European Innovation Council (EIC)

Work Programme 2025

European Innovation Council

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?

This document presents the 2025 European Innovation Council (EIC) Work Programme funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. It sets out how the EIC will allocate its funding of over EUR 1.2 billion for the year 2025 and has been prepared following the advice of the EIC Board.

The Work Programme defines the calls for applications targeting innovative researchers, startups and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), scale up companies, and founders and other organisations and individuals interested in innovation. The focus on breakthrough technologies and game-changing innovations which are high risk and with a high potential for impact and to scale up internationally and become market leaders.

A broad range of support is available, ranging from grants, investments through the EIC Fund, prizes to Business Acceleration Services (including access to coaching and mentoring, expertise and ecosystem partners). The Work Programme sets out the type of support available, how to apply, and how selection decisions are taken.

It's important for those seeking funding opportunities through the EIC to carefully read and understand the Work Programme to ensure they align with the objectives and meet the eligibility criteria as well as understand each *step* of the process.

Potential applicants, and those interested in the EIC in general, can find more information, including background to the EIC mission, organisation and practical guidance, on the EIC website: https://eic.ec.europa.eu.

Support and advice for potential applicants is available in each EU Member State and Associated County, through **National Contact Points** (Funding & tenders (europa.eu)) and through the **Enterprise Europe Network** (https://een.ec.europa.eu/).

Applications are made apply through the EU Funding & Tenders portal (https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home), which can also be accessed via the EIC website (https://eic.ec.europa.eu).

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[To be added]

I.   Introduction

Strategic goals and Key Performance Indicators

The EIC was established to identify, develop and scale up breakthrough technologies and companies, which are critical for EU policies to achieve the green and digital transition and help ensure future open strategic autonomy in critical technologies.

The EIC Board provides strategic advice for the EIC Work Programme[1]. For the period 2021-27 the EIC Board has recommended six strategic goals, with associated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), providing clear direction, track progress, and guide implementation and potential new actions.[2] The baselines and progress against KPI targets will be included in the annual EIC impact reports. The KPIs represent mid to long term targets.

Six Strategic Goals for the EIC:

1. To be the investor of choice for those with visionary ideas: The EIC must have continent-wide recognition and traction with high potential start-ups, entrepreneurs and innovative researchers, in particular from underrepresented groups such as women innovators and those from less developed ecosystems.

2. To crowd in EUR 30-50 billion investment into European deep tech[3]: The EIC must bridge a critical financing gap faced by deep tech companies and leverage the EIC Fund to influence the allocation of private assets in their support.

3. To pull through high-risk technologies in critical areas for society and open strategic autonomy: The EIC must take risks and support the most promising deep tech opportunities from the earliest stage to commercial scale-up, delivering relevant innovations for society and safeguarding against dependencies for key technologies.

4. To increase the number of European unicorns and scale ups: The EIC must support the growth and scaling up of European start-ups and SMEs to match and ultimately surpass the performance of the USA and Asia.

5. To catalyse innovation impacts from European public research and innovation: The EIC must build partnerships to draw on, and commercialise, the best ideas

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[1] In line with Article 12 (1) (b) Council Decision 2021/764

[2] European Innovation Council (EIC) Board (E03823) at https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups?lang=en

[3] As defined in the Glossary

from the research base across the EU, and scale-up start-ups funded under other EU or national initiatives.

6. To achieve operational excellence: The agility and speed of EIC operations and decision making must align with the expectations of applicants, investors and market norms.

In addition, the EIC Board has published a set of recommendations to improve the participation of innovators from widening countries in the EIC.[4] The recommendations are taken forward in the implementation of the EIC Work Programme, for example in the outreach activities and selection of EIC experts and jury members.

Overview of the 2025 Work Programme

The funding and support available in 2025 is organised into four main funding schemes: the EIC Pathfinder for advanced research to develop the scientific basis to underpin breakthrough technologies (Section II); the EIC Transition to validate technologies and develop business plans for specific applications (Section III); the EIC Accelerator to support companies (SMEs, start-ups, spin-offs and in exceptional cases small mid-caps) to bring their innovations to market and scale them up (Section IV) and the EIC Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) Scale Up, which provides additional support to promising companies driving innovation in critical areas[5] (SMEs, start-ups, spin-offs and in exceptional cases small mid-caps) to help them secure larger funding rounds for further scaling their businesses (Section V). In each case, the direct financial support to innovators is augmented with access to a range of Business Acceleration Services (Section VI) providing access to leading expertise, corporates, investors and ecosystem actors.

Pathfinder, Transition and Accelerator provide for "Open" funding which can support technologies and innovations in any field without any predefined priority areas. In the case of the Pathfinder and Accelerator, this Open funding is complemented by a set of "Challenges" which target specific technologies and innovations of strategic interest for the Union, including to support initiatives such as Net Zero Industry, Critical Raw Materials, the Chips Act, and Health Emergency Responses. The EIC STEP Scale Up call targets technologies and innovations within the fields of digital technologies, clean and resource efficient technologies, including net-zero technologies; and biotechnologies.

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[4] https://eic.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-08/EIC_Board_Statement_Widening_final31072023.pdf
[5] Regulation - EU - 2024/795 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

Outside of the calls, a budget is also set aside to support follow on investments to companies selected under previous EIC Work Programmes.

The Work Programme also supports a number of innovation prizes (Section VII), and additional supporting actions allowing the functioning of the EIC such as expert contracts, data management, communication and IT (Section VIII).

Linkages between these funding schemes will be maximised through proactive management (see below) and new approaches, such as additional 'Booster' grants to EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition projects (Annex 5), the Fast Track scheme to accelerate the access of successful projects from EU programmes to the EIC Accelerator (Annex 3) and the Plug in for access of projects stemming from national programmes (Annex 4).

In complement to the EIC Work Programme it is envisaged that the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2025 part on Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area (WIDERA), will introduce a pilot EIC Pre-Accelerator call to support early stage deep tech startups to develop the technology, business and investment readiness to levels that would enable them to successfully apply and attract funding from EIC Accelerator or other sources. In anticipation of this call, the EIC Work Programme foresees the eligibility of beneficiaries under the Pre-Accelerator call for certain Business Acceleration Services and the Fast Track to the EIC Accelerator.

Table 1. Summary of main calls in 2025[6]

Call	Who can apply	What for	EIC Open Deadlines	EIC Open Indicative Budget (EUR million)	EIC Challenges EIC Challenge	EIC Challenges Deadlines/ Cut-offs	EIC Challenges Indicative Budget (EUR million)
EIC Pathfinder	Open call: only consortia can apply. Challenges call: smaller consortia (at least two eligible entities) or and single applicants as well as larger consortia.	Open Call: Grants up to EUR 3 million Challenge Call: Grants up to EUR 4 million. Higher amounts if duly justified. Projects to achieve the proof of principle and validate the scientific basis of breakthrough technologies (starting from early TRLs aiming at achieving TRL3 or 4)	11 March 2025	142		14 October 2025	120
EIC Transition	Single applicants (SMEs, spin-offs, start-ups, research organisations, universities) or small consortia (minimum 2, maximum 5 eligible entities).	Grants of up to EUR 2.5 million to validate and demonstrate technology in application-relevant environment (starting at TRL 3/ 4 aiming at achieving TRL 5/ 6) and develop business and market readiness.	17 September 2025	98			
EIC Accelerator	Single start-ups and SMEs (including spin-offs), individuals (intending to launch a start-up/ SME) and in exceptional cases small mid-caps (fewer than 499 employees).	Grant component below EUR 2.5M for innovation activities (starting at TRL 5 or 6 aiming at achieving higher TRLs) Investment component of EUR 0.5 up to 10 million for scaling up and other activities. Grant only component under certain conditions.	Short applications: any time (continuous) Full applications: 12 March 2025, 1 October 2025	384		12 March 2025, 1 October 2025	250
EIC Accelerator – STEP scale-up call	Single startups and SMEs, small mid-caps, investors on behalf of eligible companies	Investment component of EUR 10 up to 30 million for scaling up strategic technologies for Europe.	Any time (continuous)	300			

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[6] This table provides a simplified overview. All applicants need to read the relevant sections for the full information on eligibility and conditions for funding, including Annex 2. As affiliated entities do not sign the grant agreement, they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any). The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the calls up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening. The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.

Main changes of the 2025 Work Programme The 2025 Work Programme incorporates adjustments, improvements and simplifications compared to the 2024 Work Programme, following the recommendations of the EIC Board, the budget available and lessons learned during implementation.

A major development is the **introduction of a EIC STEP Scaleup call** to provide larger investments in companies developed certain technologies (see Section V). This is introduced as a pilot call and has a number of novelties as described in the call text, including a shortened evaluation process and a link to complementary support from Venture Debt from InvestEU implementing partners.

Other specific changes include:

EIC Pathfinder:

- ✦ Additional emphasis on the potential solutions to be provided in applicants proposals for technology visions.
- ✦ **EIC Transition:** Increased number of applicants to be invited to the jury interview phase and juries to recommend "GO – reserve" for projects to be funded if additional budget becomes available.
- ✦ Seal of Excellence will be awarded to all proposals that meet the evaluation thresholds (previously only for mono-beneficiary SME proposals)

EIC Accelerator:

- ✦ The maximum investment component is reduced from EUR 15 million to EUR 10 million (investments amounts above EUR 10 million available under the STEP call)
- ✦ Clarification that applications must have completed all elements of Technology Readiness Level 5The evaluation of short applications (Step 1) will be batched on a monthly basis with results within 4-6 weeks.
- ✦ For proposals submitted through the Open Call, unanimous approval in case of consensus meetings is required for a jury interview invitation.
- ✦ <mark>Clarifications that proposals with nuclear applications are eligible</mark>
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Key features of EIC support

A combination of financial and non-financial support to accelerate and grow EIC innovations and companies.

The EIC support goes far beyond funding, and it aims at supporting the emergence, acceleration and growth of EIC innovations and deep tech companies. In order to

further leverage the EIC investments, all EIC Awardees will be provided with access to a range of externally contracted, bespoke EIC Business Acceleration Services (BAS) at any stage of development of their activities. The EIC uses its pan-European reach to connect EIC Awardees with partners from all around Europe and beyond, thereby also contributing to further develop the innovation ecosystem in Europe by providing access to and from a deal flow of top-level European innovators.

Proactive project and portfolio management by EIC Programme Managers

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

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

✦ The milestones defined by the proposals for funding will be used to periodically review the progress. Reviews will assess whether the activities foreseen to reach the milestones have been completed and will consider the results and outputs against the overall objectives. The reviews will be undertaken with support of independent experts and overseen by EIC Programme Managers for projects within their portfolios.

✦ Following the reviews, the EIC support may be continued on the basis of its implementation according to the description of action, amendments may be requested or, in case a project has lost economic or technological relevance or has not met agreed milestones, it may be suspended or even terminated. Reviews may also result in requests for amendments to ongoing or planned activities or deployment of some necessary EIC Business Acceleration Services (or other relevant ones, like those from EIT-KICs), including additional coaching days and access to crucial expertise. For EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition projects, reviews

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[7] Appointed in accordance with point 1.2.2. of Pillar III in Annex I to Council Decision 2021/764, EIC Programme Managers are temporary staff employed by the Agency to manage one or more EIC Portfolios.

may also involve an assessment to submit a proposal directly to the EIC Accelerator under the Fast Track scheme (see Annex 3) or to submit a proposal for additional EIC Booster grants (see Annex 5). In addition to the reviews, the EIC Awardees will be expected to keep the Agency regularly informed of progress and pre-alerted in case of difficulties.

✦ The EIC funded projects may be included in one or more thematic or Challenge-based portfolios of projects ('EIC Portfolios'), providing the projects with a productive setting in which to advance their ideas. For EIC Challenges, the portfolio will reflect the scope of the challenge ("Challenge Portfolio"). Projects to be funded through EIC Open calls may be requested to join one or more Thematic Portfolios.

✦ Projects selected under EIC Pathfinder Challenges will work together with Programme Managers and pursue together as a portfolio a common roadmap for the Challenge. This roadmap is prepared under the guidance of the EIC programme Manager and sets out collective activities, objectives and milestones. In order to take into account relevant changes in science and innovation or the portfolio's achievements or consistency, the objectives and roadmap of an EIC Challenge Portfolio must regularly be assessed and if necessary, revised. Based on any such revision, the Agency may request to amend the projects' activities, milestones and deliverables in accordance with the grant agreement. If a project has been selected under an EIC Challenge topic, and where no amendment can be agreed upon to ensure coherence with the updated objectives of the related Challenge Portfolio, the Agency may suspend or terminate the project in accordance with the grant agreement.

✦ EIC portfolio activities are identified and developed by EIC Programme Managers in consultation with the EIC Awardees of the projects in the EIC Portfolio, with relevant Commission services and where appropriate with other interested EIC Community members and third parties such as members of the innovation ecosystem. They aim at developing cooperation within an EIC Portfolio in order to achieve its objectives, enhance research, prepare transition to innovation and stimulate business opportunities understanding and enhancing of regulatory framework, 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.

A tailored approach to proposal evaluation

The EIC approach to the evaluation of proposals is tailored to the objectives of each of the EIC funding schemes. For the most mature technologies, when business and market

readiness levels are close to market funding, greater emphasis is put on 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).

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

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 interviews based on a binary scoring (GO/NO GO)[8] (see Section IV).

For the EIC STEP Scale Up, which supports promising companies developing critical technologies[9] that have already received funding, including those with prior EIC support, to help them secure larger funding rounds for further scaling their businesses (see Section V).

Policy of open access and Intellectual Property rights[10]

For the EIC Pathfinder, provisions will be applied to ensure open access to scientific publications and promote the uptake of research results (see Annex 2 on open science).

Moreover, EIC aims to stimulate the cross-fertilisation and exploitation of results from EIC supported projects. Therefore, EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition projects may be requested at any stage by EIC Programme Managers to actively share information about results (including preliminary findings), within their EIC Portfolio and with other relevant EIC projects and parties, as detailed in Annex 6. The goal is to stimulate and nurture potential innovation out of EIC Pathfinder or EIC Transition results and explore pathways to further development. This exchange of information between EIC Awardees 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

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[8] In line with Article 28(3) and Article 29(2) of the Horizon Europe Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2021/695) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013, OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 1, ("Horizon Europe Regulation").

[9] Regulation - EU - 2024/795 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

[10] For the EIC Accelerator, the Intellectual Property rules are included in the contract and/or investment agreement.

obligations regarding confidential results, with EIC Awardees retaining the right on a case-by-case basis to fully disclose or not their intellectual property.

Technology transfer and other relevant support is expected to be provided by universities and research organisations for exploiting the results of EIC projects. In the absence of such support and without prejudice to ownership of results, the inventors of results generated by EIC Pathfinder and Transition projects may be entrusted with appropriate access rights for the purpose of further development and exploitation. Exploitation activities may be eligible to additional financial support and services offered by the EIC, as further detailed in Annex 5.

Economic security

The 2025 EIC Work Programme continues the measures introduced in 2024 to safeguard the Union's strategic assets, technological advancements, and intellectual property. This concerns eligibility criteria and investment safeguards for Accelerator and EIC STEP Scale Up calls targeting support to critical technologies as follows:

- Eligibility criteria concerning the ownership of applicant companies are applied to the Accelerator Challenges on "Creating European champions in Generative AI" and on "Innovative in-space servicing, operations, space-based robotics" and applicants to the Accelerator Open call within the scope of these challenges; as well as the EIC STEP Scale up call.
- Consideration of investment safeguards for the investment component of EIC support for all applicants within the critical technology areas of[11]: quantum, artificial intelligence, semiconductors and biotechnologies. Investment safeguards will also apply to investments made under the EIC STEP Scale Up call.

All EIC beneficiaries are required to inform the Agency in cases where the Intellectual Property generated by EIC projects is proposed to be transferred to an entity in a non-associated third country .

Details of the economic security measures are provided in Annex 2 and in the call texts.

EIC-EIT Collaboration

The EIC is progressively increasing collaboration and synergies with the EIT and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) with the overall aim of strengthening the European Innovation Ecosystem. A number of collaboration areas are already in place and will continue to be supported under the current Work Programme facilitating

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[11] Communication on European economic security.pdf (europa.eu)

the access to services to European innovators. The Fast Track process by EIT KICs, that allows proposals from companies selected by the EIT KICs to enter the EIC Accelerator evaluation at the second stage will continue in 2025; EIC beneficiaries will have access to the services provided by the EIT KICs via the partnerships agreed with the EIC Business Acceleration Services. The "Next Generation Innovation Talents" scheme allows EIT Label Masters and Doctoral programmes, EIT Alumni, EIT Jumpstarter beneficiaries to undertake secondments in EIC and EIT supported startups and SMEs. Collaboration will continue to promote women entrepreneurs, with EIT access to the EIC Women Leadership Programme and joint women innovators prizes (see Section VII).

Outlook for 2026 and future years

The EIC Work Programme for 2026 will follow be prepared following the advice provided by the EIC Board. It is envisaged that the main calls on Pathfinder, Transition and Accelerator will continue without major changes. The experience with the STEP scale up call will be assessed with a view to the continuation and improvement of this support. The identification of the challenges will draw from the insights of the EIC Programme Managers and reflect the EU policy priorities. Changes or pilot actions may be considered following the mid-term review of Horizon Europe.

Glossary[12]

The **Agency** entrusted by the European Commission with the implementation of Horizon Europe EIC activities, except for the EIC Fund, is the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA).

Deep tech[13] 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 innovations are understood to be those that have the potential to deliver transformative solutions, rooted in cutting-edge science, technology and engineering, including innovation that

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[12] These definitions are complemented by specific definitions regarding provisions concerning management of EIC Portfolios and Intellectual Property for EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition actions detailed in Annex 6.

13 Deep tech ventures have the following characteristics: positioning at the knowledge frontier with long and uncertain R&I cycles; relates to tangible products and insutrialisation processes; linked to the ecosystem and especially higher education institutions, problem orientated or mission driven, focused on the creation of an option space and a dynamic de-risking cycle

combines advances in the physical, biological and digital spheres. Deep tech is distinct from 'high tech' which tends to refer only to R&D intensity[14].

The **EIC Board** oversees the strategy and implementation of EIC activities and provides advice on EIC Work Programmes. It comprises 20 leading innovators and innovative researchers, as well as a full time President of the EIC Board. The EIC Board is appointed by the European Commission 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 Awardees** are the beneficiaries identified in an EIC Grant agreement (Pathfinder, Transition and Accelerator), EIC contractors or investees (for EIC Accelerator), as well as winners of EIC Prizes. The Horizon Europe model grant agreements and contracts are available on the Funding and Tenders portal[15].

EIC Business Acceleration Services (BAS) are support services provided to the EIC Awardees and other eligible organisations as defined in Section VIto support the innovation development of EIC project results and the commercialisation and scaling up of EIC supported innovations, including access to coaches and training, access to services of the EIC Ecosystem Partners, and access to global partners (leading corporates, investors, procurers, distributors, clients), see Section V for more detail.

EIC business coaches are independent external experts with entrepreneurial and investment backgrounds who provide business development insights and guidance to EIC Awardees and applicants. They are part of the EIC Business Acceleration Services.

EIC Community platform is a platform available to all EIC Awardees and Awardees of EIC Seals of Excellence, EIC Pre-accelerator Seals of Excellence and EIC Sovereignty (STEP) Seals, facilitating links to Business Acceleration Services as well as enabling discussions, exchanges and match making. The EIC Community platform is a virtual meeting place where EIC Awardees can connect with 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.

EIC Ecosystem Partners are organisations that have been selected to provide EIC Business Acceleration Services or other support to EIC Awardees. EIC Ecosystem Partners can include, for example, investors, business angels, mentors and coaches, innovation agencies, business associations, clusters, accelerators, incubators,

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14 Ratio of a firm's R&D investment to its revenue

15 general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf (europa.eu)

technology transfer offices, venture builders, etc. They may also include the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) of the EIT, members of the Enterprise Europe Network and Startup Europe, and the European IP Helpdesk.

EIC Expert Evaluators are external independent experts in their field who assess proposals for funding against the criteria defined in the Work Programme. The EIC expert evaluators are selected from the Funding & Tenders portal Expert Database.

EIC expert monitors are external independent experts in their field who assist the Agency and, in some cases, EIC Programme Managers 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 the case of EIC Pathfinder Challenges, EIC Programme Managers participate as members in some evaluation committees as specified in the call texts.

The **EIC Fund** is an alternative investment fund (AIF) that has been established for the specific purpose of investing in companies selected through EIC Accelerator calls. An external alternative investment fund manager (AIFM, the "EIC Fund Manager") manages the EIC Fund. The European Investment Bank (EIB) supports the EIC Fund as Investment Advisor.

The **EIC Fund Manager** makes investment and divestment decisions on the companies selected through the EIC Accelerator call by following a due diligence performed by the EIB according to the EIC Investment Guidelines.[16] The EIC Fund Manager manages the EIC portfolio of invested companies, supported by the EIB, and in close coordination with the grant support provided to investee companies by the European Commission and managed by the Agency, as well as the provision of Business Acceleration Services (including access to other potential investors via the EIC Co-Investment Platform) and the performance of technology due diligence by the Agency. The **EIC Forum** brings different innovation drivers and levels of governance closer together to discuss openly and informally relevant policy issues.[19] The policy recommendations and activities of the EIC Forum will aim at supporting and complementing initiatives undertaken in Horizon Europe.

EIC Juries are panels of specifically selected EIC expert evaluators (including, for example, independent investors, business angels and entrepreneurs) who conduct face to face interviews with applicants to the EIC Transition and EIC Accelerator calls as part of the evaluation procedure. EIC Programme Managers and, in the case of the EIC Accelerator representatives of the EIB as Investment Adviser to the EIC Fund, may

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[16] About the EIC Fund - European Commission (europa.eu)
19 The EIC Forum is supported under the 'European Innovation Ecosystems' part of the Horizon Europe work programme.

participate in jury interviews as observers, but will not be members of the jury and will not take part in the jury's decisions. **Interviews** with EIC Juries may take place in either a physical or virtual setting.

EIC Marketplace is due to be developed as an EIC-dedicated space supported by the Horizon Results Platform, where results on the EIC Pathfinder and Transition projects will be made available in order to cross-fertilise activities and stimulate and nurture potential innovation. The EIC Marketplace is expected to become available during the course of 2024.

EIC Portfolio is a set of actions presenting thematic similarities (Thematic Portfolio) or contributing to the same EIC Challenge (Challenge Portfolio). Further information can be found in the proactive project and portfolio management by EIC Programme Managers section. **EIC Programme Managers** are high-level experts in specific fields of technology, business and innovation and who manage one or more **EIC Portfolios**. They are appointed to work in the Agency for a limited duration, in order to develop visions for breakthrough technologies and innovations, and to proactively manage portfolios of projects to achieve these breakthroughs. They are supported by EIC Project Officers as well as by EIC Tech to Market advisers. The EIC Programme Managers are subject to strict rules concerning conflicts of interest and confidentiality.

EIC Tech to Market Advisers are agents employed by the Agency to assist primarily the EIC Transition projects, in agreement with EIC Programme Managers and in cooperation with EIC Project Officers, with the design and the execution of the transition plan and to facilitate access to, and follow-up of, the relevant Business Acceleration Service offerings.

EIC Project Officers are officials and other agents appointed by the Agency to manage an action.

The **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)** is a network of business intermediary 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.

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

Next Generation Innovation Talents scheme supports EU funded researchers (from European Innovation Council EIC, European Research Council (ERC), European Institute

of Technology (EIT), Marie Sklodowska Curie Actions (MSCA) to carry out an innovation internship in a startup funded by the EIC or EIT. The aim is on the one hand to enable researchers and aspiring innovators to better understand and gain direct experience of real-world innovation and entrepreneurship while allowing innovative start-ups to access new ideas and insights from cutting edge of research. **Seal of Excellence**: is a quality label which is awarded to excellent but unfunded proposals as defined in the call texts, in order to facilitate access to funding from other sources[20]. Awardees of the Seal of Excellence also have access to EIC Business Acceleration Services.

Sovereignty (STEP) Seal: is awarded to all proposals that meet the evaluation thresholds in calls contributing to the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP). It concerns both those proposals selected for funding (to support access to complementary funding sources) and those not selected for funding due to a lack of budget (to support access to alternative funding sources). It provides access to EIC Business Acceleration Services

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 Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC.[24] Under the EIC, this category includes start-ups.

Small mid-cap means an enterprise employing up to 499 employees.[25]

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,[26] as described in the award criteria of the call texts. The following definitions of TRLs apply, recognising that there are important differences between technological fields:[27]

TRL1 - Basic principles observed

TRL2 - Technology concept formulated

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[20] Information on public 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.
[24] Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (2003/361/EC), OJ L 124, 20.5.2003, p. 36.
[25] 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.
[26] Further information on market readiness and business readiness will be provided in the guidance documents.
[27] See for instance for health: https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/career-development/researchers/manual-scientific-entrepreneurship/major-steps/trl

TRL3 - Experimental proof of concept

TRL4 - Technology validated in lab

TRL5 - Technology validated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)

TRL6 - Technology demonstrated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)

TRL7 - System prototype demonstration in operational environment

TRL8 - System complete and qualified

TRL9 - Actual system proven in operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies, or in space)

Women-led SMEs (including start-ups) means companies where the position of either the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Technology Officer (CTO) or Chief Scientific Officer (CSO) is held by a woman at the time of application, interview and award of the EU financial support.

Women-led consortia means consortia where the consortium coordinator is a woman and at least 50% of Work Package leaders, including the consortium coordinator, are women at the time of application, interview and award of the EU financial support.

II. EIC Pathfinder

The overall objective of the EIC Pathfinder for advanced research is to develop the scientific basis to underpin breakthrough technologies. It provides support for the earliest stages of scientific, technological or deep-tech research and development. Pathfinder projects 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 through:

+ 'EIC Pathfinder Open', open to support projects in any field of science, technology or application without predefined thematic priorities.
+ 'EIC Pathfinder Challenges' to support coherent portfolios of projects within predefined thematic areas with the aim to achieve specific objectives for each Challenge.

II.1   EIC Pathfinder Open

+ Do you have an ambitious vision for a novel 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 validate the scientific basis of the future technology, realise a proof of principle, and explore paths to impact?

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 provide solutions for global challenges. EIC Pathfinder Open supports early stage development of such future technologies (e.g., various activities at low Technology Readiness Levels from 1 to 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 approach 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 technology that has the potential to have a transformative positive effect to solving a challenge in 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 output 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 provide solutions for global challenges, these are not expected to be achieved in the course of your EIC Pathfinder Open project. However, you are expected to take the necessary measures in the course of the project to allow future uptake to take place. This includes: an adequate formal protection of the generated Intellectual Property (IP)[28], a plan for future exploitation and an assessment of relevant aspects related to regulation, certification, and standardisation.

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

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[25] IP includes industrial property (patents, trademarks, designs and geographic indications of source) and copyright. See also Section I and Annex 6 for more information on the EIC policy of Open Access and IP rights.

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. You are particularly encouraged to empower female researchers in your project and to achieve gender balance among your work package leaders.

Can you apply?

This call is open for collaborative research. Your proposal must be submitted by the coordinator, on behalf of a consortium including as beneficiaries, at least three legal entities, independent from each other and each established in a different country as follows:

✦ at least one legal entity established in a Member State; and
✦ at least two other independent legal entities, each established in different Member States or Associated Countries.

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 2.

The standard admissibility and eligibility conditions are detailed in Annex 2. The scope of proposals should be in line with the Do No Significant Harm principle (see Annex 2).

What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 142 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 duly justified. The funding rate of this grant will be 100% of the eligible costs.

In addition to funding, successful applicants will receive tailor-made access to a wide range of Business Acceleration Services (see Section V) and interactions with EIC Programme Managers (see Section I).

Projects funded through EIC Pathfinder (including grants resulting from certain EIC pilot Pathfinder, FET-Open and Proactive calls)[29] may be eligible:

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[29] The eligible calls are all EIC Pathfinder calls under Horizon Europe and the following Horizon 2020 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; FETPROACT-EIC-07-2020; FETPROACT-EIC-08-2020.

✦ to receive EIC Booster grants of a fixed amount not exceeding EUR 50 000 to undertake complementary activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation or for portfolio activities (see Annex 5);

✦ to submit an EIC Transition proposal (see section III for more information about the eligibility conditions);

✦ to submit an EIC Accelerator proposal via the Fast Track scheme (see Annex 3);

✦ to participate in the 'Next Generation Innovation Talents' scheme (described in the glossary). The personnel costs of researchers participating in this scheme are eligible under your Pathfinder grants.

The Model Grant Agreement[30] can be found on the Funding & Tenders Portal.

How do you apply; how long does it take?

The deadline for submitting your proposal is 11/03/2025 at 17h00 Brussels local time.[31]

You must submit your proposal via the Funding & Tenders Portal before the given deadline.

Sections 1 to 3 of the part B of your proposal, corresponding respectively to the award criteria Excellence, Impact, and Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation, must consist of a maximum of 20 format A4 pages.

You will be informed about the outcome of the evaluation within 5 months from the call deadline (indicative) and, if your proposal is selected for funding, you can expect your grant agreement to be signed by 8 months after the call deadline (indicative).

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

Your proposal will be first evaluated and scored individually by at least four EIC expert evaluators with respect to the award criteria. The score for each award criterion will be the median of the evaluators' scores. The overall score from this individual evaluation phase will be the weighted sum of the three median scores from the three award criteria.

The evaluation committee, which will be composed of EIC expert evaluators different than those who evaluated the proposals individually, will decide on the final score on the basis of the score from the individual evaluation phase and the outcome of its consensus discussions. The evaluation committee may invite expert evaluators who

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[30] general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf (europa.eu) general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf (europa.eu)
[31] The call will open on 01.December.2024. The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening. The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.

evaluated and scored the proposals individually to the consensus discussions, in particular to clarify diverging evaluators' opinions.

The Evaluation Summary Report will comprise the final score, a collation of the comments from individual reports, or extracts of them, a comment that summarises the assessment by the evaluation committee as well as any additional comments, possibly including advice not to resubmit the proposal.

Proposals will be assessed according to the following award criteria (Table 2):

Table 2. Award criteria for EIC Pathfinder Open
Excellence (Threshold: 4/5, weight 60%)
Long-term vision: How convincing is the vision of a radically new technology and relevant potential solutions, towards which the project would contribute in the long term?
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 reach the envisaged proof of principle? To what extent is the high-risk/high-gain research approach appropriate for achieving them? How sound is the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, alternative directions and options, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research content, and the quality of open science practices?
Interdisciplinarity: How relevant is the interdisciplinary approach from traditionally distant disciplines for achieving the proposed breakthrough?
Impact (Threshold: 3.5/5, weight 20%
Long-term impact: How significant are the potential transformative positive effects that the envisioned new technology would have to our economy, environment and society?
Innovation potential: To what extent does the envisioned new technology have potential for generating disruptive innovations in the future and for creating new markets? How adequate are the proposed measures for protection of results and any other exploitation measures to facilitate future translation of research results into innovations? How suitable are the proposed measures for involving and empowering key actors that have the potential to take the lead in translating research into innovations in the future?

Communication and Dissemination: How suitable are the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, including scientific publications, communication activities, for raising awareness about the project results' potential to establish new markets and/or address global challenges?
Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Threshold 3/5, weight 20%)
Work plan: How coherent and effective are the work plan (work packages, tasks, deliverables, milestones, timeline, etc.) and risk mitigation measures in order to achieve the project objectives?
Allocation of resources: How appropriate and effective is the allocation of resources (comprising person-months and other cost items) to work packages and consortium members?
Quality of the consortium: To what extent do all the consortium members have the necessary capacity and high quality expertise for performing the project tasks?

