million from the 2021 budget. The duration of the action is 7 years. For general **award criteria** check Annex 2.

# 7. Co-Creation with Public and Private Buyers of Innovations Government

Expenditure on works, goods and services represents around 14% of EU GDP, accounting for roughly annually EUR 1.9 trillion. This represents an untapped potential to stimulate the demand of innovative solutions, notably for innovative small businesses. The public but also private sector could grasp this opportunity to offer new opportunities making use of new technologies or solutions, notably for innovation suppliers such as EIC funded projects and companies. Moreover, innovation procurement allows providing better and more efficient public services to face societal challenges such as climate change, pandemic crisis or sustainable management of natural resources.

Another objective of this topic call is to foster the aggregation of the demand at European level and pull the European market – not only to push the technology – in order to give the possibility for innovative technologies to find potential first and large buyers.

**Scope**

The general idea is **to support public[61] and private[62] procurers** of innovation to better define their innovation and procurement needs and to better engage with the suppliers of innovative solutions, notably with the EIC community of very innovative companies.

For this purpose the beneficiaries selected under this call topic must **provide financial support to these procurers in the form of lump-sums** of each of the action describe below.

This call topic will fund **structured pilots** between buyers of innovations and innovative EIC SMEs, in accordance with public procurement rules, where applicable. The EIC support will cover partially the costs of procurers for the needs assessment, market engagement/consultation, co-development of solutions/pilots and drafting of terms of reference - for the amounts please see below –. With regard to the co-creation of pilots and solutions testing, the beneficiaries selected under this call topic will co-finance via lump sums the development of innovative solutions by suppliers. The support should take the form of the following 4 actions to be implemented within the specified timeframes.

Action 1: Improved **definition of the challenges and the needs** of procurers in relation to the solutions they have to buy for their users, citizens, customers, clients or employees. The *needs assessments* may include focus groups, workshops with relevant stakeholders or studies, and it will have to take place before the full development of public procurement procedures. The maximum duration of the action is set at 5 months. The maximum budget per needs assessment is a lump sum of EUR 10.000 available to both public and private buyers.

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[61] Public procurer as considered and defined in the European public procurement Directives 2014/24/EU and 2014/25/EU
[62] In the sense of large corporates

Action 2: Improved **sourcing and consulting of the market** players and innovation developers before designing the tender. The ***market engagement and consultation*** may include physical or remote events or pitching of suppliers. At least two EIC funded projects and companies to be invited per market engagement and consultation and it will have to take place before drafting the tender specifications. The maximum duration of the action is set at 5 months. The maximum budget per market engagement and consultation is a lump sum of EUR 10.000 available to both public and private buyers.

Action 3: Stimulation of **co-creation of pilots and test solutions.** The ***co-creation of pilot/test solutions*** may include pilot development and early testing for solutions between TRL 6 to TRL 9, design centric approaches... It will take place before drafting the tender specifications. At least one EIC funded company or project has to be included in this co-creation. The majority of the financial support for this action should co-finance the development of innovative solutions by suppliers that should represent the major part of the lump-sum budget.[63] Co-financing of pilots and test solutions by national or regional funding is a plus. The maximum duration of the action is set at 10 months maximum, via lump sums to public procurers only. The maximum budget per co-creation of pilot/test solution is a lump sum of EUR 100.000. This amount can be doubled EUR 200.000 in the case of joint Innovation Procurement Actions of at least 2 different public procurers from at least 2 different EU Member States or Associated Countries.

Action 4: Support to the **development of the terms of reference** before the full development of public procurement procedures. The ***development of the terms of reference*** may include innovation management, legal and intellectual property advices. The maximum duration of the action is set at 10 months, via lump sums to public procurers only. The maximum budget per co-development of terms of reference is a lump sum of EUR 50.000.

Private procurers (large corporates) will have access only to Actions 1 and 2, 'needs assessments' and 'market consultations' and not to Actions 3 and 4, while public procurers shall have access to all 4 Actions. In order to engage with EIC-funded projects and companies and innovative businesses from all EU Member States, English will be the communication language with EIC, EIC companies and the European Commission in addition to the language used by the public authority to conduct the public procurement procedure.

The action should be implemented by a consortium of minimum 2 partners from 2 EU Member States or Associated Countries (with at least one partner from an EU Member State).

**Expected Impacts:**

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[63] The public procurer(s) receiving the lump sum will be able to keep a maximum of 10% of the action budget to run the co-creation process.

- Concrete successful examples of public procurement of innovative solutions, adapted to and based on needs of public and private buyers.
- Scaled-up EIC SMEs through creation of business opportunities with public and private buyers of innovations
- Attraction and inclusion of the best European public and private procurers into the EIC Forum and eco-system.
- Enhanced public and private partners' collaboration in the co-design processes to match the needs and existing technologies that could result in public procurement of innovation;
- Stronger engagement of the buyer's community with SMEs and start-ups in driving innovation demand and detecting the innovative solutions;
- Improved skills and capacity of SMEs to identify buyers' needs, and to approach the public buyers;
- Improved skills and capacity of procurers to identify their needs and potential challenges to possible technological solutions at the market and design innovative procurements;
- Effective adoption of co-creation models to stimulate SMEs' response to procurers needs and challenges;
- Publication of innovation challenges from public and private buyers on the EIC challenge platform;
- Linking EIC community to pan-European networks the public and private buyers.

Actions implemented should benefit primarily EIC funded projects and companies - Pathfinder, Transition activities and Accelerator.

