

European Innovation Council (EIC) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

VERSION 1.0 for EIC WP 2024

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These FAQs include questions from previous versions, as well as revised questions and new questions reflecting the novelties in the EIC WP 2024. Obsolete questions have been deleted.

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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 need 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 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) as well as an assessment of relevant aspects related to regulation, certification and standardisation. 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).

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?

Please note that the rebuttal procedure will be discontinued for calls under the EIC work programme 2024 and this answer refers to ongoing evaluations from the 2023 Pathfinder calls.

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. Applicants are advised to include a work package dedicated to portfolio activities in their proposal and allocate at least 10 person-month to it.

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 include a work package dedicated to portfolio activities and allocate at least 10 person-months to it.

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

9. Will the Pathfinder Challenges still exist in future EIC work programmes?

The Challenge-driven approach will continue in future EIC work programmes beyond 2024. The topics identified for the challenge-driven calls are in principle for one call only, with new topics identified in later years, with the possibility of some topics identified in this Work Programme to be complemented with additional funding. As an ongoing process the EIC organises 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. Will dedicated events be organised to support the formation of consortia 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 considered as not having gender balance.

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.

13. Can an unsuccessful proposal submitted to an EIC Pathfinder Challenge call be resubmitted to an EIC Pathfinder Open call?

EIC Pathfinder Open calls support projects in any field of science, technology or application without predefined thematic priorities. It is therefore possible for applicants to resubmit an unsuccessful EIC Pathfinder Challenge proposal to an EIC Pathfinder Open call.

In this case, applicants should nevertheless ensure that their proposal is in line with the eligibility conditions and with the Award criteria of the EIC Pathfinder Open call, which are different from the EIC Pathfinder Challenge call to which they previously applied. They should also use the specific application form for Pathfinder Open calls.

B. EIC TRANSITION

14. What are the eligibility conditions for consortia (3 partners or more) and small consortia (2 partners)? How are these applied in relation to the legal entities established in third countries and associated countries?

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

- For three or more-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 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?](#)"

15. What range of TRL should EIC Transition projects cover? What is the expected project output?

It is expected that the various activities within the EIC Transition projects should cover TRLs, typically in the range between TRL 4 and 6. Note that the starting TRL fully achieved before the start of the project must be at least TRL3. The final TRL achieved at the end of the EIC Transition project must be at least TRL 5.

As a further guidance/examples on the TRL, please check the following [external] links:

<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/career-development/researchers/manual-scientific-entrepreneurship/major-steps/trl>

<https://horizoneuropencpportal.eu/store/trl-assessment>

Evidence of false declaration in the proposal form, in order to obtain EU funding, are ground for suspension of payments, suspension of the grant and grant termination, according to art 30, 31 and 32 of the Grant Agreement.

16. I would like to apply for a Transition project to further develop the results created by someone else (another project where I did not participate). What is the commitment letter from the relevant owner(s) of the result 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 indicated 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.

The first page of the part B application must contain the template table to indicate the project which generated the result together with reference to where the result has been reported (in the periodic reporting, the Horizon results platform, the Innovation Radar or CORDIS). Removing the template table or failing to fill the required information may make the proposal ineligible.

Applicants that are not the owner of the result to be further developed in the proposal must provide, in addition (as annex to be uploaded as separate file) 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 the applicant a fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory access to such results, including IPR, for the purpose of future commercial exploitation.

An indicative template for this letter is provided in the Funding and Tenders Portal during the application process.

17. 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 (evaluation score above threshold but below budget) 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 business coaching paid by EIC through the EIC Business Acceleration Services.

18. 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. Proposals requesting lower amounts will be deemed ineligible.

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. Failing to sufficiently justify a higher amount may be considered as a weakness and scored accordingly.

19. 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, which may include companies that did not take part in the previous consortia that originated the results.

Academic spin-offs may be considered as affiliated entities to academia that have originated them if they comply with art.8 of the Grant Agreement. Affiliated entities are not counted in the number of partners, therefore academia and its affiliated spin-off is a mono-beneficiary proposal.

20. 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?

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.

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. My project result is coming from an ERAnet (including Eurostars) or a JU (joint undertaking) project. Am I eligible to apply?

No, as of Work programme 2024 only project funded directly by the EU and EU agencies will be eligible. Project results funded through such 'cascade funding' will not be eligible.

Can I apply based on a result from another Horizon projects;

24. What are the changes in eligibility conditions compared with WP2023?

In the WP2024 new projects will be eligible to submit to EIC Transition:

Other projects directly funded under Horizon 2020 Societal challenges and Leadership in Industrial Technologies and under Europe pillar II, with an eligible TRL.