For proposals with the same final score, priority will be based on the following factors, in order: higher score under the criterion Excellence; higher score under the criterion Impact; gender balance among the work package leaders as identified in the proposal; number of applicants that are SMEs; 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.

II.2   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, a portfolio of projects will be established 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 Programme Manager, who establishes a common roadmap and proactively 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 EIC Pathfinder Challenges. Please refer to the description below of each Challenge for specific information and requirements.

Why should you apply?

You should apply if you have a potential cutting-edge project that would contribute to the specific objectives of the respective Challenge. Specifically, your proposed project must aim to deliver by its end the expected outcomes defined in the respective Challenge. In general, the starting point of a proposal answering to a Pathfinder Challenge is early TRL (e.g., 2) to up to proof of concept or validation in the lab (e.g., TRL 3 or 4). Project results should also include top-level scientific publications, adequate formal protection of the generated intellectual property (IP) as well as an assessment of relevant aspects related to regulation, certification and standardisation.

In addition, you are encouraged to involve and empower in your team key actors that have the potential to become future leaders in their fields such as excellent early-career researchers or promising high-tech SMEs, including start-ups. Your proposed project should reinforce the 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. You are particularly encouraged to empower female researchers in your project and to achieve gender balance among your work package leaders.

Before you decide to apply, you are strongly encouraged to read the respective EIC Pathfinder Challenge Guide that will be published on the EIC website and the Funding & Tenders Portal after the call opening. The Challenge Guide will provide you with more information about the objectives of the Challenges, technical information underpinning the objectives and portfolio considerations used for the final selection of proposals to be funded.

Can you apply?

In order to apply, your proposal must meet the general eligibility requirements (see Annex 2) as well as specific eligibility requirements for the Challenge (if applicable). Please check for particular elements (e.g., specific application focus or technology) in the respective Challenge chapter below.

The EIC Pathfinder Challenges support collaborative or individual research and innovation from consortia or from single legal entities established in a Member State

or an Associated Country (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. Consortia of two entities must be comprised of independent legal entities from two different Member States or Associated Countries. Consortia of three or more entities must include as beneficiaries at least three legal entities, independent from each other and each established in a different country as follows:

✦ at least one legal entity established in a Member State; and
✦ at least two other independent legal entities, each established in different Member States or Associated Countries.

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.

The standard admissibility and eligibility conditions and the eligibility of applicants from third countries are detailed in Annex 2.

The scope of proposals should be in line with the Do No Significant Harm principle (see Annex 2).

What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 120 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 duly justified or stated otherwise in the specific Challenge.

The funding rate of this grant will be 100% of the eligible costs. Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum and the amount will be determined during the evaluation process. Applicants must therefore propose the amount of the lump sum based on their estimated project costs as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-

2025).[32] It is advised to include a work package dedicated to portfolio activities and allocate at least 10 person-month to it.

In addition to funding, successful applicants will receive tailor-made access to a wide range of Business Acceleration Services (see Section V) and interactions with EIC Programme Managers and other actions in the portfolio of projects selected (see Section I).

Projects funded through EIC Pathfinder (including grants resulting from certain EIC pilot Pathfinder, FET-Open and Proactive calls)[33] may be eligible:

✦ to receive EIC Booster grants of a fixed amount not exceeding EUR 50 000 to undertake complementary activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation or for portfolio activities (see Annex 5);

✦ to submit an EIC Transition proposal (see Section III for more information about the eligibility conditions);

✦ to submit an EIC Accelerator proposal via the Fast Track scheme (see Annex 3);

✦ to participate in the 'Next Generation Innovation Talents' scheme (described in the glossary). The personnel costs of researchers participating in this scheme are eligible under your EIC Pathfinder grant agreements.

The Model Grant Agreement can be found on the Funding & Tenders Portal.

How do you apply; how long does it take?

The call deadline for submitting your proposal is 14/10/2025 at 17h00 Brussels local time. [34]

You must submit your proposal via the Funding & Tenders Portal before the given deadline.

Sections 1 to 3 of the part B of your proposal, corresponding respectively to the award criteria Excellence, Impact, and Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation, must consist of a maximum of 30 format A4 pages.

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[32] This decision is available on the Funding & Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf

[33] The eligible calls are all EIC Pathfinder calls under Horizon Europe and the following Horizon 2020 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; FETPROACT-EIC-07-2020; FETPROACT-EIC-08-2020.

[34] The call will open on 28-May-2025[xxx] . The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening. The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.

You will be informed about the outcome of the evaluation by 5 months after call deadline (indicative), and, if your proposal is accepted for funding, you can expect your grant agreement to be signed by 8 months after the 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:

1. The EIC expert evaluators will assess each proposal separately against the award criteria and the EIC evaluation committee will ensure consistency across scores.
2. The 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 (so called portfolio considerations). The evaluation committee will be composed of EIC expert evaluators and EIC Programme Managers.

Step1 (assessment of each proposal separately):

Your proposal will be first evaluated and scored individually by at least three EIC expert evaluators with respect to the award criteria. After the individual evaluation, these evaluators will get together in a consensus group to agree on a common position on comments and scores.

After the consensus Phase, the evaluation committee will check consistency across the evaluation of each individual proposal and finalise the scores and comments for all proposals.

For step 1, proposals will be assessed according to the following award criteria (Table 3).

Table 3. Award criteria for EIC Pathfinder Challenges
Excellence (Threshold: 4/5; weight [60%])
Objectives and relevance to the Challenge: How clear are the project's objectives? How relevant are they in contributing to the overall goal and the specific objectives of the Challenge?
Novelty: To what extent is the proposed work ambitious and goes beyond the state-of-the-art?
Plausibility of the methodology: How sound is the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research content, and the quality of open science practices?
Impact (Threshold: 3.5/5; weight [20%)

Potential Impact: How credible are the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts of the Challenge? To what extent would the successful completion of the project contribute to this?

Innovation potential: How realistic is the proof of principle for demonstrating the potential impact of the technology for the challenge? 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 positive societal, economic or environmental impact? How suitable are the proposed measures for involving and empowering key actors that have the potential to take the lead in translating research into innovations in the future?

Communication and Dissemination: How suitable are the proposed measures, including communication activities, to maximise expected outcomes and impacts for raising awareness about the project results' potential to establish new markets and/or address global challenges?

Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Threshold 3/5; weight 20%)

Work plan: How coherent and effective are the work plan (work packages, tasks, deliverables, milestones, timeline, etc.) and risk mitigation measures in order to achieve the project objectives?

Allocation of resources: How appropriate and effective is the allocation of resources (comprising person-months and other cost items) to work packages and consortium members?

Quality of the applicant/consortium (*depends if mono or multi-beneficiaries*): To what extent does the applicant / do all consortium members have the necessary capacity and high quality expertise for performing the project tasks?

All proposals that meet the thresholds defined in the award criteria will be considered in step 2.

Step 2 (portfolio considerations):

In step 2, the evaluation committee will consider each proposal's contribution to setting up a consistent Challenge Portfolio of projects.

First, the evaluation committee will map the proposals in a number of categories stemming from the overall goal and specific objectives of the Challenge. Examples of possible categories are: building blocks or subsystems, technical areas and/or competing technologies, platforms, applications areas, risk level and stage of technology readiness level, size, etc.

Following this mapping of proposals against categories, a suitable portfolio of proposals will be selected by the evaluation committee by applying portfolio considerations in order to propose for funding a coherent set of projects that will achieve the expected outcomes and impacts of the Challenge and maximise their impact.

Further information and details about the categories and the portfolio considerations will be provided in EIC Pathfinder Challenge Guides, which will be topic and domain specific.

The evaluation committee may also propose some minor adjustments to the proposals 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.

You will receive feedback in the Evaluation Summary Report which will comprise the final score and the comments endorsed by the evaluation committee as well as any additional comments. If your proposal was either retained for funding or not retained for funding while it received a score that was higher than other proposals retained for funding under the same Challenge, then you will also be informed about the underlying portfolio considerations. Comments on the detailed lump sum budget table will be provided in the Evaluation Summary Report only for proposals invited to grant agreement preparation or placed in the reserve list or rejected (possibly in part) due to significant overestimation or underestimation of costs.

What happens after a proposal is evaluated and retained for funding?

The applicant/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 completed within three months but shorter timelines may be specified.

The EIC Project Officer and relevant EIC Programme Manager will contact and support you during the grant agreement preparation to plan the portfolio activities for which you will be expected to collaborate with the other projects in the Challenge Portfolio and to start the preparation of the Challenge roadmap which will define the collective deliverables, activities and objectives of the portfolio of projects selected.

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

II.2.1 Biotech for Climate Resilient Crops and Plant-Based Biomanufacturing

Background and scope

Land based agricultural production is the source of approximately 95% of human food nutrients (UN FAO). Intensive and often inappropriate practices in agriculture have however resulted in severe soil degradation, thereby reducing the capacity of soils to support food production and other important ecosystem services such as the regulation of water, nutrients, and carbon cycles. Soil degradation is further accelerated by the effects of climate change, with abiotic stresses such as heat, drought, salinity, and waterlogging, often in combination, having negative effects on the world's crop production. The direct impact of a changed climate is also frequently accompanied by indirect impacts due to alterations in the composition and behaviour of insects, pathogens, and soil microbiome, alongside the impacts of increased amounts of human-generated pollutants.

Plants react to such stresses with what are often conflicting physiological and metabolic responses. These may prioritise one acclimatisation/adaptation strategy over the other, a blend of one or more responses, and/or through developing a completely new strategy, all of which can, in turn, impact final production including nutrient content.

When combined with an increasing human population, likely to increase net demand for food by a further 60%, there is a clear rationale to reinforce existing food and nutrient production systems and explore complementary routes to food production that are efficient, resilient, and sustainable, thereby helping the sector increase its sustainability and resilience.

This Pathfinder Challenge therefore aims to support projects that enhance adaptation pathways for the production of climate-resilient crops and/or develop alternative pathways to produce high value nutrients based on plant native and non-native ingredients in existing or novel crops at an industrial scale.

Specific Objectives

Innovative ideas put forward under this Challenge must go beyond incremental changes to the state-of-the-art and result in novel production processes that must deliver energy- and resource-efficient, low emission foods that are integral to a healthy diet.

Funded projects are expected to develop breakthrough technologies that reach TRL4 (validation in laboratory environment) with viable plants at the end of the projects. The proposals may work on one or both of the following objectives:

- Increasing plant growth, yields and resistance to stress through:

- o Enhancing tolerance to stress combinations with special attention to different climate scenarios that include the simultaneous exposure of crops to heat combined with drought, salinity, flooding, high CO2 levels, as well as indirect effect of climate change via altered composition and behaviour of insects, pathogens and soil microbiome and possible impact of human-generated pollutants.
  - o Increasing water use efficiency and nutrient use efficiency compared to current crops in commercial use.
  - o Improving plant reproduction and seed filling processes under unfavourable conditions caused by combination of at least two stress factors.
- Substantially increasing the nutritional value (primarily proteins) in crops through plant native and non-native ingredients in crops.

Projects must also develop a complete methodology for assessing the increase of plant growth, yields, and climate resilience to single and multiple stresses, and/or assess changes to the nutritional value of crops, as appropriate. Proposals should include multi-omics approaches including genomics, transcriptomics, proteomics, metabolomics and phenomics. These approaches can be further underpinned by leveraging technologies such as, but not limited to nanoparticle technology, chemistry, and advanced artificial intelligence to develop and introduce novel defence and acclimation strategies, currently not present in crops to achieve greater tolerance to harsh environmental conditions and/or biomanufacturing of non-native ingredients, to enable the time required for that development to be significantly shortened. Proposals should also look to address the narrow genetic diversity of novel crops and are also expected to consider regulatory aspects and to build on the work carried out so far by the European Food and Safety Authority (EFSA).

Expected Outcomes and Impacts:

In support of Building the future with nature: Boosting Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing in the EU[35], the EU Soil Mission[36], the EU Green Deal[37], Farm to Fork strategy[38], Fit for 55[39], and REPowerEU[40] policy actions, the key overall goal of this Challenge is to support the production of sustainable and nutritious food from plants.

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[35] Actions to boost biotechnology and biomanufacturing in EU (europa.eu)
[36] EU Mission: A Soil Deal for Europe (europa.eu)
[37] The European Green Deal - European Commission (europa.eu)
[38] Farm to Fork Strategy - European Commission (europa.eu)
[39] Fit for 55: Delivering on the proposals - European Commission (europa.eu)
[40] REPowerEU (europa.eu)

This Challenge aims to develop the production of high value plant native and non-native ingredients in existing and novel crops on an industrial scale in a cost-effective and environmentally friendly manner. In the medium to long-term this will:

- Improve the sustainability, efficiency, and resilience of the European food supply chain.
- Secure long-term competitiveness of EU Food supply chain while decreasing EU dependency on imports of inputs for primary production, feed, and food.

The portfolio of projects selected under this Challenge must collectively address both specific objectives of the challenge. The projects will therefore be selected based on the coverage of the following essential elements:

i. The choice of crops.
ii. Stress factors combinations considered in supporting the move to climate-smart farming e.g., to increase crop resistance to heat and drought among other stress factors in southern parts of Europe or increase crop tolerance to colder climate to expand the areal of production to northern Europe.
iii. Native ingredients increased or non-native ingredients introduced to increase the nutritional value of crops.
iv. Methodological approaches taken to achieve project goals such as, but not limited to, conventional breeding technologies, triparental breeding technology, non-targeted mutagenesis, New Genomic Techniques (NGTs).

All projects will participate in a work package dedicated to the development of monitoring and prediction methodologies for climate adaptation assessment and life-cycle-analysis.

II.2.2 Generative-AI based Agents to Revolutionize Medical Diagnosis and Treatment of Cancer

Background and scope

Imaging is a crucial component of cancer clinical protocols, providing detailed morphological, structural, metabolic, and functional information. However, harnessing the full potential of the data generated through medical imaging in clinical settings remains challenging. Clinicians often struggle to combine diverse and large-scale data into a comprehensive view of patient care, disease progression, and treatment efficacy. The inability to seamlessly integrate and interpret diverse data sources result in suboptimal patient outcomes and inefficiencies in the delivery of healthcare.

The integration of traditional Artificial Intelligence (AI) with medical imaging can transform healthcare, but most existing applications are still in their infancy and must overcome a number of challenges to accelerate adoption. These include AI applications being confined to single data modalities, which restricts their overall effectiveness (Monomodal Application); inadequate and insufficient data training, leading to data scarcity and a lack of generalizability, making them less reliable across diverse patient populations; and the lack of AI model interpretability, as many AI systems function as "black boxes," providing little insight into their decision-making processes. This lack of transparency limits trust in the systems and their usability in clinical settings.

The goal of this Pathfinder Challenge is to create interactive GenAI autonomous agents and/or a combination of them (super-agent) that provide clinicians with a holistic perspective of patient care, improve pattern identification, reduce inconsistencies and errors in diagnoses as well as improve cancer treatment. The Challenge will support early-stage groundbreaking research projects that will develop and validate novel approaches and concepts for integrating and interpreting multimodal medical imaging and health data alongside the generation of reliable synthetic medical data, which will also be pooled to form a common database and used for the development of algorithms.

Specific Objectives

Project proposals under this Challenge should focus on one (and only one) of the following diseases: breast cancer, cervical cancer, ovarian cancer, prostate cancer, lung cancer, brain cancer, stomach cancer or colorectal cancer.

Each proposal should address the following areas:

Area 1: Technological area

  i.   GenAI-based tools for Integrating Multimodal Multidimensional health Data

  Investigate groundbreaking techniques and methodologies for developing GenAI algorithms that combine multidimensional (e.g. time dimension, space dimension) and multimodal data from different sources- multiple imaging modalities (e.g., MRI, CT, PET, X-ray), clinical data (e.g., electronic health records, lab results, structured and unstructured clinical data, pathology results, genetics and –omics data, videos, knowledge databases, and other resources)- to provide a comprehensive view of the patient's condition. Developed algorithms should be able to produce unified and actionable datasets that can be exploited for the development of the AI-tools described in Area 2 (clinical).

  ii.   Medical Data Augmentation

Develop GenAI models based on groundbreaking techniques that are in the conceptual or initial experimental phase for medical data augmentation and to **create highly realistic synthetic medical data** (images, genomics data, etc.) as well as to create complementary data from existing ones (for example a synthetic CT from MRI images), for the iterative cycles of model training.

iii. Medical Knowledge Representation and Integration

Create an initial prototype GenAI model for medical knowledge representation and integration, to create a comprehensive and dynamic medical knowledge base, to identify discrete medical imaging features associated with demographic information and systemic conditions, to improve the interpretability of AI-based models and extract new knowledge not previously identifiable by experts without assistance.

Area 2: Clinical Area

i. Predictive Diagnosis

Develop an interactive autonomous agent that can assess the likelihood of a patient developing cancer by analysing their medical history, imaging data, and genetic information. The agent should provide personalised health risk predictions, allowing for early detection and preventive measures.

ii. Enhance Personalized Treatment Selection

Develop novel AI algorithms and architectures that, by exploiting the information on multidimensional and multimodal data integration as well as synthetic data generation, predicts the optimal treatment pathway for a specific patient condition, as well as disease progression and treatment efficacy through a comprehensive view of patient care.

Appropriate performance metrics should be considered for the continuous evaluation and testing of the scientific and technical robustness (including accurately quantify uncertainties) of all developed algorithms and architectures in Areas 1 and 2. This involves rigorous testing against diverse datasets to confirm that the models perform reliably across various patient demographics and conditions, reducing the risk of skewed results and ensuring the precision of results from diagnoses to therapy.

The projects should also conduct proof of concept studies in controlled settings to showcase better and more accurate diagnosis and treatment when compared to current clinical practice; and the viability, of the developed technology(ies) should be evaluated, guiding further refinement and improvement. A super-agent could for

example be validated for assisting and/or replacing clinicians through the whole clinical pathway of the patient, allowing a holistic view of patient care, which is not possible today due to fragmented healthcare systems and associated expertise.

The focus should also be on enhancing the interpretability of AI models/agents, making their decision-making processes more transparent and understandable to clinicians. This could involve developing cutting-edge techniques such as causal inference methods, explainable AI frameworks, or novel visualization tools that provide deeper insights into AI decision-making processes.

The AI models developed under this Challenge are expected to comply with the EU concept for Trustworthy AI[41], relevant ethical principles[42], and the AI Act[43]. This means that, in addition to focusing on performance, careful attention must be given to data quality, transparency, privacy, and security.

Proposers are encouraged to leverage the data and tools available in the Cancer Image Europe platform for their proposed work and in turn contribute the datasets, the developed AI tools and models to the platform based on agreed conditions. All datasets produced should be described with metadata records in the EU dataset catalogue of the European Health Data Space while all tools and models should follow the principles of open science and made available through the future UNCAN.eu platform that support the EU Cancer Mission. Proposals are also expected to seek complementarity and synergies with the following actions implemented and activities already funded or in the funding pipeline in the framework of the Health cluster of Horizon Europe[44].

Projects that address only one of the two 'Areas' or other cancer types will be considered "out" of scope.

Expected Outcomes and Impacts:

In support of the European AI Strategy[45] and the Cancer Plan for Europe[46] this Challenge looks to support the the development of the next generation models for cancer diagnosis and treatment, with Generative AI.

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[41] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/ethics-guidelines-trustworthy-ai
[42] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/640163/EPRS_BRI(2019)640163_EN.pdf
[43]https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20230601STO93804/eu-ai-act-first-regulation-on-artificial-intelligence
[44] See Pathfinder Challenge Guide
[45] European approach to artificial intelligence | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu); Commission launches AI innovation package to support Artificial Intelligence startups and SMEs | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)
[46] A cancer plan for Europe - European Commission (europa.eu)

This Challenge aims to create a collaborative environment where diverse expertise—including for example data science, informatics, oncology, radiology, pathology, and medical physics—converges to address the complexities of developing autonomous agents for holistic patient care, through enhanced diagnosis and personalized treatment. These efforts will be guided by the principles of trustworthy and ethical AI, in compliance with the AI Act.

It aspires to significantly improve patient care and reduce pressure on the healthcare system by leveraging advanced interactive autonomous agents for diagnosis and personalized treatment. By alleviating the burdens on clinicians and ensuring compliance with the EU concept for Trustworthy AI, the initiative will enhance the quality and reliability of medical services. Economically, it promises substantial cost reductions and cost avoidance, leading to long-term improvements in healthcare efficiency and sustainability. Ultimately, this challenge will foster innovation and establish Europe as a leader in the field, delivering profound benefits to patients, healthcare providers, and society at large.

The portfolio of selected projects will be designed to deliver a set of agents/models for improved diagnosis and personalized treatment of the above-mentioned diseases. Specifically, the projects will collaborate to:

- Generate a common database of synthetically generated images to be used by all projects for the development of their algorithms
- Compare the use of a combination of the agents in the case of multiple cancers
- Benchmark agents for enhanced diagnosis and personalized treatment selection
- Define innovative clinical pathways in oncology
- Externally validate the developed agents within a project at clinical premises of another project in the portfolio
  Develop standardized methods and frameworks for evaluating AI- act and Medical Device Regulation (MDR)- compliant generative AI models

The portfolio of projects to be funded under this Challenge will be informed by an ambition to collectively address all the specific objectives in a coherent way based on:

Category 1 – type of cancer
Category 2 – application (enhanced diagnosis and personalized treatment)
Category 3 – access to appropriate infrastructure and clinical facilities for agents testing

II.2.3 Towards autonomous robot collectives delivering collaborative tasks in dynamic unstructured construction environments

Background and scope

Robotic automation offers significant advantages to several sectors, yet on-site construction robotics is amongst the most challenging and least understood fields in robotics The unstructured, dynamic environment with human presence makes navigation and automation of the many concurrent construction tasks deeply challenging. Further, the current state-of-the-art solutions focus on adding higher degrees of automation to legacy tools, such as heavy equipment designed for diesel engines and human operators.

Radical innovations are essential for the sector to address the unprecedented wave of building growth, especially in the context of labour shortages, a productivity gap between the construction and other industries, rising expectations for occupational health and safety, and the need for healthier and more affordable living environments.

Through the collaboration of multiple agents (both humans and machines) construction processes can be accelerated, enabling more complex processes with multiple tasks to be performed simultaneously and collaboratively. Multi-robotic collaboration, where robotic agents support and complement each other's tasks and skill sets within the same workspace, may unlock entirely new processes that are not possible using single robotic machines. This approach could involve multiple distributed "swarms" of collaborative robots using distributed control algorithms, which may be better suited to large, spatially distributed tasks and can adapt to unpredictable environments. Doing so while also supporting the electrification of the (legacy suite of) construction equipment, will help break with the need to go for ever larger machines and facilitate the development of novel technologies that enable efficient accurate and reliable control of collaborative robots that are suitable for commercial on-site construction environments.

Realising the disruptive potential of novel emerging technology paradigms that reconsider construction processes from the fundamentals can help supplant and substitute the legacy suite of tools with novel autonomous collaborative construction robots in an integrated, "designed-for-robotics" digital production and assembly chain.

Such developments could also further enhance an emerging paradigm shift from today's complex mix of on-site construction tasks, towards a future of off-site fabrication and on-site assembly. Off-site fabrication offers industrial economic advantages of producing modularized building elements at scale in a controlled, digitalized and automated factory environment. For the construction sector this

paradigm shift can deliver demand-side emissions reductions, by implementing strategies of digitalized structural efficiency and novel materials, as well as of zero-emission construction sites through electrification.

This Pathfinder Challenge aims to address all construction tasks typically required for site preparation, substructure, and superstructure, as well as the coordination between these tasks to support a transition towards unsupervised building with autonomous electrified construction equipment. It includes the role of human agents in construction processes, as even high degrees of multi-robotic autonomy with low degrees of supervision will require a collaborative connection between human and robotic agents, ensuring they can safely collaborate and share the same workspace.

Specific objectives

The overall objective of this Challenge is the development of breakthrough technologies in the domain of autonomous collaborative on-site construction robots for an integrated, designed-for-robotics, digital production and assembly chain.

The Challenge is open to the 3 main construction tasks (site preparation, substructure or superstructure) applied to the 2 main construction segments of buildings and infrastructure. Innovative application in adjacent construction segments (for example foundations for wind turbines) also fall within scope.

Each funded project shall deliver the following 3 specific objectives:

Objective 1:

Development of a simplified material-robot structural, load-bearing building system to assemble a representative and future-relevant structure (pavilion) using a multitude of discrete modules (elements, segments, blocks, voussoirs). This system must demonstrate TRL4 (validation in laboratory environment) of the autonomous collaborative multirobotic assembly. The structure can represent an infrastructure (for example a bridge, tunnel, culvert, conduit), a building (for example a tower, vault, dome, arch, multi-story skeleton, wall) or other construction elements (for example a foundation, secant wall, barrier, sea wall). The building system can also integrate unprocessed and pre-processed in-situ building materials (rocks, sand, natural materials, demolition materials, disassembled elements). Projects are expected to demonstrate the technologies at least at a relevant human scale in terms of volume, mass and moment of inertia, and ideally at a larger real-world architectural scale, rather than at a laboratory desktop scale.

Solutions are expected to incorporate "design-for-robotic-assembly" aspects, such as the robot-material interfaces, module interfaces, and connectors, and may include innovative approaches such as embedded sensing in the modules.

A virtual simulation of the disassembled state, various intermediate assembly stages (including temporary (robotic) support measures if necessary) and final assembled state is expected to be part of the systems development process. The project should include a documented validation of key design decisions (for example materials used or configurations that simulate scaled behaviour) against the minimal requirements of the TRL4 demonstration objectives of the autonomous mobile multi-robotic collaborative platform.

Objective 2:

Development of an autonomous mobile multi-robotic collaborative platform using at least two, preferably more, mutually aware collaborative robotic systems specifically designed for the assembly tasks outlined in Objective 1. This objective requires a structured systems engineering approach to conduct a thorough functional system analysis and to allocate system-level functions between humans and machines within the target autonomous mobile multi-robotic collaborative platform.

The design should include the definition of system states and modes, along with the transitions between them, to ensure safe autonomous operations and effective demonstration of robot-robot and human-robot collaborations and interactions (passive, active, adaptive) at TRL4.

The project should also describe how the proposed technology can be scaled to meet the full dimensions of the intended commercial application in future.

Utilizing existing industrial robots or modifying suitable existing construction tools is allowed. However, these approaches may face workspace limitations when scaled to full commercial dimensions. Conversely, novel relative multi-robotic platforms could by contrast make full use of the opportunities of the material-robot system independent of scaling limitations in future.

The portfolio of funded projects will aim to include at least one "relative multi-robotic" solution.

Objective 3:

Achieve a TRL4 demonstration of an autonomous assembly sequence using the demonstration building system developed in Objective 1, executed by the autonomous mobile multi-robotic collaborative platform developed in Objective 2. The demonstration of a subsequent disassembly sequence is optional but encouraged if

the building system is designed for disassembly. The demonstration will take place in a laboratory environment, including tests that explore the system's resilience and limits under controlled unstructured real-world conditions (for example fault tolerance, granular uneven surfaces, environmental obstacles). These tests aim to identify key weaknesses and recommend future technology developments.

The specific objective of this challenge is to advance the digitalized chain of off-site modular production with on-site autonomous mobile multi-robotic collaborative assembly. Therefore, on-site 3D-printing of cementitious materials or polymers as a primary construction task is outside the scope of this challenge.

Expected Outcomes and Impacts:

This Challenge contributes to the European Green Deal[47], the European AI Strategy[48], and the key strategic orientations of Horizon Europe[49] for the digital and green transitions of the construction sector. It aims to create a diverse portfolio of innovative pathways and platforms in the domain of autonomous collaborative on-site construction robots. These advancements will facilitate an integrated, designed-for-robotics digital production and assembly chain. Expected outcomes include a deeper understanding of, and technological breakthroughs in, key enabling technology areas.

The anticipated impacts of this Challenge include addressing likely shortages and competition in the labour markets, enhancing productivity and competitiveness within the construction industry, and improving worker safety. It will facilitate a shift towards offsite industrial fabrication coupled with onsite assembly and disassembly, reducing emissions from on-site construction activities, and lowering costs and mitigating risks associated with construction projects. This Challenge will also serves as a lighthouse for industrialization in important policy areas, such as affordable housing, the renovation wave, circular construction, and infrastructure development.

The field of mobile construction robotics, in particular heterogeneous collaborative robots assembling discrete building elements, is challenging and multi-disciplinary. Given the nascent state of the enabling technologies, the cumulative impact of the portfolio of Pathfinder projects is expected to surpass that of individual projects. Consortia will benefit from mutual learning and the exchange of approaches and expertise in areas like mapping, navigating and building awareness of unstructured

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[47] The European Green Deal - European Commission (europa.eu)
[48] European approach to artificial intelligence | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)
[49] Strategic plan - European Commission (europa.eu)

environments, force-aware manipulation, swarm collectives, as well as commercialisation pathways.

Furthermore, consortia will be encouraged to collaborate and communicate their outputs to the broader public with a view to accelerating the adoption of these radical innovations by the sector. Such valuable joint portfolio activities are anticipated to be discussed and agreed upon by the funded projects.

II.2.4 Waste-to-value devices: Circular production of renewable fuels, chemicals and materials

Background and scope

Fossil fuels supply a majority of the world's energy and also provide the raw materials, or feedstocks, for many essential everyday products. While energy provision is becoming increasingly decarbonized, the production of fuels, chemicals and materials requires carbon atoms as feedstocks. However, their production can be "de-fossilized", by utilising renewable energy and alternative carbon sources. Likewise, a circular economy approach offers scope to reduce external dependencies and source other essential molecular feedstocks including critical raw materials from wastes.

This Pathfinder Challenge therefore focuses on the development of next generation technologies that turn today's problematic waste streams into essential building blocks of a future circular economy. Furthermore, it specifically focusses on currently non- or hard-to-recycle types of synthetic polymer materials (including among other mixtures of different types of plastics, polymeric composite materials, micro-/nanoplastics, untreated plastic waste, diapers, rubber, etc.), flue gases, wastewater and seawater desalination brines. Proposals must target real-life industrial and household waste streams where current recycling methods face insurmountable barriers e.g., due to impurities, the presence of noxious additives, inseparable material mixtures or non-biodegradable materials. An important side effect is the remediation of waste streams with respect to micro-/nanoplastics, metals and noxious substances. These novel technologies should be scalable, easily applicable and deliver products with higher economic value as compared to waste destruction.

The scope of technological solutions addressed in this Challenge is limited to the following technologies with currently low Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs), where significant synergies by working in a Challenge portfolio are expected: solar

reforming[50] and synthetic biology devices, brine mining[51] and integrated capture and conversion technologies[52]. Microbial-based and photocatalytic remediation processes are included as well. Computational material science and AI, and bottom-up synthetic biology are supported as key enablers at the fundamental research level.

Thermochemical approaches (such as pyrolysis or gasification) and "dark" (not light-driven) chemical recycling are out-of-scope of this Pathfinder Challenge. Likewise, food and biomass waste, metal, glass, paper, cardboard and mono-PET waste are also out of scope.

Specific objectives

The Challenge seeks ambitious proposals that address one (and only one) of the following focus areas:

Area 1: Fully integrated waste-to-value devices

This includes 1) devices for converting waste streams into (feedstock for) fuels, chemicals and materials and 2) devices for remediation; where processes are solely driven by renewable energy sources (preferably directly by sunlight) and focus on the selective production of added value products, beyond hydrogen as the sole end product:

(i) **Fully integrated solar reforming or synthetic biology devices**, enabling the treatment of synthetic polymer materials, while delivering fast and efficient decomposition under <u>sustainable</u> reaction conditions (including the use of process chemicals).

