

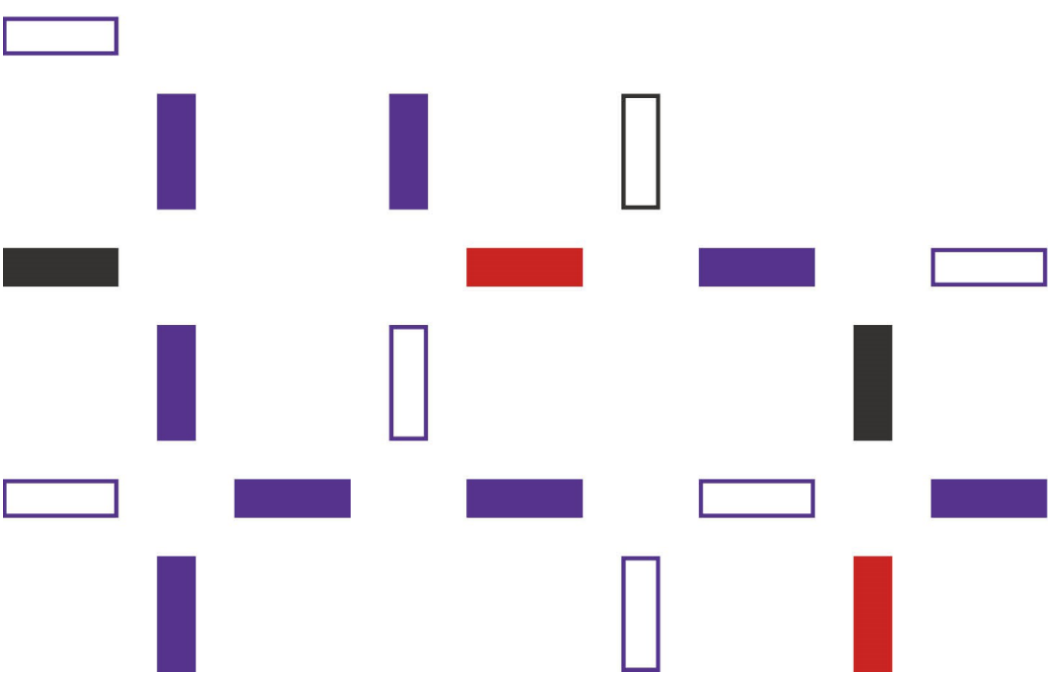


# Backing visionary entrepreneurs

European Innovation Council (EIC)  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*VERSION 2*

*February 2023*



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## **A EIC Pathfinder**

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# **A. EIC PATHFINDER**

1. What is the expected size and duration of an EIC Pathfinder project? Can single beneficiaries apply and if yes, will they be competing against multi-beneficiary proposals?

EIC considers proposals with a requested EU contribution of up to EUR 3 million for Pathfinder Open and up to EUR 4 million for Pathfinder Challenges as appropriate. Nonetheless, this does not preclude you to request larger amounts, if properly justified.

In general, there is no specific expectation on the number of partners in a consortium or the duration of EIC Pathfinder projects, which should be “fit-for-purpose”, i.e. decided in line with the S&T ambition, by ensuring an efficient implementation strategy of the planned R&I, dissemination and exploitation activities and considering quickly changing research landscape in given area(s). Note however that the eligibility conditions of each call needs to be satisfied (e.g., 3 minimum legal entities for consortia in Pathfinder Open and 2 for consortia in the Pathfinder Challenge, unless specified in the Challenge text call). For some Pathfinder Challenges, projects are expected to have a set duration specified in the in the Challenge Guide.

Applications from single legal entities are not eligible under the EIC Pathfinder Open call. Single legal entities can however submit applications under the EIC Pathfinder Challenges call, where they will compete with proposals submitted by consortia.

## 2. What range of TRL should EIC Pathfinder projects cover? What is the expected project output?

It is expected that the various activities within the EIC Pathfinder projects should cover low TRLs, typically in the range between TRL 1 and 4. Note however that the TRLs range of some EIC Pathfinder Challenges may be narrower as specified in the given Pathfinder Challenge text call and Challenge Guide.

The main expected outcomes of Pathfinder projects are top-level scientific publications in open access and an adequate formal protection of the generated Intellectual Property (e.g. a patent application). In addition, the expected outcome of Pathfinder Open project is the proof of principle that the main ideas of the envisioned future technology are feasible, thus validating its scientific and technological basis. For Pathfinder Challenge projects, the expected outcomes are described in the given Challenge text call and Challenge Guide. Moreover, Pathfinder Challenge projects are also expected to contribute to the outcomes of the Challenge Portfolio activities as described in the Challenge Guide.

## 3. Is participation of SMEs or industrial partners to EIC Pathfinder consortia compulsory?

The participation of SMEs and industrial partners in the EIC Pathfinder consortia is not compulsory.

Please note however that applicants are encouraged to involve and empower in their 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.

## 4. **Can you provide some examples of eligible and non-eligible consortium compositions in the EIC Pathfinder Challenges call?**

The EIC Pathfinder Challenges call is open for participation of **single legal entities** established in a Member State (MS) or an Associated Country (AC). Note however that mid-caps and larger companies are not permitted as single applicants. Consortia of several legal entities can also participate in this call provided that they fulfil certain eligibility criteria:

- **Consortia of two entities** must be two independent legal entities from two different MS or AC.
- **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:
  - o at least one legal entity established in a MS; and
  - o at least two other independent legal entities, each established in different MS or AC.

Important: **associated partners** participate in the project without funding but are not a party to the grant agreement which they do not sign. They are therefore not taken into consideration for the eligibility of the project. An **affiliated entity** to a beneficiary is not considered as independent legal entity.

Examples of **ineligible** consortia:

- a French university, a German research organisation and a French SME (consortium of three legal entities, but only two MS or AC represented)
- a Polish university, an Italian university, a Polish SME and an Italian company (consortium of more than three legal entities, but only two MS or AC represented)
- a Finnish research organisation, a Finnish university, a Norwegian SME and a Canadian university (the Canadian university participates as associated partner; hence this is a consortium of three legal entities, but only two MS or AC represented)

Examples of **eligible** consortia:

- a Maltese university and a Czech SME (consortium of two legal entities with two different MS or AC represented)
- A Greek research organisation and a Swiss university (the Swiss university participates as associated partner; hence this is not counted as a consortium but as a single legal entity)
- A Portuguese company, an Israeli hospital, a Latvian university, and a US research organisation (there are three entities from two different MS and one AC, and one associated partner).

In case further clarifications are needed please see FAQ "[In Horizon Europe, what is the status of participants from non-EU, Associated or Third Countries?](#)"

5. How will the rebuttal ("right-to-act") procedure in the evaluation process of EIC Pathfinder work in practice? When and how will applicants be contacted for submitting observations to the evaluators' assessments? What happens if an applicant does not submit observations?

About 1.5-2.5 months after the call deadline the applicants will receive the evaluators' comments via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal, the deadline for sending replies to these comments will be eight calendar days (at 17h00 Brussels local time) after the receipt of these comments. The participants' replies are strictly limited to maximum two A4 pages. They cannot be used to alter or add to the content of the proposals but must strictly focus providing clarifications and/or on responding to potential misunderstandings or errors by the evaluators. The replies will be made available to the evaluation committee who will decide on the final score on the basis of the remote score and the outcome of its consensus discussions, taking into consideration the comments from the rebuttal procedure, if any.

There are no consequences if a participant does not submit observations (not compulsory).

6. For the Pathfinder Challenges call, what does it mean that portfolio considerations will be taken into account in the evaluation process? What does the portfolio approach mean for beneficiaries in successful Pathfinder Challenges projects?

The evaluation process includes two steps: firstly, an assessment of each proposal separately and secondly, the Evaluation Committee will consider each proposal's contribution to setting up of a

consistent portfolio of projects. Portfolio considerations for a given Challenge call are described in the Pathfinder Challenge Guide. As a general principle, in order to balance out the portfolio, a mapping of the proposals in a number of categories will be used. 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 to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts of the 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 Portfolio goals and create new opportunities for radical innovation as described in the Challenge Guide.

7. Why and when may Pathfinder Open projects be added to an EIC portfolio? What kind of portfolio activities are expected? Can projects or beneficiaries, selected to join a portfolio, opt out?

EIC funded projects may be allocated in at least one thematic or challenge-based portfolio of projects. This allocation may change over time as new portfolios are created or evolve. EIC Portfolio activities will be identified and developed by EIC Programme Managers in consultation with the beneficiaries of the actions in each portfolio, and where appropriate with other interested EIC Community members and third parties. The aim of thematic portfolios is to develop cooperation within the portfolio in order to support the member-projects in achieving more efficiently and effectively their objectives, and more generally to enhance research, prepare transition to innovation and stimulate business opportunities, and strengthen the EIC Community. Such activities may include participation to conferences, workshops or meetings, data sharing, or participation to any relevant EIC Business Acceleration Services events, just to name a few.

It should be emphasised that the Pathfinder Open call is bottom-up and thus the level of adherence of a proposal to one or several existing portfolios is not an eligibility or evaluation criterion for proposals submitted to this call. It is nevertheless expected that all Pathfinder projects will be included in at least one portfolio.

8. How will participation in portfolio activities be supported? At the submission, do proposals need to allocate a budget for portfolio activities?