In summary:

- Projects directly funded under priority Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges (see <https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/id/H2020-EU.3>.)
- Projects directly funded under priority Horizon 2020 Industrial Leadership (see <https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/id/H2020-EU.2>.)
- Project directly funded under Horizon Europe pillar II Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness (see <https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/id/HORIZON.2>

Grants not directly funded by EU (need to have signed a Grant Agreement with EC or its Executive agencies) are not eligible. Grants funded under cascade mechanisms (e.g. ERA NETs and financial support to third parties or by JU) are not eligible.

Projects that were funded under topic "Innovation action" type are not eligible. Project results that do not have an appropriate TRL (achieved already minimum TRL 3) are not eligible.

25. I have an excellent project result from pillar II Horizon Europe. Am I eligible?

Research and Innovation Action projects funded under a H2020 Societal Challenge and Leadership in Industrial Technologies and under Europe Pillar II, with an eligible TRL, are now eligible. For more detail consult the EIC Work Programme 2024 and previous question

C. EIC ACCELERATOR

26. Why is the short proposal now moving to the Submission & Evaluation Platform (SEP)?

Given the change in submission and evaluation platform for EIC Accelerator full proposals (step 2) in June 2023 to the Horizon Europe Funding & Tenders Portal (SEP), the short proposal (step 1) will also be submitted in SEP as from January 1, 2024. This will ensure that the Accelerator is fully integrated into the standard Horizon Europe proposal submission and evaluation platform for the calls under the EIC Work Programme 2024, thus providing improved efficiency and consistency between short (step 1) and full (step 2) proposal submission via the same tool. The short proposal template questions will stay very largely the same, however the pdf submission form will allow applicants more flexibility than the current online form to prepare their proposals in a user-friendly environment. This will include, for example, the possibility to work offline and to incorporate visuals/graphs within the submission form. Applicants with a successful short proposal submitted during in 2023 will maintain their GO result and will be eligible to submit a full proposal in 2024.

27. Can I apply to the EIC Accelerator if I am already a grant beneficiary under the SME Instrument or EIC Accelerator Pilot?

Yes, as a general rule, you may apply to the EIC Accelerator once your previous project reaches its end date.

Moreover, beneficiaries of ongoing grant-only projects selected under a Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Accelerator or under Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator call may be eligible to submit a proposal for a blended finance or an equity-only support under an EIC Accelerator call.

Beneficiaries of ongoing blended finance projects selected under a Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Accelerator call may be eligible to apply for blended finance under Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator call or investment only.

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 less than EUR 2.5 million to cover activities of TRL 5/6 to 8.

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

Having a Seal of Excellence does not give in itself the right to apply directly to the full proposal. If your Seal of Excellence is the result of a rejection at the interview stage (within the limit of three unsuccessful submissions in total as outlined in the "Application submission limits" section of the EIC work programme 2024) you may resubmit your proposal directly at the full proposal stage.

29. 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 to Horizon Europe), it is eligible to apply for EIC Accelerator calls the same way as a company from a Member State (unless an exception applies – please see EIC Work Programme 2024 and List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe and, in particular, the third countries associated to HE but that cannot participate in the EIC Fund, if you plan to apply for blended finance or equity-only). 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. Specific conditions and milestones may be set in the contract to ensure that the interest of the Union is met.

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?](#)"

30. Can a company from the UK request equity and coaching support from the EIC Accelerator?

The UK has associated to the EIC work programme for the grant only part. Therefore, UK entities are eligible for Accelerator grant only, but are not eligible for blended finance or equity only support.

UK entities may apply for blended finance or equity only if they are intending to relocate to an eligible country (and this relocation must have taken place at the latest at the date of signature of the agreement on the investment component).

UK entities which pass Step 1 are eligible for support from EIC coaches for the preparation of full proposals in 2024. This includes UK entities that passed Step 1 in 2023 (for coaching after 1 January 2024).

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

The sister/parent company based in the associated country/EU Member State is eligible to apply itself. Activities run in other countries are not taken into account to check your eligibility (although relying on entities established in an EU Member State or Associated country entitled to participate in the EIC Fund (in case of blended finance or equity only) try should not be used to circumvent the eligibility conditions). 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 or EU Member State 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.

32. What happens if my company loses the 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 and considering not eligible the costs incurred as from the date of the completion of the transaction. For projects with an investment component, if the loss of the SME status takes place before a final decision on the investment component is taken by the EIC Fund, the investment component might also be rejected.