(ii) **Integrated capture and conversion technologies**, capturing and converting feedstock from flue gases, or wastewater in a single step/ single device into fuels, chemicals and materials, providing increased energy- and materials efficiency as compared to not fully integrated process chains.

(iii) **Membrane-based and electrochemical brine mining technologies** recovering raw materials, CO_2 and water from seawater desalinisation brines.

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[50] Solar reforming: Sunlight-driven transformation of waste substrates into <u>valuable</u> chemical products facilitated by a photocatalyst and utilising a wide range of the solar spectrum, including solar catalytic reforming (UV and VIS) and solar thermal reforming (IR). It thus goes beyond: Photolysis (polymer degradation under direct light irradiation with very long treatment times), Photocatalytic decomposition (photolysis facilitated by photocatalyst), or Photoreforming (Light-driven reforming using classical photocatalysts absorbing high-energy UV or near-UV radiation only).

[51] Brine mining: Recovery of useful materials dissolved in seawater desalinization brine.

[52] Integrated capture and conversion: the capture of a molecule, e.g., CO2, from a waste stream is directly coupled with its direct utilization, i.e. conversion, within a single device.

(iv) **Ex-situ remediation devices based on microbial/enzymatic and/or photocatalytic degradation**, both purifying wastewater and seawater of noxious substances, metals, or nano-/microplastics, and producing added value remediation products. This should take place in a reactor, not in the open field.

Proposals addressing only parts of the full waste-to-value process (e.g., half reactions) will not be considered. Integrated hybrid approaches, at the interface of various disciplines, and autonomously operating devices continuously optimized with AI, are particularly welcome. The resulting devices must reach TRL 4 within the 3–4-year project lifetime.

The associated processes must not down-cycle the waste substrate but create products of higher economic and environmental value as compared to the initial waste stream. They must be energy and material-efficient and fully sustainable, minimising the associated energy, water, chemicals and land footprint. Operating conditions (e.g., related to temperature, pressure and the use of additional chemicals) should be optimised and the circular use of process consumables, such as water, catalyst materials or chemical additives maximised. They must deploy environmentally safe, stable materials, with non-toxic degradation products and the developed devices must be recyclable-by-design.

Proposals must take a holistic view of the complete waste valorisation chain by optimising the different elements (pre-treatment, conversion, product separation and storage) with respect to one another. The systems must also be robust and easy-to-handle to allow operations that are independent from large-scale infrastructures, with extended lifetimes and a capability to treat real-life waste streams which have undergone minimal sorting and pre-treatment.

Proposals have to clearly indicate how the proposed solution benchmarks against industrially deployed recycling methods such as mechanical recycling, composting, biogas fermentation or waste-to-energy technologies, and emerging recycling methods such as chemical recycling or thermochemical approaches.

Area 2: Understanding underlying mechanisms by means of computational material science and AI

Projects in this focus area must deliver advances and scientific breakthroughs in the fundamental understanding of the underlying physical, chemical, and biological processes that will enable fully sustainable and scalable waste-to-value devices. Projects should address all the following specific objectives:

- Explore fundamental phenomena crucial to multiple waste-to-value device types, such as the development of efficient, stable and inexpensive catalysts, interface engineering and the effect of the surrounding medium.
- Develop more accurate and less resource-intensive quantum mechanical and AI methods to guide, predict and interpret reliably experimental works.
- Bridge the scales from describing properties at the atomic, mesoscopic level up to the macroscopic device level within a multiscale approach and describe phenomena over different timescales.
- Adopt a holistic approach to exploring phenomena applicable to multiple waste-to-value device types (aligned with Area 1). Devices stemming from Area 1 should serve to validate the developed theoretical models.

Area 3: Cells from scratch by means of bottom-up synthetic biology

Projects in this area must look to deliver scientific breakthroughs in bottom-up synthetic biology to enable the use of tailored microbial cell factories for the degradation and valorisation of waste and the production of fossil-free fuels, chemicals, and materials. Projects should address all the following specific objectives:

- Develop synthetic, fully artificial cells for future large-scale biotechnology applications, tailored to deliver desired functionalities such as carbon fixation or synthetic polymer decomposition.
- Engineer cell-like systems to produce compounds from abundantly available building blocks, such as water and carbon oxides.
- Engineer cell-like systems to decompose diverse types of waste, in particular synthetic plastic waste, into compounds that are valorisable as feedstock for a downstream production of fuels, chemicals and materials. At this stage, systems will not have to be completely autonomous and self-replicating, but the integration of different modules should be implemented.

Expected outcomes and impacts

This Challenge is in line with REPowerEU[53] and Fit for 55[54]. It is compliant with the Renewable Energy Directive[55], the Waste Framework Directive[56] and the Critical Raw Materials Act[57]. It supports the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP)[58] and the

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[53] REPowerEU (europa.eu)
[54] Fit for 55: Delivering on the proposals - European Commission (europa.eu)
[55] Renewable Energy Directive (europa.eu)
[56] Waste Framework Directive - European Commission (europa.eu)
[57] European Critical Raw Materials Act - European Commission (europa.eu)
[58] Circular economy action plan - European Commission (europa.eu)

herein included Plastics strategy. It builds on the Industrial Carbon Management strategy[59], the Communication on Sustainable Carbon Cycles[60], and the Directive on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources[61].

The portfolio of projects selected under this Challenge are expected to collectively cover Areas 1, 2 and 3. A maximum of one proposal from each of Areas 2 and 3 will be selected, whereas the aim for Area 1 is to select proposals that cover as many device categories (i-iv) as possible. Combining these three aspects into a single portfolio with close interaction between the projects and a commonly developed vision is expected to significantly speed up the innovation journey by driving synergies and mutual learning.

The resulting portfolio of projects will in time contribute to:

- Local energy and resource supply, allowing communities and remote areas to have access to reliable and sustainable waste recycling, supporting the local production of fuels, chemicals and materials. Reduction/ eventual independence from the importation of critical raw materials in the context of increasing demand for such materials for renewable energy and fuel technologies.
- Increased share of recycled waste, minimizing waste disposal in open dumps, landfills and incineration and the related negative impacts on our environment.
- Micro-/nano plastic removal, towards a zero-brine discharge.
- Decentralised, circular production of fuels, chemicals and materials where waste serves as an indispensable local resource enabling on-site production replacing fossil resources. Reduction in the demand for fossil fuels alongside associated CO_2 emissions reductions.

[59] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2024%3A62%3AFIN&qid=1707312980822
[60] com_2021_800_en_0.pdf (europa.eu)
[61] Renewable Energy Directive (europa.eu)

III. EIC Transition

Have you identified EU-funded project result(s) with promising commercial potential that could be the basis for ground-breaking innovations and promising new businesses?

- ✦ Is this novel promising technology ready for the next steps towards its maturation and validation, to be further developed and validated for some specific, high potential, commercial applications?
- ✦ Have you conducted a preliminary market research to identify potential markets for your innovation and explored potential competitors?
- ✦ Do you envisage building a motivated and entrepreneurial team with a mix of skills, including researchers, business people, marketers etc. to develop and drive the idea towards commercial success?

If the answer to each and every of these questions is a clear '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 (TRL 3 accomplished). It supports both the maturation and validation of your novel technology from the lab to the relevant application environments (by making use of prototyping, formulation, models, user testing or other validation tests) as well as explorations and development of a sustainable business plan and business model towards commercialisation into high potential markets.

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 commercial success in the market. EIC Transition projects should address, in a balanced way, both technology and market/business development, 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 technology development and validation activities to increase the maturity of the technology beyond proof of concept to viable demonstrators of the technology in the intended field of application (i.e., from minimum TRL 3 accomplished or maximum TRL 4 up to TRL 5 to 6 at the end of the project). The activities must in all cases address improving market readiness towards commercialisation and deployment (market research, value proposition, refine

incipient business plan[62] and validate incipient business model[63], intellectual property protection, etc.) and aspects of regulation, certification and standardisation (if relevant), 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/commercial readiness. The expected outcomes of your EIC Transition project are a) a technology that is demonstrated to be effective for its intended application and b) a validated business model and a business plan[64] for its development to market. It is also expected that the intellectual property generated by your EIC Transition project is formally protected in an adequate way (Annex 6).

EIC Transition can support several 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 towards a promising market application. This pathway is likely to require a collaboration among several applicants ('multi-beneficiary' approach) including SMEs, research performers, technology transfer offices and potential users/ customers;

✦ An individual SME (including start-ups, spin-offs) identifies a market opportunity to apply the results of an eligible 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 eligible project and the interested SME;

A team of entrepreneurial 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, as well as their technology transfer offices. 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.Technology Transfer Offices or business schools are encouraged to actively participate in the EIC Transition project, as they can play a key

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[62] Usual components are products or services provided, market analysis, competition analysis, marketing strategy, organisation & management, financial projections.
[63] It usually includes value proposition, target market(s), revenue streams, cost structure, channels.
[64] Business model is a key component of the business plan.

role in enabling and supporting researchers with the development and commercialisation of their research results.

At the end of your EIC 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), and 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 proposal and must include specific milestones together with concrete and verifiable KPIs during the implementation of your project to assess progress towards the market.

The EIC Transition project is expected to mature your innovation both in its TRL and market and business readiness[65] from the beginning of the project and with both tracks going in parallel and interacting between them.

Applicants to EIC Transition can submit proposals through an EIC Transition Open call which has no predefined thematic priorities and is open to proposals in any field of science, technology or application.[66]

Can you apply?

In order to apply, your proposal must meet the general eligibility requirements (see Annex 2) as well as specific eligibility requirements described in this section.

Your proposal must build on results already achieved within an eligible project that are, at least, at experimental proof of concept (TRL 3 achieved) or, ideally, technology validated in the lab level (TRL 4). Proposals building on project results at TRLs other than TRL 3 or TRL 4 are not eligible.

EIC Transition is restricted to proposals based on results generated by the following eligible projects:

✦ EIC Pathfinder projects (including projects funded under the Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Pathfinder, FET-Open, FET-Proactive, CSA and CSA Lump sum FET Innovation Launchpad, and FET Flagships calls.[67])

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[65] Business plan and business model will have to be further refine and validate during the project lifetime.
[66] In line with the Do No Significant Harm principle, see Introduction.
[67] Eligible projects are those funded under the following calls: FETOPEN-RIA-2014-2015; FETOPEN-01-2016-2017; FETOPEN-01-2018-2019-2020;; FETPROACT-01-2016; FETPROACT-01-2018; FETPROACT-EIC-05-2019; FETPROACT-EIC-07-2020; FETHPC-01-2016, FETHPC-02-2017, FETHPC-01-2018, FETPROACT-EIC-08-2020; FETPROACT-09-2020; FETFLAG-05-2020 (for projects funded under the related Specific Grant Agreements);

- ✦ European Research Council Proof of Concept projects funded Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe.
- ✦ Research and Innovation Actions [68] funded under Horizon 2020 Societal challenges and Leadership in Industrial Technologies and under Horizon Europe pillar II, with an eligible TRL[69].
- ✦ European Defence Fund (EDF), including the Preparatory Action on Defence Research, research projects, but only for proposals which are focused on civil applications (including dual use).

Grants funded as financial support to third parties (cascade mechanisms, e.g. ERA NETs) are not eligible.

If you are applying on the basis of an eligible project for which the grant is still ongoing, you may apply if the start date of the grant is more than 12 months before the cut-off date of the relevant EIC Transition call).

If you are applying on the basis of an eligible project which has already been completed, you may apply within 30 months of the completion of the project (i.e. the end date of the grant for the eligible project is less than 30 months from the cut-off date of the relevant EIC Transition call).

You do not need to be a participant, Principal Investigator or result owner of the previous projects; on the contrary, new participants including start-ups, SME or other innovation actors are welcome and encouraged to apply:

- ✦ If you (applicant (s) eligible for funding) were part of the eligible project whose results are further developed in the EIC Transition proposal, you need to confirm in your proposal that you are the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) owner or holder and have the necessary rights to commercialise the results of the project for the whole duration of the EIC Transition project;
- ✦ If you (applicant(s) eligible for funding) were not part of the eligible project whose results are further developed in the EIC Transition proposal, you (the applicant/coordinator) need to include in your proposal a commitment letter from the owner(s) of the relevant result(s), which confirms the commitment of the latter to negotiate with you fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory access

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[68] Grants funded via financial support to third parties e.g., ERA NETs/ co-funded partnerships, EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities) will not be eligible as it is not possible to verify if the result was generated by such projects
[69] Applicants must prove the grant from which the result was generated was funded by Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe (including JUs unless they implement FSTP grants) by specifying the relevant grant number and acronym as indicated in the EU Funding & Tenders Portal.

to such results, including IPR, for the purpose of future commercial exploitation for the whole duration of the EIC Transition project.

✦ In all cases you need to specify in your application the grant number and acronym of the eligible project(s) which generated the result together with reference to where the result has been reported (in the periodic reporting, the Horizon results platform, the Innovation Radar or CORDIS).

You can apply for EIC Transition either as:

✦ A single legal entity established in a Member State or an Associated Country ('mono-beneficiary') if you are a start-up, SME or research performing organisation (university, research or technology organisation, including teams, individual Principal Investigators and inventors in such institutions who intend to form a spin-off company).[70] 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 two independent legal entities from two different Member States or Associated Countries, or

✦ A consortium of minimum three and maximum five independent legal entities ('multi-beneficiary') following standard rules i.e. must include at least one legal entity established in a Member State and at least two other independent legal entities, each established in different Member States or Associated Countries (see Annex 2).[71]

Only one proposal can be submitted per eligible originating ERC Proof of Concept funded in Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe and FET Innovation Launchpad project in the same call.

Consortia may for example include start-ups, SMEs, research organisations, or larger companies, user/customer organisations or potential end users (e.g., hospitals, utilities, industry, regulatory and standardisation bodies).

The applicant must specify which path to market will explore and pursue during the execution of the EIC Transition project: direct exploitation by coordinator or beneficiary, creation of a spin-off company in a Member State or an Associated Country, licensing to an established company (not part of the consortium) or other path to be described.

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[70] A spin-off from a research performing organisation (university, research or technology organisation) having a legal (e.g., contractual cooperation not limited to the action, e.g.,a collaboration agreement for research in a particular field) or capital (research performing organisation owning a controlling share in the capital of the spin - off) can be considered as an affiliated entity according to Article 8 of the Grant Agreement.
[71] Consortia of more than 5 eligible entities will be deemed ineligible.

What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 98 million.

If successful, 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 more than EUR 0.5 million and less than EUR 2.5 million and duration between 1 and 3 years as appropriate. Nonetheless, in exceptional cases, this does not preclude you to request larger amounts, if very well motivated and duly explained.

The funding rate of this grant will be 100% of the eligible costs. Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum and the amount will be determined during the evaluation process. Applicants must therefore propose the amount of the lump sum based on their estimated project costs as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).[72]

The projects funded through EIC Transition are eligible:

✦ to receive EIC Booster grants of a fixed amount not exceeding EUR 50 000 to undertake complementary activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation or for portfolio activities (see Annex 5).

✦ to submit an EIC Accelerator proposal via the Fast Track scheme (see Annex 3).

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

The Model Grant Agreement can be found on the Funding & Tenders portal.

How do you apply; how long does it take?

The deadline for submitting your proposal is **17 September 2025** at 17h00 Brussels local time.[73]

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[72] This decision is available on the Funding & Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf

[73] The call will open on 22-April-2025. The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening. The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.[74] The definition of women-led SMEs and consortia is provided in the Glossary in the Introduction.

You must submit your proposal via the Funding & Tenders Portal before the given deadline.

Sections 1 to 3 and the cover page (that includes the information about the related project on which the current EIC Transition proposal is built on) of part B of your proposal must consist of a maximum of 22 format A4 pages.

Your proposal will be evaluated first by EIC expert evaluators. You will be informed about the result of this evaluation, including feedback on your proposal, indicatively within 9 weeks after the call deadline. If your proposal successfully passes this first evaluation phase (see details below), you will be invited for an interview, which will be organised approximately between 12-14 weeks after the deadline. At the interview, you will be assessed by a panel of maximum 6 EIC Jury members. You will be informed about the result of the interview indicatively within 4 weeks from the start of the interviews.

If you are successful, you can expect your grant agreement to be signed within 6 months from the call deadline (indicative) and you are expected to start your project within 2 months after signing the grant agreement.

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

In a first step, at least three EIC expert evaluators will evaluate and score your proposal against each award criterion (see below). The overall score for each evaluation criterion will be the average 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, a pool of the best ranked proposals (highest scoring) requesting an aggregated financial support equal to approximately 2.2 times the budget available, will be invited to the next step. If in that pool:

+ at least 30% of the applications are submitted by women-led SMEs or consortia (see definitions in the Glossary), only the applications of that pool will be invited to interviews;
+ less than 30% of the applications are submitted by women-led SMEs or consortia,[74] the pool will be expanded to subsequent best ranked applications (starting with the highest scoring in descending, sequential order and at least equal score under Excellence criterion) submitted by women-led SMEs or consortia until reaching, if possible, a composition of the pool of at least 30% of

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[74] The definition of women-led SMEs and consortia is provided in the Glossary in the Introduction.

applications submitted by women-led SMEs or consortia. All such applicants invited to interview must have met all evaluation criteria thresholds from the remote evaluation (Table 4).

The Agency will seek assistance from the European Patent Office to analyse the technological novelty, the inventive merit and the proposed future strategy of EIC proposals shortlisted for EIC Jury interview. EPO experts will not participate directly in the evaluation process but will provide their assessment to the EIC Jury as material 'for information'. The assessment by the patent examiners will not be binding and the Jury appointed by the EIC will have complete freedom to decide on its relevance.

The second step is an interview with an EIC jury. At the interview your proposal may be represented by a maximum of five persons.[75] Only individuals mentioned in the proposal and involved in the future project implementation can represent your proposal at the interview.

The EIC jury will be composed of between four and six members and may additionally include one EIC Programme Manager as observer with expertise in your area or managing one of the EIC 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 award criteria (in particular those regarding the quality of the team, the incipient business plan and incipient business model, the milestones and KPIs). The EIC Jury will recommend your proposal for funding or not ('GO' or 'NO GO'). The jury may also recommend a proposal to be placed in a reserve list ('GO Reserve') which may then be funded if additional budget becomes available. The remote evaluation score will be used to rank the proposals in the reserve list[76].

Proposals will be assessed according to the following award criteria (Table 4). For the interviews, the jury may ask questions concerning any of the award criteria.

Table 4. Award criteria for EIC Transition Open at first evaluation step
Excellence (Threshold: 4/5)

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[75] The number of participants to the interview must however be limited to the minimum necessary.
[76] If two proposals with same with the same remote evaluation score are on the reserve list, the one with smaller budget will be ranked first.

Technological breakthrough: Does the technology have a high degree of novelty and higher performance compared to other technologies available or in development? Does the technology indicate high commercial potential?

Objectives: How credible and feasible are the objectives for the planned technology development and maturation? How credible and feasible are the objectives and KPIs for the planned business development process?

Methodology: Is the timing right for this technology/innovation (i.e., feasibility, minimum technological readiness level (TRL), unique selling points)?[77]

Impact (Threshold: 4/5)

Credibility of the impacts: To what extent the expected commercial impact(s) described in the proposal are credible and substantial within the project and beyond (e.g.,one or several sectors, setting new standards, etc.)?

Economic and/or societal benefits: To what extent does the proposed innovation have scale up potential including high capacity to gain or create new European or global markets? To what extent is the proposed innovation expected to generate positive impacts for the European Union, Member States or Associated Countries (e.g., strategic autonomy, employment etc.)?

Investment readiness and go to market strategy: To what extent the proposal and its activities contribute to make the technology and the team investment ready (including through IP protection and market validation)? Is there a well-defined and convincing go-to-market strategy and pathway, including what regulatory approvals may be needed (if relevant), time to market, possible business and revenue model?

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

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

KPIs and Milestones: Are both milestones and KPIs present, relevant and clearly defined (measurable, timed, comparable etc.) to track progress along the pathway towards

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[77] The technology must be developed in a safe, secure and reliable manner. Proposals which involve the development, use or deployment of AI based systems/techniques must be technically robust (e.g., resilient to attack, secure and safe, having fallback plan, accurate, reliable and reproducible). To a degree matching the type of research being proposed (from basic to precompetitive) they must demonstrate that they comply with the Trustworthy Intelligence Principles (see Annex 2).

objectives? Have the main risks (e.g., technological, market, financial etc.) been identified, together with measures to mitigate in order to achieve the project objectives?

Workplan and allocation of resources: How appropriate and effective is the allocation of resources (person-months and equipment) between work packages and between project partners? Is the number of project partners well justified?

The following award criteria are applied coherently with the level of technological and business maturity expected from an EIC Transition proposal as described in this Work Programme.

Table 5. Award criteria for EIC Transition Open at second evaluation step (Jury interview)
Excellence (GO/NO GO)
Technological breakthrough: Does the technology/innovation – through its degree of novelty/disruptiveness and/or added value/value proposition for the users/customers – compared with competing technologies - have the scaleup potential including potential to create important new markets or significant impact in existing ones at European or global level?
Objectives: How ambitious yet credible and feasible are the objectives for the planned technology development and maturation? How credible and feasible are the objectives (and KPIs) for the planned business development process?
Methodology: Is the timing right for this technology/innovation (i.e., feasibility, minimum technological readiness level (TRL), unique selling points)?
Impact (GO/NO GO)
Credibility of the impacts: Is the incipient proposed business model sound and promising? To what extent the expected commercial impact(s) described are realistic and substantial within the project and beyond?
Market and economic impacts: have potential markets/ use cases and users of the innovation been identified? Does the proposed innovation have high impact potential for the European Union, Member States or Associated Countries including high capacity to gain or create new European or global markets?

Investment readiness and go to market strategy: Are the plans to ensure the subsequent financing of the technology/ innovation (e.g., applying for EIC Accelerator, private investment, patenting/licensing, etc.) appropriate?
Quality and efficiency of the implementation (GO/NO GO)
Quality and motivation of the team: Does the team have the capability and motivation to mature the proposed technological innovation and implement market-related activities?
Risk assessment: Have the risk that might prevent the validation of the innovation in relevant application environment and/or its market success been appropriately considered (i.e. assesed then reduced and/or mitigated)?
Workplan and allocation of resources: How appropriate and effective is the allocation of resources (person-months and equipment) between work packages and between project partners? Is the number of project partners well justified?

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 you meet all evaluation criteria thresholds at the first step but are not selected for funding (including from a No-GO recommendation from the jury), you will be awarded a Seal of Excellence. If the proposal is submitted by a consortia, Seal of Excellence will be awarded to the coordinator of the proposal, listing the other participating legal entities.

IV. EIC Accelerator

✦ Do you have a high-impact innovative technology, 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 the full amount needed?

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

Why should you apply?

The EIC Accelerator supports companies (principally SMEs, including start-ups) 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 grant and investment funding and Business Acceleration Services (see Section V).

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 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 and other relevant environment (e.g.,at least Technology Readiness Level 5). The EIC Accelerator looks to support companies where the EIC support will act as a catalyst to crowd in other investors necessary for the scale up of the innovation.

Applicants to EIC Accelerator can submit proposals through:

✦ EIC Accelerator Open, which has no predefined thematic priorities and is open to proposals in any field of technology or application[78];

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[78] In line with the Do Not Significant Harm principle, see Introduction. Proposals with potential nuclear applications are eligible within the scope of Annex I to the Euratom Treaty.

✦ EIC Accelerator Challenges in predefined areas of emerging and strategic technologies.

Can you apply?

To be an eligible applicant to EIC Accelerator, you must apply as one of the following eligible entities:

✦ a single company classified as a SME, and established within a Member State or an Associated Country (see Annex 2); or

✦ a single company classified as a small mid-cap (up to 499 employees) established in a Member State or an Associated Country, but only for exceptional cases for rapid scale up purposes; or

✦ one or more natural persons[79] (including individual entrepreneurs) or legal entities, which are either:

    a. from a Member State or an Associated Country intending to establish an SME or small mid-cap (as defined above) in a Member State or Associated Country by the time of signing the EIC Accelerator grant agreement or, in case the equity only is awarded, at the latest at the date of signature of the investment agreement;

    b. intending to invest in an SME or small mid-cap established in a Member State or an Associated Country and may submit a proposal on behalf of that SME or small mid-cap, provided that a prior agreement exists with the company. The grant agreement and/or the investment agreement will be signed with the beneficiary/ final recipient of funding company only, subject to the "Approach in specific cases relating to a parent or holding company and an operating company" (see below); or

    c. from a non-associated third country intending to establish an SME (including start-ups) or to relocate an existing SME to a Member State or an Associated Country. Your company must prove its effective establishment in a Member State or an Associated Country at the time of submission of the full proposal.

The standard admissibility and eligibility conditions are detailed in Annex 2.

There are limitations on the number of times you can submit a proposal described in the section on application submission limits as explained 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

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[79] In such cases, the applicant must use the same identification (PIC number) when submitting the full application in order to eligible.

Fast Track scheme (see Annex 3). This scheme is managed by the funding body responsible for the existing project and applies to funding bodies listed in Annex 3. Applicants may also be able to apply if they have a project financed by an eligible programme managed by a Member State or an Associated Country under the pilot Plug-in scheme (see Annex 4).

What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 634 million. EUR 384 million of the total indicative budget will be allocated to EIC Accelerator Open and EUR 250 million to EIC Accelerator Challenges. The total indicative budget for each Accelerator Challenges is provided in Challenge descriptions below.

The indicative budget for investment components is EUR 348 million and is managed by the EIC Fund. This budget may be increased by unused amounts allocated to the EIC Fund under previous EIC Work Programmes[80].

The EIC Accelerator provides:

a) **grant component only** ('***Grant Only***') that will take the form of a lump sum contribution[81] via a grant agreement. Grant only shall be provided only once to any legal entity for the duration of the Horizon Europe programme (2021-27) [82]

b) **blended finance** support which is composed of:

✦ An *investment component* usually in the form of direct equity or quasi-equity such as convertible loans via an investment agreement.

✦ A *grant component*, that will take the form of a lump sum contribution[83] via a grant agreement.

c) **investment component only (Equity-Only)** usually in the form of direct equity or quasi-equity such as convertible loans via an investment agreement

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[80] See Annex 1 for full information about the budget

[81] Decision authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025)

[82] According to Horizon Europe Art.48.1, Grant-only support under the Accelerator shall be provided only under the following cumulative conditions:

    (a) the project shall include information on the capacities and willingness of the applicant to scale-up;

    (b) the beneficiary shall be a start-up or an SME

    (c) a grant-only support under the Accelerator shall be provided only once to a beneficiary during the period of implementation of the Programme for a maximum of EUR 2.5 million.

[83] Decision authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025)

All successful proposals will receive, in addition to funding, tailor-made access to a wide range of Business Acceleration Services (see Section V).

The 30% co-funding of the work packages to be covered by the grant component has to be financed by the beneficiary through its own resources.

The EIC Accelerator model grant agreement can be found on the Funding & Tenders Portal[84].

EIC Accelerator investment component (for blended finance and equity only proposals)

The minimum investment component is EUR 0.5 million and the maximum is EUR 10 million[85]. Higher amounts are available under the EIC STEP Scale-up call.

The investment component is intended to finance market deployment and scale up and it can be requested in parallel to the grant (and may be used for co-financing innovation activities) or at a later stage during the lifetime of their grant agreement. Within the maximum budget awarded by the Commission, the terms of investment will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis[86] in accordance with the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines[87].

The investment component of the EIC is designed to fill the funding gap for high-risk innovations to a stage where they can be fully co-financed or financed under the InvestEU programme or by private investors alone. As the EIC Accelerator is designed to bear the risk of potential breakthrough market creating innovations in order to attract private investors in a second stage, the lack of such investors at the initial stage does not prevent the EIC investment to be agreed.

When implementing investments, the EIC Fund will ensure that supported companies keep most of their value, including their IP, in the EU or in the Associated Countries in order to contribute to their economic growth and job creation. Where necessary to protect European interests in strategic areas, the EIC Fund will be requested to take appropriate safeguard measures for individual companies on a case-by-case basis in order to protect European interests as defined in the Investment Guidelines *(see Introduction, section on economic Security).*

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[84] Funding & tenders (europa.eu)

[85] In certain cases, investments can be made in holding structures of the beneficiary company, subject to the provisions of the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines

[86] In the case of the investment component, the financial support may exceptionally be revised following a periodic or final review of an EIC Accelerator project (in line with Article 48(12), second sub paragraph of the Horizon Europe Regulation), also in light of the terms and conditions established in the investment agreement. The EIC Investment Guidelines are available on the EIC website.

[87] 220301 EIC Investment Guidelines - Horizon Europe March 2022 FINAL (1) 0.pdf (europa.eu)

EIC Accelerator grant component (for blended finance and grant-only proposals)

Eligible costs for the grant component are reimbursed up to a maximum of 70% within the ceiling of the maximum grant amount, i.e. EUR 2 499 999), but for blended finance the grant component may be for a higher amount in exceptional and well justified cases.

EIC Accelerator grant funding covers 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 TRL 6[88] to 8).

Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum and the amount will be determined during the evaluation process. Applicants must therefore propose the amount of the lump sum based on their estimated project costs as defined in the Decision of 7 July 2021 authorising the use of lump sum contributions under the Horizon Europe Programme – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) – and in actions under the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2021-2025).[89]

The innovation activities to be supported should normally be completed within 24 months but may be longer in well justified cases. The proposed duration should genuinely reflect your current TRL and the nature of the technology to be developed and demonstrated. The grant component may be used for subcontracting including, only if justified, for activities which are essential for the objectives of the project. The Agency may object to a transfer of ownership or the licensing of results under certain conditions in accordance with the provisions set out in the grant agreement.

How do you apply; how long does it take?

The application process consists of a number of steps:

1. *Short proposals* which may be submitted at any time, and which will be evaluated remotely by EIC expert evaluators;
2. If successful, you will be invited to prepare a *full proposal*, where you will have access to support from EIC business coaches to develop your business plan;

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[88] To be interpreted as all aspects of TRL 5 completed and validation in relevant environment started.
[89]This decision is available on the Funding & Tenders Portal, in the reference documents section for Horizon Europe, under 'Simplified costs decisions' or through this link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ls-decision_he_en.pdf

3. Full proposals will first be assessed remotely by EIC expert evaluators. If successful, you will be invited to an *interview* with an EIC jury as the final step in the selection process;

4. If selected for funding, you will be invited to *negotiate a* grant agreement for the requested grant component (if you have applied for it) and to start the *due diligence* for the investment component (if you have applied for it).

1. Submission of short proposals

You may submit a short proposal <u>at any time</u> via the Funding & Tenders Portal[90]. The short proposal consists of:

+ A short form where you summarise your proposal and respond to questions on your company and team, your innovation and the potential market;

+ A pitch-deck of up to ten slides in pdf format;

+ A video pitch of up to three minutes where the core members of your team (up to three people) should provide the motivation for your proposal.

All personal data and information in your proposal will be kept strictly confidential.[91] However, before submitting your full proposal, you will be offered the opportunity to share basic data and information with your Member State or Associated Country National Contact Point and other bodies so that they can provide additional support. National Contact Points and other bodies operate under strict confidentiality rules and will only receive the basic information about your proposal (e.g. abstract, funding request, contact details).