The action will include financial support to third parties[64] to allow public and private procurers from at least 15 EU Member States and Associated Countries from benefiting from the four services described above. The selection of entities and the monitoring of the support to third parties provided for each action, as well as the management of the financial support to third parties, will be ensured by the coordinator exclusively. In this respect,

- The applicants must have previous experience in the scope of this action, and in particular, in addressing procurers' needs with a European dimension;
- The selection of public and private procurers - as third parties benefitting from financial support – follow a competitive, transparent and fair procedure;

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[64] Financial support provided by the participants to third parties is one of the primary activities of this action in order to be able to achieve its objectives. Therefore, the EUR 60 000 threshold provided for in Article 204 (a) of the Financial Regulation No 2018/1046 does not apply.

- The applicants must put in place proper communication and publicity of the actions engaged;
- The applicants must put in place a system that allows the proper monitoring of the benefit gained by the third parties as consequence of the actions described above and, ultimately, the proper reporting of the impact obtained.

Applicants must allocate at least 75% of the total proposed budget to financial support to third parties.

Applicants must clearly detail in their proposals the elements required in General Annex.

**Type of action:** Coordination and Support Action (CSA).

**Indicative timetable:** Deadline for applications 30/09/2021

**Indicative budget:** The Commission considers that proposals requesting a contribution from the EU in the order of EUR 2 million would allow this specific challenge to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts.

These actions imply a financial support to third parties under the conditions laid down in general annex 8.

For general **award criteria** check Annex 2.

# 8. Expert group on design of EIC Market Place and 'Tech to Market' activities

Deployment of the EIC Market Place (see section 4) will be take forward through a staged approach, where purpose and scope are adjusted as experience and buy-in accumulate. The EIC is seeking advice to design and put such a Market Place into practice.

The EIC seeks advice on the different ways in which the aims of the EIC Market Place could be achieved, taking into account the following:
- How to support a broad spectrum of protection forms of intellectual assets, not only as Industrial Property (Patents, Models etc.) but also Creative Commons, Open Source/Data, Trade Secrets, Copyright, etc.
- How to support a wide range of asset types like data sets, data correlations, frameworks, software, technical solutions, instructions and visualizations, scenarios and scripts, which are not necessarily available for formal protection.

- How to provide different levels of information and disclosure, e.g. using standardised meta-data on each asset that characterises the content without disclosure, dynamically granted disclosure on a need-to-know basis, etc.
- Useful valuation categorisations (technology-, market and investor readiness, etc.) and techniques on how to establish them is also needed.
- Modalities and incentives for sharing results between researchers, investors and industry, and measures to protect ownership and to safeguard Europe's strategic interests.
- Ways to analyse, combine or transfer results to other areas, seek new uses and perspectives, in order to support lateral thinking and find unforeseen uses of technologies & new combinations
- Ways to combine and enrich intellectual assets and know-how into packages that open-up new avenues for technology and exploitation.
- How to ensure traceability of the use of the building blocks, for instance, though a block-chain mechanism, will guarantee that rights and obligations are properly registered.

In addition, and building on the recommendations of the report by the EIC Pilot Expert group on strengthening the EIC management[65], which dealt essentially with the newly created function of EIC Programme Managers, this Expert Group will also and more globally advise on 'tech to market' activities and their implementation, in particular regarding the combined use of Transition activities, in particular regarding the combination of Transition activities, EIC Market Place,  Business acceleration services and the proactive role of EIC Programme Managers.

This Expert group will serve as a 'sounding board' for EIC Programme Managers, allowing them to exchange and test new ideas and their implementation features with experienced Programme managers coming from different funding agencies and bodies, backgrounds. The overall objective is to step by step develop a stronger EIC portfolio management policy.

A special allowance of EUR 450/day will be paid to the experts appointed in their personal capacity who act independently and in the public interest. This amount is considered to be proportionate to the specific tasks to be assigned to the experts, including the number of meetings to be attended and possible preparatory work.

**Type of action:** Expert contracts.

**Indicative budget:** EUR 100 000 from the 2021 budget.

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[65] 'Implementing the pro-active management of the EIC pathfinder for breakthrough technologies & innovations', Expert Group report, November 2020.

# 9. EIC expert group on the implementation of the EIC plug-in pilot

This action will support the EIC operation and the implementation of the pilot Plug-in scheme for the EIC accelerator (see Annex 5).

This expert group will assess the programmes and related evaluation processes submitted by Members States and Associated Countries on an annual basis, and will certify the programmes suitable for the pilot plug-in scheme. The terms of reference will be co-created and co-designed with the Member States.

A special allowance will be paid to the experts appointed in their personal capacity who act independently and in the public interest. This amount is considered to be proportionate to the specific tasks to be assigned to the experts, including the number of meetings to be attended and possible preparatory work.

**Type of action:** Expert contracts (Other Actions not subject to calls for proposals).

**Indicative budget:** EUR 100 000 from the 2021 budget.

# 10. Support to the EIC Accelerator by the Enterprise Europe Network

**Rationale**

The aim of the EIC is to support innovation and scale-up of companies in Europe. Until now in the EIC pilot the number of funded projects led by women innovators and from widening countries was rather moderate and there is a need to support these groups of potential applicants further upstream to utilize their full potential. Moreover, applicants that receive a Seal of Excellence (SoE) from the EIC Accelerator often struggle to find the relevant alternative funding from other sources and therefore access to finance service should be provided to these entities to enable faster implementation of their projects. To provide above support and in line with Horizon Europe regulation, EIC is seeking for synergies with EU partners and programmes such as the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) to deliver the below actions.

