

# **EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL (EIC) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**For Work Programme 2026**

These FAQs include questions from previous versions, as well as revised questions and new questions reflecting the novelties in the EIC WP 2026. Obsolete questions have been deleted.

## Table of Content

1. WHAT IS THE EXPECTED BUDGET AND DURATION OF AN EIC PATHFINDER PROJECT? CAN SINGLE BENEFICIARIES APPLY AND IF YES, WILL THEY BE COMPETING AGAINST MULTI-BENEFICIARY PROPOSALS?.....	6
2. WHICH RANGE OF TECHNOLOGY READINESS LEVELS SHOULD EIC PATHFINDER PROJECTS COVER? WHAT IS THE EXPECTED PROJECT OUTPUT?.....	6
3. IS THE PARTICIPATION OF SMEs OR INDUSTRIAL PARTNERS TO EIC PATHFINDER CONSORTIA COMPULSORY? .....	6
4. CAN YOU PROVIDE SOME EXAMPLES OF ELIGIBLE AND NON-ELIGIBLE CONSORTIA COMPOSITIONS IN THE EIC PATHFINDER CHALLENGES CALL? 7	
5. 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?.....	7
6. WHY AND WHEN MAY PATHFINDER OPEN PROJECTS BE ADDED TO AN EIC PORTFOLIO? WHAT KIND OF PORTFOLIO ACTIVITIES ARE EXPECTED? .....	8
7. HOW WILL PARTICIPATION IN PORTFOLIO ACTIVITIES BE SUPPORTED? AT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION STAGE, DO PROPOSALS NEED TO ALLOCATE A BUDGET FOR PORTFOLIO ACTIVITIES? .....	8
8. WILL THE EIC PATHFINDER CHALLENGES STILL EXIST IN FUTURE EIC WORK PROGRAMMES? .....	8
9. WILL DEDICATED EVENTS BE ORGANISED TO SUPPORT THE FORMATION OF CONSORTIA FOR EIC PATHFINDER CALLS? .....	9
10. IN THE EIC PATHFINDER OPEN EVALUATIONS, HOW IS THE "GENDER BALANCE AMONG WORK PACKAGE LEADERS" FACTOR APPLIED WHEN PRIORITISING PROPOSALS WITH THE SAME FINAL SCORE?.....	9
11. IN THE EIC PATHFINDER OPEN EVALUATIONS, HOW IS THE 'NUMBER OF MEMBER STATES AND ASSOCIATED COUNTRIES' FACTOR APPLIED WHEN PRIORITISING PROPOSALS WITH THE SAME FINAL SCORE? .....	9
12. CAN AN UNSUCCESSFUL PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO AN EIC PATHFINDER CHALLENGE CALL BE RESUBMITTED TO AN EIC PATHFINDER OPEN CALL?.....	9
13. ARE APPLICANTS ESTABLISHED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING UNDER THE EIC PATHFINDER IN THE EIC WP 2026? 10	
14. ARE APPLICANTS ESTABLISHED IN SWITZERLAND ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING UNDER THE EIC PATHFINDER IN THE EIC WP 2026?.....	10
15. WHAT IS CONSIDERED AS A BREAKTHROUGH INNOVATION IN THE EIC PATHFINDER? .....	10
16. HOW SHOULD APPLICANTS DETERMINE AND PROPOSE THE AMOUNT OF THE LUMP SUM?.....	10
17. WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS FOR CONSORTIA (3 BENEFICIARIES OR MORE) AND SMALL CONSORTIA (2 BENEFICIARIES)? HOW ARE THESE APPLIED IN RELATION TO THE LEGAL ENTITIES ESTABLISHED IN THIRD COUNTRIES AND ASSOCIATED COUNTRIES?.....	11
18. 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?" .....	11
19. WHAT RANGE OF TRL SHOULD EIC TRANSITION PROJECTS COVER? WHAT IS THE EXPECTED STARTING POINT AND THE EXPECTED PROJECT OUTPUT?.....	11
20. WHAT INFORMATION IS TO BE PROVIDED IN THE PROPOSAL REGARDING THE 'LINKED' PROJECT?.....	12
21. IS THE 'LINKED' PROJECT ELIGIBLE? .....	12
22. WHAT DOES "REFERENCE TO WHERE THE RESULT HAS BEEN REPORTED" MEANS? .....	13
23. CAN I RESUBMIT MY PROPOSAL?.....	13