Short applications will be batched and sent for evaluation the first Tuesday of every month. From the date of the batching, you will be informed within approximately 4-6 weeks, and you will receive the evaluation result of your short proposal specifying whether or not your proposal met the admissibility, eligibility and award criteria evaluation elements (set out in the next section) and can therefore proceed to submit a full proposal. In both cases, you will receive feedback from four expert evaluators.

2. Submission of full proposals

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[90] Funding & tenders (europa.eu)
[91] All personal data will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data.

If your short proposal is successful, you will be entitled to receive coaching support to prepare a full proposal from one of the business coaches from the EIC Business Acceleration Services.[92] You can only receive this support once for a proposal.

The optional coaching support is designed to improve the value proposition, business plan and investor pitch. However, it is your decision how to respond to the feedback and support, and the content of your proposal is your sole responsibility.

If you succeeded with your short application under the 2025 Work programme, your full proposal can be submitted to any of the following cut-offs during 2025, and any of the cut-offs for 2026. Applicants who succeeded with a positive evaluation of their short proposal under the 2023 or 2024 EIC Work Programme may apply to any of the following cut-offs in 2025. You may decide which cut-off to apply to.

The two cut-off dates for 2025 are:[93]

- ✦ March 12
- ✦ October 1

The cut-off dates for 2026 will be announced in the 2026 Work Programme due to be adopted in Autumn 2025.

The full proposal consists of:
- ✦ a full business plan and full information on the company's finances and structure of the potential beneficiary/final recipient company. 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.
- ✦ a pitch-deck in pdf format[94] and a video pitch of up to three minutes. You may decide to reuse or update the pitch-deck and video pitch submitted with your short proposal.

All personal data and information in your proposal will be kept strictly confidential. However, before submitting your full proposal, you will need to give consent to share necessary information with the EIC Fund, if applying for investment.

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[92] It is nevertheless up to the applicants to decide if and when to use the coaching services.

[93] This call is continuously open and applications can be submitted at any time. From the day of the opening of the call the conditions detailed in this work programme become applicable. The Director-General responsible may delay the cut-off(s) by up to two months. Applicants will be invited to select an EIC business coach out of a dedicated database and may receive 3 days of remote coaching.

[94] There are no limits on the number of slides at full application stage, but the applicant must be able to present at the Jury interview in a maximum of 10 minutes.

Likewise, applicants requesting an investment component will be requested to give their consent to the Agency through Business Acceleration Services and the EIC Fund to support the search for suitable investment partners and share the necessary information, including personal and proposal data, with these investment partners.

Once you submit your full proposal, it will be assessed remotely against award criteria evaluation elements (set out in the next section) by three EIC expert evaluators. Within approximately eight to nine weeks[95] you will be informed about the result of the remote evaluation and will receive feedback. If successful, you will be invited to attend an interview (which may be in person or online) with an EIC Jury.

3. Interview with an EIC Jury.

All companies receiving a GO from the remote evaluation stage will be invited to the interviews. In case the number of applicants to invite exceeds the capacities of the initially planned interview sessions, a first batch of applicants will be invited according to the following prioritisation, starting with category 'a' (see below), proceeding to the next:

  a. Gender balance: women-led companies (until 40% of invited companies is reached);
  b. Submission date and time: any remaining companies will be prioritised based on the date and time of submission of their short proposal.

The remaining batch of applicants to the interview will be invited to a later set of jury interviews to be organised before the interviews of the next cut-off date.

Interviews with EIC Juries will be organised approximately four to five weeks after applicants are informed of the result of the remote evaluation (or longer if there is a need for a further set of interviews). Detailed information about the format of the interview will be communicated to you in the invitation. You will be informed about the result of the interview within approximately two to three weeks after the finalisation of the interviews.

The Agency may reimburse the cost of applicants invited to attend on-site interviews during the evaluation of their proposals. This information will be communicated to applicants when invited to the interview.

The Agency aims to complete the full process from submission of the full application (cut-off date for full proposal submission) to signature of the grant agreement within 7 months in most cases.

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[95] This period includes the consensus meetings

4. Invitation to negotiate grant component and due diligence process for investment component

If you are selected for funding, the next steps are as follows depending on the type of support.

Grant Only: you will be invited to prepare the grant agreement. Once the grant agreement preparations are concluded, and subject to the adoption of the award decision, you will be invited to sign the EIC Accelerator grant agreement. You will then receive, a first pre-financing payment on the grant component. The Agency will provide the initial pre-financing in accordance with the relevant provisions of the grant agreement.

Blended finance: A single award decision will be adopted by the Commission covering both grant and investment components. Tshe maximum amount for the investment component set in the Single Award Decision will follow the amount requested by the applicant, with an additional flexibility amount of maximum EUR 2 million per proposal. The flexibility amount is to enable the EIC Fund to make an investment decision for a higher amount than requested if justified to take account of developments of the company since the date of application and the opportunity of catalysing a larger overall funding round with co-investors. The additional flexibility amount may only be used if there are sufficient amounts available on the EIC Fund accounts (e.g. due to unused budget from other investments) and will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Following the award decision and completion of the grant agreement preparations, you will be invited to sign a grant agreement.

The relevant information from your proposal will be transmitted to the EIC Fund and its investment advisor (the European Investment Bank), to structure the potential investment agreement (compliance checks,[96] due diligence, syndication of potential co-investors, tranches of investment and related objectives and milestones, etc.). The EIB will assess with you the relevant timing and urgency of your needs for the investment component which may be immediate, or at a later stage in the grant implementation, or in a number of tranches.

During this stage and, in particular, if you have not yet secured other investors, the EIC Fund or the Business Acceleration Services provided by the Agency will support you in

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[96] Such as KYC (Know Your Customer), AML/CTF (Anti-Money Laundering / Combating the Financing of Terrorism), Tax compliance, Sanctions, etc.

the search for other investors. You will be asked for your consent before other investors are contacted or engaged in negotiations related to your proposal and company.

At the end of this process, which should usually take approximately between two to six months since the selection for funding, an investment component will be decided by the EIC Fund. The decision to invest as well as the amount and the terms of the investment component will be made by the EIC Fund in compliance with the EIC Investment Guidelines.[97] The investment amount decided by the EIC Fund will be within the maximum set by the Single Award Decision, as well as within the total amount available to the EIC Fund for investments. In some cases, the investment decision may lead to amendments to the grant agreement, for example in order to align the timing and definitions of milestones. Lack of progress in the negotiations of the investment component by the beneficiary (and, in particular, insufficient proactive efforts from the beneficiary to attract potential co-investors to invest alongside the EIC Fund) may trigger a suspension of the payment deadlines as per Article 29.1(c) of the Model Grant Agreement.

Should the outcome of the due diligence conclude that the innovation or your company is not yet mature for investment, the EIC Fund 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. In such cases, the EIC Fund will re-examine the due diligence once the defined milestone has been achieved and may then proceed to taking an investment decision. The investment decision must be taken during the grant agreement or within one year after the end of the duration of the grant. If no investment decision is taken during this period, you may subsequently apply for equity-only support.

As an outcome of the due diligence process, the investment may be rejected, notably due to the results of the due diligence, compliance checks, existence of irregularities, in cases of misrepresentation by the applicant or in the case of a manifest error in any previous assessments, in accordance with the EIC Investment guidelines. In such a case, the Agency may also request amendments to the grant agreement. In cases of misrepresentation, submission of false information, non-submission of information, suspicion of fraud or any other ground listed in the EIC Accelerator grant agreement, the Agency may suspend and/or terminate your grant agreement. The EIC Accelerator grant agreement may also be terminated if the non-investment is likely to affect the

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[97] The investment decisions will also be reported to the Programme Committee in accordance with Article 14 of Council Decision (EU) 2021/764.

implementation of the action or puts into question the decision awarding the financial support.

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.

1. Evaluation of short proposals

Short proposals will be evaluated by four EIC expert evaluators. These four evaluators' competences will match the area of technology and market application of your innovation. The EIC expert evaluators will look at the innovativeness/disruptiveness of your idea, its impact and your team using the evaluation criteria specified below.

Each evaluator will assess whether your short proposal meets each of the evaluation elements (Table 6) and give a GO or NO GO:

✦ If at least three out of the four evaluators give a GO, then your short proposal will be successful, and you will be invited to prepare a full proposal.

✦ If at least two out of the four evaluators give a NO GO, then your proposal is considered unsuccessful and will be rejected. You may resubmit your proposal, according to applicant submission limits (see below section 3). You will be expected to make improvements to your proposal.

Table 6. Evaluation elements for EIC Accelerator Open and Challenges at short proposal stage
Excellence
Novelty and breakthrough nature of the innovation: Is the proposed innovation a highly novel, deep tech breakthrough compared to existing solutions?
Technology readiness level: Is there sufficient demonstration that the innovation has completed all aspects of TRL 5 (validation in a relevant environment for the application of the technology)?
Timing: Is the innovation at the cutting edge of new market, societal or technological trends?
Impact

Competitiveness and demand: Is the innovation better than what the competition proposes, and is the solution bringing sufficient added value to trigger demand from potential customers?
Market development: Does the innovation have the potential to develop new markets or significantly transform existing ones?
Broader impact: Will the innovation, if successfully commercialised achieve positive societal, economic, environmental[98] or climate impacts?
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, including adequate gender balance?

2. Evaluation of full proposals: remote evaluation and interviews

Full proposals will be assessed following the cut-off dates listed below. This will start with a remote evaluation where your full proposal will be sent to three EIC expert evaluators (different than the short proposal evaluators) whose expertise will be matched against the area of technology and application of your innovation. The expert evaluators will then assess your proposal against the award criteria evaluation elements set out below.

Each evaluator will assess whether your full proposal meets each of the award criteria evaluation elements and give a GO or NO GO per element:

✦ If all three evaluators give a GO for all the evaluation elements, then your full proposal will be successful, and you will be invited to an interview with an EIC jury.

✦ if two of the three evaluators give a GO for all the evaluation elements, then there will be a consensus meeting to decide if you will be invited to an interview with an EIC Jury. For proposals submitted to the Open topic, all three experts must give a GO during the consensus meeting for the proposal to be invited to interview. For proposals submitted to the Challenge topics, the proposal may still be invited to interview if two experts give a GO[99].

✦ If two or more of the evaluators give a NO GO on any of the evaluation elements, then your proposal will be rejected.

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[98] Projects must comply with the 'do no significant harm' principle enshrined in Article 17 of the EU Taxonomy Regulation as part of the eligibility criteria.
[99] This is because projects submitted under the Challenge call are in strategically important areas and so may be considered for funding by the jury even if one remote evaluator provides a No Go.

The EIC jury will have access to the remote evaluation results of your full proposal but will not have access to your short proposal or the evaluation results of your short proposal and will also not have access to any previous proposals in cases of resubmissions.

EIC Jury members, based on your interview and their overall assessment, will recommend your proposal for funding (GO) or not (NO GO):

✦ If the proposal receives a GO and is recommended for funding, the EIC Jury may recommend providing a lower grant amount than the one requested by the applicant. For the investment component, the EIC jury will not recommend an amount different than the one requested by the applicant but may make observations for consideration by the EIC Fund. The EIC jury will not change the form of support (blended, grant onlyequity only) but may 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.

✦ If your proposal receives a NO GO and is not recommended for funding, your proposal will be awarded a Seal of Excellence[100] to facilitate funding from alternative funding sources and access to EIC Business Acceleration Services. Exceptionally, EIC juries may recommend that your proposal does not receive a Seal of Excellence if they find weaknesses in your proposal which were not identified by the expert evaluators at the remote evaluation stage. In such cases, you will receive feedback to justify this recommendation.

✦ If your proposal is submitted under one of the STEP-relevant Challenges calls, your project will be awarded the Sovereignty (STEP) Seal, in both cases (i.e. for both GO and NO GO recommendations). Exceptionally, EIC juries may recommend that your proposal does not receive a Sovereignty (STEP) Seal if they find weaknesses in your proposal which were not identified by the expert evaluators at the remote evaluation stage. In such cases, you will receive feedback to justify this recommendation.

Following the notification of the outcome of your application, you will receive an official rejection letter (and your Seal of Excellence and Sovereignty (STEP) Seal, if awarded). Seals of Excellence and Sovereignty (STEP) Seals may be funded by national or European programmes for both grant and investment components, and may also be supported for only the grant component (even if selected for blended finance).

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[100] To make Seal of Excellence operational applicants must give the consent to share basic data about their application with other alternative funding and support bodies.

Member States may decide to transfer budget from ERDF Programmes to Horizon Europe to support EIC Seals of Excellence. In this case the Seals will be directly funded by the Agency for the grant component and the EIC Fund for the investment component; in case the transfer is restricted by the relevant Member State to grant funding only, then applicants will receive "grant only" support even if they were evaluated for blended finance.

Indicatively, the budget for grant components will be allocated approximately equally between the cut-offs. In case the amount allocated to GO applicants is less than the budget available for that cut-off, or additional budget becomes available as a result of the grant agreement concluded with EIC Awardees, then the remaining available budget will be allocated to the subsequent cut-off. In case the amount allocated to GO applicants is above the budget available, then a number of applicants corresponding to the unavailable budget will be awarded funding using the available budget of the subsequent cut-off. Such applicants will be identified using the ordering set out above for the invitation to interviews.

Full proposals will be assessed according to the following award criteria (Table 7). The EIC Jury may focus the interview on any element of your proposal based on the remote evaluation result and its own assessment.

Table 7. Award criteria elements for EIC Accelerator Open and Challenges at full proposal stage: remote and interview
Novelty and breakthrough nature of the innovation: Is the proposed innovation a highly novel, deep tech breakthrough compared to existing solutions.
FOR CHALLENGES ONLY: , and for EIC Accelerator Challenges, Does the innovation is it addressing the specific objectives of the Cchallenge to which it was submitted?
Timing: Is the innovation at the cutting edge of new market, societal or technological trends?
Technological feasibility: has the technology been developed in a safe, secure and reliable manner? Has it been adequately assessed, validated or certified? Is there sufficient demonstration that the innovation has completed all aspects of TRL 5 (validation in a relevant environment for the application of the technology)?
Intellectual Property Strategy: Does your company have the necessary Intellectual Property Rights to ensure adequate protection of the idea? Has a freedom to operate analysis been carried out?

Impact
Customer Demand: ~~Is the innovation better than what the competition proposes, and I~~Is the solution bringing sufficient added value to trigger demand from potential customers?
Market development: Does the innovation have the potential to develop new markets or significantly transform existing ones? Has the potential market for the innovation been adequately quantified, including conditions and growth rates? Is the expected market share acquisition reasonably ambitious and reachable?
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? Are the key partners identified and committed?
Scale up potential: Does the innovation have the potential to scaleup the company?   *For grant only support: can the applicant demonstrate access to the resources needed to commercialise and scale-up the innovation*
Broader impact: Will the innovation, if successfully commercialised achieve positive societal, economic, environmental[60] or climate impacts.~~, and~~
FOR CHALLENGES ONLY: - Does the innovation have the potential to contribute to the expected outcomes and impacts set out in the **Challenge** to which the proposal was submitted?   **-** Does the innovation have a clear and measurable positive impact on the EU Single Market (in line with STEP objectives), either by: ❖ Strengthening its competitiveness: Does the innovation address a critical need within the EU internal market, fostering innovation and technological leadership for European companies?   ❖ Reducing strategic dependencies: Does the innovation contribute to reducing the EU's reliance on non-EU sources for critical technologies or raw materials?   *(Note: applicants from Associated Countries will need to demonstrate contributions the EU internal market or strategic dependencies)*

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, including adequate gender balance?
Risk level of the investment (for applicants requesting an investment component):   Can the company demonstrate that: ~~Does T~~the nature and risk level of ~~risk of~~ the investment in the ~~your~~ innovation mean that, without an investment from the EIC Fund, European market actors are unwilling to commit

the full amount that is needed? ~~without an investment from the EIC Fund~~? I~~s there evidence that market actors would be willing to invest, either alongside the EIC or at a later stage?~~
AND
The company will be able to attract, with the support of the EIC, the remaining funding from other investors within the next two years?

Note: if an applicant has previous investors or is in a current investment round, this will not be used as a reason to reject an application against this element. Moreover, this assessment should take into account the international context and whether competitor companies outside of the EU or Associated Countries have access to larger investment amounts.

Risk mitigation: Have the main risks (e.g. technological, market, financial, regulatory) been identified, together with measures to take to mitigate them?

Implementation plan: Is there a clear implementation plan with defined milestones, work packages and deliverables, together with realistic resources and timings?

Application submission limits

The EIC Accelerator applies limitations on the number of unsuccessful submissions of the same/improved proposal by the same legal entity. These limitations apply equally to applicants submitted via the Fast Track or Plug In schemes.

After three unsuccessful submissions of the same/improved proposal by the same legal entity to the EIC Accelerator call for Challenges or Open, which can be at any stage of the process (Short Proposal, Full Proposal) and for any form of support (Grant only, Blended finance), an applicant may not apply again to the EIC Accelerator under the Horizon Europe Framework Programme.

This provision repeals the rules on '*on resubmission of applications to the EIC Accelerator*' laid down in the EIC Work Programmes 2021 to 2023. Furthermore, the number of applications to the EIC Accelerator submitted in previous years by the same applicant will not be taken into account for the purpose of the application of this new rule.

In all cases, applicants are expected to take into account the feedback on their previous submission and only reapply if they have made significant improvements.

Approach for follow-on investments by the EIC Fund

The EIC Fund may provide follow on investments in companies that have already been selected and awarded equity support. Such follow-on investments consist of amounts additional to the original maximum amount laid down in the Award Decision or the

decision on investment, within a maximum of EUR 10 million[101] and subject to availability of budget. Such follow-on investments will be subject to a project review by external experts (to ensure the evaluation criteria for Accelerator are met), an amended Award Decision by the European Commission as well a renewed assessment (due diligence) by the EIB as investment adviser to the EIC Fund .[102]

Such follow-on investments will be limited to the following exceptional categories of cases[103]:

i)   Where necessary to secure EU interests which cannot be otherwise protected or in the case of strategic technologies[104], or

ii)   If subsequent funding rounds would not proceed or would proceed at significantly less favourable terms without the EIC Fund's follow-on investment.

The EIC Fund may also provide **investments to companies that received "Grant first"** support under the EIC Work Programmes 2021 to 2023, subject to these companies achieving the milestones set for proceeding with the investment component.

The budget for follow on investments and the investment component subsequent to "Grant first" support will come with priority from the follow-on reserve budget as indicated in Annex 1 or from returns generated by EIC Fund investments. In case these budgets are exhausted, available amounts from the budget of this call or from previous amounts allocated to the EIC Fund may be used. In case the budget reserved for follow on investments is not fully used for the above cases, the remaining amount will be transferred to the Accelerator Open call.

Approach in specific cases relating to a parent or holding company and an operating company[105]

In some cases of EIC Accelerator it may be necessary for the EIC Fund to invest in the parent or holding company and not in the company that applied for EIC Accelerator support and is the beneficiary of the grant component. This includes cases where the parent or holding company is where all other investors have invested and will invest in the future and where any potential upside will take place.

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[101] Higher amounts for follow on investments are available by applying under the EIC STEP Scale-up call.
[102] In accordance with Article 48(12), second subparagraph, of the Horizon Europe Regulation. The Programme Committee shall be informed of such cases.
[103] These cases stem from the advice of the EIC Board.
[104] Investments will be consider strategic where without securing the investment in the Union there is a risk of dependency of a critical technology on a limited number of third country suppliers. See also section of the Introduction on economic security.
[105] In case of equity only, the parent or holding will have to submit the application

Applicants should already indicate in their application if they have a parent or holding company for the purposes of the investment component. In such cases the EIC Fund may decide to invest not in the beneficiary but in its parent or holding company in such cases:

- Provided that the parent or holding company fulfils all relevant criteria, including establishment in an EU Member State or Associated County, and
- in accordance with the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines.

In these cases, and where there is a grant component of support, the grant agreement with the beneficiary will include the parent or holding company as an affiliated entity in its role as investee.[106]

Indirect management of the investment component of the EIC Accelerator

In line with Article 11(3) of Council Decision 2021/764/EU establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe, the Commission has entrusted tasks related to the implementation and management of the investment component of the EIC Accelerator to the European Investment Bank as the implementing partner for an indicative budget for investment amounts as shown in Annex 1.

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[106] Where necessary, via an amendment to the grant agreement.

IV.1 EIC Accelerator Open

EIC Accelerator Open has no predefined thematic priorities and is open to proposals in any field of technology or application.

If an application to the Open call falls within the scope of the Challenges topics below, grant funding is subject to eligibility in accordance with the specific conditions applicable to those topics:

- GenAI4EU: Creating European Champions in Generative AI
- Acceleration of advanced materials development and upscaling along the value chain
- Biotechnology driven low emission food production systems
- Innovative in-space servicing, operations, space-based robotics and technologies for resilient EU space infrastructure

Breakthrough innovations for future mobility Furthermore, in case of an investment support for applications in the areas of AI, quantum, semiconductors and biotechnology, specific safeguards may be introduced in the investment agreement (see Introduction, section on Economic Security as well as Annex 2).

IV.2   EIC Accelerator Challenges

The total indicative budget for EIC Accelerator Challenges is EUR 250 million. However, this amount is subject to the following conditions on budget flexibility and potential transfers to the EIC Accelerator Open: if there are insufficient applications selected for funding for a Challenge, the budget will be transferred to the other Challenges: in case there are insufficient applications selected for all the Challenges, the remaining budget will be transferred to the Accelerator Open.[107]

The Accelerator Challenges have been identified in areas where breakthrough technologies or game-changing innovations developed by start-ups or SMEs can have a major impact on EU objectives. In 2025, these objectives include the AI Act, Net Zero Industry Act, the strategies on Biotechnology and Biomanufaturing, and on Advanced Materials, as well as the list of critical technologies identified in the strategy on Economic Security.

All Challenge applicants are encouraged to develop synergies with relevant activities under other Horizon Europe Work Programmes.

All the Accelerator Challenges included in the 2025 EIC Work Programme support technologies that fall within the scope and objectives [108] of the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) legislation. Hence, applicants to all Challenges will be awarded the Sovereignty (STEP) Seal in accordance with the provisions in Section IV.

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[107] With the exception of the Next Generation EU component of the budget.
[108] For further information on the scope and objectives of STEP, see the Guidance Note concerning certain provisions of Regulation (EU) 2024/795 establishing the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP). C(2025)3148 of 8 May 2024.

IV.2.1 Acceleration of advanced materials development and upscaling along the value chain

Background and scope

Advanced Materials are defined as materials that are engineered with a view to enhancing functional performance above and beyond that of existing materials[109]. They are key enablers for the development of game-changing products and innovative solutions in many industrial sectors, such as energy, mobility, electronics, and construction.

As stated in the European Commission Communication "Advanced Materials for Industrial Leadership"[110], there is an urgent need to boost all the stages of development of advanced materials, such as their design, scale-up and manufacturing capacity (from lab to fab), as demand for these materials is expected to increase significantly in the coming years.

This requires investment to identify and bring breakthrough innovations to the market that cover the full value chain from developers and producers of advanced materials alongside those companies developing digital tools for designing, synthesising, modelling and characterising advanced materials including those supported by Artificial Intelligence / machine learning.

This Challenge therefore aims at scaling SMEs belonging to the whole value chain of advanced materials and addressing one or more of these four key applications: energy, mobility, electronics, construction. It contributes to a common European approach in accelerating the scaling up of advanced materials, a critical technology identified under the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP)[111], and thereby addresses the risks to the EU's future strategic autonomy in this area.

Specific objectives

Companies supported under this Challenge should target one or both of the following areas, taking into account the Safe and Sustainable by Design framework, including Life Cycle Assessment and circularity approaches:

- Technologies for design, synthesis, characterisation, up-scaling, and production of advanced materials.
- Scaling up processes to reach the targeted functionalities or improved performance of advanced materials, such as surface functionalization of nanoparticles, or additive manufacturing approaches which may enable a fast integration of the advanced materials into smart devices.

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[109] OECD ENV/CBC/MONO(2022)29
[110] Advanced Materials for Industrial Leadership - European Commission (europa.eu)
[111] Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform - European Union (europa.eu)

The advanced materials and associated processes in the abovementioned four key application areas must be developed minimizing the use of resources, in particular critical raw materials (CRMs), and the environmental footprint. The latter is to be measured with a life-cycle analysis that includes an evaluation of the cost and social impact.

Expected outcomes and impacts:

In support of the Commission Communication on Advanced Manufacturing for Industrial Leadership[112], the European Green Deal industrial plan[113], the New European Innovation Agenda[114], Digital Europe[115] and the EU Economic Security Strategy[116], this Challenge will:

- Strengthen the European value chain of advanced materials in the energy, mobility, electronics, and construction application areas.

- Enable a more diversified, digitally driven, and risk-aware configuration of the European advanced materials value chain and associated processes and technologies.

- Accelerate market uptake of advanced materials in the energy, mobility, electronics, and construction industrial sectors.

- Address the EU's industrial dependency on imports of resources, such as CRMs, for the energy, mobility, electronics, and construction sectors.

Projects selected will become part of the wider advanced materials ecosystem to be fostered by the different actions set out in the Advanced Materials for Industrial Leadership, amongst these the new co-programmed partnership IAM4EU[117].

Indicative budget: EUR 50 million

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[112] Advanced Materials for Industrial Leadership - European Commission (europa.eu)
[113] The European Green Deal - European Commission (europa.eu)
[114] The New European Innovation Agenda - European Commission (europa.eu)
[115] Digital Europe Programme - European Commission (europa.eu)
[116] European economic security strategy - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)
[117] Materials 2030 Initiative | (ami2030.eu)

IV.2.2 Biotechnology driven low emission food and feed production systems

Background and scope

The global food system is responsible for approximately 30% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions with the largest contribution (ca. 70%) coming from agriculture, land use and land-use change activities (e.g., de-forestation). In addition to CO2 emissions, other GHGs such as methane (CH4) and nitrous oxide (N2O) are responsible for a significant share of the sector's footprint with agricultural production the main source due in particular to methane produced through enteric fermentation, and from manure - in the EU, livestock are responsible for over 90% of all agriculture related methane emissions. Furthermore, modern agricultural practices that feature the excessive use of mineral fertilizers and pesticides also have a highly detrimental effect on the biosphere and biodiversity.

Radically decreasing GHG emissions and the wider environmental footprint of the food production system requires action on several fronts. In keeping with the ambitions of the Commission Communication on Building the future with nature: Boosting Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing in the EU[118], a critical technology identified under the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP)[119], this Challenge focuses on supporting novel biotechnology driven solutions in four areas, which can in combination offer a GHG mitigation potential of nearly 1.5 billion tons (tCO$_2$e), through approaches that:

- Replace fossil fuels in the production of raw materials for agriculture

- Achieve efficiency in resource use and support the deployment of climate smart agriculture technologies for sustainable plant- and livestock-based food production

- Mitigate enteric methane emissions from ruminants

- Replace conventional food and feed production.

Specific Objectives

The start-ups and SMEs to be supported under this initiative must focus on one (or more) of the following objectives:

- Biotech for biopesticides, bio-stimulants, and biofertilizers: This strand focuses on scaling breakthroughs in the use of microorganisms or their biological components, and enzymatic or other biotechnology-based processes for the production of renewable materials from waste streams and biomass in an innovative and sustainable way that is in keeping with the principles of a circular economy. It includes novel manure management techniques.

- Biotech to support precision crop and livestock farming: This covers approaches that could for example leverage new plant breeding technologies or enhance desirable traits through biotechnology to complement, and be integrated with, precision crop and livestock farming approaches to help increase yields and animal performance while reducing costs and optimising process inputs.

- Biotech for Ruminant Methane Mitigation: This includes approaches such as novel feed components, feed processing for digestibility, advanced feed additives and selective breeding.

- Biotech for feed and food production: This focuses on precision fermentation for the sustainable production of food ingredients traditionally derived from animal or plant sources.

Regardless of the specific objective addressed, companies are encouraged to leverage digital tools such as AI, as appropriate, to facilitate the development of process and make the resulting products and services more suitable for integration into existing production systems.

All projects must provide a lifecycle assessment considering environmental, social and economic consideration. Proposals are also expected to consider regulatory aspects alongside issues surrounding consumer acceptance and articulate suitable strategies to support market entry within and beyond the EU.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

In support of the Building the future with nature: Boosting Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing in the EU[120], EU Soil Mission[121], the EU Green Deal[122], Farm to Fork strategy[123], Fit for 55[124] and REPowerEU[125] policy actions, this Challenge aims to improve the sustainability, efficiency, and resilience of the European food supply chain.

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[120] Actions to boost biotechnology and biomanufacturing in EU (europa.eu)
[121] EU Mission: A Soil Deal for Europe (europa.eu)
[122] The European Green Deal - European Commission (europa.eu)
[123] Farm to Fork Strategy - European Commission (europa.eu)
[124] Fit for 55: Delivering on the proposals - European Commission (europa.eu)
[125] REPowerEU (europa.eu)

It will support breakthrough solutions that will support future strategic autonomy, and enhance the future competitiveness of Europe's agricultural sector by helping it overcome challenges linked to climate change and environment stresses including biodiversity loss and pollution.

Indicative budget: EUR 50 million

IV.2.3 GenAI4EU: Creating European Champions in Generative AI

Background and scope

While Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies are already delivering significant improvements in healthcare, aiding climate change mitigation and adaptation, enhancing production systems through predictive maintenance, and increasing the security of European citizens and business, generative AI (GenAI) is expected to revolutionize these fields further. GenAI promises a transformative impact on our daily lives by significantly advancing capabilities across various domains.

GenAI however still faces notable challenges, such as unexplained inaccuracies (i.e., hallucinations) and a lack of transparency and accountability in decision-making, which undermines trust and poses questions regarding the safety and reliability of the systems. These are even more critical in the case of more advanced applications, needing greater scale and integration within user workflows, particularly in sensitive or safety-critical settings like clinical workflows or the management of critical infrastructures.

In line with the AI innovation package[126] supporting Artificial Intelligence startups and SMEs, and with the EU AI Act[127], targeted at the development, deployment and take-up of trustworthy AI in the EU, this Challenge contributes to fostering a European, human-centric approach to AI, that embodies EU values and works towards guaranteeing Europe's tech sovereignty in a critical technology area identified under the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP)[128].

The aim of this Challenge is to support start-ups and SMEs committed to bringing transformative AI-driven solutions to market. The proposed solutions should safeguard human autonomy and enhance human expertise thus providing significant added value

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[126] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_383
[127] AI Act | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)
[128] Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform - European Union (europa.eu)

to decision-making processes, services or industrial workflows. Novel solutions with broad future applicability are particularly encouraged.

Specific Objectives

This Challenge will support start-ups and SMEs that are:

- Further developing and validating new GenAI models

- Adapting existing models to specific sectors or types of data where smaller faster and more energy-efficient models would also be applicable

- Integrating and testing the GenAI solutions in existing workflows, and testing these in regulatory sandboxes and real-life settings, including certification and post-market surveillance, as appropriate.

The developed models must go beyond the state of the art and must look to overcome the current difficulties that limit the extent to which they support human expertise with a particular focus on the following areas, and in line with the sectors and applications listed in the AI communication[129]:

- Healthcare: radiology is a frontrunner in the use of GenAI, but current solutions suffer from a lack of trust and integration with clinical workflows, which must be overcome to advance automatic radiology reporting and enhance human-AI interaction while reducing interpretation errors and associated variability.