Pathfinder Open proposals do not need to allocate budget for these activities while those from Pathfinder Challenges should allocate a corresponding budget as indicated in the relevant Challenge Guide.

In specific cases the participation in portfolio activities may be supported by booster grants with fixed amounts of up to EUR 50 000 per project.

9. Will the Pathfinder challenges still exist in future WP?

The Challenge-driven approach will continue in future EIC work programmes beyond 2023. The topics identified for the challenge-driven calls in the [EIC WP 2023](#) will evolve, with new topics identified in later years, with the possibility of some topics identified in this Work Programme to be complemented with additional funding. Throughout 2023, the EIC will organise various discussions and events to help identify the most promising emerging topics for the Challenges, and [EIC Programme Managers](#) are expected to play a central role in this process.

10. Are there events foreseen to support the formation of consortium for Pathfinder calls?



The European Commission supports the formation of consortia for Pathfinder calls by means of its Partner Search tool on the Funding and Tenders Portal. Specific networking events may be organised and announced at a later stage. Please also contact your National Contact Point for further information and support.

11. In the Pathfinder Open evaluations, how do you apply the “gender balance amongst work package leaders” criterion when prioritising proposals with the same final score?

Applicants must include information about the gender of their work package leaders in the application form (part B, table 3.1a – list of work packages). This information will be used to calculate the gender balance criterion. Proposals with a more balanced composition in terms of gender of work package leaders get priority.

Work packages for which the gender of the work package leader is not clearly indicated will be counted as contributing to the gender which is already mostly represented. Work package leaders which are leading more than one work package will be counted only once. Proposals where the information on the gender of work package leaders is entirely missing will be counted as 100% imbalanced.

12. In the Pathfinder Open evaluations, how do you apply the “number of Member States and Associated Countries” criterion when prioritising proposals with the same final score?

This criterion is applied by calculating how many Member States (MS) and Associated Countries (AC) are represented in the consortium. Consortia with a larger number of MS and AC represented get priority. Associated partners not requesting funding are not taken into account. Countries with several entities are only counted once. Example:

- Consortium A with 2 German, 3 Spanish, 2 Estonian and 1 Tunisian entities: 4 Member States and Associated Countries represented
- Consortium B with 1 Greek, 3 Norwegian, 1 Lithuanian, 1 Swiss and 1 US entity: 3 Member States and Associated Countries represented

Consortium A has priority over consortium B.

## **B. EIC TRANSITION**

13. What are the eligibility conditions for small consortia? How are these applied in relation to the legal entities established in third countries and associated countries?

For proposals already submitted and currently under evaluation, services check that the proposals still comply with the (minimum) participation conditions, e.g.:

- For multi-beneficiary proposals (3 different countries): must include at least one legal entity established in an EU member state (MS) and two legal entities established in two other EU member states or (candidate) associated countries (AC);
- For two-beneficiary proposals (2 different countries): two independent legal entities from two different EU member state or (candidate) associated countries.
- For mono-beneficiary proposals: one legal entity established in an EU member state or (candidate) associated country.

In addition, applicants can have Associated Partners (who are not members of the consortia but are additional partners for whom the applicant takes responsibility for implementing activities).

If it becomes clear that a proposal is no longer eligible, services must inform concerned applicants that their proposal is no longer eligible due to the new circumstances regarding the current status of the candidate Associated Countries in Horizon Europe.

Some examples with Switzerland as follows:

- Mono-beneficiary application from a Member State or Associated Country with an Associated Partner from Switzerland: is this proposal eligible? Yes, if all the other eligibility criteria of admissibility and eligibility are fulfilled.
- Two-beneficiary proposal (two independent legal entities from two different Member States or Associated Country and with an Associated Partner from Switzerland: is this proposal eligible? Yes, if all the other eligibility criteria of admissibility and eligibility are fulfilled.
- A proposal with at least three independent legal entities each established in a different MS/AC and with at least one of them established in a MS. A three-beneficiary proposal with an Associated Partner from CH is eligible. However, is eligible a proposal with the maximum number of beneficiaries (5 legal entities) and with an Associated Partner from CH (to make a total of 6)? Yes, if all the other eligibility criteria of admissibility and eligibility are fulfilled. It would make a consortium of 5 for the consideration of the eligibility of the proposal.

In case further clarifications are needed please see FAQ "[In Horizon Europe, what is the status of participants from non-EU, Associated or Third Countries?](#)"

14. I would like to apply for a Transition project to further develop the results created by someone else (another project, another partner in my project, etc). What is the written evidence of the IPR agreement to be included in the proposal?

Proposals must build on results from an ongoing or recently finished project (linked project), funded from an eligible call as listed in the Work Programme and the linked project needs to be clearly identified in the first page of the proposal's part B.

Proposals must include the confirmation that the applicants are the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) owner or holder, or have the necessary rights to commercialise the results of the project, as described in the proposal.

Applicants that are not the owner of the result to be further developed in the proposal must provide a commitment letter from the relevant owner(s) of the result(s), which confirms the commitment of the owner of the linked project research result(s) to negotiate with you a fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory access to such results, including IPR, for the purpose of future commercial exploitation.

15. What is the Seal of Excellence for Transition projects? How and to whom is it given? What support is available for such Seals of Excellence?

The Seal of Excellence (only for mono-beneficiary applications from individual SMEs) is a quality label awarded to project proposals submitted to the EIC, to help these proposals find alternative funding. It certifies the value of the proposal, based on the outcome of the rigorous EIC evaluation process.

Proposals for EIC Transition (mono-beneficiary only) that were judged to deserve funding but did not get it due to budget limits will receive the Seal of Excellence. EIC Transition proposals must meet the thresholds on all evaluation criteria to receive the Seal of Excellence.

The Seal of Excellence projects can participate in activities and request up to three days of free business coaching through the EIC Business Acceleration Services..

16. What is the expected size and duration of an EIC Transition project?

The EIC considers proposals with a duration of up to 3 years as appropriate. .

The expected size may depend on the path chosen, the sector and amount of work proposed in the application. E.g.: for mono-beneficiary proposals, the budget may be smaller than for multi-beneficiary proposals, and certain sectors may be more expensive than others.

The minimum amount envisaged for a project is EUR 500 000. The maximum amount envisaged for a project is EUR 2.5 million.

Exceptional cases of higher amount or longer duration need to be explicitly and very well motivated and explained in the proposal.

17. Is participation of SMEs or industrial partners to EIC Transition consortium compulsory? Can researchers participate?

The Work Programme allows for the participation of academic partners without an SME or industrial partner. However, the evaluation will assess the "necessary high-quality expertise, capabilities and motivation to move decisively towards innovation, create a unique commercial value from the emerging technology and develop an attractive business and investment proposition".

It is therefore encouraged that companies participate, including SMEs/start-ups, and which may include companies that did not take part in the previous consortia that originated the results.

18. When and how will a selected Transition project be added to a portfolio of projects? Do projects have a choice? What kind of portfolio activities are expected and how will this participation be supported?

The Transition Challenge projects will be by default part of the related challenge portfolio. If deemed necessary, the Transition Open projects may be allocated to at least one Thematic or Challenge Portfolio.

19. How much should applicants invest upfront in the market aspects (competition, business case, business model) for the proposal and how much this would be developed in the project itself?

The applicants should have sufficient preliminary business case/business model and market analysis for the application area(s) they have in mind at the proposal stage, based mainly on desk research. The Transition projects should advance both the technology and business aspects. The business case and business model will be further developed and refined during the project duration, with field and user research, as to become a credible basis for entrepreneurship, business creation and investment.

20. In case your Transition project is selected for funding, when is it expected to start?

Applicants that are selected for funding are expected to start their project no later than 2-3 months after grant signature. The grant signature occurs normally within 6 months from the call deadline.

Applicants are advised to start their preparation (e.g. publish vacancy notices to recruit staff or call for tender to procure equipment) from the moment they have been informed of the positive outcome of the evaluation, as the probability of not to sign the grant, while non-zero, is rather low historically. If the applicants are not able to start within maximum 3 months after the grant signature are advised to submit their proposal in the subsequent cut off.

## **C. EIC ACCELERATOR**

21. Can I apply to the EIC Accelerator if I have already been a grant beneficiary under the SME Instrument or EIC Accelerator Pilot?

As a general rule, you may apply to the EIC Accelerator if your previous project is finalised (i.e. the related actions are finalised and the final report is uploaded and submitted by the beneficiary).

Beneficiaries of ongoing projects selected under a Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Accelerator call may be eligible to submit a proposal for a related investment only component under an EIC Accelerator call. They will have to submit a new proposal to the short application phase.

Beneficiaries of completed projects must also apply starting with the short proposal and if successful can apply for any of the options in the full proposal: grant + investment; investment-only; grant only, grant first.

Please keep in mind a grant-only support under the EIC Accelerator can only be provided once to a beneficiary during Horizon Europe for a maximum of EUR 2.5 million to cover activities of TRL 5/6 to 8.

Companies awarded a grant under the EIC pilot Accelerator in Horizon 2020 can also benefit from the Fast Track scheme to the EIC Accelerator (see section on Fast Track scheme below). Please keep in mind that for previous beneficiaries of a grant, the Fast Track scheme cannot be used to request grant-only support. Eligible projects can contact their project officers for further information.