24. I WOULD LIKE TO APPLY FOR AN EIC TRANSITION PROJECT TO FURTHER DEVELOP THE RESULTS CREATED BY SOMEONE ELSE (ANOTHER PROJECT WHERE MY LEGAL ENTITY DID NOT PARTICIPATE). WHAT IS THE COMMITMENT LETTER FROM THE RELEVANT OWNER(S) OF THE RESULT TO BE INCLUDED IN THE PROPOSAL?.....	13
25. WHAT IS THE SEAL OF EXCELLENCE FOR EIC TRANSITION PROJECTS? WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE? .....	14
26. WHAT IS THE EXPECTED BUDGET AND DURATION OF AN EIC TRANSITION PROJECT? .....	14
27. IS THE PARTICIPATION OF SMEs OR INDUSTRIAL PARTNERS TO EIC TRANSITION CONSORTIA COMPULSORY? CAN RESEARCHERS FROM E.G. ACADEMIC PARTNERS PARTICIPATE? .....	14
28. WHEN AND HOW WILL A SELECTED EIC TRANSITION PROJECT BE ADDED TO A PORTFOLIO OF PROJECTS? WHAT KIND OF PORTFOLIO ACTIVITIES ARE EXPECTED AND HOW WILL THIS PARTICIPATION BE SUPPORTED? .....	15
29. HOW MUCH SHOULD APPLICANTS INVEST UPFRONT IN THE MARKET ASPECTS (COMPETITION, BUSINESS CASE, BUSINESS MODEL) FOR THE EIC TRANSITION PROPOSAL AND HOW MUCH THIS WOULD BE DEVELOPED IN THE PROJECT ITSELF? .....	15
30. IN CASE OUR EIC TRANSITION PROPOSAL IS SELECTED FOR FUNDING, WHEN IS IT EXPECTED TO START? .....	15
31. MY PROJECT RESULT IS COMING FROM AN ERANET/CO-FUNDED PARTNERSHIP (INCLUDING EUROSTARS). AM I ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?15	
32. WHAT ARE THE CHANGES IN ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS COMPARED WITH EIC WP2025?.....	16

33.	I HAVE AN EXCELLENT PROJECT RESULT FROM A FUNDED PILLAR II HORIZON EUROPE PROJECT. WOULD A PROPOSAL, BASED ON THE CONCERNED PROJECT RESULT, BE ELIGIBLE? .....	16
34.	WE ARE THINKING TO CREATE A SPIN-OFF TO EXPLOIT THE RESULT OF OUR RESEARCH, BUT WE ARE NOT SURE TO CREATE IT JUST BEFORE THE APPLICATION OR SPINNING IT OFF DURING THE EIC TRANSITION PROJECT.....	16
35.	CAN WE INCLUDE IN THE PROPOSAL OTHER ELEMENTS THAN THE MAIN RESULTS FROM THE PREVIOUS PROJECT (E.G. MATURATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF A FURTHER COMPLEMENTARY TECHNIQUE ASIDE OF THE MAIN TECHNOLOGIES DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE LINKED (ELIGIBLE) PROJECT) OR DOES THE EIC TRANSITION SCHEME REQUIRES EXCLUSIVELY TO FURTHER THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESULTS DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE ELIGIBLE PROJECT? .....	16
36.	CAN MULTIPLE PROPOSALS BE SUBMITTED STEMMING FROM THE RESULT(S) OF THE SAME ELIGIBLE PROJECT? ONCE HAVING OBTAINED A TRANSITION GRANT, CAN ANOTHER PROPOSAL BE SUBMITTED IN A NEXT CALL, STEMMING FROM THE SAME ELIGIBLE PROJECT RESULT(S)? .....	17
37.	WHAT DIFFERENTIATES THE ADVANCED INNOVATION CHALLENGES FROM OTHER EIC CALLS? .....	17
38.	ARE THE CHALLENGES TOPICS PREDEFINED? .....	17
39.	WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS TO APPLY TO THIS PILOT? ARE THERE ANY OTHER ENTRY REQUIREMENTS?.....	17
40.	WHAT IS THE EXPECTED BUDGET AND DURATION OF THE ADVANCED INNOVATION CHALLENGE? .....	18
41.	WHO MANAGES THE CHALLENGES? .....	18
42.	WHAT QUALIFIES AS 'BENCHMARKING' IN THE CONTEXT OF STAGE 1, AND HOW CRITICAL IS IT TO STAGE 2 SELECTION? .....	18
	BENCHMARKING MEANS THAT YOUR SOLUTION IS COMPARED TO THE STATE-OF-THE-ART SOLUTION. THE RESULTS OF THE BENCHMARK SHOULD SHOW THE BREAKTHROUGH CHARACTER OF YOUR SOLUTION. ....	18