- Energy: the integration of GenAI in managing the power grid, alongside the storage and use of renewables by grid operators, for example, calls for high quality, reliable AI systems that deliver safe, real-time decision making to enhance resilience and planning

- Security: security professionals including those operating critical infrastructures can scale their work in threat and vulnerability detection and the subsequent response to such threats, with the support of fault-tolerant, high quality and secure AI systems

- Public sector: leveraging GenAI to improve the quality, ease of access and efficiency of public services, or to increase the efficiency of public administration services and productivity

- Manufacturing: systems to enhance predictive maintenance through the analysis of sensor data from machines and production lines, achieving zero-

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[129] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/communication-boosting-startups-and-innovation-trustworthy-artificial-intelligence

defect manufacturing by identifying patterns and anomalies in production data, allowing for early detection and correction of defects.

- Education: Use of Generative AI systems to enable personalized and adaptive learning experiences. Development of virtual tutors capable of providing personalized instruction and support.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

This Challenge will support the further development and validation of Gen AI models and/or downstream applications, which are "European-Value driven" and contributes to the ambitions of the AI Act[130] and the European approach to Artificial Intelligence[131]. The AI models developed under this Challenge are expected to comply with the EU concept for Trustworthy AI and the relevant ethical principles with due attention paid to data quality, transparency & accountability, privacy, and security.

In the medium to longer term, it is expected to reduce dependencies and support European companies in leveraging the advances in generative AI, enhance their products and develop new ones that:

- Optimise existing workflows: utilising Generative AI technologies to streamline and improve operational processes across various industries

- Enhance human capabilities: Applying advanced AI models to enhance decision-making, creativity, and productivity

- Are validated for application: Ensuring that the AI models are both advanced and thoroughly validated for practical applicability in real-world scenarios.

The selected beneficiaries will receive favourable access to European supercomputing resources for the training of their large foundation models, in the context of the AI Factories in line with the EuroHPC regulation[132]. In addition, they may benefit from additional actions aimed at creating strategic partnerships with major industries or attracting further capital. Where relevant, opportunities may be explored to provide the selected beneficiaries with access to scientific datasets through the European Open Science Cloud or to provide users of the European Open Science Cloud with access to the tools developed by the beneficiaries.

Specific conditions

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[130] AI Act | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)
[131] European approach to artificial intelligence | Shaping Europe's digital future (europa.eu)
[132] EuroHPC JU regulation is published in the Official Journal of the European Union - European Commission (europa.eu)

Any technology under this Challenge must be developed in a robust manner, paying specific attention to safety, security and ethics considerations in future applications.

In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, beneficiaries of the grant component of Accelerator funding[133] must not be directly or indirectly controlled by a non-associated third country or a legal entity established in a non-associated third country other than such third countries or legal entities established in OECD member countries, Mercosur member countries countries with which the EU cooperates under a Trade and Technology Council, and countries with which the EU has a Digital Partnership [134].

Furthermore, in case of an investment support, specific safeguards may be introduced in the investment agreement (see Introduction, section on Economic Security).

Indicative budget: EUR 50 million

IV.2.4 Innovative in-space servicing, operations, space-based robotics and technologies for resilient EU space infrastructure

Background and scope

Satellites are currently designed, built and launched into space without the functionalities to be serviced, repaired, upgraded or refuelled. In combination with recent trends, such as increased satellite launches and growing space debris, this has resulted in:

- A reduction in the operational lifetime of satellites due to the depletion of fuel as a result of collision avoidance manoeuvres

- Growing debris due to launch anomalies, fragmentation events or explosions in orbit, and

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[133] 'i.e., the legal entity which signs the grant agreement.

[134] OECD member countries have demonstrated a commitment to trustworthy and human-centric AI, as outlined by their adoption of OECD principles. Collaboration with India, Singapore, and Mercosur countries fosters not only technological advancements but also the ethical and secure deployment of AI aligned with European values. The Trade and Technology Council with India, the Digital Partnership with Singapore, and the Framework Cooperation Agreement with Mercosur, serve to mitigate the strategic and technological risks for collaboration with these countries.

- The need for in-space mobility, Low Earth Orbit (LEO) to Geosynchronous Orbit (GEO) transfer capabilities and the necessity to preserve orbital slots.

Furthermore, these spacecrafts will be exposed to a number of space-based cyber threats, such as signal spoofing, Radio Frequency (RF) interferences, jamming and intrusion that must be overcome to ensure a resilient EU space-based infrastructure.

Approaches that extend the lifetime and protect space-based infrastructure can thus offer both essential resilience and significant cost savings for satellite operators and less debris in space. However, despite the emerging commercial trend for in-orbit servicing, Europe lacks cost-effective, cyber-secure, scalable, and resilient capabilities that can deliver autonomous space operations including through the use of in-space robotics to inspect, dock, capture and extend the lifetime of satellites. Such critical capabilities will be of increasing strategic importance as the coming years will witness the development of the next generation of flexible, serviceable and resilient spacecraft that will require such capabilities.

This Challenge therefore focuses on supporting European companies developing cost-effective, scalable and resilient solutions to service and/or augment satellite capabilities, perform in-orbit refuelling, contribute to space debris reduction, and protect EU space infrastructure. It develops capabilities in areas such as cyber security control technologies, satellite-based secure connectivity, robots and robot-controlled precision systems identified under the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP)[135], and thereby addresses risks to the EU's future strategic autonomy.

Specific objectives

The start-ups and SMEs to be supported under this initiative must deliver solutions that address one of the following objectives:

- In-Orbit Servicing & Maintenance – This focuses on technologies to extend the lifetime of satellites, reduce the number of dysfunctional satellites and address deployment anomalies in orbit. It covers the full spectrum of activity including inspection and maintenance, Rendezvous and Proximity Operations (RPOs), capture and docking alongside repair or the augmentation/ reconfiguration of satellite capabilities.

- In-space transportation - This covers refuelling and recharging of spacecraft in orbit, in-space mobility from LEO to GEO, orbital transfer vehicles and cost-efficient propulsion for in-space mobility of spacecraft.

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[135] Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform - European Union (europa.eu)

- Space-based resilience – This includes technologies that address space-based cybersecurity threats for satcom, navigation, Earth Observation and In Orbit servicing missions. It covers technologies tackling space-based cyber threats such as encryption, frequency hopping, radio frequency fingerprinting, secure on-board processing capabilities, AI for cybersecurity for autonomous RPO and ones related to Space Situational Awareness, space weather and space debris impacts.

Expected outcomes and impact

This challenge contributes to the strategic autonomy to the EU and the R&I High Level Roadmap/on-orbit operations, the EU Approach to Space Traffic Management[136], the EU In-Orbit Demonstration and Validation initiative (IOD/IOV)[137] and planned initiatives such as the in-Space Operations and Services (ISOS) infrastructure under the Act in Space activities[138].

By developing and scaling up affordable and resilient in-space technologies the Challenge will:

- help enhance the resilience of European space-based infrastructure while extending their lifetime and contribute to the management and reduction of space debris.

- increase the competitiveness of European companies in In-orbit satellites servicing (IOS), In-space assembly and manufacturing (ISAM) and Active Debris Removal (ADR) domains

- contribute to supporting the scaling up of technologies for in-orbit satellite servicing and maintenance, in-space transportation and space-based cybersecurity resilience

- generate new contracts from new markets, while delivering significant cost-savings for satellite owners and operators who will find viable approaches to inspect, protect and extend the operational lifetime of their satellites while reducing space debris.

Specific conditions

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[136] Space Traffic Management - European Commission (europa.eu)
[137] In-Orbit Demonstration and Validation (IOD/IOV) - European Commission (europa.eu)
[138] In-Space Operations; Act in Space; ISOS (europa.eu)

In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, beneficiaries of the grant component of Accelerator funding must not be directly or indirectly controlled by a non-associated third country or a legal entity established in a non-associated third country.

Indicative budget: EUR 50 million

IV.2.5 Breakthrough innovations for future mobility

Background and scope

The European Union has charted a path to climate neutrality by 2050 with an ambition to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. The transport sector, including road transport, aviation, waterborne and rail, has however been steadily increasing its emissions at an average yearly rate of 1.7% since 1990. The resulting emissions are also one of the main contributors to environmental and health problems, which are particularly acute in urban areas.

The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy[139] includes an action plan to deliver on a 90% cut in mobility emissions by 2050, delivered by a smart, competitive, safe, accessible, and affordable transport system. This encompasses all road vehicles, aircraft, rail, waterborne vessels, infrastructure and new mobility services in increasingly climate-neutral cities and rural areas.

The electrification of road transport alongside the increasing electrification and use of zero and low carbon fuels of waterborne transport and aviation are expected to reduce these emissions, but further breakthroughs beyond the drivetrain are needed to deliver an effective and safe low emission transport system.

This Challenge therefore focuses on supporting European companies developing cost-effective and scalable deep tech breakthroughs that will help deliver reductions in mobility-related emissions in its many facets, from the manufacture of vehicles to their use. It also includes approaches that deliver improvements in the efficiency of the transport system through for example the use of digital tools. It thereby develops capabilities in areas such as sensing, manufacturing and resource efficient technologies

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[139] Mobility Strategy - European Commission (europa.eu)

alongside sustainable alternative fuels identified under the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP)[140], and thereby addresses risks to the EU's future strategic autonomy.

Energy vectors based on electrification and hydrogen fall outside the scope of this Challenge call but can be supported through the Open calls.

Specific objectives

The start-ups and SMEs to be supported under this Challenge must focus on developing cost-effective and scalable solutions that deliver against at least one of the following objectives:

- Breakthroughs in the design, manufacture, assembly and operation of road vehicles, waterborne vessels, aircraft, or rail that contribute significantly to reduce their environmental footprint;

- Disruptive technologies that contribute to increase operational efficiencies and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, secondary and other harmful emissions and noise for Heavy Duty road vehicles, waterborne vessels, aircraft or rail, multimodal transport and/or their related infrastructure;

- Sustainable fuels for hard-to-abate sectors such as aviation and maritime, including retrofitting solutions; and

- Breakthroughs in the development and integration of digital tools ranging from sensors to the application of Artificial Intelligence to achieve increased transport autonomy on land, water or in the air, improve the connectivity and efficiency of vehicles and the transport system including capacity management.

Projects must take into account the Safe and Sustainable by Design (SSbD) framework[141], including Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) and circularity approaches.

Companies selected under this Challenge will become part of the ecosystem fostered under the European industrial partnerships in the areas of Clean Aviation, Towards zero-emission road transport (2ZERO), Connected, Cooperative and Automated Driving (CCAM), Zero-emission waterborne transport and Transforming Europe's rail system.

Expected outcomes and impact

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[140] Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform - European Union (europa.eu)
[141] Safe and sustainable by design - European Commission (europa.eu)

This Challenge contributes to the strategic autonomy to the EU, the objectives of the European Green Deal[142], the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy[143] and the Net-Zero Industry Act[144], which seeks to foster the EU's net-zero technology industrial base - products, components, and equipment necessary for manufacturing net-zero technologies - to deliver an affordable, reliable, and sustainable clean transport system.

By developing and scaling up breakthrough innovations for future mobility, the Challenge will:

- increase the competitiveness and economic autonomy or security of European companies across the mobility value chain

- support the scaling up of technologies that materially reduce mobility-related emissions, including a quantification on how they reduce emissions or increase efficiency of transport, or provide more affordable or inclusive mobility

- deliver improvements in accessibility, safety, connectivity and efficiency of the transport system including new mobility services and models

- create new skills and jobs in the EU

Indicative budget: EUR 50 million

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[142] The European Green Deal - European Commission (europa.eu)
[143] Mobility Strategy - European Commission (europa.eu)
[144] The Net-Zero Industry Act (europa.eu)

V. EIC Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) Scale Up Call

❖ Does your company have a game-changing innovative technology focused on the development and commercialisation of a **strategic technology** for Europe in digitaland deep tech, cleantech or biotech?

❖ Has your company already secured an **initial investment**, and is now looking to raise a major funding round to **scale up rapidly** and become a **global leader**?

❖ Does the successful commercialisation and scaling or your technology/ innovation **represent significant risks** which mean that it cannot be sufficiently financed from the market investors?

If you answered **yes** to all questions, then the EIC Strategic Technology for Europe Platform (STEP) Scale Up call could be your launchpad to success. This call for provides significant funding to fuel groundbreaking innovation in **strategic technologies[145],** propelling Europe's economic, industrial, and technological competitiveness. This is a new call that has been introduced as a pilot action following the STEP regulation to address an important market gap in financing deep tech scale up companies in Europe and to inform decisions on future support.

Why should you apply?

The EIC STEP Scale Up call presents a unique opportunity for ambitious scale up companies (SMEs and small mid-caps) with game-changing innovations **in Europe's critical technology areas**. It offers a powerful combination of financial and strategic support designed to propel your groundbreaking idea to the forefront of these sectors.

The companies selected under the EIC STEP Scale Up call can receive investments **ranging from EUR 10 to EUR 30 million**. This investment can significantly accelerate the development and market launch of your technology, product, or service. With this funding, you'll gain the power to disrupt established markets and forge new ones across Europe, potentially achieving significant global impact. Crucially, this investment is designed to **catalyse major funding rounds**, e.g. in the range of EUR 50 to 150 million, and at least 3-5 times the EIC investment.

This call is part of the implementation of the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP))[146] which supports the development or manufacturing of critical

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[145] Guidance Note concerning certain provisions of Regulation (EU) 2024/795 establishing the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP)
[146] https://strategic-technologies.europa.eu/index_en

technologies throughout the Union or safeguarding and strengthening their respective value chains. Besides, support from the EIC, the projects may be eligible for support under other EU programmes included in STEP.

Can you apply?

In order to apply, your innovation must be within the scope of the priority areas defined in the STEP regulation[147] and guidance note[148]

a. **Digital technologies**[149] , and deep tech innovations. This includes: advanced semiconductor technologies; artificial intelligence technologies; quantum technologies; advanced connectivity, navigation and digital technologies; advanced sensing technologies; robotics and autonomous systems; Deep tech innovations (see Glossary).

b. **Clean and resource efficient technologies**, including net-zero technologies[150]. This includes: solar technologies; onshore wind and offshore renewable technologies; battery and energy storage technologies; heat pumps and geothermal technologies; hydrogen technologies; sustainable biogas and biomethane technologies; carbon capture and storage technologies; electricity grid technologies; nuclear fission technologies, sustainable alternative fuel technologies; hydropower technologies; other renewable technologies; energy system -related energy efficiency technologies; renewable fuels of non-biological origin technologies; biotech climate and energy solutions; transformative industrial technologies for decarbonisation; CO2 transport and utilisation technologies; wind and electric propulsion technologies; other nuclear technologies; advanced materials, manufacturing and recycling technologies, technologies vital to sustainability such as water purification and desalination; and circular economy technologies.

c. **Biotechnologies**, including medicinal products on the Union list of critical medicines and their components. Including DNA/RNA; proteins and other molecules; cell and tissue culture and engineering; process biotechnology techniques; Gene and RNA vectors; bioinformatics; and nanobiotechnology.

These technologies are deemed critical where they meet either of the following conditions:

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[147] Regulation - EU - 2024/795 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu), Article 2(1), point (a) of the STEP Regulation
[148] Guidance Note concerning certain provisions of Regulation (EU) 2024/795 establishing the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP). C(2025)3148 of 8 May 2024.
[149] Including those contributing to the targets and objectives of the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030, multi-country projects as defined in Article 2(2) of Decision (EU) 2022/2481
[150] As defined under the Net-Zero Industry Act [add ref]

a. they bring to the internal market an innovative, emerging and cutting-edge element with significant economic potential;

b. they contribute to reducing or preventing strategic dependencies of the Union.

The Commission [Guidance Note](), concerning certain provisions of STEP Regulation adopted on May 2024, provides detailed information on the criticality condition.

This call aims at companies raising significant funding rounds and you must demonstrate an initial market interest such that the EIC investment acts as a catalyst for larger funding rounds.

You will therefore need to demonstrate that the company **already has a pre-commitment** which meets the following elements:

❖ The pre-commitment is from a qualified lead investor[151], who is not already an existing investor in your company.

❖ The pre-commitment represents at least 20% of the total target funding round you are aiming to raise.

The following entities are eligible to apply:

❖ A single company classified as a SME or small mid-cap (up to 499 employees) established within a Member State or an Associated Country (see Annex 2). The company may have a holding entity for the purposes of the investment, and this holding company must also be established in a Member State or an Associated Country.

❖ An investor may submit a proposal on behalf of an eligible SME or small mid-cap as defined above, provided that a prior agreement exists with the company. The investment agreement will be signed with the final recipient of funding company only.

The standard admissibility and eligibility conditions are detailed in Annex 2.

In order to achieve the expected outcomes, and safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, and security, it is important to avoid a situation of technological dependency on a non-EU source, in a global context that requires the EU to take action to build on its strengths, and to carefully assess and address any strategic weaknesses, vulnerabilities and high-risk dependencies which put at risk the attainment of its ambitions. For this reason, recipients of EIC STEP Scaleup investments must not be directly or indirectly controlled by a non-associated third country or a legal entity established in a non-associated third

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[151] As defined in the EIC Investment Guidelines [add ref]

country. Furthermore, specific provisions may be introduced in the investment agreement (see Introduction, section on Economic Security).What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?

The EIC STEP Scale Up call offers a total indicative budget of EUR 300 million for the 2025, which is expected to rise to EUR 900 million for the period 2025-2027[152]. Any unused amount from this budget will be allocated to the EIC Accelerator Open call.

The support will be in the form of **equity only (equity and quasi-equity) investments** managed by the EIC Fund. Applicants to this call will not receive a grant component. It provides significant financial support, with **investments ranging from EUR 10 million to EUR 30 million**. The specific terms of each investment are negotiated on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines. This ensures the investment is tailored to your company's needs while aligning with EIC's objectives.

EIC STEP Scale Up is designed to fill the funding gap for high-risk innovations which cannot be fully financed by other investors, including Invest EU implementing partners. . Complementarity with Venture Debt from InvestEU implementing partners is encouraged.

When implementing investments, the EIC Fund will ensure that supported companies keep most of their value, including their IP, in the EU or in the Associated Countries in order to contribute to their economic growth and job creation. Where necessary, the EIC Fund will be requested to take appropriate safeguard measures for individual companies on a case-by-case basis in order to protect European interests as defined in the Investment Guidelines.

Beyond funding, your company will benefit from a strong support system that fosters your continued growth within Europe through EIC Business Acceleration Services (details available in Section V). Applicants to the EIC STEP Scale Up call who meet the evaluation thresholds will also be **awarded a Sovereignty (STEP) Seal,** to facilitate and provide privileged access to funding and support from other EU programmes and other funders and investors.

How do you apply; how long does it take?

You may submit an application to the EIC STEP Scale Up call at any time. The evaluations of applications submitted will be organised at regular intervals depending on the number of applications, with at least one per quarter or more frequently in urgent cases. You must submit your proposal via the Funding and Tenders Portal.

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[152] Amounts for 2026 and 2027 are subject to the EIC Work Programmes for 2026 and 2027.

1. Submission of proposals

The proposal consists of:

  ❖ a full business plan (maximum [50] pages)
  ❖ information on the company's ownership and financial structure;
  ❖ a short application form regarding STEP related objectives;
  ❖ a pitch-deck (maximum [15] pages) in pdf format;
  ❖ a pre-commitment from a qualified lead investor (according to a template available on the EIC website).
  ❖ An ownership declaration.

All personal data and information in your proposal will be kept strictly confidential. However, before submitting your full proposal, you will need to give consent to share necessary information with the EIC Fund.

In addition, you will be asked as part of your application whether your company would be interested in Venture Debt support from InvestEU implementing partners[153].

Upon submission, your proposal will be assessed if it meets the criteria set out above in terms of whether it falls within scope of the STEP technologies; the pre-commitment from a qualified lead investor; and the eligibility of the applicant entity.

The European Investment Bank, as investment adviser to the EIC Fund, may be requested to support assessment regarding the pre-commitment from a qualified lead investor.

If your application meets the eligibility requirements, including that the application is within the scope of the STEP priority areas and the requirement for a pre-commitment by a qualified lead investor, you will be invited to attend a jury interview. It is expected that you will be informed about the interview within approximately 4-6 weeks from the start of the evaluation process.

2. Interviews with an EIC Jury

At the interview, you will be assessed by a Jury of maximum six members (see Glossary). Detailed information about the format of the interview will be communicated to you in the invitation.

You will be informed about the result of the interview within approximately two weeks from the date of the interview.

If you are successful, an ownership control assessment will be conducted to assess the eligibility of your company to receive EIC STEP Scaleup support.

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[153] InvestEU Implementing partners - European Union (europa.eu)

An award decision will be adopted by the Commission covering the investment. The award decision will provide a maximum amount of investment by the EIC Fund which will follow the amount requested in the application, with an additional flexibility amount of maximum EUR 5 million per proposal. The flexibility amount is to enable the EIC Fund to make an investment decision for a higher amount than requested if justified to take account of developments of the company since the date of application and the opportunity of catalysing a larger overall funding round with co-investors. The additional flexibility amount may only be used if there are sufficient amounts available on the EIC Fund accounts (e.g., due to budget available from other investments).

The relevant information from your proposal will be passed to the European Investment Bank, acting as an investment adviser for the EIC Fund, to proceed with the due diligence and the investment agreement.

If you have expressed an interest and given consent, the relevant information from your proposal will be passed to the relevant InvestEU implementing partners to consider for Venture Debt support.

How does the EIC decide if your proposal will 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.

The EIC STEP Scale Up call utilizes a "first come, first served" approach to evaluate proposals. However, juries will be asked to take account of overall budget availability for the full year and will be limited to recommend proposals amounting to no more than 70% of the available budget for the calendar year within the first six months of the year. The Jury will be informed about budget availability, including additional amounts that may be available due to previous amounts awarded that were not fully used.

Proposals will be assessed according to the following award criteria (Table X). The EIC Jury may focus the interview on any element of your proposal based on its own assessment.

The EIC Jury members, based on your interview and their overall assessment, will recommend one of three outcomes for your proposal:

❖ **GO and Sovereignty (STEP) Seal:**

Your proposal meets all of the evaluation criteria (see below) and is recommended for funding within the budget available. The Jury may provide observations for consideration by the EIC Fund regarding the investment amount or other considerations for the investment decision or management. It is important to remember that investment amounts awarded by the Commission are subject to

negotiation, including due diligence, by the EIC Fund according to the Investment Guidelines, and investment amounts may be reduced or rejected for justified reasons.

Your project will also be awarded the Sovereignty (STEP) Seal and will have access to EIC Business Acceleration Services.

❖ **NO GO and Sovereignty (STEP) Seal:**

Your proposal meets all of the evaluation criteria (see below) but is not recommended due to the lack of budget availability.

Your project will be awarded the Sovereignty (STEP)Seal and access to EIC Business Acceleration Services.

❖ **NO GO:**

Your proposal does not meet all the evaluation criteria required for funding. You will receive detailed feedback outlining the areas where your proposal fell short to help you improve for future applications.

The Jury may also provide recommendations regarding a potential resubmission, or not, of your application and improvements needed.

Table X. Award criteria elements for EIC STEP Scale up proposals
Excellence
Excellence of the company: Does the company have a clear mission and vision and partnerships to realise their ambition to scale up?
Novelty and breakthrough character of the innovation: Does the innovation have breakthrough character and a high degree of novelty compared to existing solutions?
Timing: Is the timing right for this innovation in terms of users, societal or scientific of technological trends and developments?
Technological feasibility: Has the technology been developed in a safe, secure and reliable manner? Has it been adequately assessed, validated or certified?
Intellectual Property Strategy: Does your company have the necessary Intellectual Property Rights to ensure freedom to operate and adequate protection of the idea?
Impact
Customer demand: is the solution bringing sufficient added value to trigger demand from potential customers?
Market development: Does the innovation have the potential to develop new markets or significantly transform existing ones? Has the potential market for the innovation been adequately quantified, including conditions and growth rates? Is the expected market share acquisition reasonably ambitious and reachable?

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? Are the key partners identified and committed?

Scale up potential: Does the innovation have the potential to scaleup the company and to become a global leader in the technology?

Broader impact: Will the innovation, if successfully commercialised achieve positive broader societal, economic, environmental or climate impacts? Does the innovation have the potential to create new markets or significantly transform existing ones within the EU, fostering economic, social, and territorial cohesion?

STEP Impact: Does the innovation have a clear and measurable positive impact on the EU Single Market, either by:
   ❖ Strengthening its competitiveness: Does the innovation address a critical need within the EU internal market, fostering innovation and technological leadership for European companies?
   ❖ Reducing strategic dependencies: Does the innovation contribute to reducing the EU's reliance on non-EU sources for critical technologies or raw materials?

(Note: applicants from Associated Countries will need to demonstrate contributions the EU internal market or strategic dependencies)

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, including adequate representation of women and men?

Risk level of the investment Does the nature and level of risk of the investment in your innovation mean that European market actors are unwilling to commit the full amount that is needed without an investment from the EIC Fund? Is there evidence that market actors would be willing to invest, either alongside the EIC or at a later stage?

Risk mitigation: Have the main risks (e.g., technological, market, financial, regulatory) been identified, together with measures to take to mitigate them?

Investment leverage: Does the proposal provide a convincing and realistic plan for raising an equity financing round using the EIC Fund investment to attract 3-5 times the amount from other investors?

VI. EIC Business Acceleration Services

The EIC Business Acceleration Services (BAS) provide EIC Awardees and other eligible organisations with services aiming at matching with business partners, gaining new contacts and skills they need to bring their innovations to the market and grow their businesses. EIC BAS is a distinctive feature of the EIC that enables it to provide not only "money", but "smart money".

BAS services are procured from external contractors or delivered by selected ecosystem partners via the [EIC Service Catalogue](). They consist mainly of business coaching, business advice, networking opportunities to expand the client base and to find co-investors, and access to testing/scaleup facilities. The EIC BAS services are also part of the tools available to EIC Programme Managers and EIC Project Officers to proactively manage the EIC portfolios.

The EIC BAS are tailored to EIC Awardees needs and should adapt quickly to the changing nature of markets and overall economic environment. The flexibility for piloting new services and approaches and adapting or even stopping the ones that are not efficient is built in all BAS implementing contracts.

The following entities are eligible to receive BAS services:

- ✦ All EIC Awardees (from the EIC Accelerator, EIC Transition, EIC Pathfinder, EIC STEP Scaleup) including beneficiaries and associated partners of EIC grants and recipients of EIC Fund Investments. This includes such Awardees with support awarded under the EIC Pilot and the Phase 2 of the SME Instrument under Horizon 2020;
- ✦ Companies selected under the EIC Scale Up100 initiative;
- ✦ Women TechEU Awardees;
- ✦ Pre-Accelerator call Awardees[154], who will receive a dedicated programme including coachingand one-to-one services aiming at increasing their investment readiness and outreach as well as participation to bootcamps and pitching sessions;
  Horizon Europe Seal of Excellence holders awarded under EIC calls;[155]
- ✦ Applicants to the EIC Accelerator who have succeeded at the short application stage or submitted through the Fast Track or Plug In schemes (see Annex 4 and 5) are eligible to receive 3 days of coaching.

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[154] A Pre-Accelerator call is envisaged to be launched in 2025 under the Horizon Europe widening work programme, and subject to decisions taken for this work programme.
[155] Including WIDERA Pre-Accelerator call and Awardees of Sovereignty (STEP) Seals

Unless otherwise specified, above mentioned groups of beneficiaries can apply to Business Acceleration Services through open calls published on the EIC Community Platform. The selection is done based on assessment from business partners or market experts or first come first served basis. A core set of Business Acceleration Services includes:

✦ Access to high quality, topic or sector specific **services** from **EIC Ecosystem Partners** (see Glossary), for example incubation and acceleration programmes, legal and IP expertise, testing and research infrastructure and many more as well as services specifically designed in collaboration with EIC. These services are available via the EIC Service Catalogue in the EIC Community Platform. A financial support is also offered to eligible EIC awardees to cover up to 50% of costs of partners' services[156];

✦ for EIC Accelerator applicants, EIC Awardees, EIC STEP Scaleup call, Women Tech EU, WIDERA Pre-accelerator Awardees, Women Leadership Programme participants and EIC Seal of Excellence recipients **coaching** is available when a suitable alternative service cannot be provided by EIC Ecosystem Partners;

✦ Support to attend European and international **business trade fairs;**

✦ **Support to access and expand business in new global markets (soft-landing programme);**

✦ Support to pilot and close deals with corporates (**EIC Corporate Partnership Programme**)

✦ Training and support for start-ups and SMEs in winning contracts from **public and private sector innovation procurement** tenders and funding to test products with innovation procurers **(EIC Innovation Procurement Programme**);

✦ **Tech2Market Business Acceleration Services** - Dedicated Business and Innovation Acceleration Services to EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition beneficiaries[157] supporting transition from lab to market. It will give access to venture building activities helping entrepreneurial researchers / proto-entrepreneurs to acquire critical skills and connect with partners and service providers supporting in business and venture development;

✦ A **platform** and supporting one-to-one services for EIC Accelerator,Transition, EIC STEP Scaleupand Pre-Accelerator companies **to find (co-)investors;**

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[156] The detailed eligibility is described in the EIC WP2023, action V.1.2. Financial Support to access services from Ecosystem Partners.

[157] In certain cases (e.g., available places, etc.) eligibility for Tech2Market BAS may be extended to Horizon Europe beneficiaries eligible to apply to EIC Transition. Pathfinder and Transition beneficiaries will have priority.

- ✦ **The EIC Women Leadership Programme** to provide training sessions on leadership and entrepreneurial skills, business coaching and mentoring to women- (co)founded and/or led EIC companies (see Glossary), women researchers from EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition aspiring for leadership position in business, and Women TechEU Awardees;
- ✦ Support in **Environmental, Social and Governance** related reporting and assessing and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, for instance through the provision of a carbon-footprint measurement tool and specific trainings on the subject.

All EIC BAS services are listed on and accessed through the EIC Community Platform.[158] The EIC Community Platform is a virtual meeting place, where all EIC Awardees and entities eligible to receive BAS services can connect with each other and with other innovators, entrepreneurs, researchers, investors, corporates and procurers. It provides matching and collaboration features.

EIC BAS services are funded through multi-year procurement contracts and grants, some of which were financed through previous Work Programmes. The following actions pertaining to EIC BAS services will be funded in 2025:

VI.1 EIC business coaches (direct EIC services)

Business coaching focuses on providing insights on business development and guidance to improve business performance. Coaching topics cover the entire entrepreneurial and innovation endeavour from challenging the value proposition and business model, IP management, data protection, improving strategy and investor business case, building the team and leadership, to international expansion. EIC business coaching is provided to eligible entities:

- ✦ At full proposal application stage for EIC Accelerator, three days of remote coaching.[159]
- ✦ For EIC Awardees, business coaching is accessible via an EIC Ecosystem Partner or directly from the EIC if no suitable alternative is available. Twelve days of remote

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[158] The EIC will also seek operational synergies with Enterprise Europe Network, national and regional clusters, the European IP Helpdesk, Start-up Europe, EIT KICs, national innovation agencies and the National Contact Points networks.

[159] Applicants are encouraged to use the EIC coaching services. It is nevertheless up to the applicants to decide if and when to use the coaching services.

coaching[162] are offered to EIC Awardees, Pre-accelerator Awardees. In exceptional cases (e.g., scaling up), this can be extended beyond the 12 days.

+ ther entities eligible to receive BAS services receive three days of remote coaching. Exceptionally, coaching can be offered to beneficiaries of other EIC or Horizon Europe actions.

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In all cases the EIC will request to the coach and coachee a structured coaching report/survey after the coaching has been provided, to ensure the services are of the highest quality.