**Scope**

**Support to innovative companies in a) widening countries[66] (300-400 per year) and b) women-led innovative companies across the whole EU and HE 3rd pillar associated countries[67] (600-800 per year) aiming at preparing high quality EIC Accelerator proposals.**

The support should take the form of a **3-5 day (on average) service package of 1-to-1 advice** to strengthen the business case of potential applicants through reinforcement of their business, innovation and partnering strategies (e.g. research institutes, investors, clients, business partners). It should focus on strengthening the company's case in each part of the EIC application. The objective is to increase the number of quality proposals and filter out companies not suitable for the EIC. Companies' needs (e.g.: partnering, business support etc) should be analysed and then be referred to relevant EEN business support services or other partners (incl. cross-border). EEN should reach out to private sector partners (e.g. innovation agencies, start-up associations, incubators, Business Angels associations etc.) and beneficiaries of the 'Women TechEU' call under the EIE WP to look for relevant innovative SMEs to assist with this 1-to-1 service.

2. **Support to EIC Accelerator SoE holders (300 per year) to obtain funding from private and/or public sources. The support should take the form of a 3-5 day (on average) service package of 1-to-1 advice, including:**
   - Identification of the relevant alternative funding source(s)
   - Advisory support for the application process to the identified funding source, including possible reorientation of the project
   - Increase the pitching capacity to present project ideas to investors and introduce regional/national/European investors (including pitching events with investors)
   - Identify other needs than funding (e.g.: partnering, business support) and refer to relevant EEN or relevant stakeholders' services (incl. cross-border)
   - Follow-up the supported SoE companies in their success in raising alternative funding and provide data back to the EIC.

3. **Exchange of best practice within the EEN and access to additional expertise and private sector actors for the benefit of EENs in widening countries and ACs to 3rd Pillar.**

The objective is to bring EENs in widening countries on a par with more advanced EENs to deliver an adequate service under Action 1 and 2 and enhance their collaboration with public and private stakeholders (e.g.: innovation agencies, start-up associations, incubators, Business Angels associations, investors).

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[66] Proposal for a REGULATION establishing Horizon Europe. Article 2, definition 15a https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14239-2020-INIT/en/pdf 'widening countries'/ 'low R&I performing countries'…are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, for the whole duration of the Programme. For associated countries, the list of eligible countries will be defined based on an indicator and published in the Work Programme. On the basis of Article 349 TFEU, legal entities from Outermost Regions will be also fully eligible.

[67] A list ACs to HE 3rd pillar will be a subject to the results of negotiations between the ACs and the EC.

This action should be delivered by the Coordination Office (see below) and includes but is not limited to:

- Drawing up and implementing a specific action plan based on needs and challenges faced by EENs in widening countries.
- At least 1 training and exchange of best practice per EEN consortium in widening countries (in addition to existing EEN 'exchange of experience' scheme)
- At least 2 days of 1-to-1 cross-border coaching by more experienced peers/experts per EEN consortium in widening countries to draft EIC Accelerator proposals (from EEN members and other experts from other MS/AC)

**Consortium – Coordination office**

In order to implement this action the proposals should be submitted by a consortium of maximum 5 EEN members with adequate EU geographic representation, fairly distributed budget and well-founded regional knowledge and experience directly related to the scope of above actions (including widening countries). The consortium should act as a '**Coordination office'** responsible for:

- Organisation and coordination of all activities, including communication and dissemination.
- Equal and fair allocation of implementation of all actions to other EEN members in all regions of the EU and ACs to HE 3$^{rd}$ pillar. These other EEN members, which are not members of the Coordination Office consortium, could be subcontractors or act as third parties providing in-kind contributions against payment. In countries/regions in ACs where there are no EEN members, a non-EEN entity could receive the subcontract/third party funding.
- Reporting on indicators, supported companies' profiles and success stories through an IT tool. This IT Tool should be developed by the coordination office in consultation with the EIC.  Data should be collected to enable the production of aggregated descriptive statistics per region to understand the profile of companies being served supported across Member States and Associated countries[68]. This IT tool should minimise reporting burden for the EEN members.

Indicative costs of the coordination and project management activities of the Coordination office should be around 5% of the total budget.

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[68] Minimum data needed: company's age, size (no. of employees and turnover), sector, female/male CEO/founder, total public funding, total private funding, academia spin-off: Y/N etc. For SoE – amounts and source of funding sought: public local, public national, philanthropy or private investors, or EIC or other EU sources.

Satisfaction surveys should be carried out for each action and SMEs' satisfaction rate should be at least 80%.

All above actions need to be carried out in complementarity and avoiding duplication of efforts with other EC actions and programmes e.g. EIC, NCPs, EIT KICS, different parts of EEN and therefore EEN needs to work in close co-operation with them.

**Expected Impact:** A broader talent pool will apply to the EIC and will therefore ultimately improve the innovation capacity of the EU and of countries associated to the HE 3rd pillar and enhance the European innovation ecosystem. This will be achieved through:

- 70% of SMEs served by EEN through this action will apply for the EIC Accelerator and 8% of served SMEs will receive EIC funding or SoE
- There will be also more realised SoE projects through access to private and public funding (i.e. 50% of served SoE will apply for funding and 25% of served SoE will receive funding)

**Eligible entities:**

Only prospective members of the Enterprise Europe Network, gathered in consortium for the 'Coordination Office' on behalf of the regional and national EEN consortia that received a letter inviting them to start grant agreement preparation for EEN 2022-2025 call under the Single Market Programme may apply to this call.