43.	HOW MUCH FLEXIBILITY EXISTS IN BUILDING CONSORTIA FOR STAGE 2? CAN NEW PARTNERS JOIN WHO WERE NOT INVOLVED IN STAGE 1? 18	
44.	HOW DO PROGRAMME MANAGERS INTERACT WITH FUNDED PROJECTS? .....	19
45.	WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO SUBMIT A FULL PROPOSAL? .....	19
46.	CAN I APPLY TO THE EIC ACCELERATOR IF I AM ALREADY A BENEFICIARY UNDER THE SME INSTRUMENT, EIC ACCELERATOR PILOT OR HORIZON EUROPE EIC ACCELERATOR? .....	19
47.	CAN I APPLY DIRECTLY TO THE FULL PROPOSAL UNDER THE EIC ACCELERATOR IF I HAVE RECEIVED A SEAL OF EXCELLENCE IN THE PAST? 20	
48.	CAN I APPLY TO THE EIC ACCELERATOR IF MY COMPANY IS LOCATED OUTSIDE THE EU? .....	20
49.	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? .....	20
50.	WHAT HAPPENS IF MY COMPANY LOSES THE SME STATUS DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EIC ACCELERATOR PROJECT?.....	21
51.	MY COMPANY RECEIVED A GO ON ITS SHORT PROPOSAL, HOW MUCH TIME DO WE HAVE IN ORDER TO SUBMIT THE FULL PROPOSAL?.....	21
52.	WILL EVALUATORS SEE MY PREVIOUS SUBMISSIONS OR EVALUATOR COMMENTS? .....	21
53.	WHAT ARE THE LIMITS TO SUBMIT AND RE-SUBMIT A FULL EIC ACCELERATOR PROPOSAL? .....	22
54.	AT WHAT STAGE SHOULD THE APPLICANT DEFINE THE TYPE OF FUNDING (BLENDED, GRANT ONLY, EQUITY ONLY) TO APPLY FOR?.....	22
55.	CAN I CHANGE FUNDING REQUEST BETWEEN THE SHORT AND FULL PROPOSAL? .....	22
56.	WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE IN APPLYING FOR "GRANT ONLY" VERSUS "BLENDED FINANCE" OR "EQUITY ONLY"? .....	23
57.	CAN THE JURY RECOMMEND A DIFFERENT TYPE OF FUNDING THAN THE ONE I APPLIED FOR (BLENDED, GRANT ONLY) AFTER THE INTERVIEW? .....	23
58.	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?.....	23
59.	ARE ALL PROPOSALS REQUESTED TO DESCRIBE THEIR MARKET ACTIVITIES? .....	23
60.	WHAT ARE THE MILESTONES? .....	23
61.	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?.....	24
62.	DO I HAVE TO INDICATE FINAL DELIVERABLES IN WORK PACKAGES OR DOES EACH TASK NEED TO HAVE A DELIVERABLE? .....	24
63.	WHICH TRL (TECHNOLOGY READINESS LEVEL) LEVEL MAKES A PROPOSAL ELIGIBLE FOR EIC ACCELERATOR?.....	24
64.	WHERE WILL IT BE POSSIBLE TO INSERT THE GRAPHS AND PICTURES IN THE PROPOSAL? 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? .....	24
65.	WHAT DOCUMENTS SHOULD BE UPLOADED WITH A FULL APPLICATION TO THE EIC ACCELERATOR? .....	24
66.	IF I SUBMIT MY PROPOSAL TO ONE OF THE CHALLENGES INSTEAD OF THE OPEN CALL, WILL IT BE MOVED TO THE OPEN CALL OR VICE VERSA, IF I SUBMIT TO THE OPEN BUT MY PROPOSAL FITS WITHIN THE SCOPE OF A CHALLENGE WILL IT BE MOVED .....	25
67.	I WANT TO APPLY TO AN EIC ACCELERATOR CHALLENGE BUT I READ IN THE SPECIFIC ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS THAT TO BECOME A BENEFICIARY I MUST NOT BE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY CONTROLLED BY A NON-ELIGIBLE THIRD COUNTRY OR A LEGAL ENTITY ESTABLISHED IN A NON-ELIGIBLE THIRD COUNTRY. WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE? .....	25

68.	I WILL SUBMIT A PROPOSAL TO THE EIC ACCELERATOR OPEN CALL WHICH CONTENT COULD ALSO FIT IN AN EIC ACCELERATOR CHALLENGE CALL WITH OWNERSHIP CONTROL RESTRICTIONS. WHAT DOES THIS IMPLY? .....	26