The EIC coaching services are provided by highly qualified business coaches. The coaches register their profile and expertise in the Commission's corporate database, further to a single Call for Expression of interest published for experts across all EU programmes, as well as on the [EIC Coach Platform](). The selection of the business coaches is made following a continuously open call in accordance with Article 237 of the Financial Regulation, and new coaches are selected when necessary.

Applicants to provide EIC coaching services must have: at least five years of professional experience as investor, board advisor or in managerial positions with responsibilities in developing business innovation; and at least five years of coaching experience supporting new business development within a corporate's departments or with start-ups. The fields of new business development includes technical expertise as well as practical involvement on go-to-market processes, building/acquisition of strategic partnerships and organizational and financial development.

EIC business coaches have the task to support the recipients of EIC BAS depending on their needs, assess with them improvement opportunities and assist them in their process of learning and solving complex business development issues. As highly qualified specialized business coaches, their fees will be proportionate to their high-level strategic support, and it will closely mirror the international level of fees for experts performing tasks of similar nature. In this respect, EIC business coaches will receive EUR 1 000 per day of coaching (corresponding to EUR 500 per half day), which is considered to be proportionate to the specific services that EIC business coaches will provide, which are more complex than the standard tasks of experts evaluators.

Type of action: Expert contracts action.

Indicative budget: EUR 2 million

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[162] Coaching involving travel may take place in duly justified cases when the physical presence of the coach is expected to bring significantly better results, mainly for coaching to EIC awardees. Coaching 2025 budget may also be used for the Horizon 2020 EIC legacy projects

Indicative timetable: from Q1 2025

VI.2 EIC Community and Women Leadership Programme

The objective of this action is to provide content, maintain and improve the functionalities and services of the EIC Community and its online platform. The successful contractor will provide services such as:

- Management, moderation, curation of information and data of the online EIC Community on its dedicated platform;
- Management of the overall EIC BAS communication;
- Management the coordination among all the EIC BAS Programmes;
- Implementation of a customer relationship management tool;
- Maintenance and improvement of the entire EIC Community platform and of the Green House Gas emissions measurement tool for companies;
- Organisation of online and offline events for the EIC Community;
- Management and organisation the EIC Women Leadership Programme providing training, mentoring and networking opportunities for female entrepreneurs and researchers aiming for leadership positions in business.

Type of action: Public Procurement

Indicative budget: EUR 2 million

Indicative timetable: from Q3 2025

VI.3 Investors' Outreach Activities

Together with the EIC Fund, this action will build on the existing co-investment programme with two folds objectives:

- Provide the specialised support to the EIC Awardees (including startups selected under the EIC pilot and beneficiaries of the STEP action) in fundraising for technology development, market deployment and scale-up.
- Support the EIC Fund in ramping up to being a key strategic actor within the investment landscape in supporting European breakthrough technologies by supporting the development of a community of investors for co-investing alongside the EIC Fund.

This action shall provide assistance to EIC Awardees that are startups and scaleups to increase their investment readiness, assist them to identify the right investors, reach out to the investors and actively support their matching with potential investors and

finance partners through dedicated matching events, direct introductions, investor matching platform or other means.

EIC Fund has been recognised as one of the most active deep tech investors in Europe.[163] It is of utmost importance that the activities are increased to the benefit of both deep tech companies and investors in deep tech. This action shall support EIC Fund in ramping up the efforts in strengthening the network of capital providers and strategic partners suitable for (co-)investments and follow-on funding for the EIC beneficiaries through organising and participating to dedicated investor events either online or physical.

The Programme shall engage the most relevant data aggregators to ensure that the EIC Fund investments are – to the extent possible - accurately depicted in their databases and reports.

Type of action: Public Procurement

Indicative budget: 3.5 million

Indicative timeline: Q1 2025

VI.4. Ecosystem Partnership Programme & promotion of ESG reporting

The objective of this action is to reinforce the EIC mission to be a pivotal and active connector in the European innovation ecosystem by bridging EIC Awardees with innovation actors across the globe enabling them to access their specialized, sector-focused services, resources, facilities, and expertise to address their individual needs.

The potential ecosystem partners apply through an open call, on a rolling basis and the Programme is open to all organisations globally. The selection of the partners is service-focused and their track record in providing relevant services to the EIC Awardees is key.

The proposed action would support the Agency in running the call for EIC Ecosystem Partners, diligent maintenance of the EIC Service Catalogue displaying partners' services, by keeping the services' offer relevant for the EIC beneficiaries and by implementing and supervising its further developments. It should cover creation and updating of all the guiding materials for all users (e.g. tutorial videos, briefs, FAQs,..) and promotion of the EIC Service Catalogue through newsletters, social media of relevant events of and for EIC Ecosystem Partners and EIC Awardees.   The action also foresees the co-organisation of joint activities with EIC Ecosystem Partners including info sessions, stakeholders' days, pitching and trainings sessions and EIC outreach

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[163] https://eic.ec.europa.eu/news/eic-fund-topping-charts-2023-09-06_en

activities. This activity should be implemented in close collaboration with the separate project providing EIC Awardees with financial support to access services from the EIC Service Catalogue.

Taking advantage of services included in the EIC Service Catalogue, the action will take on board the development of training sessions, tools and promotion to support Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting. More and more investors and financial institutions drive their investment strategies and risk management on ESG factors, having an increasingly important impact on the operation of capital markets and on investor confidence in sustainable products. This action intends to prepare and test with EIC Awardees best tools for their future development and for reaching the thresholds where environmental, social and governance disclosure become mandatory.

Type of action: Public Procurement

Indicative budget: EUR 1.5 million

Indicative timetable: from Q1 2025

VI.5 EIC Participation to trade fairs in 2026

This action will allow to select EIC Awardees that are SMEs to attend European and international business trade fairs. The aim is to support their commercialisation strategy in European and foreign markets, and to strengthen the EU innovation brand around the world. The provided services will include exhibition space within the 'EIC Pavilion' in relevant fairs, market training sessions for the participating companies, organisation of business meetings at the fair, company promotion, the organisation of side events and sessions at the fair.

Type of action: Public Procurement

Indicative budget: EUR 2.5 million

Indicative timetable: from Q2 2025

VI.6 Global Soft-landing programme.

This action will support EIC Awardees which are SMEs and aim for global expansion venturing into new markets outside Europe. The provided activities will include a customised programme of guidance and adequate tools (including coaching, training, pitching, communication...) for EIC Awardees who want to expand to a new market without keeping their attention away from their main operations at home.

Beyond identifying suitable opportunities and partners for business development and co-investment, this action will provide the selected EIC Awardees with a comprehensive

array of tailored services and a deep understanding of the business ecosystem and landscape, culture and regulations of the most active deep-tech innovation hubs in the world. It will also contribute to strengthen the EU innovation brand globally.

Type of action: Public Procurement

Indicative budget: 2 EUR million

Indicative timetable: from Q1 2025

VII. EIC Prizes

VII.1 The European Prize for Women Innovators

Objectives and scope

Facing fast-paced developing technologies and science, it is crucial to involve women and girls in the design, development and up-take of innovative solutions. Achieving gender equality and diversity benefits not only individuals, but also increases the performance of business, research and innovation.

Nevertheless, women continue to face multiple barriers, in bringing new ideas to the market and raising capital for their companies. This negatively affects the success rate of women-founded businesses and perpetuates the lack of awareness about the systemic nature of gender inequality. Hence, women's efforts and contributions to science and innovation should be encouraged and supported.

The European Commission put in place a [Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#)[164], which sets out the Commission's broader commitment to equality across all EU policies.

As outlined in the New European Innovation Agenda[165], supporting women innovators strengthens the European research and innovation system and creates gender-equal working environments where all talents can thrive. By integrating a gender dimension in projects, research quality is improved as well as the production of the knowledge, technologies and innovations.

The European Prize for Women Innovators celebrates the women entrepreneurs behind Europe's game-changing innovations, so that they may inspire other women and girls realise their full potential as the EU's future scientists, innovators, and tech leaders.

This prize supports a culture within research and innovation organisations and companies allowing women to become the innovators and entrepreneurs of tomorrow.

The prize is awarded every year to women from across the EU and countries associated to Horizon Europe, who have transformed their ideas into disruptive innovations to benefit people and the planet.

As for the previous edition, the 2025 European Prize for Women Innovators is organised in coordination between the Agency and the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT). The winners are chosen by an independent expert jury.

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[164] [Gender equality in research and innovation (europa.eu)](#)
[165] See Flagship 4: Fostering, attracting and retaining deep tech talent :[The New European Innovation Agenda (europa.eu)](#)

There are two EIC prize categories funded under this Work Programme: Women Innovators and Rising Innovators. In the first category, three prizes of EUR 100 000, EUR 70 000 and EUR 50 000 are awarded to the three highest-ranked applications. In the second category, three prizes of EUR 50 000, EUR 30 000 and EUR 20 000 are awarded to the three highest-ranked applications from promising 'Rising Innovators' under the age of 35. (The EIT Women Leadership category will be funded and managed by the EIT in coordination with the above prizes and following the same broad approach and the same timetable.)

Eligibility criteria

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

1. The applicant must be a woman (natural person);[166]
2. The applicant must be legally residing[167] in an EU Member State, including overseas countries and territories (OCTs) or a country associated to Horizon Europe;
3. The applicant must be the founder or co-founder[168] of the company or organisation;
4. The company or organisation must be established in an EU Member State including overseas countries and territories, (OCTs) or a country associated to Horizon Europe, and registered or incorporated[169] at least two years before the call year[170];
5. Applicants who have already received an EU or Euratom prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.

In addition to the above, those applying for the Rising Innovators category must be aged under 35 at the start of the call year.[171] There is no age limit to apply for the Women Innovators category (or for the EIT Women Leadership category), though applicants eligible for several prize categories can only apply to one.

Applicants are expected to provide proof of eligibility upon request.

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[166] This Prize celebrates women in all their diversity. The word 'woman' equates to a cis woman, or a transgender woman who is legally defined as a woman.
[167] A natural person is legally residing in a given country, if she is recognised as a resident under national law in that country, and proof of such recognition can be provided upon request.
[168] A co-founder is somebody who has started the company (i.e. "founded" the company) with at least one other person, and proof of this can be provided upon request.
[169] The company or organisation is formed and registered with the appropriate statutory authority of the country as a 'company or corporation', and proof can be provided upon request.
[170] The company must be registered or incorporated before 1 January 2023.
[171] Those applying for the Rising Innovator category must be born on or after 1 January 1990.

Applicants must support their written application with an inspiring video message about themselves and their achievements, lasting no more than 90 seconds.

Award criteria

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

1. **Breakthrough innovation** – the company or organisation founded or co-founded by the applicant is developing a breakthrough innovation focusing, among others, deep-tech and Science Technology Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) fields. In presenting their innovation, the applicant should demonstrate what makes this innovation breakthrough in relation to other existing solutions.
2. **Impact** – this innovation addresses a real need or challenge, with significant benefits for people and/or the planet. The applicant will demonstrate how the company's or organisation's current performance and growth is driving a positive socio-economic and/or environmental impact, among others, in terms of wellbeing, education, profit, job creation.
3. **Inspiration** – the applicant is an inspiring leader, who has played a pivotal role in the success of the company or organisation and is a role model empowering other women and girls in realising their full potential. The applicant should, for example, highlight her efforts to promote gender balance within the company, organisation or beyond, and/or to advocate for innovative initiatives that have positively contributed to gender equality in, e.g., access to finance, networks, product design, education and contributes to a gender-responsive innovation.

The jury will review and score all eligible applications, and invite the shortlisted applicants to an interview to defend their application. This interview may take place remotely.

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

Expected results

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

Type of Action: **Recognition Prize**

Indicative Timetable:

Stages	Indicative period
Opening of the contest	Q1 – Q3 2025
Deadline for submission of proposals	Q3 – Q4 2025
Award of the prize	Q1 – Q2 2026

Indicative Budget:

Category	Amount
'Women Innovators' category 1st prize 2nd prize 3rd prize	EUR 100 000 EUR 70 000 EUR 50 000
'Rising Innovators' category 1st prize 2nd prize 3rd prize	EUR 50 000 EUR 30 000 EUR 20 000

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

Cities and/or towns are faced with most severe societal and sustainability challenges but do also have the means to develop, promote, and apply effective innovative solutions. They are the place where ideas, people, public and private actors meet and engage to improve the quality of life of citizens. They are the natural playground where breakthrough innovations 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 to new models of innovation engaging citizens, ensuring their involvement in the decision-making process, and reinforcing democracy and rights. An increasing number of cities are acting as test beds for innovation and run people-driven initiatives to find solutions to societal challenges, such as climate change, digitalisation, sustainable growth or social cohesion, including through new endeavours such as nature-based solutions and EU Missions

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 and retain 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 and inspires many other cities follow a similar path.

The New European Innovation Agenda[172] sets out a vision for harnessing the power of innovation to drive economic growth, social progress, and contribute to the green and digital transition in Europe. The agenda emphasizes the need for strategic investments in key technologies, including deep tech, and for strengthening and better connecting innovation ecosystems through stronger collaboration between regions, to close the innovation divide.

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 this edition, the European Capital of Innovation Awards will feature two categories.

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[172] eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0332

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 cumulative criteria set out below, would reward the winner (ranked 1st) with EUR 1 million and two runners-up (ranked 2nd and 3rd) with EUR 100 000 each one.

The second one, the **European Rising Innovative City** category, would include cities with a population of 50 000 and up to 249 999 inhabitants; and, based on the cumulative criteria set out below, would reward the winner (ranked 1st) with EUR 500 000 and the two runners-up (ranked 2nd and 3rd) 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 [173] must be located in one of the Member States or Associated Countries to Horizon Europe.
2. For the category of the **European Capital of Innovation,** the candidate city must have a minimum population of 250 000 inhabitants. In countries where there are no such cities, the city coming closest to 250 000 inhabitants is eligible to apply for the European Capital of Innovation category, provided that it has a minimum population of 50 000 inhabitants and that the city did not apply for the European Rising Innovative City category. The candidate cities for the **European Rising Innovative City** category must have a population of 50 000 and up to 249,999 inhabitants. In countries where there are no such cities, the largest city by number of inhabitants is eligible.
3. Winners of former European Capital of Innovation Awards editions, as well as runners-up of the edition 2024 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

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[173] A city is a Local Administrative Unit or a group of Local Administrative Units where a majority of the population lives in an urban centre of at least 50 000 inhabitants. Local Administrative Units and their respective population figures should be those set out in the latest available validated or partially validated LAU correspondence table published by Eurostat (Local administrative units (LAU) - Eurostat (europa.eu)) at the time of the submission of the application. Local authorities may represent one city defined as a Local Administrative Unit, or a "greater city" or Metropolitan region, taking account of Functional Urban Areas when relevant. Legal entities with separate legal personality from cities, even if founded and funded by the cities, are not eligible to apply.

The award is launched and managed by the Agency. 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. The applicant is expected to provide details on concrete results of the showcased initiatives.

2. **Escalating** – promoting the acceleration of the different actors of the local innovation ecosystem, supporting growth of highly innovative start-ups and SMEs establishing innovation friendly legal framework, creating an environment that stimulates growth and attracts private and public investments, resources, diversity and talents; and driving innovation demand through efficient innovation public procurement.
The applicant 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, start-ups, civil society, citizens to academia, to contribute to the development of an innovation ecosystem within the city.
The applicant is expected to provide details on concrete results of the showcased initiatives.

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 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.
The applicant is expected to provide details on concrete results of the showcased initiatives.

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 sustainable and resilient innovation ecosystem ensuring the green and digital transition.

The applicant is expected to provide details on concrete results of the showcased initiatives. Moreover, the applicant is invited to provide information on how all showcased activities follow the innovative vision/strategy.

6. **Citizens' rights** – the use of innovation to strengthen democracy, to protect citizens' rights, to foster social cohesion, and ensure integration with a special view on minorities, gender, disability, or race.

The applicant is expected to provide details on concrete results of the showcased initiatives.

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 process 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.

Moreover, in this edition, the title "iCapital 2026" will be awarded in each category. Therefore, to celebrate the year the winning cities (ranked 1st in each category) will be invited to sign a declaration of intent[174] to commit on a series of actions to promote iCapital during the year.

For the common rules of contest for prizes, please see the Funding & Tenders Portal.

Expected results

The European Capital of Innovation Awards aim to champion inspiring cases of municipality-enabled innovation flourishing in cities. The Awards are a prestigious recognition for city administrators who are courageous enough to open up their governance practices to experimentation, to boost innovation by all means, to be a role model for other cities, and to push the boundaries of technology for the benefit of their citizens.

In addition to the monetary reward, the prize brings high visibility in the form of renewed public interest and increased media coverage.

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

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[174] Declaration of intent would be a voluntary document containing detailed information about the use of the iCapital brand, the organization and participation of events such as the opening and / or award ceremonies, info days, or the knowledge sharing with other cities, among other actions.

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 2025 budget will be allocated as follows:

European Capital of Innovation winner	**EUR 1 000 000**
European Capital of Innovation 1st runner-up	EUR 100 000
European Capital of Innovation 2nd runner-up	EUR 100 000
European Rising Innovative City winner	**EUR 500 000**
European Rising Innovative City 1st runner-up	50 000
European Rising Innovative City 2nd runner-up	50 000

Indicative timetable of contest(s)

Stages	Date and time or indicative period
Opening of the contest	Q1 – Q2 2025
Deadline for submission of application	Q2 – Q3 2025
Award of the prize	Q3 2025 – Q1 2026

VIII. Other Actions

VIII.1 Honoraria and expenses of the 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 from the budget of the EIC work programme.

Remuneration is justified on the grounds of the personal commitment of the members 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 or any other additional meetings where EIC Board members are asked to attend. It will be accompanied by a compensation for travel ('travel allowance') and other expenses ('per diem') for in person meetings on location.

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 Agency. 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:

   ▪ EUR 2 200 for full attendance at a plenary meeting, and;

   ▪ EUR 1 100 for partial attendance (up to 50% of the meeting time).

3. Payments will be authorised by the Agency on the basis of an attendance list validated by the EIC Board President and the Director of the Agency or their deputies. The attendance list must indicate if each member attended the entire meeting (full attendance) or only part of it (partial attendance).

4. For other meetings than plenary meetings, and preparatory work for plenary meetings, the Agency will, where appropriate, reimburse those days with an honoraria of EUR 1000 per day and 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 reimbursement of external experts.[175]

5. In the case of participation at plenary meetings through the use of remote communication, the time spent connected through the communication link must count as a physical presence at the meeting for the purpose of establishing the appropriate honoraria.

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

These amounts are adapted to high level expert's terms as performed by other entities for similar high-level work. Additional work other than plenary meetings shall be reimbursed based on time spent and at the request of the Commission, of a daily amount of EUR 1100. In accordance with Article 49(2) of the Horizon Europe

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[175] Commission Decision C(2007) 5858.

Regulation, the level of remuneration for EIC Board members is beyond the standard conditions, as the Board consists of high-level experts, their role goes beyond that of normal experts, and a daily reimbursement of an amount of EUR 1100 (EUR 2200 for plenary meetings where attendance and preparation corresponds to two days) is in line with relevant market standards.

Type of action: Expert contract action.

Indicative budget: EUR 500 000

Indicative Opening: From Q1 2025

VIII.2 External expertise for monitoring, ethics and policy advice

The EIC uses external independent experts for monitoring of projects[176] and ethics compliance, for other compliance checks (including on Gender Equality Plans), for technology assessments (including where necessary on risks to economic security), for policy advice on the optimal achievement of the EIC objectives, as well as for the implementation of scientific/technological/ innovation intelligence, proactive management of EIC activities (including support to BAS activities and to the EIC Programme Managers) and project reviews for increases in Accelerator support[177].

The EIC could reimburse the costs of applicants invited to attend interviews during the evaluation of their proposals .

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.

Type of action: Expert contracts.

Indicative budget: EUR 5.300.000

Indicative opening: From Q1 2025.

VIII.3 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.

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[176] Including projects financed by the EIC pilot, SME instrument, Fast Track to Innovation, FET Open and FET Proactive under Horizon 2020.
[177] Necessary to implement Horizon Europe regulation Article 48.12

The objective of this action is to prepare and implement the communication and outreach activities for the EIC, following advice from the EIC Board, with an objective to strengthen the reputation of the EIC among its stakeholders, potential applicants, policymakers, investors and the broader EU innovation ecosystem. The action will also include EIC global outreach activities, in particular to raise awareness of the EIC among international investors. This action covers the maintenance and management of the EIC website and its social media channels; the creation of relevant informative content and materials; the preparation and development of thematic communication campaigns; media relations and other outreach and stakeholders engagement activities including networking events with EIC jury members.

In addition, this action provides further support to the organisation of the EIC Summit 2026 Furthermore, this action support the organisation of the EIC Awards Ceremonies as well as various communication activities around the EIC Prizes .

This action will also support a prominent EIC presence at key European Commission and /or third party events, , ensuring high visibility of the EIC and selected beneficiaries, leading to increased impact in the visibility and branding of the EIC among key audiences. 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.

Type of action: Public procurement actions.

Indicative opening: From Q1 2025.

Indicative budget: EUR 3,200,000

VIII.4 EIC Data management and IT systems integration[178]

The purpose of this action is to provide to the EIC the technical means to achieve the EIC Programme objectives.

This action covers the entire development lifecycle of the relevant IT tools and methodology including the development of user stories, functional and technical analysis, IT architecture and development of new functionalities, evolutive maintenance of existing IT components, cloud infrastructure architecture and provisioning, automatic /user testing of new features, IT helpdesk and user support while ensuring

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[178] The code developed to implement the IT components should be released in open source under code.europa.eu

adequate IT project and team management, ensure security and IT governance compliance.

The focus In 2025, building on the developments started in 2020 and continued throughout the years of the EIC until 2024, is to ensure the evolutive maintenance of existing IT tools in support of the EIC, with the needed technical and usability improvements the EIC IT system, and develop new functionalities and features in response to evolving business processes and user needs. The objective is to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the EIC operations complementing the EC Corporate IT Tools.

The focus will also be on harnessing the data and information coming from internal and third-party sources to enable data-driven / strategic decision-making and strategic intelligence for the proactive management of EIC activities and the efficient and effective delivery of services to EIC applicants, beneficiaries, and stakeholders.

Considering the above, the EIC IT developments will focus on the following key components:

✦ Further harmonise and consolidate data sources into a common data model and infrastructure for EIC. Develop needed webservices to exchange EIC Business Acceleration Support (BAS) data with other EC IT systems and stakeholders including EIT, EIB, EIC Fund etc.

✦ Improve and expand the IT tools and interfaces built to support the daily operations management of EIC staff and third parties (e.g., staff of EIC Fund, EIB and service providers for the due diligence process) involved in the negotiation, monitoring and other processes of EIC Accelerator projects and companies. EIC IT developments will complement Corporate IT tools and where applicable, IT developments foreseen by EIC Fund, EIB , EIT and relevant third parties.

✦ Update, improve and maintain the EIC Community to help EIC funded projects and companies in finding partners, relevant support and services to their activities and projects, facilitate business development, networking activities and the establishment of communities of practice (c.f. chapter V. EIC Business Acceleration Services.) Where applicable, these actions will complement IT developments foreseen through EIC Business Acceleration Services. The objective is also to further integrate the EIC Community with other corporate tools including CORDIS, Horizon Results Platform, Innovation Radar, Newsroom (for newsletters)

✦ Update and improve the EIC Coaching system to automate administrative operations, generate statistics automatically and better integrate with the other

EIC and EC corporate tools, while serving new business needs and stakeholders (c.f. chapter V. EIC Business Acceleration Services.)

✦ Further develop and expand the event management back-office and front-end / communication tools in support of the EIC Business Acceleration Services (BAS) and EIC Communication team.

✦ Support capacity development and Learning on all EIC IT tools and methodologies for EIC stakeholders including evaluators, experts and beneficiaries on-line and through EU Academy training events.

✦ Improve usability, integration and seamless user experience across all the above tools, while increasing modularity and configurability of the IT tools developed, to increase their re-usability withing the EC services.

✦ Ensure maintenance and 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, Member States, Associated Countries and relevant third parties.

Type of action: Public procurement action

Indicative budget: EUR 2.900.000

Indicative opening: From Q1 2025.

VIII.5   Danish presidency conference

The objective of this action is to support the organization of a conference on deep tech innovation that also explores the role of the wider ecosystem in supporting such developments. The conference will be organised by the Technical University of Denmark/Danmarks Tekniske Universitet in Autumn 2025 during the Danish Presidency of the Council (July-December 2025).

Expected outcomes and impacts

✦ Identify best practice in helping innovation-driven deep tech start-ups, focusing on critical technologies such as advanced semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies and biotech, get to market.

✦ Debate the role and interactions with key stakeholders such as end customers in industry esp. corporates, academia, investors and policy makers amongst

other in creating the conditions for such companies to flourish and innovations to find their route to market

✦ Explore the factors that determine progress and associated success factors.

Type of Action: Coordination and support action (CSA) / Grant to a named beneficiary (as the implementation of this grant is linked to a Danish Presidency event in support of the EIC. It will be awarded to an identified beneficiary according to Article 195 of the Financial Regulation).

Legal entities:

- Technical University of Denmark/Danmarks Tekniske Universitet

Indicative budget: EUR 300 000

Call Opening: 04.11.2024

Deadline for applications 10.   01 2025 at 17h00 Brussels local time

VIII.6 Polish presidency conference

The objective of this action is to ensure the support for the organisation of a conference on best practices in building well connected deep tech innovation ecosystem and filling in the technology/business/investment readiness gap with the objective to support growth of innovation-driven deep tech start-ups. It will be organized by the The National Centre for Research and Innovation under the Ministry of Science and Higher Education during Polish Presidency of the Council (January-June 2025).

Expected outcomes and impacts

- Identify best practices in helping innovation-driven deep tech start-ups from innovation ecosystems with different levels of maturity, particularly focusing on approaches to building capabilities and addressing current barriers such as the lack of specialized (e.g., deep tech) support at national/ regional level, and less developed ecosystems (fewer investors, peer group, potential clients, etc.)
- Discuss the role and interactions with key stakeholders such as technology transfer offices, academia, investors, and policy makers amongst other in creating the framework conditions for such companies to flourish and bring their innovations to the market.
- Build knowledge on the role of the New European Innovation Agenda actions on the MS innovation ecosystems and the impact of the EIC Board report on widening

recommendations to determine factors that create progress and associated success factors.

Type of Action: Coordination and support action (CSA) / Grant to a named beneficiary (as the implementation of this grant is linked to a Polish Presidency event in support of the EIC. It will be awarded to an identified beneficiary according to Article 195 of the Financial Regulation).

Legal entities:
– National Centre for Research and Innovation under the Ministry of Science and Higher Education

Indicative budget: EUR 300 000

Call Opening: 03.02. 2025

Deadline for applications: 03.04. 2025 at 17h00 Brussels local time

VIII.7 Women TechEU initiative

The Women TechEU Initiative is designed to support early-stage women-led deep-tech startups, addressing gender gap in the tech industry and fostering more diverse startup ecosystem across Europe. The initiative aims to enhance the competitiveness of women-led companies addressing critical societal challenges. By empowering women entrepreneurs, Women TechEU supports early stage deep-tech companies, paving the way for the participation of women-led start-ups in future EIC calls.

Expected outcomes and impacts

The Women TechEU initiative supports European early-stage deep tech start-ups, registered and established in an EU Member State or Horizon Europe Associated Country for at least six months at the time of the submission, founded or co-founded by women, holding a top management position (chief executive officer (CEO), chief technology officer (CTO), chief scientific officer (CSO), or equivalent). All deep tech domains are eligible, with the emphasis being on overall gender balance and the position held by women in the start-up. This call supports early-stage women-led companies which have not received substantial financial support. The women-led startups must respect the above conditions to be eligible for financial support to third parties under this action.

The consortium selected under this call is expected to Implement the Women TechEU initiative, covering the following activities:

Ensure the sound design, organisation and management of the Women TechEU, ensuring continuity of the initiative;Implementing calls for proposals and organizing the evaluation of proposals and award of support to successful applicants. The call should use, where appropriate, the same evaluation criteria as for the EIC Accelerator

Ensure smooth connection with the EIC Business Acceleration Services (BAS) for the Women Leadership Programme and EIC Community Platform to selected applicants;

Implement project reviews of awardees as a basis to access the Fast Track to the EIC Accelerator:

Communicate and promote the scheme in order to secure quality applications;

Organise landmark events, building a network of Women TechEU grantees, and help them to connect with the overall EIC community;

Promote cooperation and networking activities among the community of women entrepreneurs in the deep tech field;

Promote a diversity in geographical participation and technological areas to be covered by the scheme;

- Report on the implementation of the scheme (key data on applications, evaluation, start-ups funded, demographics of end-beneficiaries of the scheme, etc.) to European Commission services.

The consortium should consider a project duration of two (2) years, with a possibility to extend the grant for another year, subject to achieving the key milestones of the project.

The main activity of the consortium will be to run calls for proposals (at least two (2) per calendar year, the consideration of multiple cut-off dates is encouraged), organize the evaluation process, and administer the grants. Beyond providing funding to women-led deep tech start-ups, proposals under this topic should include a sound promotion and communication strategy of the programme (especially in underrepresented Member States), clearly brand the scheme as an EIC initiative, including but not limited to, through information and dissemination events, press and outreach events, or roadshows.

The consortium will provide financial support to the third parties in form of grants. The consortium must allocate at least 75% of the total proposed budget to financial support to third parties.

The maximum amount to be granted to each third party is EUR 75 000.[179] The grant aims to finance supporting activities of the selected company such as evaluating and refining products/services, design, user experience, upgrading the business model, updating the business plan and growth strategy, finding partners and investors, market validation, etc.

Women TechEU third parties will be eligible for mentoring and coaching provided by the EIC BAS, under the 'Women Leadership Programme', which includes dedicated networking and pitching events funded under a separate EIC budget.

Type of Action: Coordination and support action (CSA)
Call Opening: 01.04.2025**Indicative budget**: EUR 15 million

VIII.8   Expert Group on the EIC Plug in scheme

This action will support the EIC operation and the implementation of the Plug-in scheme for the EIC Accelerator (see Annex 4). This expert group will assess the programmes and related evaluation processes submitted by Members States and Associated Countries on a regular basis, and will recommend certification of those programmes suitable for the Plug-In scheme. The expert group will also provide recommendations on improvements to the scheme based on the experiences of implementation. The expert group may be requested to provide country specific recommendations for those Member States and Associated Countries who have not proposed relevant programmes or where those programmes have not been certified. The terms of reference will be co-created and co-designed with the Member States under the Working Group of the EIC Forum.

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 Indicative opening:

From Q1 2025

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[179] As determined in the decision authorising the use of financing not linked to costs for the Women TechEU actions under the Horizon Europe Programme (2021-2027).

VIII.9 EIC Marketplace

As anticipated in previous work programmes a new tool will be the development of an EIC Marketplace that will collect and organise information on preliminary findings and results generated by EIC projects and proactively make 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.

The EIC marketplace will be hosted by the Corporate Horizon Results Platform but will be dedicated to the EIC beneficiaries.

The current action will serve to finance the developments needed of the platform.

Type of Action: Service Level Agreement

Indicative budget: EUR 1 million

IX.   Annexes

Introduction

These Annexes set out the general conditions applicable to calls and topics for grants and other forms of funding under the EIC Work Programme 2025. They also describe the evaluation and award procedures and other criteria for Horizon Europe EIC funding.

If a call or topic deviates from the general conditions or includes additional conditions, this is explicitly stated under the specific conditions for the call or topic in the main part of this EIC Work Programme.