22. Can I relocate my company from the UK between the short and full proposal in order to apply for blended finance?

A company located in UK, having submitted a successful short proposal, may relocate to an EU member state/Associated Country, before submitting their full application. In this case, a new company has to be established in a member state or associated country in order to be eligible for blended finance. The PIC number of the newly established entity has to be communicated before submitting the full proposal to the EIC evaluation team so that we can update your application with the correct information.

23. Can I apply directly to the Full proposal under the EIC Accelerator if I have received a Seal of excellence in the past?

No, you have to start the evaluation process from the Short Proposal. The AI-based IT platform will guide you through the whole submission process, as well as provide you with assessment of the different funding opportunities you may have at national and European level.

24. Can I apply to the EIC Accelerator if my company is located outside the EU?

If your company is located outside the EU but established in an associated country it is eligible to apply for EIC Accelerator calls in the same manner as a Member State. In the event that your company is based in a non-associated third country but intends to establish an SME (including start-ups) or to relocate an existing SME to a Member State or an Associated Country, your company may submit a short proposal as a non-associated third country but must prove its effective establishment in a Member State or an Associated Country at the time of submission of the full proposal.

In case further clarifications are needed please see FAQ "[In Horizon Europe, what is the status of participants from non-EU, Associated or Third Countries?](#)"

25. My company is located in a non-associated country but my sister/parent company is based in an associated country, can I apply for the EIC Accelerator?

The sister/parent company based in the associated country is eligible to apply itself. Activities run in other countries are not taken into account to check your eligibility. Alternatively the company based in the non-associated country may submit the short proposal but must prove its effective legal establishment in the associated country at the time of submission of the full proposal. Specific conditions and milestones may be set in the contract to ensure that the interest of the Union is met.

26. What happens if my company loses SME status during the implementation of an EIC Accelerator project?

The consequences of losing the SME status during the implementation of the grant component will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking in consideration, in particular, the causes for losing the SME status. A change to the ownership situation of the beneficiary that calls into question the decision to award the grant may constitute a ground for terminating the contract.

27. What are the differences between the Grant first and Transition in terms of state of project, e.g. definition of the risks, the commercial objectives, the market strategy and necessary finances needed?

Transition activities help all types of researchers and innovators develop the pathway to commercial development in the Union, such as demonstration activities and feasibility studies to assess potential business cases, and support the creation of spin offs and start-ups. Transition activities are open to projects and/or results stemming from the EIC Pathfinder, FET, and ERC Proof of Concept and such results are typically at TRL 3-4. At the end of a Transition project, the technology should have matured to TRL 5/6 and the business case should be sufficiently advanced for the applicant to be ready for the next stage, which can be to apply for EIC Accelerator.

Applicants selected under the EIC Accelerator may be awarded grant first support with the investment component of blended finance introduced at a later stage. This is the case when the innovation is at least TRL 5/6 but is based on a scientific discovery or novel technology and still requires significant work to validate and demonstrate in relevant environments in order to properly assess its commercial potential. Such innovations may include, but are not limited to, those based on research results from the EIC Pathfinder and Transition, as well as European Research Council. Grant-first companies are eligible for a follow on equity component subject to a milestone assessment attesting that the innovation activities are well under way and that the innovation has the potential for deployment.

28. My company received a GO on its short proposal, how much time do we have in order to submit the full proposal?

Once you receive a GO for your short proposal, you will have access to the full application module. You will be able to build your full proposal and may submit it to any of the cut-off dates within 12 months of receiving the evaluation result.

Please note that if your short proposal is successful then you will be entitled to receive coaching support to prepare a full proposal.

29. What are the limits to submit and re-submit a full EIC Accelerator proposal?

You will have 12 months from the date of notification of a GO on your short proposal to prepare and submit a full proposal. If you have submitted a full proposal within these 12 months but received a NO GO, you may resubmit your full proposal at a subsequent cut-off within 12 months from the date of the submission of the first full proposal. If your first full proposal submission was made to a cut-off in 2021 or 2022, you may resubmit to any of the cut-offs in 2023.

If your proposal is rejected a second time, you will not be allowed to submit another proposal for 12 months, starting from the date of submission of your revised full proposal, at which point you may only submit a new or significantly improved proposal to the short application stage.

30. At what stage should the applicant define the type of funding (blended, grant only, grant first) to apply for?

For short proposals, applicants will be invited to fill a questionnaire on the EIC AI-based IT platform illustrating their innovation and submit a 10-slide presentation and a 3-minute video pitch. Applicants will also have to estimate the costs required to develop their idea, in the form of grant or investment, and they will have to demonstrate the need for EU support. Please note that at this step, the amounts are indicative and non-binding.

The full proposal consists of a detailed business plan and full information on the company's finances and structure. Applicants will also need to propose a set of milestones to be used as a basis for the EIC to manage the funding for their innovation. Applicants are requested to define at this stage the type of funding (Blended (Grant and investment or investment only), grant only, grant first, ) they are applying for and provide a detailed budget.

31. Can I change funding request between the short and full proposal?

You may adjust the EIC funding request when submitting your full proposal because the short proposal only requires to indicate an estimate while the full proposal should demonstrate your complete business plan and financial needs.

32. Can the jury recommend a different type of funding than the one I applied for (blended, grant first, grant only) after the interview?

If your proposal is invited to interview, the Jury may propose to change the type of funding offered (e.g. blended finance proposal to "grant first"; "grant only" to blended finance, etc) where they see fit. For blended finance proposals, the recommendation from the due diligence on the investment component may also be to convert to "grant first".

33. What does the Jury expect to see when I was a "potential GO" in a previous interview round and I am invited directly back to interview? Do I have to improve both, the full proposal or/and the pitch deck?

At that stage, there are 2 options.

- Jury member can give a NO-GO with a resubmission at Step 2. If this is the case, then an applicant may resubmit directly to the remote evaluation of the full proposal at a subsequent cut-off within 12 months from the date of the submission of the first full proposal, but will be expected to have made improvements. In addition, they will have the opportunity to address comments/recommendation by the jury in the first interview in 10.000 characters + will have 5000 characters to present the improvements that have been made.
- Jury member can give a NO-GO with "direct resubmission" recommendation, meaning that the applicant will not resubmit its full proposal but will be invited directly at one of the next face to face interviews. They don't have to (and can't) update their full proposal (the first one that have already received a GO at remote evaluation) but will have the possibility to upload a new pitch deck and to provide comments to address the first juries' assessment/recommendations. Such a resubmission direct to the face to face interviews will only be permitted once.

34. When shall we expect to see the use of reimbursable advance, guarantees, and convertible loans? Will these be used for ongoing projects?

Reimbursable advances and other financial instruments may be developed in future but are not yet available. Information will be provided on the EIC website or future EIC work programmes.

35. What kind of risks need to be linked to my innovation to be relevant for the EIC Accelerator? Is it strictly development risks or also risks linked to the go-to market strategy?

Various typologies of risks are covered during the evaluation, including technology, regulatory and implementation/market risks. The experts will assess the considerations given to the management and mitigation of these risks.

36. What happens if there are major changes in the course of the application process - for example, that we gain a VC as an investor? How is this reflected in the application process and the evaluation?

Any significant information which changed between the submission of the full application and the interview should be highlighted to the jury during the interview and will be assessed accordingly by the jury. Any major change after the outcome of the interview should be taken into account during the negotiation process to structure the potential investment agreement during compliance checks, due diligence, syndication of potential co-investors, tranches of investment and related objectives and milestones, etc.

37. What is expected to be found in "post TRL 9 activities" within the grant domain? If you are using TRL and BRL scales together why you are not using BRL scales to describe WPs?

In line with the approach followed by the EIC Accelerator, all projects need to describe market activities even when they are not supported by the grant component. Projects requesting grant only support also need to describe market activities, and to indicate which are the other sources, other than the EIC, that they can use to finance their market activities.

Depending on their nature, costs for TRL9 onwards can be estimated either in the TRL9 work packages within the Development part of the Design Module, or in exploitation costs within the Go To Market part of the Design Module. For instance, all costs related to the development of a product, service or process can be included in TRL9 work packages within Development part of the Design Module.

However please note that the grant component only reimburses costs related to activities below TRL 9. According to the design of the AI platform and in line with EIC requirements, it is necessary to have at least:

- One work package for technology development, one work package for market activities and one work package for management to develop your innovation activities.
- One work package for market activities and one for management to develop your market/scale-up activities (TRL 9).

38. What are milestones and why are Work Packages linked to TRL milestones and not to BRL ones?



Milestones are checkpoints produced at a specific point in a task while deliverables are tasks results such as reports, studies, tests, etc. While milestones can sometimes correspond to the completion of a deliverable, the two are not necessarily linked. It is not necessary to have a milestone for every deliverable. However, the most important deliverables can be good indications of where you want to place milestones.

These milestones are mandatory and correspond to the achievement of TRL levels during the project. So in short, work packages are linked to TRLs in order to be consistent with the difference between Grant component (which can support activities up to TRL 8) and Equity component which can support activities in TRL 9.

39. The technical development of my project is very long and it will take more than 24 months to reach TRL 8. Can I use the investment to finance the innovation activities beyond month 24?

The duration of the grant component will be set to align with the indicated duration of the Work Package related to TRL5-8 activities, even if it is more than 24 months. Nevertheless, as there are no restrictions to the use of the investment component and you can use the investment component to complement the funding needed for the innovation activities.

40. On the EIC AI platform, what is the difference between "existing technology", "needed technology" and "technology to be developed"?