Following the successful evaluation of proposals, a grant for this coordination and support action will only be awarded to the members of the Enterprise Europe Network which have signed a grant agreement for the 'new' Enterprise Europe Network which will start operating in 2022. [69]

**Type of Action:** Coordination and support actions

**Call submission deadline:** Fourth quarter, 2021

**Indicative budget:** EUR 7.3 million for a Coordination and Support Action with a duration of 3 years (2022-2024).

For general **award criteria** check Annex 2.

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[69] [Add reference to call for EEN]

# Annex 1 [Estimated][70] Indicative Budget

| Budget-line | | Budget in EUR millions[71] | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Horizon Europe budget | Next Generation EU budget |
| **Calls[(1)]** | | | |
| **HORIZON-EIC-2021-PATHFINDEROPEN-01** [(2)] | | 170.10 | |
| **HORIZON-EIC-2021-TRANSITIONOPEN-01** [(2)] | | 61.00 | |
| **HORIZON-EIC-2021-ACCELERATOROPEN-01** [(3)(4)] | *Grants* | 300.80 | |
| | *Investments* | 300.80 | |
| **HORIZON-EIC-2021-PATHFINDERCHALLENGES-01** [(2)] | | 133.60 | |
| **HORIZON-EIC-2021-TRANSITIONCHALLENGES-01** [(2)] | | 10.85 | 30.00 |
| **HORIZON-EIC-2021-ACCELERATORCHALLENGES-01** [(3)(4)] [(5)] | *Grants* | 53.15 to 54.15 | 199.45 |
| | *Investments* | 53.15 to 54.15 | 199.45 |
| **HORIZON-EIC-2021-EEN-01** | | 7.30 | |
| **HORIZON-EIC-2021-NCP-01** | | 4.00 | |
| **HORIZON-EIC-2021-PUBLICBUY-01** | | 2.00 | |
| **Business Acceleration Services** | | | |
| **Public Procurement Actions** | | 6.50 | |

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[70] These figures remain estimated figures that are not legally binding.

[71] Rounded estimated figures still subject to final determination as result as agreement reached between Council and European Parliament on Horizon Europe budget. These figures do not include possible EFTA and Third countries appropriations.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Coaching** | | 10.00 | |
| **Investor Mentoring** | | 4.10 | |
| **Soft-landing and scale-up support** | | 2.00 | |
| **Other actions** | | | |
| **Prizes** | | 2.45 | |
| **Public Procurement Actions** | | 12.30 | |
| **Expert contracts** | | 5.30 | |
| **Scientific and technical services by the JRC** | | 0.20 | |
| **Contribution to Women TechEU initiative (implemented by EIE programme) (5)** | | [2.00] | |
| **Estimated total budget** | | 1 141.80 | 428.90 |

(1) The budgets set out in the calls and topics are indicative. Unless otherwise stated, final budgets may change following evaluation. The final figures may change by up to 20% compared to the total budget indicated in each individual work programme part. Changes within these limits will not be considered substantial within the meaning of Article 110(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046.

(2) Max. 1% of the budget dedicated to this call may be used for additional grants to existing projects for a fixed amount of EUR 50 000 as set out in the relevant Call section.

(3) On the basis of Enhanced EIC pilot and at the recommendation of the EIC Advisory Board, the share of the budget dedicated to investments (e.g. equity, equity-like, debt/guarantees, etc.) has to be distinguished. Consequently, the budget of these calls is broken-down into grants and investments (i.e. [50% - 50%]); the latter being transferred to the EIC Fund. In case the full budget allocated for investments in year N will not be committed fully in year N+1 at the latest, the unused budget will be reallocated to subsequent EIC Accelerator calls.

(4) The EIC Fund will have its own administrative budget for which it receives from the EIC Work Programme an annual amount. The administrative budget covers the set-up costs, operation and administration expenses of any compartment. These costs include any cost in relation to the acquisition, ownership or realisation of the investments. The administrative budget also cover, among others, the fees payable to service providers, advisory, compensations to external experts, staff, depositary and administrative agent fees, accounting, auditors, compliance procedures, communication and marketing, litigation or arbitration, statutory or regulatory fees, insurance premiums, taxes and other governmental charges and any other operational and administration costs and expenses as approved by the Board of the Fund. This budget will in average not exceed 4 % of the budget transferred to the EIC Fund for investments purposes.

(5) Subject to the adoption of the main Horizon Europe WP 2021-2022, the EIC WP will contribute financially to the Women TechEU initiative implemented by the EU Innovation ecosystems programme (EIE). Consequently the indicative budget provided by Horizon Europe budget (MFF) and dedicated to HORIZON-EIC-2021-ACCELERATORCHALLENGES-01 will be adjusted.

# Annex 2 General conditions for applications

**A — Admissibility**

*Admissibility*

Applications must be submitted before the **call deadline**.

Applications must be submitted **electronically** directly via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the call topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section); or indirectly via the EIC Platform where applicants will be redirected to the Portal . Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Applications must be **readable**, **accessible**, **printable** and **complete** (contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents) and must be submitted using the forms provided inside the Electronic Submission System.