33. Is the grant first type of support still a possibility in 2024? I was planning to submit a grant first application, what are the alternatives now?

No, the grant first type of support has been discontinued in 2024. If you don't have the necessary resources to deploy your solution and need support from the EIC Fund, then you can request blended finance, even if you don't need this support immediately.

For applicants requesting blended finance, the investment component may come later during the lifetime of the project, after the innovation activities supported by the grant component have started. The EIB as investment advisor of the EIC Fund will assess with you when the correct timing for starting the investment process is, according to the information submitted in the application.

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

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

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

35. Why is there no longer a rebuttal process? Will evaluators see my previous submissions or evaluator comments?

Under the 2024 Work Programme, there is no longer a structured place to "rebut" comments from the previous evaluators and the evaluators will not see any previous submission or evaluation reports from

previous evaluators. Proposals submitted will be assessed independently from previous submissions and based on their own merits according to standard Horizon Europe practice. The applicant is encouraged to include any improvements made in the narrative part B of the application form, however there is no structured format to include this information.

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

The rule has been simplified in 2024: from the start of 2024, you may submit up to 3 unsuccessful applications, at any stage of the process (Short Proposal, Full Proposal) and for any form of support (Challenge, Open, Grant only, Blended finance, Equity only) up until the end of the programme under Horizon Europe (until 2027). After the third rejection, you will not be able to submit again to the EIC Accelerator under the Horizon Europe Framework Programme.

Once an applicant is admitted to the full proposal stage as a consequence of a successful application at the short proposal stage, the applicant may submit to subsequent proposals directly at the full proposal stage.

For example:

- if an applicant is rejected one time at full proposal or interview stage, it may still submit two times at the full proposal stage.

- if an applicant is rejected one time at full proposal or interview stage and was previously rejected once at short proposal stage, it may still submit one time at the full proposal stage.

Please note that applications submitted in the previous years are not taken into account (your counter restarts from zero as from 1/1/2024).

If you would currently be in your 12 month cool-off period according to the Work Programme rules prior to 2024, you may submit a full proposal in 2024 if you received a GO on your short proposal in 2023.

If you received a GO on your short proposal before 2023, you are not eligible to submit a full proposal in 2024 but you may submit a short proposal in 2024 (even if you are in a cool off period).

In most cases all resubmissions from the same company (legal entity) will be considered as resubmissions. However, if you submit a proposal which has no overlap or link to a previous proposal, then this may be considered a new proposal.

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

For the short proposal stage, applicants will be invited to submit a proposal to illustrate 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, investment only, grant only) they are applying for and provide a detailed budget.

38. 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.

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

As from the Work Programme 2024, the Jury may no longer propose to change the type of funding requested by the applicant (e.g. blended finance proposal to "grant only"). However the jury may recommend lowering (for example to exclude activities beyond TRL 8) and but may make observations in view of the grant agreement preparation, e.g. on the milestones or on proposed coaching activities, as well as observations on the investment amount (which will then be considered by the EIC Fund).

40. 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.

41. 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.

42. Are all proposals requested to describe their market activities?

In line with the approach followed by the EIC Accelerator, all projects need to describe market activities even when they are not requesting investment/equity. 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.

43. What are milestones?

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.

44. 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 in alignment with the indicated duration of the Work Packages flagged by you (in your proposal) as to be co-financed by the grant component, even if the resulting duration is more than 24 months. Nevertheless, as there are no restrictions to the use of the investment component, equity can be requested and used to co-finance "innovation activities work packages" if you decide to do so and you flag/present such work packages as to be covered by the investment component when submitting your proposal.

45. 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.

46. Which TRL (Technology Readiness Level) scale is used under the programme?

Please refer to the "Technology Readiness Levels" section in the [General Annexes of the Horizon Europe Work Programme](#).

47. Where will it be possible to insert the graphs and pictures? In the form B of the proposal or only in the pitch deck? Is there a limit to the number of slides? Is there a limit in the pages for both proposal stages?

You may use graphs and pictures everywhere, and you are encouraged to do so where it efficiently supports your message and particularly in your pitch deck. The only limitations you have are 12 pages for a short proposal, 50 pages for a full proposal. For your pitch deck, it should not exceed 10 pages at the short proposal stage while for the full application, there is no maximum number of slides, although you only have 10 minutes to present it at interview stage. You also have the possibility to include a maximum of 10 pages in an annex to the full proposal where you could add graphs and pictures.