"Existing technologies" are technologies that already exist and that applicants can use to carry out the project. "Needed technologies" are the ones where you need to advance your own knowledge in order to continue the project and finally "Technologies to be developed" addresses the technological gap in the project's technology which the project requires to deliver the solution. These definitions are also described on the AI tool platform.

41. What exactly are exploitation revenues?

Exploitation revenues can include different types of revenues (sales, licensing, contracts, etc), to be identified for each company. This issue may be discussed with coaches.

42. Do I have to indicate final deliverables in Work Packages or does each task need to have a deliverable?

Each Work Package should include at least one deliverable. Where a Work Package includes several tasks, there should not be more than one deliverable per task.

43. Why is the market penetration strategy requested for all the states of the market?

Applicants should fill only the steps that are relevant to their project, and therefore the market penetration strategy should focus on the market to be addressed by the innovation.

44. Is BRL (Business Readiness Level) the same as MRL (Market Readiness Level) and what are the existing levels? Which TRL (Technology Readiness Level) exist?

BRL and MRL Levels are the same, and may be linked with TRL levels:

BRL 1: Basic research: You can describe the need(s) but have no evidence

BRL 2: Needs formulation: You articulate the need(s) using a customer/user story

BRL 3: Needs validation: You have an initial 'offering', stakeholders like your slideware

BRL 4: Small scale stakeholder campaign: Run a campaign with stakeholders ('closed' beta - a number of friendly stakeholders that is relevant according to specificities of your market)

BRL 5: Large scale early adopter campaign: Run a campaign with early adopters ('open' beta - a number of intended customers that is relevant according to specificities of your market)

BRL 6: Proof of traction: Sales match a number of paying customers that is relevant according to specificities of your market

BRL 7: Proof of satisfaction: A happy team and happy customers give evidence to progress

BRL 8: Proof of scalability: A stable sales pipeline and strong understanding of the market allow revenue projections

BRL 9: Proof of stability: KPIs surpassed and predictable growth

TRL levels:

TRL 1: Basic Research: Basic principles observed

TRL 2: Technology Formulation: Technology concept formulated

TRL 3: Needs Validation: Experimental proof of concept

TRL 4: Small Scale Prototype: Technology validated in lab

TRL 5: Large Scale Prototype: Technology validated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)

TRL 6: Prototype System: Technology demonstrated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)

TRL 7: Demonstration System: System prototype demonstration in operational environment

TRL 8: First Of A Kind Commercial System: System complete and qualified

TRL 9: Full Commercial Application: Actual system proven in operational environment (competitive manufacturing in the case of key enabling technologies; or in space)

45. How should the value chain be specifically defined?

In the AI tool, the value chain specified using "cards" which can be analysed from the perspective of being before and after the solution is provided. You should ensure consistency between the stakeholders involved in the value chain, and the information you put in the card of the stakeholder.

Please see the indications on the AI platform: Please upload your FTO (Freedom To Operate) if you have one. If you do not have one, please upload a note of up to 2 pages explaining the reasons and provide as much information as possible on this issue. In cases where the FTO is not relevant (e.g. software), please upload a simple statement.

46. Where will it be possible to insert the graphs and pictures? In the form of the AI platform or only in the pitch deck? Is there a limit to the number of slides?

In the full proposal, applicants provide data into different fields. Out of the data, the AI Tool builds a business plan. In other words, applicants do not need to provide a form B in pdf (as it was the case in Horizon 2020): the AI platform simply collects all their data and inputs via a step-by-step methodology.

In addition, applicants will be able to upload the following documents in their Business Plan:

- Pitch deck (mandatory)- no maximum number of slides but the pitch deck will be used in the interview should you be invited to the jury and must be presented in maximum 10 minutes.
- maximum 10 pages in an Annex with any additional information you'd like to add (optional)

You can also insert url links anywhere in your proposal. However, all the essential information about your project must be in the platform and not referred to any external material via urls. Be also aware that evaluators are under no obligation to read any additional information referred to in urls.

47. Is it mandatory to include a data management plan in a full application to the EIC Accelerator? What other documents in the Go to Market section should be uploaded? What needs to be uploaded in Freedom to Operate?

For the Accelerator applications, applicants are not required to present a full Data Management Plan at the application stage. Rather, it is expected that applicants upload at least a one-page document in which they take into account the need to develop such a Plan as part of their project implementation (and for which associated costs are eligible) and to demonstrate an awareness of the relevant considerations for their project. Consequently, applicants should already think about it at the application stage (and take note that the rules concerning data management plans are different compared to Horizon 2020).

Applicants are required to upload the following documents in the following sections of Go to Market:

- Results of the FTO analysis: Go to Market/Prepare/Intellectual Property. Please upload your FTO if you have one. If you do not have one, please upload a note of up to 2 pages explaining why and providing as much information as possible on this issue. In cases where the FTO is not relevant (e.g. software), please upload a simple statement.
- Data management plan: Go to Market/Prepare/Intellectual Property. Please upload your Data Management Plan if you have one, or a one pager providing your thoughts on the underlying issues (open access to data, access of public authorities in case of emergencies) and your guiding principles as to how you would tackle these where needed.
- Financial Information: Go to Market/Prepare/Finance. Please use the financial information template provided in this section with your information
- Letters of intent (if any- this is optional): Go to Market/Scale/Scaling strategy.

48. Will my proposal be rejected if I submit for one of the Challenges instead of Open call, or will the EC simply moved it to the Open call?

The Commission will not move the proposals from one Call to another. The applicant has the responsibility to make the choice and take the decision to submit his/her proposal either to the EIC Accelerator Open call or to one of the EIC Accelerator Challenges.

Please take a close look at the sections in the Work Programme regarding the EIC Accelerator Challenge areas of strategic relevance in order to take the decision. The EIC Accelerator Challenges is open to innovations in the specific fields of technology or application described by the specific challenges in sections IV.2.1 and IV.2.2.

The proposal will not be declared out of scope if you submit your challenge-related proposal to the EIC Accelerator Open call however if you believe it fits better in the challenge call, it is recommended to select that option.

Also, please note that all of the evaluation criteria established for the EIC Accelerator Open call will apply. However, in addition, applications under the challenges will be evaluated against an additional criterion for 'Impact': "Does the proposed application have the potential to contribute to the specific objectives and achieve the expected impacts set out in the Challenge?"

In case the evaluators will not be convinced, they will score accordingly under this sub criterion.

49. At the end of the diagnostic tool on the AI platform, the company gets ratings in the fields of science, technology and team. Are the evaluators during the different evaluation steps able to access these results?

Yes, the expert evaluators at each step of the process will have access to the ratings. However, please keep in mind this information is not a score and is meant only as additional guidance and insights to assist the applicants in their application and for the experts in their assessment. Therefore, the ultimate responsibility of the information contained in the application remains with the applicant. Experts may use the information to support their assessment, but ultimately the experts' decision is their own responsibility and should be based on their knowledge and expertise.

50. To what extent will results generated by the AI Platform affect the evaluation?

The AI-based IT Platform will provide applicants with AI support to assess their concept/idea as they prepare their short application. If the short application is successful, the AI-based IT Platform will further provide AI & methodological support to help applicants develop their business plan in the full application. It is the applicant's decision how to respond to the feedback and support, and the applicant is fully responsible for the content and submission of the application.

The AI-based IT Platform will provide evaluators with data and insights about the proposed innovation. However, the evaluators are fully responsible for their evaluation of proposals against the criteria laid down in the Work Programme.

51. What is the procedure if I have received a NO-GO after my first short or full proposal but believe that one or more evaluators have wrongly assessed my proposal?

Because each applicant is entitled to submit a second time, the rebuttal system is now embedded in the resubmission process on the AI platform. The newly submitted proposal contains text fields which allow

the applicant to both respond to evaluator's feedback as well as summarize the changes made if applicable. The new set of evaluators will assess the changes and improvements made since the first submission and take into account any comments you may wish to respond to the feedback from the first evaluation.

52. What is the procedure if I have received a NO-GO after my second short proposal submission and believe that one or more evaluators have wrongly assessed my proposal?

If you receive a NO-GO for the second time on your short proposal, you have 5 working days to submit a complaint regarding your evaluation if the complaint is based on: 1) factual errors; 2) manifest error of appreciation regarding the purpose and scope of the Accelerator or 3) experts asked for details or documents that are deemed to be submitted at the full proposal stage only. The complaint form is available on the AI platform together with the evaluators' report. You will be able to submit a complaint to individual evaluator feedback which the EIC Evaluation team will carefully assess. In cases where within 5 working days the Agency finds that there is an error on one of the above grounds, it will be assessed again by the concerned expert(s) within 5 working days. If your proposal is re-evaluated as a GO, you will be eligible to introduce your full application to the same cut-off date that you would have been able to submit to, with a GO from the initial evaluation. Otherwise, your proposal will be definitively rejected, and you will only be able to resubmit in accordance with the resubmission rules.

53. I want to submit my full proposal but the platform is asking for a second PIC number, what can I do?

The issue you encountered was due to the fact that you marked your profile as either "investor" or "non EU/associated country" when you submitted your short proposal.

An investor or a non-EU/associated country applicant is able to submit a short proposal on behalf of an SME, but that SME must be established in the EU at the time of the full proposal and you will be asked to provide the PIC for the EU/Associated Country SME in order to submit the full proposal.

If you are not an investor or from a non-EU/associated country and marked this option by mistake in the short proposal, please contact the EIC support team to change your profile so you can submit your full proposal with your PIC.