69.	FOR GENERATIVE AI: HOW WILL YOU EVALUATE IF A PROPOSAL IS DEEP TECH, AND WHAT DOES TRL 5 ACHIEVED MEAN? .....	26
70.	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? .....	26
71.	HOW FAR IN ADVANCE SHOULD I SUBMIT MY SHORT PROPOSAL IN ORDER TO MEET THE DEADLINE FOR A FULL PROPOSAL. ....	26
72.	WHEN IS THE DEADLINE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF MY FULL PROPOSAL? .....	27
73.	I HAVE SUBMITTED MY PROPOSAL AFTER 17:00 CET ON THE BATCHING DATE, WILL I RECEIVE AN ERROR MESSAGE OR MY PROPOSAL IS SAVED FOR THE FOLLOWING CUT-OFF? .....	27
74.	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? .....	27
75.	APPLICANTS ARE ASKED TO GIVE CONSENT AT THE SHORT APPLICATION STAGE SO THEIR DATA CAN BE SHARED WITH OTHER AUTHORITIES. WHAT INFORMATION IS SHARED AND WITH WHOM? .....	28
76.	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? .....	28
77.	WHEN CAN I RECEIVE A SEAL OF EXCELLENCE? .....	28
78.	WHAT IS THE FORMAT OF THE EIC ACCELERATOR INTERVIEW AND WHO MAY REPRESENT THE APPLICANT COMPANY? .....	28
79.	CLINICAL TRIALS .....	29
80.	ACCESS TO HIGH PERFORMANCE COMPUTING FOR AI FOR EIC BENEFICIARIES .....	29
81.	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? .....	30
82.	WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE EIC FUND MANAGER? AND OF THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK (EIB)? .....	30
83.	WHY HAS THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION RESTRUCTURED THE EIC FUND AND THE WAY ACCELERATOR'S INVESTMENTS ARE MANAGED COMPARED TO THE HORIZON 2020 PILOT PHASE? .....	30
84.	WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MY COMPANY IS SENT TO THE EIC FUND, WHAT ARE THE INVESTMENT SCENARIOS? .....	31
85.	WHAT FORMS OF INVESTMENT DOES THE EIC FUND USE? .....	31
86.	WHAT WOULD HAPPEN WITH THE LOW INVESTMENT READINESS COMPANIES? .....	32
87.	WHAT IS A 'QUALIFIED INVESTOR'? .....	32
88.	CAN COMPANIES REQUEST EIC INVESTMENTS HIGHER THAN EUR 10 MILLION? .....	32
89.	WHO CAN APPLY FOR EQUITY ONLY SUPPORT? 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? 32	32
90.	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? .....	32
91.	WHY AND HOW IS THE TECHNOLOGICAL DUE DILIGENCE PERFORMED? .....	33
92.	WHEN IS THE TECHNOLOGICAL DUE DILIGENCE PERFORMED? .....	33
93.	HOW IS THE INVESTMENT AMOUNT ESTABLISHED? .....	33
94.	WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EIC ACCELERATOR INVESTMENTS AND SUPPORT UNDER THE INVESTEU PROGRAMME? .....	34
95.	CAN THE EIC FUND INVEST IN COMPANIES WHICH CAN PARTIALLY COVER THEIR INVESTMENT NEEDS FROM SUPPORT PROVIDED UNDER THE INVESTEU PROGRAMME? .....	34
96.	IF A COMPANY HAS AN EIC FUND INVESTMENT AND IT SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVES FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM INVESTEU, DOES THIS MEAN THAT THE COMPANY HAS TO REPAY THE EIC FUND INVESTMENT? .....	35
97.	WHAT DOES IT MEAN IF MY COMPANY IS IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMISSION AS "A COMPANY REQUIRING SPECIFIC SAFEGUARD MEASURES TO PROTECT EUROPEAN INTERESTS IN STRATEGIC AREAS"? .....	35
98.	WHAT TYPES OF TECHNOLOGIES ARE CONSIDERED ELIGIBLE FOR THE EIC STEP SCALE UP CALL? .....	35