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

For the Accelerator applications, you have to upload:

- The pitch deck: This is a crucial part of your application, you will use it to support your pitch at the interview stage. You will have the possibility to update it after the short application if needed.
- The lump sum detailed budget breakdown: this file will be used to determine upfront the amount of the lump sum grant. It will indicate the % of the total lump sum that each work package represents (i.e. "lump sum share") and may be used as a basis to reduce the final payment if a given work package is not implemented fully.
- The Financial plan and equity needed: these are the financial figures supporting your business plan and the equity needed. Here you will show your projection of turnover and costs, the evolution of your cash flow, of the main items on your balance sheet and off several key ratios.
- Mandatory data and consent: this is to enable us to inform local authorities in your country of origin in case you receive a seal of excellence (which may be you access to local funding), and to the EICF and its partners to support you in getting equity
- The FTO analysis: please upload your freedom to operate analysis or, if you do not have one, please upload a note explaining why it may not be relevant or what you have done to assess FTO.
- The Data Management plan: 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. Detailed information may be found in the Annotated Model Grant Agreement and in the Programme Guide. If needed, a template for DMP is available

in the following link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/temp-form/report/data-management-plan_he_en.docx"

- CVs of key persons
- Letters of intent: these are crucial to de-risk your project and demonstrate your credibility with potential partners.

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

The EISMEA will not move proposals from one call to another, nor declare your proposal out of scope if you submit to open despite meeting the requirements of a challenge. 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 note, however, that challenges are identified as strategic areas/technologies for Europe, with a clearly assigned budget target.

Proposals submitted to a challenge will be evaluated by remote evaluators and – if successful at the full proposal stage – a jury panel composed of experts for this specific challenge. Successful challenge proposals will benefit from specific targeted support as part of an Accelerator Challenge portfolio.

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.

50. I want to apply to an EIC Accelerator Challenge but I read in the specific conditions that to become a beneficiary I must not be directly or indirectly controlled by a non-associated third country or a legal entity established in a non-associated third country. What does it mean in practice?

As an applicant to the grant component of any of the EIC Accelerator challenges with request not to be controlled you will have to provide an ownership control declaration as an annex to the application form. Proposals under the Open call which are identified as falling under these Challenges will have to fill in the same declaration, if they are selected for funding. On top of this declaration, successful applicants will be requested to provide documents proving their ownership/control. These documents will then be assessed on whether your company is directly or indirectly controlled by a non-associated third country or a legal entity in a non-associated third country.

51. I will submit a proposal to the Accelerator Open call which content could also fit in an accelerator challenge with control restrictions. What does this imply?

Proposals under the Open call which are identified as falling under the challenges with control restrictions and are requesting grant support, will have to fill in an ownership control declaration, if they are selected for funding. On top of this declaration, successful applicants will be requested to provide documents proving their ownership/control.

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

Each applicant is entitled to submit up to three unsuccessful applications, so you have (in case of a first or second submission) another chance. Nonetheless, if you believe that there has been a procedural error in the evaluation, you will find the means of redress in your rejection letter. For more information, please refer to section "E. EVALUATION REVIEW PROCEDURE" of the EIC work programme 2024.

53. When 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 (please also visit the [EIC News section](#) and the [F&T Portal](#) for any update). 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).

54. 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 unless it is the last cut-off of the year. You will have the option to keep it in 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.

55. 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 Seal of Excellence (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.

56. 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.

57. 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?

The role of national Contact Points (NCPs) is among others to support applicants to prepare to the EIC calls. They have access to 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.

58. *When can I receive a Seal of Excellence?*

If your proposal receives a NO GO at the interview it will normally be awarded a Seal of Excellence^[1] to facilitate funding from alternative funding sources and access to EIC Business Acceleration Services. Exceptionally, EIC juries may recommend that your proposal does not receive a Seal of Excellence if they find weaknesses in your proposal which were not identified by the expert evaluators at the remote evaluation stage.

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

59. *Clinical trials*

A) Are they considered to be an innovation activity? Under which component (grant or equity) can they be co-financed?

YES. Clinical trials can be included in the grant component (as part of innovation activities, for TRL 5 to 8.). The company can therefore apply for grant support for these activities. In addition, the investment amount can cover both types of activities: innovation (up to TRL8) and market/scale-up (above TRL8) activities. The company can therefore split the clinical trials in several work packages and have some of them supported under the grant component and others under the equity component.

B) How are clinical trials considered with reference to TRLs?