The Application Form for Pathfinder and Transition will have two parts:

— **Part A** (to be filled in directly online) — contains administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator and beneficiaries and affiliated entities), the summarised budget for the proposal and call specific questions;

— **Part B** (to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded as PDF in the system) — contains the technical description of the project.

Annexes and supporting documents will be directly available in the Submission System and must be uploaded as PDF files (or other formats allowed by the system).

The **page limits** and sections subject to limits will be clearly shown in the application templates and must be respected. Excess pages will be automatically made invisible, and will not be taken into consideration by the evaluators.

For the EIC Accelerator, the applicant must not be in a situation of **concurrent submission/implementation**. Concurrent submission exists when an applicant submits more than one proposal for evaluation to any EIC Accelerator call before the evaluation feedback has been provided for the earlier submission. If a case of concurrent submission is identified, only the proposal submitted first will be deemed eligible. Concurrent implementation occurs when the grant holder of an ongoing EIC Accelerator/EIC Pilot/SME Instrument project submits another proposal before the first project is finalised.[72]

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[72] Grant-only projects selected under a Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Accelerator call may be eligible to submit a proposal for a related investment component under an EIC Accelerator call.

In no circumstances shall the same costs be financed twice by the budget (article 191 of the Financial Regulation).

Applicants be asked at a later stage for further documents *(for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc.).*

**B — Eligibility**

*Entities eligible for participation*

Any legal entity,[73] regardless of its place of establishment, including legal entities from non-associated third countries or international organisation (including international European research organisations)[74] is **eligible to participate**, provided that the conditions laid down in the Rules for Participation[75] have been met together with any other **conditions laid down in the specific call or topic**.

In order to be **eligible for funding**, the applicants must be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e., EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs)) and Horizon Europe Associated Countries (see Annex 3).[76]

*Eligible activities*

Eligible activities are the ones described in the call conditions.

Project must have a focus on civil applications and may not aim at human cloning for reproductive purposes, intend to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such changes heritable (with the exception of research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads, which may be financed) or intend to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer.

*Ethics*

Projects must comply with:

– ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity) and

– applicable EU, international and national law

Applicants must have completed the Ethics Self-Assessment as part of their application.

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73 For the definitions, see Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.
74 International European research organisation means an international organisation, the majority of whose members are Member States or Associated Countries, and whose principal objective is to promote scientific and technological cooperation in Europe.
75 [INSERT REF TO HE REGULATION].
76 See complete list on the Funding & Tenders Portal.

Projects involving ethics issues will have to undergo an ethics review to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific ethics requirements (which become part of the grant agreement in the form ethics deliverables, e.*g. ethics committee opinions/ authorisations required under national or EU law*).

### *Security — EU classified and sensitive information*

Projects involving classified and/or security sensitive information will have to go through the Security Appraisal process to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific security rules (detailed in a Security Section, which is annexed to the grant agreement). Specific provisions for EU-classified information (EUCI) and sensitive information (SEN) will be included in the grant agreement, as necessary and appropriate.

The rules for protecting EU-classified information (governed by Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444[77] and/or national rules) provide for instance that:

- projects involving information classified as TRES SECRET UE/EU TOP SECRET (or equivalent) can NOT be funded,

- EU-classified information must be marked in accordance with the applicable security instructions in the Classification Guide appendix of the Security Aspects Letter (SAL) which is contained in the Security Section of the grant agreement,

- generation of or access to information with classification levels CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL or above (and RESTREINT UE/ EU RESTRICTED, if required by national rules) may take place only in premises of entities which have been granted a Facility Security Clearance (FSC) issued by the competent National Security Authority (NSA),

- handling of information classified CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL or above (and RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED, if required by national rules) may take place only in a secured area accredited by the competent NSA,

- access to and handling of information classified CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL or above (and RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED, if required by national rules) may be granted only to individuals with a valid Personnel Security Clearance (PSC) and an established need-to-know, who have been briefed on the applicable security rules,

- access to and handling of information classified RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED may be granted only to individuals who have a need-to-know and have been briefed on the applicable security rules,

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[77] See Commission Decision 2015/544/EU, Euratom of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53.

– at the end of the grant, the classified information must either be returned or continued to be protected in accordance with the applicable rules,

– subcontracting of action tasks involving EU-classified information is subject to prior written approval by the European Commission, which is the originator of EU-classified information, and is possible only to entities established in an EU Member State or in a non-EU country with a security of information agreement with the EU (or an administrative arrangement with the Commission)

– disclosure of EU-classified information is subject to prior written approval by the European Commission.

Please note that, depending on the type of activity, facility security clearances may have to be provided before grant signature. The granting authority will assess this for each case and fix the delivery date during grant preparation. It is not possible to sign any grant agreement, before at least one of the beneficiaries in the consortium has a facility security clearance.

In certain cases, the project results might not require classification but they might be security sensitive and consequently require restricted disclosure or limited dissemination due to security reasons, in accordance with the applicable security instructions in the Security Section. This means that, in principle, third parties should have no access to results subject to this type of restriction. Disclosure of this information is subject to prior written approval by the European Commission.

Further security recommendations may be added to the grant agreement in the form of security deliverables *(e.g. establishment of Security Advisory Board, appointment of Project Security Officer, limit the level of detail, use fake scenario, etc.)*.

In addition, EIC funded projects and companies must ensure that their projects are not subject to national/third country security requirements that could affect the implementation or put into question the award of the grants *(e.g. technology restrictions, national security classification, etc.)*. Any potential security issues must be notified immediately to the granting authority.