54. I have submitted my full proposal but haven't received an acknowledgment of receipt, is it normal?

There are no formal email acknowledgement receipts of your full proposal. You should see the status as "submitted" in the EIC AI platform - Design Version.

55. What is the deadline for the submission of my full proposal?

The deadline for full proposal submission is 17:00:00 (CET) on the cut-off date published in the EIC Annual Work Programme. It is highly recommended to submit your proposal as early as possible and at least 48 hours before the deadline. This will avoid technical problems (system requirements, local configuration settings, system congestion, etc). In case of issues please contact [support@eic.eisma.eu](mailto:support@eic.eisma.eu).

56. I have submitted my proposal after the 17:00 CET deadline on the cut-off date, will I receive an error message or my proposal is saved for the following cut-off?

You will not receive an error message in response to your late proposal submission. Your proposal status will be listed as "submitted" and will be eligible to be evaluated under the following cut-off deadline. You will have the option to keep it in the submission system until the subsequent cut-off. Alternatively, you can withdraw the proposal, update it and then submit in time for the upcoming deadline. Withdrawing the proposal before receiving the evaluation result will not count toward the resubmission limit.

57. As a condition to be allocated a Seal of Excellence, applicants have to agree that some information of their proposal is shared. What information is shared and with whom?

Applicants who managed to reach the stage of submitting full proposals will be given a possibility to share specific project-related data:

- basic information about the proposal limited to the name, phone, email of the CEO or person in charge of managing innovation/company, proposal acronym, title, company's name (country, city), abstract, requested budget, evaluation result (GO/NO GO).

By selecting the option above, the applicants give 'consent' to share this information with National Contact Points (NCPs) of their Member State or Associated Country, Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) members, relevant public organisations from the EU, EU Member States and Horizon Europe associated countries (including regional innovation organisations, European Structural and Investment Funds managing authorities). These entities may assist SoE holders in receiving additional support at national level. In particular, the EEN has been contracted by the EIC to support SoE holders to obtain funding from private and/or public sources. (This service will be offered to a limited number of companies)

In case applicants choose not to share the above-mentioned data, the SoE will unfortunately not be granted.

The data will be made available subject to the fulfilment of confidentiality obligations agreed with the NCPs, EEN members and relevant authorities.

58. Applicants are asked to give consent at Step 1 (short application) so their data can be shared with other authorities. What information is shared and with whom?

National Contact Points, Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) Members and Knowledge Innovation Communities of the European Institute of Innovation and Technologies (EIT KICs) may be useful sources of information and support the preparation of full proposals. This is the reason why, the EIC gives the possibility for applicants to give consent i.e. to share specific data with them:

- basic information about the proposal limited to the name, phone, email of the CEO or person in charge of managing innovation/company, proposal acronym, title, company's name (country, city), abstract, requested budget, evaluation result (GO/NO GO).

The data will be made available subject to confidentiality obligations of the NCPs, KICs and EEN members.

59. What is the role of National Contact Points (NCPs) and Europe Enterprise Network (EEN) in application process? Will NCPs be informed about applicants selected from the short application stage?

NCPs role is among others to support applicants to prepare to the EIC calls. They have the latest information about EIC calls and can provide practical advice and support on how to apply. NCPs are appointed by each country. The EIC provides additional funding to NCPs in order to network, exchange best practice and build capabilities in particular in widening countries.

The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) has members in the EU and Associated Countries. It provides comprehensive information and support on different funding opportunities. For the EIC it complements the support provided by the NCPs, for example by proactively identifying and encouraging more companies to apply to the EIC Accelerator, in particular from widening countries and women led companies. In addition, the EEN will provide support to Seal of Excellence companies to find alternative sources of funding.

It is up to applicants to decide if they choose to receive services from NCPs and EEN members and they will be given such an option in the application tool (see other questions related to it)

60. Is there a complaint procedure after receiving NO GO on a resubmission of the full proposal?

There is no complaint procedure after a first NO GO. Nonetheless, you can resubmit and you are able to rebut comments from the first evaluators. If your proposal is a resubmission (meaning you have already received one NO GO), and two evaluators give a GO on all criteria and the other evaluator gives a GO on two of the criteria and a NO GO on the other criterion (hence you score 8 GOs), then your proposal will be evaluated by a fourth expert on that criterion. If the fourth expert gives a GO on this criterion you will be invited to interview, otherwise your proposal will be rejected. Applicants who receive a second NO GO will receive the means of redress in their official rejection letter.

61. When can I receive a Seal of Excellence?

After the interview, you will be notified of the outcome of the interview. If it was your second rejection at the interview (not counting direct resubmission), you will receive an official rejection letter and your Seal of Excellence (if the jury agrees and you have given consent). If it was your first submission at interview, you will receive your official rejection letter at the latest 12 months after your first submission. Alternatively, if you do not intend to resubmit and want to receive immediately your official Seal of Excellence, you may renounce to resubmit and request those documents upon receiving interview results.

## **D. EIC INVESTMENT**

62. What are the EIC Investment Partners? What is the role of the EIC Fund manager? And of the European Investment Bank (EIB)?

The EIC works with EIC Investment Partners for implementation and management of the investment component of EIC Accelerator blended finance.

In 2022, the EIC Investment Partner will be only the [EIC Fund](#) (transition phase). After 2022, the EIC may work with other Investment Partners in addition to the EIC Fund.

Within the mandate given by the Commission following the evaluation process by EISMEA, investment decisions (and their related conditions and management) are taken by the EIC Fund.

The EIC Fund is an alternative investment fund (AIF) for investing in companies selected by the EIC Accelerator. The European Commission will appoint an alternative investment fund manager (AIFM) to manage the EIC Fund.

The [European Investment Bank](#) (EIB) is investment adviser to the EIC Fund. The EIB and the EIC Fund manager are completely different and separate legal entities. The EIB provides advice and support to the EIC Fund, but does not make any investment decision. Within the mandate given by the Commission, the EIC Fund manager makes decisions on investments, their structure and terms, follow-on investments and divestments, in accordance with the EIC investment guidelines and having regard to the recommendations of the EIB as investment adviser.

On divestments, the EIC Fund invests patient capital, with a long average perspective on return on the investment. The EIC Fund's main objective is "impact investment" rather than maximizing return on the investment. The exit strategy for each company is to be set on a case-by-case basis. Exit routes may include IPOs, management buyouts, secondary sales or liquidations.

Investments made or to be made under Horizon 2020 EIC Pilot will be managed by the EIC Fund as well.

63. Why is the Commission restructuring the EIC Fund and the way Accelerator's investments are managed compared to the Horizon 2020 pilot phase?

The Commission needs to adapt the structure and management of the EIC Fund to the Horizon Europe regulation, and also to draw the lessons from the pilot phase (2019-2020) in order to make the Fund sustainable for the number and amounts of investments expected in the period 2021 -27

In September 2022, the Commission completed a restructuring of the EIC Fund with the appointment of an external fund manager.. Within the mandate given by the Commission following the evaluation process, investment decisions (and their related conditions and management) are implemented by the EIC Fund. The Commission plans to entrust tasks related to the implementation and management of the investment component of the EIC Accelerator to an implementing partner during 2023.

64. What are the implications of the restructuring of the EIC Fund for the EIC Accelerator applicants?

The restructuring of the EIC Accelerator investment process will not have any impact on funding offered by the EIC or the selection process. The European Innovation Council and SME Executive Agency (EISMEA) will continue conducting the evaluation and selection of proposals and the EIB will continue its role in implementing due diligence as investment adviser. The EIC Investment Guidelines will provide information on the investment strategy. This builds on the first positive experiences from the 141 investments approved by the EIC Fund since September 2020.

EISMEA will continue coordinating the grant and the equity components and will ensure close cooperation between the various partners to ensure rapid decision making processes in line with market timeframes.

65. Why are the EIC Accelerator blended finance projects from 2021 facing delays; will there be further delays in 2023?

Blended finance projects selected following the cut-offs in 2021 faced delays while the implementation arrangements for the investment component for the fully-fledged EIC under Horizon Europe were being put in place.

Backlogs are being overcome and the EIC Fund is expected to be ready to process investment decisions for companies selected under the 2023 cut-offs without delays.

Cut-off dates:



- 11 January 2023
- 22 March 2023
- 7 June 2023
- 4 October 2023

In addition, the time to grant has rapidly improved during 2022 towards the 5 month KPI set by the EIC Board (defined as time from date of full application to date of grant signature, including the evaluation process).

66. Which will be the EIC investment guidelines applicable to selected proposals in 2023?

The applicable EIC investment guidelines were published on the EIC website on 1 March 2022 subject to approval by the EIC Fund Board.

It is not expected that the final investment guidelines will significantly differ from the published version. The final version will mainly reflect the restructuring of the EIC Fund.

67. What are the investment scenarios?

The EIC investment guidelines provide details on investment scenarios.

Following an initial assessment implying some level of due diligence, including 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) compliance checks (led by the EIC Fund<sup>1</sup>), the EIB, as investment advisor, will categorise the transactions into investment scenarios or "buckets". Investment scenarios are based on companies' investment maturity and their ability to attract co-investments. The EIC investment will be structured according to the investment scenarios.

In some exceptional cases, the EIC Fund may recommend the Agency to reject an investment when initial assessment or due diligence, at any stage, reports substantial negative issues in accordance with the EIC investment guidelines.