For the correspondence between TRLs and clinical trials steps, the following considerations are made (Eurexess website: <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/career-development/researchers/manual-scientific-entrepreneurship/major-steps/trl>): TRL5 stands for animal testing and clinical protocols for phase 1 clinical testing, TRL 6 for exploratory phase 1 trials support proceeding to phase 2, TRL 7 for phase 2 clinical trial completed, and TRL8 stands for completed phase 3 clinical trials and regulatory approval.

D. LUMP SUMS

Please refer to the dedicated [lump sums FAQs on the Funding and Tenders Portal](#).

60. What are the main changes to the financial annexes to the full proposal?

As from 2024, detailed costs regarding lump sums are collected in a new annex called “lump sum detailed budget” and the data supporting your business plan and your investment needs are shown in a simplified version of the previous financial annex now named “Financial plan and equity needed”.

61. Why are these annexes needed and how are they used in the evaluation process?

The worksheet “financial plan” is used to show evaluators more concretely your financial assumptions, i.e. your planned turnover, the evolution of your costs, your cashflows, your balance sheet and key financial ratios, the one on “lump sum detailed budget” to show the costs of the actions you intend to implement. Evaluators will use the data to support their assessment of the last evaluation sub-criteria, e.g. to assess whether the financial resources foreseen are realistic and timely to support the proposed implementation plan and activities.

62. Why is it important to provide a forecast of my balance sheet 4 years from now?

It is particularly important to document when investments are planned, e.g. to build a plant, or when you increase your working capital to support an increase in sales volume.

63. The requested forecast only goes till year N+4 and my project needs another year to perform e.g. a clinical trial, may I add further columns?

Yes please, if you need extra columns because your timeline to market is longer, feel free to adapt the file adding column(s). Also adapt the worksheet on equity needed, adding a line for each column added in the financial plan worksheet.

E. EIC INVESTMENTS

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

Within the mandate given by the European Commission following the evaluation process by EISMEA, investment decisions (and their related conditions and management) are subsequently 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 has appointed an alternative investment fund manager (AIFM) to manage the EIC Fund. Because the AIFM is a different legal entity than the EIC Fund, the AIFM is sometimes referred to as “external AIFM”.

The [European Investment Bank](#) (EIB) is investment adviser to the EIC Fund. The EIB and the EIC Fund manager are separate legal entities. The EIB provides advice and support to the EIC Fund but does not make the investment decisions. It is the EIC Fund manager (the AIFM) that 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 under Horizon 2020 EIC Pilot are managed by the EIC Fund as well.

65. Why has the European Commission restructured the EIC Fund and the way Accelerator’s investments are managed compared to the Horizon 2020 pilot phase?

The EIC Fund which is a dedicated fund for investing in companies selected by the EIC Accelerator with the support and following the advice of the European Investment Bank.

The European Commission has adapted 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.

AS of Autumn 2022, the European Commission authorised the appointment of an external alternative investment fund manager (the AIFM) to be responsible for taking investment decisions. As of 1 January 2024, the Commission’s ownership (shares) in the EIC Fund are transferred to the European Investment Bank to manage this shareholding on behalf of the European Commission and with safeguards to ensure the EIC Fund fulfils the objectives set out for the EIC. During this transition phase in 2022 and 2023 the EIC Investment Partner is

66. 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 in accordance with the criteria and process set out in the Work Programme 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.

EISMEA will continue coordinating the grant and the equity components, and the investments by the EIC Fund are authorised by an Award Decision of the European Commission.

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 (by the EIC Fund¹), the EIB, as investment adviser, will categorise the potential 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 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)), or direct equity as part of a funding round with other co-investors

The EIC Fund may use convertible instruments and combination of quasi-equity instruments in cases that the company is not yet sufficiently mature to attract other investors but is expected to raise a funding round with other investors within a reasonable time period. .

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

¹ 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 other qualified investors (i.e. which will cover at least 50% of the round), having an objective of achieving at least a 1:3 leverage at the level of the EIC portfolio..

69. 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 postpone the investment until the company has matured enough.

70. What is a 'qualified investor'?

Qualified Investor means an investor deploying privately sourced funds in an EIC Fund Final Recipient with demonstrable know-how and experience in the relevant market, technology and jurisdiction. Such a qualified investor adds to EIC Fund due diligence with the purpose of both valuing the relevant asset or Investment on market terms and providing the underlying entity, in case of an investment alongside the EIC Fund, with subsequent crucial support for a successful market entry and scale-up.

Can companies request EIC Investments higher than EUR 15 million?