### *Use of Copernicus and Galileo/EGNOS*

Projects involving earth observation, positioning, navigation or timing data, services or technologies must make use of at least Copernicus and Galileo/EGNOS data, services and technologies.

### *Gender Equality Plans and gender mainstreaming*

Each legal entity being a public body, a research organisation or a higher education establishment must have a Gender Equality Plan, covering the following elements:

– Publication: formal document published on the institution's website and signed by the top management

- Dedicated resources: commitment of resources and gender expertise to implement it

- Data collection and monitoring: sex/gender disaggregated data on personnel and students and annual reporting based on indicators

- Training: Awareness raising/trainings on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers

- Recommended areas to be covered and addressed via concrete measures and targets:

  - work-life balance and organisational culture

  - gender balance in leadership and decision-making

  - gender equality in recruitment and career progression

  - integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

  - measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.

A self-declaration will be requested at application stage, while the existence of the Gender Equality Plan is checked before grant signature.

### *Open Science*

For Pathfinder, the EIC funded projects must provide immediate open access ro results (i.e. through publication) through a trusted repository for peer-reviewed publications. EIC funded projects must develop and update a data management plan and manage responsibly all digital research data generated in the action in line with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable data). Data will be open in principle but exceptions to open access apply. Topics may require the use of European Open Science Cloud-federated repositories or to adhere to other open science practices such as early and open sharing of research or citizen involvement in research. EIC funded projects (or authors) must retain sufficient intellectual property rights to comply with all of their open science requirements, including specific licensing requirements.

EIC funded projects must, if requested by the EIC executive agency, grant for a limited period of time specified in the request non-exclusive licences — on fair and reasonable conditions — to their results to legal entities that need the results to address the public emergency and commit to rapidly and broadly exploit the resulting products and services at fair and reasonable conditions. This provision will apply up to four years after the end of the action.

Unless provided otherwise in the specific call conditions, EIC funded projects must — up to four years after the end of the action — inform the EIC executive agency, if the results could reasonably be expected to contribute to European or international standards.

The EIC executive agency may — up to four years after the end of the action — object to a transfer of ownership or the exclusive licensing of results.

EIC funded projects must provide (digital or physical) access to data or other results needed for validation of the conclusions of scientific publications, to the extent that their legitimate interests or constraints are safeguarded (and unless they already provided the (open) access at publication.

In case of a public emergency, if requested by the EIC executive agency, the EIC funded projects must immediately deposit any research output in a repository and provide open access to it under a CC BY licence, a Public Domain Dedication (CC 0) or equivalent. As an exception, if providing open access would be against the EIC projects' legitimate interests, such projects must grant non-exclusive licenses — on fair and reasonable conditions — to legal entities that need the research output to address the public emergency and commit to rapidly and broadly exploit the resulting products and services at fair and reasonable conditions. This exception is limited to four years after the end of the action.


## C. FINANCIAL and OPERATIONAL CAPACITY

### *Financial capacity*

Applicants to EIC Pathfinder and Transition calls must have **stable and sufficient resources** to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

The financial capacity check will be done by us on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the [Participant Register](#) during grant preparation *(e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc.)*. The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally only be done for the coordinator and if the requested grant amount is more than EUR 500 000, except for:

- public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations, and

- cases where the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000 (low-value grant).

For more information, *see [Rules on Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#)*.

*Operational capacity*

Applicants to EIC Pathfinder and Transition calls must have the **know-how, qualifications and resources** to successfully implement their tasks in the project and contribute their share (including, when appropriate, sufficient experience in EU/trans-national projects of comparable size).

This assessment of operational capacity will be carried out during the evaluation of the award criterion 'quality and efficiency of the implementation', on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including its operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time of the implementation of the tasks.

If the evaluation of this award criterion leads a score above the applicable threshold, then the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Public bodies, Member State organisations and international organisations are exempted from the operational capacity check.

For the EIC Accelerator, the operational capacity of the applicant will be assessed during the evaluation of the award criterion 'Implementation and Financial Risk'. Experts will judge whether each participant has, or will have in due time thanks to EIC support, sufficient operational capacity to successfully carry out their tasks in the proposed work-plan. This assessment will be based on the competence and experience of the applicant, including their operational resources (human, technical, other) and the measures proposed to secure these resources by the time of the implementation of the tasks.

*Exclusion*

Applicants that are subject to **EU administrative sanctions** (i.e. exclusion or financial penalty decision)[78] or are in one of the following **exclusion situations**[79] banning them from receiving EU grants can NOT participate:

- − bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts),

- − they are in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts),

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[78] See Article 136 EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.
[79] See Articles 136 and 141 EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

− they are guilty of grave professional misconduct (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant),

− they are guilty of fraud, corruption, having links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant),

− they have shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement or grant decision (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant),

− they are guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No 2988/95 (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant), or

− they have created under a different jurisdiction an entity with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that[80]:

− during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information, or

− they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

### D. AWARD CRITERIA

If admissible and eligible, the proposals for Coordination and Support Actions will be evaluated and ranked against the following award criteria:

| Excellence | Impact | Quality and efficiency of the implementation |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

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[80] See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

| - Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives. <br><br> - Quality of the proposed coordination and/or support measures including soundness of methodology. | - Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the work programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions due to the project. <br><br> - Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities. | - Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall. <br><br> - Capacity and role of each participant, and extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise. |
| --- | --- | --- |

Evaluation scores will be awarded for the criteria, and not for the different aspects listed in the tables. For full applications, each criterion will be scored out of 5. The threshold for individual criteria will be 3. The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the three individual scores, will be 10.