Applicants are invited to read the call documentation on the topic page of the Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal') carefully, and particularly these Annexes, the Horizon Europe

Programme Guide[180], the EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual[181] and the EU Grants AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement[182]. These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions on preparing the application.

Annex 1   Estimated Indicative Budget

Calls/Actions [183]	Budget EUR million
HORIZON-EIC-2025-PATHFINDEROPEN-01[(2)][184]	142
HORIZON-EIC-2025-PATHFINDERCHALLENGES-01	120
HORIZON-EIC-2025-TRANSITIONOPEN-01-01	98
HORIZON-EIC-2025-ACCELERATOROPEN-01[185]	384
Grant component	173
Equity component	211
HORIZON-EIC-2025-ACCELERATORCHALLENGES-01	250

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[183] 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 this Work Programme. Changes within these limits will not be considered substantial within the meaning of Article 110(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046.

[184] The indicative budget of the call 2025-PATHFINDEROPEN-01 is planned to be increased with additional appropriations (XXX EUR million) provided for the draft budget for 2026 after the adoption of the budget 2026 by the budgetary authority or, if the budget is not adopted, as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths.

[185] The Accelerator is a continuously open call and hence this amount may be increased by any amounts committed but not allocated under the cut-offs of the previous EIC annual Work Programme as well as amounts from divestments. The share of the budget dedicated to investments (e.g.,equity, equity-like, debt/guarantees, etc.) and grants will be a result of the evaluation and due diligence process for applications to the EIC Accelerator. 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 may be reallocated to subsequent EIC Accelerator calls.

The EIC Fund will receive an annual amount from the EIC Work Programme budget to cover administrative expenses and fees. This administrative budget covers the operation and administration expenses of any investment. These costs include any cost in relation to the acquisition, ownership or realisation of the investments. The administrative budget covers, among others, the fees payable to the EIC Fund Manager, other service providers, advisory, compensations to external experts, 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 required. This budget will in average not exceed 10 % of the budget transferred for investments purposes. The indicative budget under indirect management is expected to be around EUR 348 million.

Amounts from EIC Accelerator calls, including amounts decommitted from proposals awarded funding under the Accelerator calls as well as amounts from divestments, may be used, within the same budgetary year, either for i) follow-on investments under the provisions set out in Horizon Europe Regulation Article 48(12), second subparagraph, and/or ii) for providing an equity component to grant-first beneficiaries, including for actions selected under Accelerator calls from previous years. Such investments will be subject to an award decision and to the provision of information to the EIC and EIE Programme Committee.

Grant component	112
Equity component	138
HORIZON-EIC-2025-STEP-01	300
Reserve amount for follow on investments and Grant First[186]	80
Other calls/ CSAs	15.6
Prizes	2.12
Public Procurement Actions	17.6
Expert contracts	7.9
EIB Fees	1
Service Level agreement	1
ESTIMATED TOTAL BUDGET	EUR 1.419

(1)

(3)

Annex 2   General conditions

A. ADMISSIBILITY

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

Proposals must be submitted **electronically** directly via the Funding and Tender portal electronic submission system (accessible via the call topic page in the Search Funding & Tenders section); or indirectly via the EIC Community Platform where applicants will be redirected to the Portal. Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals 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.

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[186] This reserve is to provide: i) additional amounts for follow-on investments under the provisions set out in Horizon Europe Regulation Article 48(12), second subparagraph, including for actions selected under Accelerator calls from previous years; and/or ii) an equity component to grant-first beneficiaries selected under the EIC Work Programmes 2021 to 2023. Such investments will be subject to an award decision and to the provision of information to the EIC and EIE Programme Committee. The amounts needed for such additional financing will be reviewed on a regular basis during the year and any unused amounts re-allocated to EIC calls within the flexibility of the amounts set out in this Work Programme.

The Application Form for EIC Pathfinder, EIC Transition and EIC Accelerator 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 ethics and security 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. For the EIC Accelerator, Part B will consist of the business plan.

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. If an application exceeds the limits, there will be an automatic warning and invitation to re-submit a version that conforms to these limits. Excess pages will be automatically made invisible and will not be taken into consideration by the evaluators.

For lump sum grant proposals, the estimated budget must be described in a detailed budget table. This will be used as a basis for justifying and/or fixing the lump sum amount. As the lump sum must be an approximation of the costs actually incurred, the costs included in this detailed budget table must comply with the basic eligibility conditions for EU actual cost grants (see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, Article 6). This is particularly important for purchases and subcontracting, which must ensure best value for money (or, if appropriate, the lowest price) and be free from any conflicts of interest. If the budget table contains ineligible costs, the grants may be reduced (even later on during implementation of the project or after they end). Exceptionally, the Decision authorising the use of lump sum funding for a specific action might specify that a detailed budget table is not required.

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 last (before the deadline) will be taken into consideration. Concurrent implementation occurs when the

awardee of an ongoing EIC Accelerator/EIC Pilot/SME Instrument project submits another full proposal before the first project reaches its end date.[187]

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

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

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[187] Ongoing grant-only projects selected under a Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Accelerator or under Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator call may be eligible to submit a proposal for a blended finance or an investment only support under an EIC Accelerator call.
Ongoing blended finance 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.

B. ELIGIBILITY

B.1 Entities eligible to participate

Any legal entity,[188] regardless of its place of establishment, including legal entities from non-associated third countries or international organisation (including international European research organisations)[189] is eligible to participate (whether it is eligible for funding or not), provided that the conditions laid down in the Horizon Europe Regulation[190] have been met together with any other conditions laid down in the specific call or topic.

A 'legal entity' means any natural or legal person created and recognised as such under national law, EU law or international law, which has legal personality and which may, acting in its own name, exercise rights and be subject to obligations, or an entity without legal personality.[191]

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must register in the [Participant Register](#) before submitting their application, in order to get a participant identification code (PIC) and be validated by the Central Validation Service before signing the grant agreement. For the validation, they will be asked to upload the necessary documents showing their legal status and origin during the grant preparation stage. A validated PIC is not a prerequisite for submitting an application.

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

Specific cases:

Affiliated entities — Affiliated entities (i.e. entities with a legal or capital link to a beneficiary[192] which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations to the beneficiaries, but which do not sign the grant agreement and therefore do not become beneficiaries themselves) are allowed, if they are eligible for participation and funding.

Associated partners — Associated partners (i.e. entities which participate in the action without signing the grant agreement, and without the right to charge costs or claim contributions) are allowed, subject to any specific call/topic conditions.

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[188] For the definition of 'legal entity', see Article 2 (16) Regulation (EU) 2021/695 as well as Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation.

[189] 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 (Article 2 (15) Regulation (EU) 2021/695).

[190] Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe (OJ L 170 , 12.5.2021, p. 1).

[191] See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

[192] See Article 187 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees to protect the EU's financial interests equivalent to those offered by legal persons[193].

EU bodies — Legal entities created under EU law including decentralised agencies may be part of the consortium, unless provided for otherwise in their basic act.

Joint Research Centre ('JRC')— Where provided for in the specific call/topic conditions, applicants may include in their proposals the possible contribution of the JRC but the JRC will not participate in the preparation and submission of the proposal. Applicants will indicate the contribution that the JRC could bring to the project based on the scope of the topic text. After the evaluation process, the JRC and the consortium selected for funding may come to an agreement on the specific terms of the participation of the JRC. If an agreement is found, the JRC may accede to the grant agreement as beneficiary requesting zero funding or participate as an associated partner, and would accede to the consortium as a member.

Associations and interest groupings — Entities composed of members (e.g. European research infrastructure consortia (ERICs)) may participate as 'sole beneficiaries' or 'beneficiaries without legal personality'[194]. However, if the action is in practice implemented by the individual members, those members should also participate either as beneficiaries or as affiliated entities (otherwise their costs will NOT be eligible).

Restrictions:

Restrictions on participation in Innovation Actions, including the EIC Accelerator, for entities established in China — In accordance with the 2019 "EU-China - A Strategic outlook" communication, the 2021 "Global Approach to Research and Innovation" communication, and the joint conclusions of the 4th EU-China Innovation Cooperation Dialogue of 2019, an exercise to develop a Joint Roadmap for the future of EU-China cooperation in science, technology, and innovation (Roadmap) has been established between the EU and China. It has the objective to develop a level playing field for engagement between the EU and China in the areas of science, technology, and innovation (STI) that is respectful of fundamental research and innovation values and principles. This endeavor is to be achieved through an agreement on the framework conditions contained in the Roadmap and their monitoring and evaluation.

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[193] See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.
[194] See Articles 187(2) and 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

As progress so far has mainly taken place on the framework conditions linked to research rather than on those related to innovation, and taking into account the nature and objectives in particular of Innovation Actions, cooperation with entities established in China needs to be calibrated accordingly.

Legal entities established in China are therefore not eligible to participate in Horizon Europe Innovation Actions, including the EIC Accelerator, in any capacity. This includes participation as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any). Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for justified reasons. The above eligibility criteria may be reviewed in the future in accordance with policy developments. This exclusion is justified given the substantive concerns regarding the use of intellectual property generated under this publicly funded programme, and the ongoing discussions between China and the EU on the Joint Roadmap for the future of EU-China cooperation in science, technology, and innovation.

Restrictions for the protection of European communication networks — The protection of European communication networks has been identified as an important security interest of the Union and its Member States.[195] In line with the Commission Recommendation on the cybersecurity of 5G networks of 2019[196] and the subsequent report on EU coordinated risk assessment of the cybersecurity of 5G networks of 2019,[197] the EU Toolbox on 5G cybersecurity,[198] the second report on Member States' progress in implementing the EU toolbox on 5G cybersecurity of 2023,[199] and the related Communication on the implementation of the 5G cybersecurity toolbox of 2023,[200] the Commission together with the Member States has worked to jointly identify and assess cyberthreats and security risks for 5G networks.[201] The toolbox also recommends adding country-specific information (e.g. threat assessment from national security services, etc.). This work is an essential component of the Security Union Strategy and supports the protection of electronic communications networks and other critical infrastructures.

Entities assessed as "high-risk suppliers", are currently set out in the second report on Member States' progress in implementing the EU toolbox on 5G cybersecurity of

[195] European Council conclusions of 1 and 2 October 2020 (EUCO 13/20), point 11; Council Conclusions on the significance of 5G to the European Economy and the need to mitigate security risks linked to 5G, 14517/19.
[196] Commission Recommendation (EU) 2019/534 of 26 March 2019 Cybersecurity of 5G networks, L 88/42.
[197] NIS Cooperation Group, Report on EU coordinated risk assessment of the cybersecurity of 5G networks, 9 October 2019.
[198] NIS Cooperation Group, EU Toolbox on 5G Cybersecurity, 29 January 2020.
[199] NIS Cooperation Group, Second report on Member States' progress in implementing the EU Toolbox on 5G Cybersecurity, June 2023.
[200] Communication from the Commission: Implementation of the 5g cybersecurity Toolbox, Brussels, 15.6.2023 C(2023) 4049 final.
[201] Within the NIS framework NIS 1 + 2 [Directive - 2022/2555 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)]

2023[202] and the related Communication on the implementation of the 5G cybersecurity toolbox of 2023[203].

The toolbox also underlines that further developing European capacities in the area of 5G and post-5G technologies by leveraging EU Research & Innovation Funding programmes is a strategic risk mitigating measure. This entails the need to avoid the participation of high-risk supplier entities in the development of other technologies linked to the evolution of European communication networks to prevent technology transfer and the persistence of dependencies in materials, semiconductor components (including processors), computing resources, software tools and virtualisation technologies, as well as related cybersecurity.

In order to protect the specific policy requirements of the Union and/or its Member States, it is therefore appropriate that the following additional eligibility criteria apply to actions identified as "subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks" and to proposals within the MSCA part[204] that concern the evolution of European communication networks (5G, post-5G and other technologies linked to the evolution of European communication networks):

Entities that are assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment (and any entities they own or control) are not eligible to participate as beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners.

The assessment is based on the following criteria:

- likelihood of interference from a non-associated third country, for example due to:
  - the characteristics of the entity's ownership or governance (e.g. state-owned or controlled, government/party involvement);
  - the characteristics of the entity's business and other conduct (e.g. a strong link to a third country government);
  - the characteristics of the respective third country (e.g. legislation or government practices likely to affect the implementation of the action, including an offensive cyber/intelligence policy, pressure regarding place of manufacturing or access to information).
- (cyber-)security practices, including throughout the entire supply chain;
- risks identified in relevant assessments of Member States and third countries as well as other EU institutions, bodies and agencies, if relevant.

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[202] NIS Cooperation Group, Second report on Member States' progress in implementing the EU Toolbox on 5G Cybersecurity, June 2023.
[203] Communication from the Commission: Implementation of the 5G cybersecurity Toolbox, Brussels, 15.6.2023 C(2023) 4049 final.
[204] Doctorial Networks, Postdoctoral Fellowships, Staff Exchanges, Cofund.

Exceptions may be requested from the Agency and will be assessed case-by-case, taking into account the criteria provided for in the 5G cybersecurity toolbox, the security risks and availability of alternatives in the context of the action.

EU restrictive measures —Entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) [205] as well as Article 75 TFEU[206] are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

Special rules also apply to entities covered by Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/05[207].

Applicants to the EIC Accelerator undertake that their Ultimate Beneficial Owners are not listed and, moreover, do not do business with customers, or make funds or economic resources available to, or for the benefit of (directly or indirectly) any natural or legal person designated under EU sanctions (Obligation of Result).

Legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government-controlled territories of Ukraine — Given the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the involvement of Belarus, there is currently no appropriate context allowing the implementation of the actions foreseen in this programme with legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government-controlled territories of Ukraine. Therefore, even where such entities are not subject to EU restrictive measures, such legal entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity. This includes participation as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any). Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for justified reasons.

Measures for the protection of the Union budget against breaches of the principles of the rule of law in Hungary — Following the [Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506](#), as of 16 December 2022, no legal commitments can be entered into with Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain. Affected entities may continue to apply to calls for proposals. However, as long as the Council measures are not lifted, such entities are

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[205] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the **EU Sanctions Map**.
[206] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the **EU Sanctions Map**.
[207] Commission guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#) on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).

not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc). In case of multi-beneficiary grant calls, applicants will be invited to remove or replace that entity and/or to change its status into associated partner. Tasks and budget may be redistributed accordingly.

Economic security

Following the Communication on the European Economic Security Strategy and the Commission Recommendation on critical technology areas for the EU's economic security a number of provisions have been made to protect Europe from economic security risks.

These measures are:

- *Eligibility criteria:* The exclusion, in duly justified cases, of legal entities as beneficiaries of Accelerator grant funding which are directly or indirectly controlled by a non-associated third country or by a legal entity established in a non-associated third country from specific Challenges under the EIC Accelerator relating to artificial intelligence and quantum (see Section IV). Such exclusion is exceptionally applied and justified in order to safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security and to achieve technological objectives and expected outcomes.
- *Investment safeguards:* The inclusion of economic security safeguards in investment agreements by the EIC Fund for companies selected to receive an investment component under the EIC Accelerator if this is deemed necessary in order to safeguard the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy, or security and to achieve technological objectives and expected outcomes in the four priority technology areas defined in the Commission Recommendation on critical technology areas, namely: advanced semiconductors technologies, artificial intelligence technologies, quantum technologies and biotechnologies. The different possible safeguards are described in the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines, and will be tailored to each specific investee. Where the need for such safeguard measures is identified in the Commission Single Award Decision, the EIC Fund Manager will apply at least one of the safeguard measures in the investment agreement. The assessment by the Commission of the need for safeguard measures to be identified in the Award Decision will take account of EU policy developments on economic security, including the application of safeguards in the main Horizon Europe work programmes (such as those implemented under Article 22.5 of the Horizon Europe Regulation).

- *Intellectual Property:* A requirement for all EIC beneficiaries to inform the Agency in cases where the Intellectual Property generated by EIC projects is proposed to be transferred to an entity in a non-associated third country.

EIC investments

The requirements concerning the list of non-cooperative jurisdictions (as amended from time to time) for tax purposes issued by the Council (OJ C 438, 19.12.2017, p. 5) (the "Council Conclusions") are applied by the EIC in respect of EIC Accelerator investments.

The EIC Fund shall not enter into any contract or maintain a business relationship with any institution or individual listed on sanction lists,[208] and in particular shall not make any funds available directly or indirectly to any institution or individual listed in sanction lists.

The EIC applies the EU rules, policies and procedures, addressing the requirements in respect of money laundering, terrorism financing, tax avoidance, tax fraud, tax evasion contained in Article 155(2)(a) of the Financial Regulation and complies with the prohibition to enter into new or renewed operations with entities incorporated or established in jurisdictions listed under the relevant Union policy on non-cooperative jurisdictions or that are identified as high-risk third countries[209] or that do not effectively comply with Union or internationally agreed tax standards on transparency and exchange of information, as well as the possibility to derogate from this requirement when the action is physically implemented in one of those jurisdictions, contained in Article 155(2)(b) of the Financial Regulation.

The breach of these obligations may lead to the interruption of the equity investment process.

B.2. Entities eligible for funding

To become a beneficiary, legal entities must be eligible for funding.

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[208] Consolidated list of sanctions: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/8442/Consolidated%20list%20of%20sanctions

[209] Pursuant to Article 9(2) of Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2015 on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing, amending Regulation (EU) No 648/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Directive 2005/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Directive 2006/70/EC (OJ L 141, 5.6.2015, p. 73), as may be amended.

To be eligible for funding, applicants must be established in one of the following countries:

✦ Member States of the European Union, including their outermost regions:

> Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

✦ the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) linked to the Member States[210]

> Aruba (NL), Bonaire (NL), Curação (NL), French Polynesia (FR), French Southern and Antarctic Territories (FR), Greenland (DK), New Caledonia (FR), Saba (NL), Saint Barthélemy (FR), Sint Eustatius (NL), Sint Maarten (NL), St. Pierre and Miquelon (FR), Wallis and Futuna Islands (FR).

✦ countries associated to Horizon Europe – Pillar III[211]:

> Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo[212], Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom[213]. If the association agreement provides for an exclusion from the EIC Accelerator investment component, legal entities from that country are only eligible to apply for the 'grant-only' component of the EIC Accelerator.

✦ the following low- and middle-income countries:[214].

> Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia,

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[210] Entities from Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) are eligible for funding under the same conditions as entities from the Member States to which the OCT in question is linked. See the Horizon Europe Programme Guide for a complete list of OCTs.

[211] The list is correct at the time of adoption of this Work Programme. Please see the Horizon Europe List of Participating Countries on the Portal for up-to-date information on the current list and on the position for Associated Countries.

[212] This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

[213] The United Kingdom is associated to the entire Horizon Europe Programme, with the only exception of the investment component of the EIC Accelerator managed by the EIC fund

[214] The list is correct at the time of adoption of this Work Programme. See the Horizon Europe List of Participating Countries https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/programme-guide_horizon_en.pdfon the Portal for a up-to-date list of these countries.

Comoros, Congo (Democratic Republic), Congo (Republic), Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt (Arab Republic), El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Korea (Democratic People's Republic), Kyrgyz Republic, Lao (People's Democratic Republic), Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States), Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Niue, Pakistan, Palau, Palestine[215], Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Samoa, São Tomé and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic), Vietnam, Yemen Republic, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Legal entities which are established in countries not listed above will be eligible for funding if provided for in the specific call/topic conditions, or if their participation is considered essential for implementing the action by the Agency.

Specific cases:

Affiliated entities — Affiliated entities are eligible for funding if they are established in one of the countries listed above, or in a country identified in the specific call/topic conditions.

Associated partners — Entities not eligible for funding (and therefore not able to participate as beneficiaries) may participate as associated partners, unless specified otherwise in the specific call/topic conditions.

Coordination and Support Actions – To be eligible to participate as beneficiaries (or affiliated entities) in 'Coordination and support' actions, legal entities must be established in a Member State or Associated Country, unless the specific call/topic conditions provide otherwise (in which case the general rules for eligibility for funding apply). Legal entities established in a non-associated third country may, however,

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[215] This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

participate in 'Coordination and support' actions as associated partners, unless this is explicitly excluded by the specific call/topic conditions.

EU bodies — Legal entities created under EU law may also be eligible to receive funding, unless their basic act states otherwise.

International organisations — International European research organisations are eligible to receive funding. International organisations with headquarters in a Member State or Associated Country are eligible to receive funding for 'Training and mobility' actions or when provided for in the specific call/topic conditions. Other international organisations are not eligible to receive funding, unless provided for in the specific call/topic conditions, or if their participation is considered essential for implementing the action by the Agency.

B.3 Single legal entity ('Mono-beneficiary') and consortium ('multi-beneficiary') composition

Unless otherwise provided for in the specific call/topic conditions:

✦ Applicants for mono-beneficiary actions must be established in a Member State or Associated Country.

✦ Proposals for multi-beneficiary actions: proposals must be submitted by a consortium including as beneficiaries, at least three legal entities, independent from each other and each established in a different country as follows:
- at least one independent legal entity established in a Member State; and
- at least two other independent legal entities, each established in different Member States or Associated Countries.

As affiliated entities do not sign the grant agreement, they do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition (if any).

Unless specified otherwise, proposals for EIC Pathfinder Challenge and EIC Transition may be submitted as well by multi-beneficiary comprising of two legal entities, provided that those two legal entities are established in two different Member States or Associated countries.

The JRC, international European research organisations and legal entities created under EU law are deemed to be established in a Member State other than those in which the other legal entities participating in the action are established.

Applications for Coordination and Support actions may be submitted by one or more legal entities, which must be established in a Member State, Associated Country, or in

exceptional cases and if provided for in the specific call/topic conditions, in another third country.[216]

B.4. Eligible activities

Eligible activities are the ones described in the call conditions. <mark>Applications</mark> will only be considered eligible if their content corresponds, wholly or in part, to the topic description for which it is submitted.

Projects must focus on civil applications and must 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);

- ✦ 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;

Projects must, moreover, comply with EU policy interests and priorities (environment, social, security, industrial policy, etc.).

B.5 Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs)

Where the specific call/topic conditions require a Technology Readiness Level (TRL), the definitions set out in the Glossary apply, unless otherwise specified.

B.6 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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[216] Consortia of two entities must be comprised of independent legal entities from two different Member States or Associated Countries. Consortia of three or above entities follow standard rules i.e. they must include at least one legal entity established in a Member State and at least two other independent legal entities, each established in different Member States or Associated Countries (see Annex 2).

ℹ For more information, *see How to complete your ethics self-assessment.*

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

Do Not Significant Harm (DNSH) principle

Innovations that significantly harm the environment (and therefore contravene the 'do not significant harm' principle of the EU Taxonomy Regulation), [218] social welfare or that are primarily designed for military applications, or in other fields which are generally excluded from EU funding pursuant to Article 18 Horizon Europe Regulation, will not be funded.

In general, EIC funding will not be awarded to projects that contravene the objectives of the Green Deal, including for example proposals dedicated to enhancing the use of fossil fuels and related technologies. Exceptions might be established, however, for activities aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from certain fossil fuel-based energy sources, such as those covered by the Complementary Climate Delegated Act[219] under the Taxonomy Regulation. For example, this delegated act recognises that, under strict conditions, specific fossil gas-related activities that can help accelerate the transition from high-emitting energy sources, such as coal, to renewable or low-carbon gases are in line with the EU's climate and environmental objectives.[220]

Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence

All AI-based systems or techniques need to be developed in a safe, secure and responsible manner, with a clear identification of and preventative approach to risks and in accordance with the AI Act. Depending on the type of research being proposed (from basic to precompetitive) and as appropriate, AI-based systems or techniques should be, or be developed to become (implicitly or explicitly contributing to the following objectives):

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[221] See Commission Decision 2015/444/EU, Euratom of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53.
[221] See Commission Decision 2015/444/EU, Euratom of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53.
[221] See Commission Decision 2015/444/EU, Euratom of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53.

- ✦ technically robust, accurate and reproducible, and able to deal with and inform about possible failures, inaccuracies and errors, proportionate to the assessed risk posed by the AI-based system or technique;

- ✦ socially robust, in that they duly consider the context and environment in which they operate;

- ✦ reliable and function as intended, minimising unintentional and unexpected harm, preventing unacceptable harm and safeguarding the physical and mental integrity of humans;

able to provide a suitable explanation of its decision-making process, whenever an AI-based system can have a significant impact on people's lives.All proposals involving the development, use and/or deployment of AI based system/technique must ensure that the proposed AI system/technique is technical robust (e.g.,resilient to attack, safe and secure, having fallback plan, accurate, reliable and reproducible), safe and must describe how they will uphold the principles of human agency and oversight, fairness, diversity, non-discrimination, societal and environmental well-being, transparency and accountability.**B.7 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[221] and/or national rules) provide for instance that:

- ✦ projects involving information classified 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 Security 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 on the premises of entities which have

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[221] See Commission Decision 2015/444/EU, Euratom of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53.

been granted a facility security clearance (FSC) issue 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 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;

+ at the end of the grant, the classified information must either be returned or continue to be protected according to the applicable rules;

+ subcontracting of tasks involving EU-classified information is subject to prior written approval by the European Commission, which is the originator of EU-classified information. It is only possible to subcontract these tasks 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.

Depending on the type of activity, FSCs may have to be provided before the grant is signed. The Agency will assess this for each case and fix the delivery date during the grant preparation stage. It is not possible to sign any grant agreement before at least one of the beneficiaries in the consortium has an FSC.

In certain cases, the project results might not require classification, but they might be sensitive and require restricted disclosure or limited dissemination for security reasons, according to 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 and contract agreement in the form of security deliverables *(e.g. establishing a security advisory board,*

appointing a project security officer, limiting the level of detail, using a fake scenario, etc.).

In addition, EIC Awardees must ensure that their projects are not subject to national/third country security requirements that could affect 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 Agency.

B.8 Gender Equality Plans and gender mainstreaming

Relevant EIC Awardees must take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in implementing the action and, where applicable, in line with their gender equality plan. They must aim to achieve, to the extent possible, a gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, including at supervisory and managerial level.

In addition, to be eligible, legal entities from Member States and Associated Countries that are public bodies, research organisations or higher education establishments (including private research organisations and higher education establishments)must have a gender equality plan, covering the following minimum process-related requirements:

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

✦ Dedicated resources: commitment of resources and in gender equality to implement the plan;

✦ Data collection and monitoring: sex/gender disaggregated data on personnel (and students, for the establishments concerned) and annual reporting based on indicators;

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

Content-wise, it is recommended that the gender equality plan addresses the following areas, using 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 proposal stage. If all the above-mentioned mandatory requirements are met through another strategic document, such as a development plan or an inclusion or diversity strategy, it can be considered as an equivalent. This eligibility criterion does not apply to other categories of legal entities, such as private for-profit organisations, including SMEs, non-governmental or civil society organisations.

B.9 Financial support to third parties

Where the specific call/topic conditions allow for financial support to third parties, the applicants must clearly describe in their proposal the objectives and the expected results, including the elements listed in the application template. The following conditions must also be fulfilled:

- projects must publish their open calls widely and adhere to EU standards of transparency, equal treatment, conflict of interest and confidentiality;
- all calls for third parties and all calls that are implemented by third parties must be published on the Funding & Tenders Portal, and on the beneficiaries' websites;
- the calls must remain open for at least 2 months;
- if submission deadlines are changed, this must immediately be announced and registered applicants must be informed of the change;
- projects must publish the outcome of the calls without delay, including a description of third-party projects, the date of the award, the duration, and the legal name of the third party and country of establishment;
- the calls must have a clear European dimension.

Further conditions may be stipulated in the specific conditions for the topic.

- For more information, *see AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement, Articles 6.2.D.1 and 9.4.*

Open Science and Data Management

For the EIC Pathfinder and Transition, the EIC funded projects must comply with the open science requirements as described in the Model Grant Agreement (article 17). This concern:

✦ providing immediate open access to scientific publications under the conditions required by the grant agreement;

✦ managing responsibly research data generated or reused by projects in line with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable data)'. Producing and updating a data management plan; providing open access to research data under the principle 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary', that is with exceptions, under the conditions required by the grant agreement;

✦ providing information about the research outputs/tools/instruments needed to validate the conclusions of scientific publications or to validate/re-use research data;

✦ providing digital or physical access to the results needed to validate the conclusions of scientific publications, unless exceptions apply (the same as with open access to research data);

✦ in cases of public emergency, if requested by the granting authority, providing immediate open access to all research outputs under open licenses or, if exceptions apply, access under fair and reasonable conditions to legal entities that need the research outputs to address the public emergency**.**

Further, open science practices that are not mandatory but recommended, may be included in projects at the design phase, such as involving all relevant knowledge actors, including citizens, early and open sharing of research, output management beyond research data, open peer-review. This is a non-exhaustive list of practices that proposers are expected to adopt when possible and appropriate for their projects. Recommended open science practices are incentivised through their evaluation at the proposal stage. Proposers should be aware of both mandatory and recommended practices and integrate them into their proposals.

Data Management

All EIC funded projects must develop and update a data management plan in case they generate or reuse research data or any other research outputs (except for publications). All personal and non-personal data must be managed responsibly in line with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable data), the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)[222] and the respective European, international and

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[224] See Article 136 EU Financial Regulation https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046&qid=1535046024012.

national legal frameworks. Personal data must not be made public unless explicitly agreed by the data subjects. Non-personal data will be open in principle but exceptions to open access apply (following the principle 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary').

Granting authority right to object to transfers or licensing

For Horizon Europe EIC actions, the granting authority may, up to 4 years after the end of the action, object to a transfer of ownership or to the exclusive licensing of results. The conditions for this opposition are set on Horizon Europe Regulation (art 40.4[223]).

C. FINANCIAL and OPERATIONAL CAPACITY

C.1 Financial capacity

Applicants 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 on the basis of the documents that the applicants will be requested to upload in the Participant Register during the grant preparation stage (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 be done for the coordinator and if the requested grant amount is equal or greater 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).

If needed, it may also be done for the other applicants, including affiliated entities. If the financial capacity is structurally guaranteed by another legal entity, the financial capacity of that legal entity will be verified.

If the Agency considers that the financial capacity is not satisfactory, they may require:

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[224] See Article 136 EU Financial Regulation https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046&qid=1535046024012.

- further information;

- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility of affiliated entities *(see Annex G below)*; and

- prefinancing paid in instalments;

or

- propose no prefinancing;

- request that the applicant concerned is replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

For more information, see <u>Rules on Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment</u>.

C.2 Operational capacity

Applicants 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'. It will be based on 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 the necessary competence and experience by the time of the tasks are implemented.

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

For this assessment, applicants will be required to provide the following information in the application form:

- description of the (consortium) participant(s); and

- for each participant:

    - identity of researchers involved in the proposal (through the researchers table);

    - up to five most relevant publications, widely-used datasets, software, goods, services, or any other achievements relevant to the call content;

- up to five most relevant previous projects or activities, connected to the subject of this proposal; and

- description of any significant infrastructure and/or any major items of technical equipment, relevant to the proposed work.

Additional supporting documents may be requested if they are needed to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant.

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 'Level of risk, implementation, and need for Union support'. 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.

C.3 Exclusion

Applicants that are subject to **EU administrative sanctions** (i.e. exclusion)[224] or are in one of the following **exclusion situations**[225] that bar 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);

✦ 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);

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[224] See Article 136 EU Financial Regulation https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046&qid=1535046024012.
[225] See Articles 136 and 141 EU Financial Regulation https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046&qid=1535046024012.

- ✦ 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[226] (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 they:[227]

- ✦ have misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or have failed to supply that information; or

- ✦ were previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equality of treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

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[226] Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95 of 18 December 1995 on the protection of the European Communities financial interests, (OJ L 312, 23.12.1995, p. 1).
[227] See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32018R1046&qid=1535046024012.