68. What forms of investment does the EIC Fund use?

The investment component is tailored based on the assessed investment scenario and may take different forms. It may consist of convertible instruments (i.e. loans/bonds/notes and other similar instruments such as participation rights and simple agreements for future equity (SAFE), a combination of such quasi-equity instruments and direct equity, or direct equity, initially covering seed-stage up to growth equity rounds.

The EIC Fund may use convertible instruments and combination of quasi-equity instruments in cases that are not sufficiently mature for regular investors (not investor ready), due to remaining very high risk despite the awarded EIC Accelerator support.

The EIC Fund may use direct equity in cases where potential investors show immediate interest in co-investing into EIC selected companies. The EIC Fund will seek that the equity investment is at least matched

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<sup>1</sup> Compliance and some due diligence checks would be performed by the EIC Fund based on standard compliance rules, related among others to KYC (Know Your Customer), anti-money laundering (AML), anti-terrorism financing, tax-avoidance, non-compliant/non-cooperative jurisdictions (NCJ) and sanctions. Compliance and KYC checks will be performed prior to the initial investment, as well as prior to possible follow on investments. They will be extended to shareholders and their ultimate beneficial owners (UBO).

by these other potential, qualified investors (i.e. which will cover at least 50% of the round), having an objective of 1:3 leverage for the full EIC investment cycle.

69. Which types of previous “grant-only” support received by companies would allow these companies to request “equity-only” support from the EIC Accelerator?

Non-bankable SMEs, including start-ups, which have already received grant-only support under the Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator, grant-only support under the Horizon 2020 EIC Pilot and grant-only support under the Horizon 2020 SME Instrument can request equity-only support.

70. Which are the “exceptional cases” under which small mid-caps could request blended finance support from the EIC Accelerator?

Small mid-caps should be mostly focussing on market deployment but still fine-tuning limited innovation activities at TRL8 level which require a grant component. The company is expected to show or reach rapid scale up, which means that it has the potential in the medium term to increase its valuation to unicorn status (over €1 billion) or can demonstrate a growth rate greater than 20% per annum either by the number of employees or by turnover in the previous or following years. It is expected that the company should be raising a minimum equity funding round of EUR 30 million with a committed lead investor that the EIC Fund can catalyse on an indicative basis of at least 1:2 (i.e. for any 1 EUR invested by the EIC Fund at least 2 EUR would be invested by other investors).

71. What would happen with the low investment readiness companies?

The EIC Fund may either invest with quasi-equity or a combination of quasi-equity and equity, or may propose to the European Commission to revert to a “grant first” support to cover up to 70% of total eligible costs of the pre-TRL9 activities, and recommend milestones that once reached, may attract co-investors and hence trigger the investment component initially awarded by the Commission.

72. What is a ‘qualified investor’?

The EIC investment guidelines provide a definition of ‘qualified investor’.

It could be generally defined as an investor that has the capacity to validate the market and technology prospects of the prospective investee company, and concludes the investment with market compliant terms and conditions. In addition the qualified investor shall have full alignment of interest with the EIC Fund, and shall not have other motives driving the investment decision. Qualified investors may vary on case-by-case basis, and for each case the qualification is subject to assessment by the Investment Partners.

73. Under which conditions can companies request EIC Investments higher than EUR 15 million?

A more than EUR 15 million investment request is allowed in duly justified cases for proposals in technologies that are strategic for the Union, where there is a global competition and where the funding needs significantly exceed what is available in Europe, even for early stage of technology development.

There is no explicit list of strategic technologies and applicants can propose innovations they consider strategic, with a justification included in their application.

The areas included in the Accelerator challenges on “semiconductor or quantum technology components” and “innovative space technologies and services” would normally be considered as strategic. Other relevant

examples include those identified under EU industry policy, such as Advanced Materials, Advanced Manufacturing, Artificial Intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, Big Data, Blockchain, cloud technologies, connectivity, Industrial Biotechnology, Internet of Things, Micro- and Nanoelectronics, Mobility, Nanotechnology, Photonics, Robotics, and IT for Security/Cybersecurity. (<https://ati.ec.europa.eu/>). Other areas such as critical raw materials, batteries, green hydrogen, cloud and edge technologies, zero emission aircraft, RNA and cancer vaccines could also be considered as relevant. This list of potential examples is neither exhaustive, nor are the examples definitive confirmations that the respective sectors will be considered as strategic at the time when a given proposal is examined – this depends on the specificities of the proposal and on the developments in the respective sectors.

Requests for over 15 million euro will not normally be accepted for investments which are standard in the sector, for example late stage clinical trials in the pharmaceutical sector, except where the intervention assessed is considered of key strategic value (e.g. is considered by EMA for accelerated review or PRIME designation). The assessment of global competition and availability of funding needs in Europe will be made on a case by case basis during the evaluation and due diligence process, i.e. the fact that a proposal relates to a strategic sector is a necessary but in no way a sufficient condition for it to be considered for this exceptional investment. To note that the EIC juries or the due diligence process may lead to recommendation for a lower investment amount if the request for an investment over 15 million euro is not sufficiently justified. Applicants should also be aware that in a pilot phase in 2022, the total budget for investments above 15 million euro is limited to 15 percent of the total budget for the EIC accelerator. Once this limit is reached, the maximum investments will be 15 million euro (for the duration of 2022). Proposals will be submitted to the EIC/EIE programme Committee for opinion.

#### 74. What are the advantages of submission to the Accelerator Challenges vs Accelerator Open?

The 2023 EIC Work Programme includes more focused Accelerator challenges, which target startups and SMEs with potential breakthrough innovations in strategic areas for Europe.

If your innovation fits within one of the 7 challenges it is recommended that you apply for the relevant challenge (to note, you do this at full proposal stage, and not for the short applications). The 7 challenges are fully described in the 2023 Work Programme in terms of specific topics, technologies and expected impact.

Proposals submitted to these challenges have a pre-allocated budget (as specified in the work programme) and will be evaluated by dedicated independent experts. If your project is selected, it will be part of a thematic portfolio, and the corresponding Programme Manager(s) will support you and the other projects of the portfolio to scale up and address common barriers. You may also request equity investments above EUR 15 million in duly justified cases as set out in the Work Programme.

#### 75. Can a 'grant-only' supported company from the EIC pilot (funded from Horizon 2020) apply for an equity follow-up? If so, how shall it apply; by means of a full application or with a different type of request?

Grant-only beneficiaries under the EIC Accelerator pilot in Horizon 2020 can apply for an investment component follow-up in Horizon Europe. To do so, eligible applicants will have to submit a new proposal via the short application stage of the evaluation procedure for the EIC Accelerator. (see next question for more details)

Companies awarded a grant under the EIC pilot Accelerator in Horizon 2020 managed by the Agency can also benefit from the Fast Track scheme to the EIC Accelerator (see section on Fast Track scheme below). Please keep in mind that for previous beneficiaries of a grant, the Fast Track scheme cannot be used to request grant-only support. Eligible projects can contact their project officers for further information.

76. To what extent is an investor located in a country that is not an EU Member State or an Associated Country able to invest in an EIC supported SME? How and when will the company have to give its prior agreement? Would the investor be eligible to accompany the SME in the interview?

There are no excluded investors by geography *a priori*. However, the EIC is an initiative of the EU and where relevant, considerations will take into account EU technology sovereignty. When implementing investments approved by the Agency, 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. The Agency may set specific conditions and milestones in the contract to ensure that the interest of the Union is met.

Before submitting the full application, applicant companies will need to give consent to share necessary information with the EIC Fund. Applicant companies will also be offered the opportunity to share certain data and information with investors who have undergone a prior EIC due diligence process and who may wish to invest in the company or project and assist the company in developing its idea into a business plan.

For applications for blended finance (including an investment component), the EIC Fund will start the negotiation process to structure the potential investment agreement. During this stage, the EIC Fund or the Agency will also look for other investors. The company will be asked for its consent before other investors are contacted or engaged in negotiations.

Companies are allowed to send a maximum of three representatives to the interview. More details on this respect will be communicated at a later stage.

Existing investors or investors that submitted a proposal on behalf of an applicant that is subsequently invited to the interview, are also eligible to attend the interview among the three representatives of the company. Investors are expected to explain how they are supporting and/or intend to support the company if it is retained for the EIC support.

77. Why is the technological due diligence performed?

In order to prepare an informed and tailor-made investment recommendation, the EIB performs the commercial and financial due diligence while the EIC performs the technological due diligence.

The purpose of the technological due diligence is not to re-assess the project, but to complement the evaluation process and dig in depth specifically on the technology (protection, validity, "investibility") and its potential market (landscape, competition, positioning), beyond the information initially provided and the statements made by the company in the proposal.

The technological due diligence contributes to better-informed investment decisions paving the way for other investors to invest alongside the EIC Fund, the largest deep-tech investor in Europe. The outcome should also help the EIC and the founders to take a critical looking at the proposed technological and commercial milestones, and to structure the investment accordingly.

78. How is the technological due diligence prepared?

The EIC selects the most qualified expert from the pool of EIC evaluators already involved in the selection of the concerned proposal, or from the wider European Commission experts' database, to lead the research and draft a 5-10 pages report in 3 weeks' time.

The report is based on the strong technical background and the proven expertise of the selected expert that may challenge the claims of the company, contact the company to collect further information and eventually its clients and network. The expert may also consult any other relevant sources of information.