For other types of actions, including Research and Innovation Actions, the selection and award criteria are detailed in the relevant call sections.

# Annex 3 Eligible Associated Countries and Third Countries

In order to be eligible for funding, the applicants must be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:

— EU Member States (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))

— eligible non-EU countries:

  — Countries associated to Horizon Europe[81]

    At the date of the publication of the work programme, there are no countries associated to Horizon Europe. Considering the Union's interest to retain, in principle, relations with the countries associated to Horizon 2020, most third countries associated to Horizon 2020 are expected to be associated to Horizon Europe by the time the first grant agreements under Horizon Europe are signed. For the purposes of the eligibility conditions, applicants established in Horizon 2020 Associated Countries will be treated as entities established in an Associated Country, subject to the applicability of the association agreements under Horizon Europe.

  — Low and middle income countries[82]

Legal entities which are established in countries not listed above will be eligible for funding when provided for in the specific call conditions, or their participation is considered essential for implementing the action.

### *Single legal entity ('Mono-beneficiary') and consortium ('multi-beneficiary') composition*

Applicants for mono-beneficiary actions (EIC Accelerator, EIC Transition where specified, EIC Pathfinder where specified) must be established in a Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country.

Applications for multi-beneficiary actions (EIC Pathfinder, EIC Transition where specified) must be submitted by a consortium including at least three independent legal entities unless otherwise specified in the call text, each established in a different Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country and with at least one of them established in a Member State.

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[81] Please see the Horizon Europe Programme Guide for up-to-date information on the current list of and the position for Associated Countries.

[82] See the Horizon Europe Programme Guide for a complete list of these countries.

Applications for Coordination and Support actions may be submitted by one or more legal entities, which may be established in a Member State, Associated Country, or in exceptional cases and if provided for in the specific call conditions, in another third country.

The European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC), international European research organisations and legal entities created under EU law are deemed to be established in a Member State other than the ones in which the other legal entities participating in the action are established.

# Annex 4. Fast Track scheme to apply for the EIC Accelerator

The 'Fast Track' scheme is a novelty under Horizon Europe and a specific process applicable to the EIC Accelerator. It provides for a specific treatment of applications that result from existing Horizon Europe or Horizon 2020 projects.

Under the Fast Track scheme, applicants do not apply directly to the EIC Accelerator call (see Section [xx] of the work programme). Rather, the Fast Track scheme applies to a potential innovation and market deployment action stemming from the implementation of a project, where the assessment of suitability for support under the EIC Accelerator is made within the context of that project review.

The project review implemented by the funding body must therefore be conducted using equivalent evaluation criteria as set out for the short application stage of the EIC Accelerator (Section II.3) centred on the underlying idea of that potential new action. The project review must also assess whether there is any overlap between the activities/ work packages supported under the existing grant, and those that would be proposed for support under the EIC Accelerator.

If the project review concludes that the idea/ result meets the first two criteria (Excellence and Impact), that there is no duplication of funding with the existing grant, and that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for the EIC Accelerator, then the responsible funding body will submit the outcome of the review to the EIC Accelerator. The applicant will then be invited to prepare a full application for the EIC Accelerator to one of the cut-off dates within the next 12 months following initial review. They will receive support through the EIC artificial intelligence based IT platform and coaching as specified in Section [II.3].

Full applications to the EIC Accelerator stemming from the Fast Track scheme will be assessed as set out in Section II.3, and will be treated in exactly the same way as all other full applications.

At a first stage, the funding bodies and schemes which are eligible for the Fast Track for Accelerator cut off dates in 2021 are:

-    The EIC Pathfinder and Transition projects (including under EIC pilot);
-    The ERC Executive Agency for Proof of Concept;
-    The Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

These funding bodies are responsible for implementing the Fast Track scheme in accordance with the above provisions. They may decide not to implement the scheme or to introduce it at a later stage.

Subject to experience with the Fast Track scheme in 2021, it may be opened to other parts of Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020, and to the funding bodies responsible for their implementation.

The EIC website will provide up to date information about how the Fast Track scheme will be implemented by the relevant funding bodies.

# Annex 5 Pilot Plug-in scheme to apply for the EIC Accelerator

The Plug-in scheme is a novelty under Horizon Europe and a specific process applicable the EIC Accelerator only. Its process is equivalent to the Fast-track one, as described under Annex 4, except that it applies to applications that result from existing national or regional programmes.

Following the results of a mapping of national and regional programmes, a pilot initiative by the European Commission in close cooperation with EU Member States and Associated Countries, is included in the first work programme of Horizon Europe.

Under the Plug-in scheme, applicants do not apply directly to the EIC Accelerator call (see Section [II.3] of the work programme). Rather, the Plug-in applies to a potential innovation and market deployment action stemming from the implementation of a project, where an assessment of suitability for support under the EIC Accelerator is made within the context of a project review.

The project review implemented by the funding body responsible for the programme should:

- be conducted using equivalent evaluation criteria as set out for the short application stage of the EIC Accelerator (Section II.3), centred on the underlying idea of that potential new action, as well as equivalent evaluation processes guaranteeing an independent assessment of proposals and compliance with Art. 43(3) to (5) of the Rules for Participation.
- assess whether there is any overlap between the activities supported under an existing grant allocated under the national and regional programme, and those that would be proposed for support under the EIC Accelerator.