D. AWARD CRITERIA

D.1 Award criteriaIf 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
✦ Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives. ✦ 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. ✦ 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. ✦ Capacity and role of each participant, and the extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.

For other types of actions, including 'Research and Innovation Actions' (EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition) and 'Innovation and Market Deployment Actions' (EIC Accelerator), the award criteria are detailed in the main part of this Work Programme, under the relevant sections.

D.2 Scores and weighting

Evaluation scores will be awarded for the criteria, and not for the different aspects listed.

For Coordination and Support Actions 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.

All scores will be given a weight of 1.

Proposals that pass the individual threshold AND the overall threshold will be considered for funding, within the limits of the available call budget. Other proposals will be rejected.

D.3 Two-stage calls

Where applicable, this is detailed in the main part of this Work Programme, under the relevant sections.

E. DOCUMENTS*Submission*

All proposals must be submitted **electronically** via the Funders & Tenders Portal electronic submission system (accessible via the topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals must be **complete** and contain all parts and mandatory annexes and supporting documents.

The application form 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 a 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).

Proposals should be designed to stay as close as possible to the award criteria *(see Annex D above)*. The application form will help to achieve this.

When submitting the proposal, the coordinator will have to confirm that they have the mandate to act for all applicants. Moreover, they will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that all participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, financial and operational capacity, exclusion, etc.). Proposals not complying with these requirements will be rejected. Before signing the grant, each participant will have to confirm this again by signing a declaration of honour.

For lump sum grants proposals, the estimated budget must be described in a detailed budget table. This will be used as a basis for justifying and/or fixing the lump sum amount. As the lump sum must be an approximation of the costs actually incurred, the costs included in this detailed budget table must comply with the basic eligibility conditions for EU actual cost grants *(see AGA — Annotated Grant Agreement, Article 6)*. This is particularly important for purchases and subcontracting, which must ensure best value for money (or, if appropriate, the lowest price) and be free from any conflicts of interest. If the budget table contains ineligible costs, the grants may be reduced (even later on during implementation of the project or after they end). Exceptionally, the

Decision authorising the use of lump sum funding for a specific action might specify that a detailed budget table is not required.

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

F. PROCEDURE

F.1 Evaluation procedure and ranking

For lump sum grants proposals, comments on the detailed lump sum budget table will be provided in the Evaluation Summary Report only for proposals invited to grant agreement preparation (or placed in the reserve list) and ones rejected (in part) due to significant overestimation or underestimation of costs.

Exceptionally, where indicated in the specific call/topic conditions, the evaluation committee may be composed partially or, in the case of 'Coordination and support actions', partially or fully of representatives of EU institutions.

For proposals with the same score within a single budget envelope a method to establish the **priority order** will be determined, taking into consideration the objectives of the specific topic. In the absence of special arrangements in the specific call/topic conditions, the following method will apply:

For each group of proposals with the same score, starting with the group achieving the highest score and continuing in descending order:

1) Proposals that address aspects of the call that have not otherwise been covered by more highly ranked proposals will be considered to have the highest priority.

2) The proposals identified under 1), if any, will themselves be prioritised according to the scores they have been awarded for 'Excellence'. When these scores are equal, priority will be based on scores for 'Impact'. In the case of 'Innovation actions', priority will be given to the score for 'Impact', followed by that for 'Excellence'.

3) If necessary, the gender balance among the researchers named in the researchers table in the proposal, will be used as a factor for prioritisation.

4) If necessary, any further prioritisation will be based on geographical diversity, defined as the number of Member States or Associated Countries represented in the proposal, not otherwise receiving funds from projects higher up the ranking list (and if equal in number, then by budget).

5) If a distinction still cannot be made, the panel may decide to further prioritise by considering other factors related to the objectives of the call, or to Horizon Europe in general. These may include, for example, enhancing the quality of the project portfolio through synergies between projects or, where relevant and feasible, involving SMEs. These factors will be documented in the panel report.

6) The method described in 1), 2), 3) and 4) will then be applied to the remaining equally ranked proposals in the group.

At the end of the evaluation, all applicants will be informed of the result in an evaluation result letter. Successful proposals will be invited to the next stage, 'grant preparation'; the other proposals will be put on the reserve list or rejected.

⚠ No commitment to provide funding — Invitation to the grant preparation stage does NOT constitute a formal commitment to funding. Various legal checks are still needed before the grant can be awarded, such as legal entity validation, financial capacity verification, exclusion check, etc.

⚠ Proposals may also receive a **Seal of Excellence[228]** and/or a **Sovereignty (STEP) Seal** as explained in the main part of this Work Programme. With prior authorisation from the applicant, the Agency may share information concerning the proposal and the evaluation with interested financing authorities, subject to the conclusion of confidentiality agreements.

⚠ Budget flexibility — 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 part of the work programme. Changes within these limits will not be considered substantial within the meaning of Article 110(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046.

F.2 Evaluation review procedure

If the consortium believes that the evaluation procedure was flawed, the coordinator can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter).

Only the procedural aspects of an evaluation may be the subject of a request for an evaluation review. The evaluation of the merits of a proposal will not be the subject of an evaluation review.

A request for an evaluation review must relate to a specific proposal and must be submitted within 30 days after the beneficiary accesses the evaluation results. The deadlines will be counted from the date of opening/access. The maximum size limit of the request is 7 000 characters. Notifications of evaluation results which have not been opened in the Funding & Tenders Portal within 10 days after sending are considered

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[228] https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/seal-excellence_en.

to have been accessed and that deadlines will be counted from the date of opening/access (*see also* [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)).

An evaluation review committee will provide an opinion on the procedural aspects of the evaluation. The evaluation review committee may recommend a re-evaluation of the proposal, to be carried out primarily by evaluators who were not involved in the previous evaluation, or a confirmation of the initial evaluation.

F.3 Indicative timetable for evaluation and for signature of the grant agreement

Unless otherwise stated in the specific call/topic conditions, the timing for evaluation and grant preparation is as follows:

– information on the outcome of the evaluation: around 5 months from the deadline for submission;

– indicative date for the signing of grant agreements: around 8 months from the deadline for submission.

G. LEGAL AND FINANCIAL SET-UP OF THE GRANT AGREEMENTS

During the grant preparation stage, the applicant will be asked to prepare the grant agreement, together with the Agency project officer.

This grant agreement will set out the framework for the grant and its terms and conditions, particularly concerning deliverables, reporting and payments. The applicable model with the complete text of the provisions is available on the topic page, together with the other call documentation.

G.1 Starting date & project duration

The project starting date and duration will be fixed in the grant agreement (*see Data Sheet, point 1*). Normally, the starting date will be after the grant has been signed. A starting date before the date the grant is signed (retroactive) can be granted exceptionally for duly justified reasons, if agreed with the Agency[231].

The project duration is provided in months (extensions will be possible only exceptionally, for duly justified reasons and if the Agency agrees).

G.2 Milestones and deliverables

The milestones and deliverables for each project will be managed through the grant management system in the Portal and are reflected in Annex 1 of the grant agreement.

The standard deliverables will be set out in the specific call/topic conditions.

G.3 Form of grant, funding rate and maximum grant amount

The grant parameters (maximum grant amount, funding rate, total eligible costs, etc.) will be fixed in the grant agreement *(Data Sheet, point 3 and Article 5)*.

The project budget is provided in EUR. The amount of the grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

For **actual cost grants**, the grant will be a budget-based, mixed actual cost grant. This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and ONLY those costs *actually* incurred for the project (NOT the *budgeted* costs).

The costs will be reimbursed at the funding rate fixed in the specific call/topic conditions and in the grant agreement.

Such grants may NOT produce a profit. If there is a profit (i.e. surplus of revenues + EU grant over costs), it will be deducted from the final grant amount.

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[231] See Article 193 EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

Moreover, the final grant amount may be reduced in case of non-compliance (e.g. improper implementation, breach of obligations, etc.).

The relevant maximum Horizon Europe funding rates are as follows:

– Research and innovation action: 100%

– Innovation action: 70% (except for non-profit legal entities, where a rate of up to 100% applies)

– Coordination and support action: 100%

– Innovation and market deployment: 70% (except for non-profit legal entities, where a rate of up to 100% applies)

Other funding rates may be set out in the specific call/topic conditions.

For **lump sum and unit grants**, the funding rate is already applied as part of the methodology for fixing the amounts and is therefore not shown in the grant agreement.

G.4 Budget categories and cost eligibility rules

The budget categories and cost eligibility rules are fixed in the grant agreement *(see Data Sheet, point 3 and Article 6)*.

Budget categories:

– actual costs (i.e. costs which are real and not estimated or budgeted) for:

– personnel costs (unless declared as a unit cost; see below);

– subcontracting costs;

– purchase costs (unless declared as a unit cost; see below); and

– costs of providing financial support to third parties (if provided for in the specific call conditions);

– units (i.e. an amount per unit) for:

– personnel costs of SME owners/natural persons not receiving a salary;

– personnel costs calculated by the beneficiaries according to their usual cost accounting practices (average personnel costs);

– costs of internally invoiced goods and services calculated by the beneficiaries according to their usual cost accounting practices; and

- specific unit costs (if provided for in the specific call/topic conditions; see also Annex 2a of the grant agreement);

- flat-rate (i.e. costs calculated by applying a percentage fixed in advance to other types of eligible costs) for:

  - indirect costs (25% flat-rate of the total eligible direct costs, excluding eligible direct costs for subcontracting, financial support to third parties and any unit costs or lump sums which include indirect costs);

- lump sum (i.e. a global amount deemed to cover all costs of the action or a specific category of costs, if provided for in the specific call/topic conditions).

Within a grant, different forms of costs can be used.

Costs can also be declared under several EU Synergy grants, if the cumulative funding under the grants does not exceed 100% of the eligible costs and the contributions declared to them.

G.5 Reporting & payment arrangements

The reporting and payment arrangements are fixed in the grant agreement *(Data Sheet, point 4 and articles 21 and 22)*.

After the grant has been signed, the consortium will normally receive a float to start working on the project (normally, pre-financing of 160% of the average EU funding per reporting period (i.e. maximum grant amount/number of periods); exceptionally, less or no pre-financing). For actions with only one reporting period, it will be less, since 100% would mean the totality of the grant amount.

Payments will be automatically lowered if one of the consortium members has outstanding debts towards the EU (granting authority or other EU bodies). Such debts will be offset by the Agency, in line with the conditions set out in the grant agreement *(see Article 22)*.

At the moment of the prefinancing payment, an amount ranging from 5% to 8% of the maximum grant amount will be deducted from the prefinancing payment and transferred to the mutual insurance mechanism. This mechanism covers the risks associated with non-recovery of sums due from the beneficiaries.

There will be one or several interim payments linked to a periodic report, depending on the duration of the project.

At the end of the project, the consortium will be invited to submit a report on the basis of which the final grant amount will be calculated. If the total of earlier payments is

higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiaries concerned (or the coordinator) will be asked to pay back the difference (recovery).

G.6 Certificates

Depending on the size of the grant amount and on the type of beneficiaries, beneficiaries may be required to submit a certificate on the financial statements. The thresholds for this certificate are fixed in the grant agreement *(Data Sheet, point 4 and Article 24)*.

G.7 Liability regime for recoveries

The liability regime for recoveries is that of individual financial responsibility. Each beneficiary is liable only for their own debt (and those of its affiliated entities, if any) *(Data Sheet point 4.4 and Article 22)*.

G.8 Provisions concerning project implementation

– Proper implementation of the action *(Article 11)*.

– Conflict of interest *(Article 12)*.

– Confidentiality and security (EU classified information) *(Article 13 and Annex 5)*.

– Ethics (research integrity) and values (gender mainstreaming) *(Article 14 and Annex 5)*.

– Data protection *(Article 15)*.

– Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), background and results, access rights and rights of use *(Article 16 and Annex 5)*. In addition to the standard provisions, the following specific provisions in the model grant agreement will apply to all grants awarded under this work programme:

> **Additional exploitation obligations in case of a public emergency:** If requested by the Agency, beneficiaries must grant non-exclusive licences to their results – for a limited period of time specified in the request and on fair and reasonable conditions – to legal entities that need the results to address the public emergency. These legal entities must commit to rapidly and broadly exploiting the resulting products and services on fair and reasonable conditions. This provision will apply up to 4 years after the end of the action.

> **Additional information obligation relating to standards:** Unless stated otherwise in the specific call conditions, beneficiaries must, up to

4 years after the end of the action, inform the Agency if the results could reasonably be expected to contribute to European or international standards.

Annex 3 Fast Track scheme to apply for the EIC Accelerator

The 'Fast Track' scheme is a specific process applicable to the EIC Accelerator. It provides for a specific treatment of proposals 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 (Section IV). Instead, a project review is carried out by the responsible funding body to assess the innovation or market deployment potential of an existing project, and to decide whether the project is suitable for support under the EIC Accelerator.

The project review – implemented by the funding body responsible for the programme – must be conducted using:

✦ award criteria equivalent to the ones set out for the short application stage of the EIC Accelerator regarding excellence and impact (Section IV), centred on the underlying idea of that potential new action;

✦ a project review process that guarantees an independent assessment and is carried out within the previous two years in compliance with Article 48 of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

The responsible funding body can submit the outcome of the projects review to the EIC Accelerator, if the project review concludes that the following conditions are met:

✦ the proposal meets the first two criteria of the EIC Accelerator (i.e. excellence and impact);

✦ there is no duplication of funding of activities to be supported under the EIC Accelerator with the existing grant; and

✦ the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for the EIC Accelerator.

Fast Track applicants will then be invited to prepare a full proposal for the EIC Accelerator following the notification about the successful result of the initial review. The Fast track Accelerator applicants will be submitted to the same submission limitations that apply to the EIC Accelerator.

They will receive coaching as specified in Section IV.

Full proposals to the EIC Accelerator stemming from the Fast Track scheme will be assessed as set out in Section IV, and will be treated in exactly the same way as all other full proposals.

In 2025, the funding bodies, schemes, projects and beneficiaries which are eligible for the Fast Track for EIC Accelerator cut-off dates are:

✦ The EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition projects (including under EIC pilot) managed by the Agency;
✦ Relevant schemes managed by the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), as identified as relevant by each KIC;
✦ Funding schemes for SMEs supported under the Eurostars-2 Joint Programme and the Partnership on Innovative SMEs managed by the Eureka secretariat and relevant national bodies;

✦ Companies awarded a grant only under the Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Accelerator and the Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator managed by the Agency.[232]
✦ Companies awarded grants under the Pre-accelerator funding scheme;
✦ Companies awarded grants under the Women Tech.EU scheme
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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, the scheme 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 is being implemented by the relevant funding bodies.

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[232] For previous beneficiaries of a grant, the Fast Track scheme cannot be used to request grant-only support.

Annex 4   Pilot Plug-in scheme to apply for the EIC Accelerator

The pilot Plug-in scheme is a specific process applicable to the EIC Accelerator only. Its process is equivalent to the Fast Track, as described under Annex 3. However, the Plug-in scheme applies to proposals that result from existing national or regional programmes.

Under the Plug-in scheme, applicants do not apply directly to the EIC Accelerator call (Section IV). Instead, a project review is carried out by the certified national or regional programme to assess the innovation or market deployment potential of an existing project supported by the programme, and to decide whether the project is suitable for support under the EIC Accelerator.

The project review - implemented by the funding/managing body responsible for the programme or by other appointed authority under the responsibility of the funding body - must be conducted using:

✦ award criteria equivalent to the ones set out for the short application stage of the EIC Accelerator (Section IV), centred on the underlying idea of that potential new action;

✦ equivalent evaluation processes that guarantee an independent assessment of proposals in compliance with Article 48 of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

The responsible funding/managing body, or other appointed authority under the responsibility of the funding body, can submit the outcome of the project review to the EIC Accelerator, if the project review concludes that the following conditions are met:

✦ the proposal meets the first two criteria of the EIC Accelerator (i.e. 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.

Applicants will then be invited to prepare a full proposal for the EIC Accelerator on the same basis as applicants passing Step 1 of the EIC Accelerator calls.

The EIC Plug In Accelerator applicants will be submitted to the same submission limitations that apply to the EIC accelerator. They will receive support through coaching as specified in Section IV.

Full proposals to the EIC Accelerator stemming from the Plug-in scheme will be assessed as set out in Section IV (above) and will be treated exactly the same way as all other full proposals.

The Commission certifies the programmes that are deemed suitable for the Plug-in scheme based on independent experts' assessment. The experts will collaborate with the EIC Plug-in contact points (representatives of Member States and Associated Countries) who will have to provide accurate information regarding the programmes. Only programmes for which all the key elements and information are provided by the EIC Plug-in contact points will be considered for the certification.

A first set of programmes have been certified to be compliant with the requirements of the Plug-in scheme for a pilot phase. Subject to the outcome of a review of this pilot, further programmes may be assessed during 2024 and 2025 and may also be certified to be compliant with the Plug-in scheme. A full list of certified programmes for the Plug-in scheme is available on the EIC website.

The Commission services[233] will be notified if any future changes in the criteria and/or evaluation of the regional or national programmes may impact the assessment and certification of those programmes.

The Commission may withdraw the certification, if it finds out that:

✦ false information was used to obtain the certification;

✦ the project review did not comply with the provisions as set out in the EIC work programme.

The funding/managing bodies in charge of these national/regional programmes, or other appointed authority under the responsibility of the funding body, 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. A coordination among the different national and regional funding bodies will have to be ensured at national level to avoid duplication of the proposals.

After the certification process is concluded, the responsible funding/managing bodies, or other appointed authorities under the responsibility of the funding body, are entitled to present the projects that have passed the project review and were funded under those certified programmes. In the pilot phase, a limitation for the number of projects proposed by each programme and each Member State or Associated Country will be agreed.

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[233] From the Directorate General in charge and/or Executive Agency to which the tasks/programme will be delegated.

Annex 5   EIC Booster grants for EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition Awardees

In line with Article 47(2) of the Horizon Europe Regulation,[234] with the aim to implement Portfolio coordinating activities or to nurture innovation out of these, EIC Booster grants of a fixed amount not exceeding EUR 50 000 may be awarded outside any call for proposal to EIC Awardees, Technology Transfer Offices, EIC Inventors and other third parties linked to projects already selected under the Pathfinder or where relevant Transition calls (EIC Pathfinder projects including grants resulting from certain EIC pilot Pathfinder, FET-Open and FET-Proactive calls, see Section II and of EIC Transition projects)

Additionally, and for the purpose of further assessing innovation potentialities and explore potential pathways to commercialisation out of these projects results (preliminary or final), applicants may also be EIC Awardees, Technology Transfer Offices, EIC Inventors and other third parties provided with the necessary access rights or entrusted with any such task by the concerned awardee. Booster grants may in particular support the development of potential innovation stemming from the future EIC Market Place. Complementary activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation (Innovation activities) could include, but are not limited to:

- ✦ definition of a commercialisation process;
- ✦ market and competitiveness analysis;
- ✦ technology assessment and/or certification;
- ✦ verification of innovation potential;
- ✦ consolidation of IP rights;
- ✦ freedom to operate (FTO);
- ✦ business case development;
- ✦ testing, piloting with users or potential customers.;
- ✦ exploratory / preparatory work for creating start-ups or spin-offs;
- ✦ support for hosting by a public or private incubator/ accelerator.
- ✦ support in participating to Tech2Market BAS programme (in particular Business Validation Programme and/or Venture Building Programme);

Portfolio activities could include, but are not limited to:

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[234] See also Article 195(e) of the Financial Regulation.

- defining common objectives and activities;

- building synergies within the EIC Portfolio and with any outside relevant partners, including within the EIT Community;

- engaging strategic partners to overcome common challenges;

- (co)-organising events;

- maximising data sharing;

- raising visibility of the EIC Portfolio's community and the EIC.

These EIC Booster grants do not fund research, or activities that were already foreseen in the original project or that are already funded by other EIC instruments. A maximum of three EIC Booster grants can be awarded for each EIC Pathfinder project and more than three may be awarded in exceptional and duly justified cases. A maximum of one EIC Booster grant can be awarded for each EIC Transition project and more than one may be awarded in exceptional and duly justified cases. Any such EIC Booster grant can be awarded to an individual EIC awardee or a group of EIC Awardees.[235]

EIC Awardees or other potential booster grant beneficiary as indicated above can be invited to apply at any time for an EIC Booster grant following a positive recommendation from an EIC Programme Manager or a project review or a participation in the EIC Tech2Market BAS programme, in particular Business Validation Programme and/or Venture Building Programme (Opportunities exploration phase or Team creation). Each proposal will be assessed in accordance with Article 29, paragraph 2, of Horizon Europe Regulation taking into account the following considerations ("award criteria"):

For activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation:

- Timeliness and pertinence of the activities proposed (Excellence);

- Potential of the proposed deep-tech innovation to create new market or to solve pressing societal needs / problems (Impact);

- Expertise, capabilities and motivation of the applicants to take this innovation forward to the market (Quality and efficiency of implementation).

For portfolio activities:

- Contribution of the activity to the objectives of the EIC Portfolio (Excellence);

- Timeliness of the activity proposed to maximise its impact (Impact);:

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[235] This includes affiliated entities that are participating in the Pathfinder or Transition projects.

- ✦ Engagement of EIC Portfolio's projects and relevant external partners (Quality and efficiency of implementation).

Each proposal will be evaluated by a mixed evaluation committee composed of:

- ✦ An EIC Programme Manager.
- ✦ An external expert selected from a limited pool of trained experts, covering the broad technology areas.
- ✦ Either an EIC Project Officer or a second external expert.

The evaluation committee will assess whether the proposal meets each of the award criteria and will give a GO or NO GO. Proposals receiving at least two GO will be selected. Proposals not receiving at least two GO will be rejected. The evaluation committee may invite a rejected applicant to resubmit an adjusted proposal.

The implementation of Booster grants for Innovation activities will be performed by the CSA beneficiary selected under the call for proposals HORIZON-EIC-2024-BOOSTER.

Annex 6   Additional provisions concerning Intellectual Property for EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition

In accordance with the Horizon Europe Regulation,[236] the current Work Programme provides for additional dissemination and exploitation obligations in particular to facilitate the exploitation of results, and to enable a more pro-active role to the Commission and EISMEA identifying and maximising exploitation opportunities in the Union.

Together with specific intellectual property rules provided for under annex 5 of the Model Grant agreement, the following rules will apply to EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition actions.

1. Definitions

The following definition is complementing those provided in the Glossary in the introductory section of this Work Programme for the purpose of this Annex.

With reference to information and results owned by any EIC Awardee that is a not-for-profit legal entity, EIC Inventors are any of their employees and subcontractors, established in a Member States or Associated Country, and appearing or entitled to appear as inventor in any corresponding patent filing and according to the definition of inventor for the relevant patent jurisdiction.

2. Exchange of information for the purpose of EIC portfolio activities

2.1 – Access to information about results[237]

a. At any time and without prejudice to the EIC Awardee's ownership of results the EIC Programme Manager may request any EIC Awardee to facilitate information on results (preliminary or final) generated by the action, subject to paragraphs b) and c) below, with the aim to probe their potential for further innovation.

b. Where any suchresult (preliminary or final) was not already made public through agreed dissemination activities or a patent or protection by any other intellectual property right, that information shall be earmarked and treated by the Agency as confidential and disseminated only to:

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[236] In accordance with Recital (85) and notably the second indent of Article 39(1) of Horizon Europe Regulation.
[237] Results' means any tangible or intangible effect of the action, such as data, know-how or information, whatever its form or nature, whether or not it can be protected, as well as any rights attached to it, including intellectual property rights.

✦ other EIC Awardees, bound by an EIC grant agreement or an EIC ==contract==, that refers to or includes the obligations detailed under section 2.2 below;

✦ EIC inventors having signed a non-disclosure agreement with the Agency, providing for the obligations detailed under section 2.2 below;

✦ other member of the EIC Community platform established in a Member State or an Associated Country and having signed a non-disclosure agreement with the Agency, providing for the obligations detailed under section 2.2.

Where based on that confidential information any of above mentioned entities request disclosure or access to the underlying detailed data and results, the EIC Awardee may refuse it based on its legitimate interests, including commercial exploitation and any other constraints, such as data protection rules, privacy, confidentiality, trade secrets, Union competitive interests, security rules or intellectual property rights.

c. EIC Awardees may object to the obligation provided for under paragraph b) when:

✦ committing to either publish or patent or protect by any other intellectual property right and without unreasonable delays, or

✦ demonstrating concrete exploitation of the said preliminary findings and results, subject to initial discussion with and final agreement of the Agency on the corresponding update of the Plan for dissemination and exploitation referred to in Section 3.1.

2.2 – Non-disclosure obligations

Where EIC Awardees are informed on or given access or disclosure to any preliminary findings, results or other intellectual property generated by other EIC actions, and where this information is earmarked as confidential in accordance with section 2.1.b, they must:

✦ keep it strictly confidential; and

✦ not disclose it to any person without the prior written consent of the owner, and then only under conditions of confidentiality equal to those provided under this section; and

✦ use the same degree of care to protect its confidentiality as the EIC awardee uses to protect its own confidential information of a similar nature; and

✦ act in good faith at all times; and

+ not use any of it for any purpose other than assessing opportunities to propose other research or innovation activities to the EIC, or any other initiative agreed by the owner.

These EIC Awardees may disclose any such information to their employees and, with the prior authorisation of the owner, to their subcontractors established in a Member State or an Associated Country if these subcontractors:

+ need to access it for the performance of their work with respect to the purpose permitted as above; and

+ are bound by a written agreement or professional obligation to protect its confidentiality in the way described in this section.

No obligations are imposed upon the EIC Awardee where such information:

+ is already known to the EIC awardee before and is not subject to any other obligation of confidentiality; or

+ is or becomes publicly known through no act by or default by/of the EIC awardee; or

+ is obtained by the EIC awardee from a third party and in circumstances where the EIC awardee has no reason to believe that there has been a breach of an obligation of confidentiality.

The restrictions in this section do not apply if such information is required to be disclosed by any law or regulation, by any judicial or governmental order or request, or pursuant to disclosure requirements relating to the listing of the stock of the EIC awardee on any recognised stock exchange.

Upon the end or termination of the grant agreement or of the participation of the EIC awardee, it must immediately cease to use the said information, except if otherwise directly agreed with the owner, or if the EIC awardee remains a member of the EIC Community referred to under section 2.1.b.

The provisions of this section will be in force for a period of 60 months following the end or the termination of the grant agreement or of the participation of the EIC awardee, at the end of which period they will cease to have effect.

3. Specific provisions on intellectual property and related dissemination and exploitation activities

3.1 – Plan for exploitation and dissemination

EIC Awardees must report to the Agency on their exploitation and dissemination activities:

- ✦ in accordance with the grant agreement, together with any updated version of the plan for exploitation and dissemination;

- ✦ within 30 days upon request from the EIC Programme Manager for the purpose of EIC portfolio activities.

The Agency may also request an update of the plan for exploitation and dissemination of the results at any time during the implementation of the action.

EIC Awardees must address and agree in their Consortium agreement on all related intellectual property issues, from ownership and co-ownership of results to the consortium's internal approval process for their dissemination. EIC Awardees must also identify therein any pre-existing technology fitting the action's needs and objectives and try to reach appropriate licensing agreement between them to prevent research funding redundancy.

The EIC Awardees are deemed to have signed the Consortium agreement at the date of the signature of this grant agreement. The Agency may require a copy at any time in accordance with the grant agreement.

3.2 – Dissemination activities

Each EIC awardee will propose and undertake dissemination activities of the plan for exploitation and dissemination agreed by the Agency with the aim of supporting innovation in the European Union and fostering the development of the EIC Community, opting for publications as main route to bring technical and scientific knowledge to the public.

When approving the plan for exploitation and dissemination of the results or any update, the Agency may subject any proposed dissemination activity to one or a combination of the following conditions:

- ✦ the prior assessment of any innovation potential of the results to be disseminated,

- ✦ the prior protection of the result to be disseminated, in accordance with the grant agreement, the cost being eligible;

Where the Agency disagrees to a dissemination activity, it will actively assist the EIC Awardees to achieve compliance with the required conditions, without unreasonable delay and in due time, notably by proposing complementary EIC support for exploitation or a support of the EIC Business Acceleration Services, as detailed and referred to under section V.I. Where the Agency agrees to a dissemination activity, it will abide to the grant agreement.

The Agency is hereby entrusted with the right to also disseminate and promote the exploitation of any results that are made public by the EIC awardee or with its assent.

3.3 – Exploitation of results

EIC Awardees must use their best efforts to exploit their results or have them exploited by a third party, in priority those established in a Member State or an Associated Country, including through transfer or licensing. The Agency may object to a transfer of ownership or the exclusive licensing of results under certain conditions as detailed in the EIC grant agreement.

EIC Awardees must report on any exploitation operation :

✦ at the reporting periods provided for in the grant agreement;

✦ with the periodicity agreed at the end of the action together with the final exploitation and dissemination plan;

✦ within 30 days upon request from the Agency, within 4 years after final payment.

Each EIC Awardee agrees upon signature of the grant agreement, to ensure the necessary support or access rights for the further development and exploitation of results that any of its EIC Inventors have contributed to (respecting the transfer rule).

If the EIC Awardee provides financial or other support to the EIC Inventor for any such exploitation, royalties or other returns may be shared with the EIC Awardee on mutually beneficial terms, provided the conclusion of any such agreement does not prevent the EIC Inventor(s) to exercise their rights. Such financial support should include as a minimum the full or partial funding of the costs of relevant Intellectual Property Right protection in major jurisdictions. Other support includes expertise, access to infrastructure and facilities, or other forms of support. The royalties and other returns to the EIC Awardee should be fair and proportionate to the financial and other support provided.

If the EIC Awardee does not commit to provide support within a maximum period of 6 months from the date of the first formal request from the EIC Inventor, or that support is manifestly inadequate, then the EIC Awardee must entrust sufficient access rights to

allow the EIC Inventor to further develop and exploit the result. If the EIC Awardee does not provide support for exploitation, then by default the access rights to the EIC Inventor are royalty free.

The EIC Inventor must inform the EIC Awardee in due time before any exploitation activity they intend to undertake, and report to the EIC Awardee on the implementation of the exploitation activity.

If the EIC Awardee considers that the exploitation activity could negatively affect its own exploitation activities:

+ In the absence of any approved exploitation and dissemination plan, the EIC Awardee may request to the Agency the suspension of the access rights of a given EIC Inventor, by demonstrating that their use puts negatively at stake their future strategy of or ongoing valorisation activities.

+ Where an exploitation and dissemination plan has been approved, the EIC Awardee may directly suspend the access rights of a given EIC Inventor if this would negatively affect the implementation of the said approved plan. The EIC Inventor may request the Agency to lift that suspension by demonstrating that the exercise of the access rights does not affect the said plan.

3.4 – Failure to exploit or disseminate

The Agency is entrusted with the right to disseminate and promote the exploitation of results that have not been made public through dissemination activities or patent or protection by any other IPR, where the EIC awardee owning it:

+ does not provide any information regarding exploitation or dissemination of those results; or

+ neither intends to exploit nor disseminate those results; or

+ declares to continue research activities on those results but without a view of their subsequent exploitation; or

+ where, despite its best efforts, no exploitation or dissemination takes place within the delays provided in the final exploitation and dissemination plan set out in the grant agreement and in the absence of any demonstrated alternative exploitation or dissemination opportunity.

Where the EIC awardee continues to oppose to the dissemination by the Agency or refuses to provide any data or document necessary for the said dissemination, the Agency may impose penalties in accordance with the grant agreement.