Under the 2024 EIC Work Programme, the maximum investment amount is EUR 15 million.

71. Can a 'grant-only' supported company from the EIC pilot (funded from Horizon 2020) apply for an equity? 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 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.

72. 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. In specific areas of strategy technology (described in the Work programme) a company may be excluded if it is controlled by entities

outside the EU or the associated countries, or the Commission may require that the investment agreement includes appropriate safeguards.

When implementing investments the EIC Fund will ensure that supported companies keep most of their value, including their IP, in the EU or in the Associated Countries in order to contribute to their economic growth and job creation.

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.

73. 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. In addition, technological due diligence is performed.

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 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.

74. How is the technological due diligence prepared?

The EIC selects the most qualified expert 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.

75. When is the technological due diligence performed?

The technological due diligence exercise is launched in coordination with the EIB investment Officer according to the best timing for initiating the Due Diligence process in view of an upcoming investing opportunity and in general immediately after the evaluation and selection process.

The company is informed about this step in the invitation to the negotiation letter and it is also foreseen in the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines.

The technological due diligence might be performed in parallel to the negotiation phase and therefore does not slow down the grant agreement signature.

76. Companies who previously benefited from a grant-only support are allowed to request 'equity-only' funding from the EIC Accelerator. What are the eligible grant-only schemes?

Equity only funding is only available for companies which have already received grant-only support under:

- a) Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator,
- b) grant-only support under the Horizon 2020 EIC Pilot and
- c) grant-only support under the Horizon 2020 SME Instrument

77. How is the investment amount established?

The European Commission will set a maximum investment amount as part of the Single Award Decision for EIC support to the company. In accordance with the rules in the Work Programme, this amount will be based on the amount requested by the company at the application stage, together with a flexibility margin of up to €2 million above the amount requested by the company.

Within the indicative maximum investment amount laid down in the Single Award Decision, the EIC Fund will establish the investment amount in the light of the discussions on valuation and possible equity stakes in the potential investee companies. In general, the EIC Fund will align its valuation for the purposes of equity investment to the valuation set by the market (i.e. by the private qualified investors co-investing alongside them). Valuation methods vary depending on the business models, markets and sectors, technology and other intangible aspects to consider.

When deciding on the investment amount, the EIC Fund will also take into account the investment amounts from co-investors, so as to match the EIC Fund's investment with investment from leading coinvestors at least 1:1 (and seeking a leverage effect of at least 1:3 throughout the investment horizon). The investment amount will also take into account the amounts available in the accounts of the EIC Fund.

D. EIC COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS ACCELERATION SERVICES

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

Coaches undergo a rigorous selection process and are thoroughly vetted before being included in a list from which they can be chosen for coaching assignments. C. They must meet essential experience criteria that are published in the Call for Expression of Interest for EIC Coaches. For more information, please see the following link:

https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/business-acceleration-services/coaching-under-eic/call-expression-interest-establishing-list-eic-business-coaches_en

Applicants or beneficiaries proposing a coach who is not already on the EIC Coaches list is not possible. This is because all coaches must undergo a selection process and have their expertise evaluated against specific criteria before being approved for inclusion on the list. The procedure for selecting a coach is as follows:

1. You pre-select a group of up to 6 coaches who are promptly notified via email, asking them to confirm their availability. - <https://eic.eisma.eu/mydashboard/mycoaching>
2. You may approach the coaches who validate their availability for a preliminary 'chemistry' call (this step is optional).
3. Post this interaction, or even without it, you make your final choice.
4. The selected coach then drafts a coaching plan using our Casetracker system.
5. Upon approval of the plan, the Coaching Team in EISMEA formalizes the contract with the coach, and the coaching activity can begin.

If you require any support during the coaching journey, please feel free to reach out to our Coaching team at EISMEA-COACHING@ec.europa.eu.

79. I am a Pathfinder or Transition beneficiary. Can I benefit from Coaching?

Beneficiaries of the EIC Pathfinder and Transition programs who have signed a grant agreement are eligible for 12 days of coaching paid by EIC. In cases where a consortium implements the project, its members, in consultation with their project officer, will decide which partner(s) receive the coaching services.

Unlike the EIC Accelerator, applicants of the EIC Pathfinder and Transition programs do not receive EIC business coaching after passing the first step of evaluation to aid in preparing for subsequent proposal evaluations or interviews.