If the project review concludes that the following criteria are met, the responsible funding body can submit the outcome of the projects review to the EIC Accelerator:

- the proposal meets the two first criteria of the EIC Accelerator (excellence and impact),
- there is no duplication of funding of activities to be supported under the EIC Accelerator with the existing grant allocated at national or regional level, and
- the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for the EIC Accelerator.

The applicants will then be invited to prepare a full application for the EIC Accelerator to one of the cut-off dates within the next 12 months following initial review. They will receive support through the EIC artificial intelligence based IT platform and coaching as specified in Section [II.3]. Applicants may decide to which eligible cut-off they apply.

Full applications to the EIC Accelerator stemming from the Plug-in scheme will be assessed as set out in Section II.3, and will be treated exactly the same way as all other full applications.

An expert group will be set up by the Commission (see Section Other Actions) to assess the programmes submitted by the EU Member States and Associated Countries for the mapping exercise and whether their related national or regional evaluation procedures are equivalent to the ones applicable to the assessment of proposals under the EIC Accelerator. The expert group will certify which programmes are suitable for the Plug-in scheme. The experts will collaborate with the EIC plug-in contact points (representatives of EU Member States and Associated Countries) who will have to provide accurate information regarding the programmes. The mapping exercise is the basis and starting point of the experts' work. The result of the mapping exercise and the experts' assessment will be published on the EIC website and will include only programmes for which all the key elements and information are provided.

The funding bodies or entities in charge of these national/regional programmes are responsible for implementing the Plug-in scheme in accordance with the above provisions. They may decide not to implement the scheme or to introduce it at a later stage. The national innovation agency (or the appointed authority) will ensure coordination among the different national and regional funding bodies and avoid duplication of the applications.

The EIC website will provide information about how the Plug-in scheme will be implemented by the relevant funding bodies.

To guarantee the effective implementation of this pilot, only public programmes – both national and regional –will be considered initially. After the certification process done by the experts is concluded, the responsible funding bodies will be entitled to present the projects that have passed the project review and were funded under those certified programmes.

Plug-in applications will be accepted starting from the first EIC Accelerator cut-off in 2022 at the earliest, and could be limited based on a national quota. The pilot plug-in scheme will be subjected to an assessment after the first implementation to verify the effectiveness of the process and the quality of the applications, in view of the renewal of the Plug-in process under subsequent cut-off.

# Annex 6 Ad hoc grants for EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition grant holders

The grant holders of **EIC Pathfinder projects** (including grants resulting from certain EIC pilot Pathfinder, FET-Open and FET-Proactive calls, see Section II.1) and of **EIC Transition projects** are eligible to receive ad hoc grants with fixed amounts of up to EUR 50 000, as specified in the relevant call sections of this work programme.

The ad hoc grants are not subject to any call. They reflect the necessity and hence the possibility for the EIC to proactively support, at any stage of a project implementation, the assessment of any potentially innovative lead stemming from a Pathfinder project, or reinforce the coordination and management of a Portfolio where needed.

These ad hoc grants will fund either complementary activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation (for EIC Pathfinder grant holders) or portfolio activities (for EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition grant holders).

Complementary activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation could include, but are not limited to:
- definition of a commercialisation process;
- market and competitiveness analysis;
- technology assessment;
- verification of innovation potential;
- consolidation of IP rights;
- business case development;
- exploratory / preparatory work for creating start-ups or spin-offs.

Portfolio activities could include, but are not limited to:
- defining common objectives and activities;
- building synergies within the portfolio and with any outside relevant partners;
- engaging strategic partners to overcome common challenges;
- (co)-organising events;
- maximising data sharing;
- raising visibility of the portfolio's community and the EIC.

These ad hoc grants do not fund research or activities that were already foreseen in the original project. A maximum of three ad hoc l grants can be awarded for each Pathfinder project and more than three may be awarded in exceptional and duly justified cases. A maximum of one ad hoc grant can be awarded for each Transition project. Any such ad hoc grant can be awarded to an individual grant holder or a group of grant holders.[83]

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[83] This includes affiliated entities that are participating in the Pathfinder or Transition projects.

EIC grant holders, after discussion with a Programme Manager or following a project review, can apply for such an ad hoc grant. Each application will be assessed by an EIC Programme Manager, where relevant with the assistance of an EIC expert evaluator, taking into account the following considerations:

For activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation:
- Potential of the proposed deep-tech innovation to create new market or to solve pressing societal needs / problems;
- Expertise, capabilities and motivation of the applicants to take this innovation forward to the market;
- Timeliness and pertinence of the activities proposed.

For portfolio activities:
- Contribution of the activity to the objectives of the portfolio;
- Engagement of portfolio's projects and relevant external partners;
- Timeliness of the activity proposed to maximize its impact.

Final decision will be motivated and communicated to the grant holders and the Programme Committee. Successful applicants will be invited for grant preparation, which might take into account adjustments proposed by the EIC Programme Manager.

Following successful grant preparation, the granting authority will award the ad hoc grant[84] to cover the eligible costs necessary for the implementation of the proposed activities. The funding rate of this grant will be 100% of the eligible costs.

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[84] This may be a new grant agreement or an amendment to the existing grant agreement.

# Annex 7 Intellectual Property provisions for EIC Pathfinder and Transition projects

*[to be included once validated with LS and DG BUDG]*