In order to protect the activities and interests of the company, the expert signs the standard Horizon Europe expert contract template, including a strong impartiality and confidentiality clause and conflict of interest.

**79.** When is the technological due diligence performed?

The technological due diligence exercise is launched after the selection of the projects and the publication of the results of the call.

The company is informed about this step in the invitation to the negotiation letter and beforehand via the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines.

The technological due diligence is performed during the negotiation phase and therefore does not slow down the process since it runs in parallel with other regular checks.

## **E. EIC COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS ACCELERATION SERVICES**

**80.** How are coaches selected? Can we suggest coaches/ cooperate with coaches we worked with in the past?

Coaches will be vetted to appear on a list selectable for coaches. They must meet essential experience criteria that will be published in the new Call for Expression of Interest for EIC Coaches

The process to find and select a coach will be by:

- creating a shortlist of possible matches through individual selection criteria
- inviting them, explaining the main business challenge and including project information
- have 'chemistry' calls with those who responded to be available and interested, to make a final choice.

81. I am an EIC Accelerator applicant invited to submit the full proposal; what support will I get from coaches? Can they support us in proposal writing as well? Is it compulsory for an applicant to use coaching support to build up a proposal?

An EIC business coach – in face-to-face online setting - will mainly question your aspirations and challenge your assumptions. Our coaches will let you discover improvement opportunities and they have the task to let you learn and solve business development issues. Topics can cover the whole entrepreneurial venture, depending on your needs, from challenging the value proposition and business model, improving the strategy and investor business case, building the team, the leadership and processes, up to international expansion. The coaching support we offer is not compulsory to build a proposal, just strongly recommended. You will always remain fully responsible yourself for the content of your proposal. EIC coaching assignments cannot be instrumental for proposal writing or other consultancy activities.

82. How can I benefit from coaching? Are there any selection criteria to participate?

The business development coaching is available for various EIC target groups and will be tailor made to deliver the desired outcome:

- For Accelerator applicants (full application stage) and Seal-of-Excellence teams, your objective may be to improve the value proposition and investor pitch.
- For Pathfinder researchers your objective may be to discover innovation opportunities and to provide insight in your entrepreneurship potential.
- For Transition teams your objective may be to get to know the industry and to create a value proposition.
- For Accelerator start-ups and scale-ups, your objective may be to improve your business plan, the strategy implementation and a faster market entry.
- In the Women Leadership Programme additional WLP Coaching is offered to help you tackle potential glass ceiling issues.

For Accelerator applicants and Seal-of-Excellence teams, three days of coaching are offered. For all further beneficiaries the starting offer of three coaching days may be extended on the recommendation of project officers and programme managers.

You will all receive an invitation to select a coach, as soon as you become eligible to the service.

Business Acceleration Services are tailored as much as possible to the EIC beneficiaries' needs and aim to guarantee the best match possible with relevant business partners. This is why most offered EIC services will have a certain selection process based on specific criteria relevant to the specific event or service. If this is the case, the criteria and the selection process are announced in the event publication and/or the registration website. If there are no selection criteria, the event may also be based on a 'first come first serve' basis or an unlimited attendance approach. Please check out any details in this regard in the event

publication (in the [EIC Community](#)). Please note as well that even if your grant or EIC funding is contractually finished you are still eligible and invited to apply to the EIC BAS services.

83. When can I use the three days of coaching if I receive a GO on my EIC Accelerator short proposal?

You are entitled to three days of coaching to be used whenever you need them. You are only entitled to the coaching services once. Therefore, you may choose to use them directly after the short proposal to prepare your full proposal for the first time. You may also choose to apply for the full proposal without using a coach and should you be rejected, you can use the coach to prepare your resubmission.

84. Do I have to pay for the Business Acceleration Services? Which are the eligible costs?

Business Acceleration Services form an integral part of the EIC programmes and are offered for free (in-kind) to eligible EIC funded projects and companies, Seal of Excellence as well as to innovators and companies coming from other European or national initiatives that have entered into a specific agreement with the EIC. Nevertheless, if the event or service requires travel or accommodation those are to be taken care of by the attendee. For the EIC funded companies and projects, there are possibilities to claim those costs under your current grant, please contact your project officer in this regard.

85. How can I get access to other BAS services (access to expertise, trainings, matching, community events, services provided by EIC partners)?

EIC BAS Global Offer is presented and available via the [EIC Community](#). You will find there an event/service agenda and information relevant to application/expression of interest to participate in each individual BAS service. Access to some services like specific expertise and advice is triggered through the project review process or programme manager.

86. How can I access the EIC Community and what does it provide?

The [EIC Community Platform](#) is an exclusive, virtual business platform, where EIC innovators can connect and leverage potential business partnerships. It gathers all innovative companies and innovators funded under the European Innovation Council covering the EIC Accelerator, EIC Transition, EIC Pathfinder and Women TechEU programs, as well as coaches, national contact points, corporates, investors, procurers, staff of the EIC ...and many more.

If you are...

→ an EIC beneficiary (Accelerator, Pathfinder, Transition, Women TechEU), access a one-stop-shop to:

- Register to EIC Business Acceleration Services, such as the EIC Corporate Programme, EIC Investor Programme, EIC Procurers Programme, EIC Community Talks & Trainings;
- Get access to your event group for photos and videos or background information;
- Create a personal and company profile;
- Use the powerful search engine to find like minded companies;

- Explore business opportunities among EIC peers;
- Get exclusive access to [ScaleUp EU](#), our matching platform with investors;
- Expand networks with EIC ecosystem partners;
- Share your experience and get support from peers via horizontal and thematic groups;
- Co-create ideas and knowledge;
- Promote interesting other events to the EIC Community;

*To have access to these sections, you will be requested to log in using your EU Login username and password. If you do not have one, you can create your [EU Login here](#). If you are funded by the European Innovation Council, it may be that your user profile has been already automatically registered. In this case, just log in with EU Login username and password and you are already in!*

- not part of the internal EIC Network yet? Access the public side of the EIC Community Platform and find:
- The most relevant news, success stories, open calls and events promoted by the Business Acceleration Services are available outside the platform;
  - Sharing options: spread the great news with your network: you can do it directly on your digital page.

## **F. GENERAL CONDITIONS AND ELIGIBILITY**

87. Under EIC calls, should projects reflect the medium-term objective to achieve a balanced portfolio across geographical regions referred to in the Work Programme?

No. In line with the Horizon Europe legal base, there are no geographical criteria or quotas used by the EIC in selecting projects and companies for funding. The evaluation criteria are specified in the relevant call texts. At the same time the EIC would like to encourage high quality applications from all EU countries and associated countries and works with the National Contact Points, the Enterprise Europe Networks and



others to promote EIC funding opportunities across all regions and that potential applicants have support available.

88. Can I apply for several EIC calls at the same time? Can I apply for both Open and Challenges?

You may apply to several EIC calls at the same time as long as the same costs are not financed twice by the EU or national budget.

- If you decide to apply to both Pathfinder Open and Challenge calls, please make sure to adapt your proposals in line with the different objectives and evaluation criteria of the relevant call.
- For Transition, given the fact the EIC Transition Open and Challenge calls are opening at the same time, we strongly discourage to submit the same proposal to both calls.
- For the EIC Accelerator, you can only apply to one call at a time and must choose between the Open and the Challenges. You may apply to another EIC Accelerator call once you have received the evaluation results of the first submission.

89. Can I apply for EIC funding if I have an ongoing grant from the EIC pilot (or another Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe grant)?

You can apply for EIC funding if you have an ongoing grant as long as the same costs are not financed twice by the EU or national budget.

- For Pathfinder, please make sure that you explain in your proposal how your ongoing other grant(s) relate to your current application.
- For Transition, please make sure to fulfil the eligibility conditions described in the Work Programme (e.g. applications should be based on results generated by eligible projects specified in the Work Programme).
- For the EIC Accelerator you cannot apply for funding if you have an ongoing EIC Accelerator/EIC Pilot/SME Instrument project. Exceptionally, if you have an ongoing grant-only project, you can apply for an investment only component under the EIC Accelerator.

90. How do I know which countries are associated to the EIC? Can I apply if I am based in a third country, which is not associated?

A list of countries associated to Horizon Europe is available on the Funding and Tenders portal. In addition, legal entities based in a third country which is officially candidate for association to Horizon Europe is eligible; however, the signature of any grant agreement with such entity will be subject to the positive conclusion of the association negotiation, including to Horizon Europe's third pillar. Such a negotiation result will be made public on the Commission's dedicated Horizon Europe website.

A legal entity based in a third country which is not candidate for association to Horizon Europe can apply as part of a consortia in which the minimum number of EU or Associated Country partners are present. This applies to EIC Pathfinder and Transition calls which are open for consortia.

A legal entity based in a third country which is not candidate for association to Horizon Europe can apply at the short application stage for the EIC Accelerator but must relocate or establish an eligible company in an EU Member State or Associated Country before receiving any support.

91. Is guidance available to prevent foreign interference in projects supported by the EIC?

Foreign interference occurs when activities are carried out by, or on behalf of, a foreign state-level actor, which are coercive, covert, deceptive, or corrupting and are contrary to the sovereignty, values, and interests of the European Union (EU).

The EU is a front-runner of international openness in R&I, at the same time, international cooperation can involve risks and challenges that must be taken into account. To support R&I actors in mitigating such risks, the Commission has published a toolkit for tackling foreign interference in R&I\*. Applicants are strongly recommended to familiarise themselves with this publication and to consider its relevance for the proposals they intend to submit.