80. 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, working through online face-to-face interactions, will primarily evaluate your business goals and test your presumptions. They guide you in identifying areas for improvement, focusing on learning and resolving business development challenges. Coaching covers a wide range of topics based on your needs, including evaluating your value proposition and business model, enhancing strategy and investor business case, team building, leadership, processes, and even international expansion. While this coaching support is not mandatory for proposal development, it is highly recommended. You will always remain fully responsible yourself for the content of your proposal. EIC coaching assignments cannot be used for proposal writing or other consultancy activities.

81. 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.

To select a coach please use this link: <https://eic.eisma.eu/mydashboard/mycoaching>

Should you encounter any technical difficulties, feel free to reach out to EISMEA-COACHING@ec.europa.eu for assistance.

82. 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. If you passed the step 1 evaluation, you may use this link to reach the coach selection dashboard: <https://eic.eisma.eu/mydashboard/mycoaching>.

Should you encounter any technical difficulties, feel free to reach out to EISMEA-COACHING@ec.europa.eu for assistance.

83. 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.

Regarding services from EIC ecosystem partners that are available through the searchable [EIC Service Catalogue](#) on the [EIC Community Platform](#), some are offered for free as other would require financial compensation. For the moment EIC funded projects and companies need to cover the costs by themselves. As of the Q2 2024 a new action would allow the eligible EIC funded projects and companies to request a financial support to cover up to 50% of costs of partners' services.

84. How can I get access to other BAS services (access to expertise, trainings, matching, community events, services provided by EIC ecosystem 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. To access services from the EIC ecosystem partners you can consult the searchable [EIC Service catalogue](#) also available through the EIC Community. Access to some services like specific expertise and advice is triggered through the project review process or programme manager.

85. 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, 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 (Co-)Investor Programme, EIC Innovation Procurement Programme, EIC Tech 2 Market Programme, EIC International Trade Fairs Programme, EIC Women Leadership Programme;
- Create a personal and company profile;
- Use the powerful search engine to find like-minded companies;
- Promote your achievements;
- Explore business opportunities among EIC peers;
- Expand networks with EIC ecosystem partners and access their services through the [EIC Service catalogue](#);
- 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;
- Apply to our EIC Partner Calls and get access to special offers for the EIC Community;
- Reduce your GHG emissions using EIC GHG Tool;

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 EIC Business Acceleration Services are available outside the platform;
- Spread the words: share the great news with your network: you can do it directly on your digital page.

E. GENERAL CONDITIONS AND ELIGIBILITY

86. 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.

87. 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 eligibility conditions, objectives and Award 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.

88. Can I apply for EIC funding if I have an ongoing grant from the EIC pilot (or another Horizon 2020 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 H2020 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.

89. How do I know which countries are associated to the EIC (including to the EIC Fund in case of blended finance? 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 European 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 the company established in an EU Member State or Associated Country to Horizon Europe (including to the EIC Fund in the case of blended finance).

90. 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 European 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>

91. 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

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.

F. FAST TRACK SCHEME AND PILOT PLUG-IN SCHEME TO APPLY FOR THE EIC ACCELERATOR

92. How can I apply for the Fast Track or Plug In scheme? When will it be available and for which programmes?

Under the Fast Track and Plug In schemes, applicants do not apply directly to the EIC Accelerator call. Instead, the responsible funding bodies 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 or market deployment potential of such project.

The Fast Track is being implemented by a number of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and further information can be found on their websites. The Fast Track is also available for: ongoing EIC Pathfinder and Transition projects (including pilot Pathfinder/ FET projects funded under Horizon 2020); 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; and companies awarded a grant only project under the Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Accelerator and the Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator (given the level of technological maturity that Accelerator projects have, only beneficiaries of ongoing projects (i.e. ending date of the project not expired yet) will be considered eligible). Eligible projects can contact their project officers for further information.

The Plug In scheme is implemented by a number of Member States and Associated countries and applies to eligible companies that are supported by the programmes that have been certified. The funding body managing the programme implements the project review and decides which applicants to submit to the EIC Accelerator. A list of all the programmes certified for the Plug In is available on the EIC website.

Applicants that are submitted via a Fast Track or Plug In Scheme are invited immediately to prepare a full application to the EIC Accelerator and are not required to pass the Step 1 stage. They are treated equally to other applicants at the full application stage and are also eligible to receive coaching support. Fast track and Plug In applications are subject to the rules on resubmission.

93. 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 4 to the 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 stems from Article 43(5) of Horizon Europe Regulation. Its purpose is to allow eligible funding bodies to directly submit for evaluation under the last award criterion (Article 43(4)(c)) a proposal for an innovation and market deployment action which already fulfils the first two criteria, provided that cumulative conditions as set out in the Regulation, in the Specific Programme, and in the Work Programme are met.

G. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

PROVISIONS FOR EIC PATHFINDER AND TRANSITION PROJECTS

94. What is an EIC Inventor?

An EIC Inventor is any named inventor on a patent filed to protect a result obtained with EIC funding. EIC Inventors are hired or subcontracted with EIC funding by an EIC Awardee (i.e. an EIC beneficiary) who is a public body. Being an author in a peer-reviewed scientific publication does not qualify such author as EIC Inventor, even if the results were obtained with EIC funding.

EIC Inventors have certain rights to exploit results in cases where the Awardee does not provide adequate or timely support for exploitation, as set out in the Work Programme.

95. Who owns a result developed by an EIC Inventor?

The ownership of the result follows the institutional practice of the EIC Awardee (in most cases the ownership rests with the EIC Awardee, e.g. the institution employing the EIC Inventor)

96. Can I publish an EIC result in a peer-reviewed scientific journal?

Yes, although you are expected to first assess the protection and commercialisation potential of your invention and ensure that this is not negatively impacted by a publication.

97. I am a researcher who developed an innovative result with EIC funding. How do I protect my invention?

Researchers are encouraged to disclose their results to their institution (the EIC Awardee), in particular to their Technology Transfer Office, when such service is available. Following a formal request from the researcher (EIC Inventor), the institution has 6 months to decide whether it will support the protection and commercialisation of the invention. If it decides not to, then the EIC Inventor may claim access rights to protect and commercialise the invention.

98. What is considered sufficient 'support' by the EIC Awardee for the protection and commercialisation of their innovations?

The EIC Awardee is expected to provide meaningful support such as either financial support, for instance through the funding of patenting costs, or other forms of support, such as expertise/ advice, access to infrastructures or facilities, or other forms of support that would be considered necessary for the protection or commercialisation of the innovation.

99. I would like to transfer my results to another institution. Do I have to inform the European Commission?

EISMEA may object to a transfer of ownership or the licensing of results under certain conditions. These condition and the procedure are indicated in the grant agreement.

100. I am an EIC Inventor, and my invention was patented by my institution. Can I commercialise this invention?

If your institution (the EIC Awardee) provides you ,the EIC Inventor, with financial or other support to protect or commercialise your invention, royalties or other returns may be shared with the institution on mutually beneficial terms, provided that the conclusion of any such agreement does not prevent you from commercialising your invention. The financial support from the institution should include as a minimum the full or partial funding of the costs of relevant Intellectual Property Right protection in major jurisdictions. The royalties and other returns to your institution should be fair and proportionate to the financial and other support provided.

101. I am an EIC Inventor, and my institution will not support the protection or commercialisation of my invention. Can I protect /commercialise this invention on my own?

Yes, if your institution (the EIC Awardee) decides not to support the protection and commercialisation of your invention. Following a formal request from you, the EIC Inventor, the institution has 6 months to decide to support or not the protection and commercialisation of the innovation.

102. However, any protection/commercialisation plans from the EIC inventor should not contravene the 'Dissemination and Exploitation Plan' already

agreed between the EISMEA and the institution. I am an EIC Awardee and I disagree with the actions undertaken by one or more of my EIC Inventors regarding the Intellectual Property they developed with EIC funding. Can I oppose their plans/actions (i.e. suspend their access rights)?

Yes. The EIC Awardee can suspend the access rights of an EIC Inventor if 1) The plans of the EIC Inventor go against the 'Dissemination and Exploitation Plan' that the EIC Awardee is in the process of developing, according to the institutional policies/strategy and 2) the plans of the EIC Inventor go against the 'Dissemination and Exploitation Plan' already agreed by the EISMEA for that particular project.

103. I am an EIC Inventor. My institution has decided to suspend my rights to further develop the intellectual property that I developed, on the grounds that it affects the agreed 'Dissemination and Exploitation Plan' for this project. Can I oppose this decision?

Yes. If your access rights have been suspended by your institution on the basis that they contravene the 'Dissemination and Exploitation Plan' agreed by the institution (EIC Awardee) and the EISMEA, you may request that the EISMEA lifts that suspension by demonstrating that the exercise of the access rights does not affect the Dissemination plan.

104. Annex 6 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 EISMEA (the 'granting authority') will not impose penalties if the institution ('EIC Awardee' or 'beneficiary') attempts to disseminate and provides the means to the EISMEA to support the dissemination. EISMEA will impose penalties only 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."