\* European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Tackling R&I foreign interference: staff working document, 2022*, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/513746>

92. Can entities in the UK apply for EIC funding?

UK entities may apply to calls of the EIC funded by grants, including the Pathfinder scheme, Transition activities, and the grant only part of the EIC Accelerator. However, UK entities will only be eligible for funding (and to meet the minimum requirements for eligible partners within consortia) if the Horizon Europe association agreement with the UK applies at the time of signature of the grant agreement. Further guidance for UK applicants is available at:

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research\\_and\\_innovation/strategy\\_on\\_research\\_and\\_innovation/documents/ec\\_rtd\\_uk-participation-in-horizon-europe.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research_and_innovation/strategy_on_research_and_innovation/documents/ec_rtd_uk-participation-in-horizon-europe.pdf)

For the EIC Accelerator, this means that UK start-ups and SMEs will be able to apply for the calls, but solely to request a “grant-only” support. UK entities will not be eligible to apply for “blended finance” (which combines a grant with an investment component) and UK entities already awarded a “grant-only” support will not be eligible for follow up equity investments from the EIC.

UK entities may apply for all forms of EIC Accelerator funding at Step 1 (short applications) but will need to relocate to an EU Member State or eligible Associated Country by the time of submitting a full application for support (other than “grant only”).

UK entities that win EIC funding will also be eligible to receive Business Acceleration Services (coaching, mentoring, events, etc.), except these relating to access to investors.

## **G. FAST TRACK SCHEME AND PILOT PLUG-IN SCHEME TO APPLY FOR THE EIC ACCELERATOR**

93. How can I apply for the Fast Track scheme? When will it be available and for which programmes?

Under the Fast Track scheme (Annex 3 to the EIC Work Programme), applicants do not apply directly to the EIC Accelerator call. Instead, the eligible funding bodies and schemes identified in the Work Programme decide whether an existing project is suitable for support under the EIC Accelerator based on a project review to assess the innovation and market deployment potential of such project.

Since its official launch in 2021, the Fast Track is being implemented by a number of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and further information can be found on their websites. Furthermore, the Fast Track is also being implemented for EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition projects (including under EIC pilot) managed by the Agency. Eligible projects can contact their project officers for further information.

In 2023, the EIC Work Programme also identifies, as eligible funding bodies and schemes for the Fast Track:

- 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 supported by the WomenTech.EU programme managed by the Agency;
- Companies awarded a grant under Horizon 2020 under the EIC pilot Accelerator managed by the Agency (N.B.: for previous beneficiaries of a grant, the Fast Track scheme cannot be used to request grant-only support).

94. Is this Fast Track scheme the same as the 'Fast Track to Research and Innovation' procedures under Horizon Europe or is it something different?

The Fast Track scheme referred to in Annex 3 to the EIC Work Programme and the Fast Track to Research and Innovation (FTRI) referred to in Horizon Europe Regulation are two different things.

On the one hand, the FTRI is a procedure that may be applied to allow a faster, bottom-up access to funds for small collaborative consortia covering actions from fundamental research to market application. To this end, the FTRI may be proposed under some of the calls for proposals dedicated to select research and / or innovation actions Under the Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness and the European Innovation Council Pathfinder parts of the Framework Programme.

On the other hand, the Fast Track scheme allows eligible funding bodies and schemes implementing the Programme to directly submit a proposal to the EIC Accelerator for evaluation. The Fast Track scheme to the EIC Accelerator stems from Article 48(6) of Horizon Europe Regulation, which also sets out the cumulative conditions that must be met and which must be read in conjunction with Annex 3 to the EIC Work Programme.

95. How can I apply for the pilot Plug In scheme? When will it be available and for which programmes?

Like for the Fast Track scheme described above, under the pilot Plug In scheme (Annex 4 to the EIC Work Programme) applicants do not apply directly to the EIC Accelerator call.

The Plug-in scheme applies to proposals stemming from existing national or regional programmes that have been assessed and certified. It is the management bodies of the certified national or regional programmes which decide whether an existing project is suitable for support under the EIC Accelerator, based on a project review to assess the innovation and market deployment potential.

The implementation of the pilot Plug In will start as soon as 2/3 of EU Member States have at least one programme certified. An assessment of candidate programmes is ongoing and the results are expected January 2023 after which the certified programmes may submit Plug In applications.

A list of certified Plug In programmes will be available on the EIC website. To know how the Plug In scheme is being implemented, , please contact the responsible funding body for that programme.

## **H. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROVISIONS FOR EIC PATHFINDER AND TRANSITION PROJECTS**

96. Why does the EIC have specific provisions for Intellectual Property? Do these conflict with the role of Technology Transfer Offices?

The EIC has a goal to stimulate innovation and the specific provisions on IP are for this purpose.

The underlying intention of the EIC IP provisions is not to take over the valuable activities of the TTOs/KTOs in Europe, but to empower the innovators to commercialise their inventions where the TTO/KTO support is not sufficient. The quality of this support is not equally available in all parts of Europe and we would like to unblock situations where the inventors are hampered in their commercialisation ambition.

Further, the IP provisions only foresee royalty free access rights for inventors in those cases where the university or research institution does not provide support for exploitation. In this way, the provisions complement the valuable role of research performing organisations' knowledge valorisation services.

In addition, the 2023 EIC work programme includes the possibility for institutions to suspend the access rights of EIC inventors where these go against the institutional valorisation strategies.

97. Annex 7 of the Work Programme states that beneficiaries may object to the dissemination of their preliminary findings or results by the granting authority when they demonstrate concrete exploitation. In this context, what is meant by "demonstrating concrete exploitation"? Would an on-going negotiation with an entity be considered as demonstrating concrete exploitation?

Beneficiaries may not have to disclose underlying detailed data and results when they commit to publish, patent or protect their results or when they demonstrate concrete exploitation, i.e. plan a specific use of the results for commercial purposes that will lead to an update of the Plan for dissemination and exploitation.

Entering in negotiation may constitute a step towards exploitation but a concrete exploitation will have to be materialised through a written commitment by the entity.

98. Annex 7 of the Work Programme says that if a beneficiary fails to exploit or disseminate a result the granting authority can impose penalties; when will such penalties be applied?

The granting authority will impose penalties when the beneficiary "continues to oppose to the dissemination by the granting authority or refuses to provide any data or document necessary for the said dissemination." Hence, the granting authority will not impose penalties if the beneficiary attempts to disseminate and provides the means to the granting authority to support the dissemination.

99. Why does the definition of EIC Inventor not include for-profit legal entities?

The context in non-for-profit entities and in for-profit entities is different in regard to the level of exploitation of results or research findings. Indeed, exploitation may be an ancillary aim in non-for-profit legal entities. Therefore, the EIC provides for the necessary access rights for “the EIC inventor” in non-for-profit legal entities where these can be more impactful and most multiply exploitation opportunities.

100. Does the definition of EIC Inventor include co-authors of scientific publications?

The inventor rights are only for those individuals that are explicitly appear as an inventor in a publication or patent filing. This does not include authors of scientific publication, where the authorship role does not include inventorship.

101. Some believe that employees of universities receive too many rights over the intellectual property in relation to their employer - can you comment on this?

- We support universities in giving their researchers sufficient rights to help them turn their research output into innovation. However, our intention is not to be prescriptive with regards to how universities manage intellectual property.

- The rules of intellectual property for the EIC Pathfinder and Transition activities are different from the usual Horizon Europe rules as the explicit aim of the EIC is to support disruptive and breakthrough technologies to be developed into innovations. In this sense, the goal is not only to support ‘knowledge output’ but most importantly to support ‘innovative output’ with commercial value and enable faster access to market.

- These rules for the EIC Pathfinder and Transition were introduced last March as part of the first EIC work programme, following advice from the EIC pilot Advisory Board and in consultation with Member States.

- The following are two particular additions to the usual Horizon Europe rules:

- o Projects must consider potential innovation opportunities before publishing the results. The aim here is not to prevent publications but to ensure that publications do not inadvertently prevent innovation;

- o Individual inventors (e.g. researchers where they qualify as inventors) in public institutions should have sufficient access rights to further use/exploit the results. This does not mean they have to own the results (as long as they have sufficient access rights) and allows for royalty sharing where the university provides support, and so is designed to work in tandem with effective university policies on IP and technology transfer.

- The rationale of these distinct features is that the EIC aims at delivering innovation and supporting the implementation of these innovations in companies, startups, spinouts or by other means (e.g. licensing, collaborations).

- In doing so, this addresses the relative weaknesses in technology transfer in Europe (for example, compared with the US), while being fully supportive of those universities and research institutions which have well-developed and effective technology transfer.

To become an EIC Inventor you need:

- to be employed or subcontracted by a non-for-profit legal entity,

- to have actively taken part in producing the results at stake and

- to be entitled to appear on a publication of these results and/ or in an IP registration mechanism such as patent filing.

Then, the EIC inventor will be granted sufficient access rights to exploit the said results, only if their idea/plan to exploit does not hinder the exploitation plan already agreed between the EIC and the EIC awardee. A key point to remember is that there is no transfer of ownership and the EIC awardee has the priority of exploitation. The only aim is to multiply the opportunities of exploitation of the EIC results in order to reach impact.

An example would be a PhD student or a post-doc who dedicated few years of their work to obtain the said results.