99.	WHY SHOULD I APPLY FOR THE STEP SCALE UP CALL INSTEAD OF THE EIC ACCELERATOR? .....	36
100.	HOW DOES THE FUNDING WORK FOR THE EIC STEP SCALE UP CALL AS PART OF A LARGER OVERALL FUNDING ROUND? .....	36
101.	CAN NON-EU COMPANIES APPLY FOR THE EIC STEP SCALE UP CALL? .....	36
102.	WHAT SUPPORT, BEYOND FINANCIAL INVESTMENT, DO SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS RECEIVE UNDER THE EIC STEP SCALE UP CALL? ...	37
103.	WHAT IS THE EVALUATION PROCESS FOR PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE EIC STEP SCALE UP CALL? .....	37
104.	HOW OFTEN WILL THE PROPOSALS BE EVALUATED? .....	38
105.	HOW CAN AN INVESTOR SUBMIT ON BEHALF OF A COMPANY? .....	38
106.	ARE THERE RESUBMISSION LIMITS FOR THE STEP CALL? .....	38
107.	WHAT IS THE SOVEREIGNTY (STEP) SEAL; HOW WILL IT BE AWARDED? .....	38
108.	WHAT IS THE ADVANTAGE OF THE SOVEREIGNTY (STEP) SEAL? .....	39
109.	DOES THE SOVEREIGNTY (STEP) SEAL GUARANTEE EU FUNDING FOR MY PROJECT? .....	39

110.	WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SOVEREIGNTY (STEP) SEAL AND THE SEAL OF EXCELLENCE? .....	39
111.	HOW ARE THE COACHES SELECTED? CAN WE SUGGEST COACHES/ COOPERATE WITH COACHES WE WORKED WITH IN THE PAST? .....	40
112.	I AM A EIC PATHFINDER OR EIC TRANSITION BENEFICIARY. CAN I BENEFIT FROM COACHING? .....	40
113.	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? .....	40
114.	HOW CAN I BENEFIT FROM COACHING AND EIC BAS? ARE THERE ANY SELECTION CRITERIA TO PARTICIPATE? .....	41
115.	WHEN CAN I USE THE THREE DAYS OF COACHING IF I RECEIVE A GO ON MY EIC ACCELERATOR SHORT PROPOSAL? .....	42
116.	DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR THE EIC BUSINESS ACCELERATION SERVICES? WHICH ARE THE ELIGIBLE COSTS? .....	42
117.	HOW CAN I GET ACCESS TO OTHER EIC BUSINESS ACCELERATION SERVICES (ACCESS TO EXPERTISE, TRAININGS, MATCHING, COMMUNITY EVENTS, SERVICES PROVIDED BY EIC ECOSYSTEM PARTNERS)? .....	42
118.	HOW CAN I ACCESS THE EIC COMMUNITY PLATFORM AND WHAT DOES IT PROVIDE? .....	42
119.	HOW CAN I BE UPDATED ON ALL THE OPEN OPPORTUNITIES OF THE EIC BUSINESS ACCELERATION SERVICES? .....	43
120.	WHAT IS EIC PRE-ACCELERATOR AND WHO CAN APPLY? .....	43
121.	WHAT IS THE SCOPE EUROPEAN INNOVATION GENDER AND DIVERSITY INDEX? .....	44
122.	WHICH EIC INSTRUMENTS REQUIRE A 'LUMP SUM BUDGET'? .....	44
123.	HOW TO PREPARE THE BUDGET FOR A LUMP SUM PROPOSAL? .....	44
124.	IN ACCELERATOR, WHY ARE THE FINANCIAL ANNEXES NEEDED AND HOW ARE THEY USED IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS? .....	45
125.	IN ACCELERATOR, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROVIDE A FORECAST OF MY BALANCE SHEET 4 YEARS FROM NOW? .....	45
126.	HOW SHOULD PROPOSALS FOR THE EIC PATHFINDER, TRANSITION, ACCELERATOR, AND STEP SCALE UP CALLS BE SUBMITTED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY COMPONENTS OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS? .....	45
127.	UNDER EIC CALLS, ARE THERE GEOGRAPHICAL CRITERIA USED TO ACHIEVE A BALANCED PORTFOLIO ACROSS DIFFERENT COUNTRIES/ REGIONS? .....	46
128.	CAN I APPLY FOR SEVERAL EIC CALLS AT THE SAME TIME? CAN I APPLY FOR BOTH OPEN AND CHALLENGES? .....	46
129.	CAN I APPLY FOR EIC FUNDING IF I HAVE AN ONGOING GRANT FROM THE EIC PILOT (OR ANOTHER HORIZON 2020 GRANT)? .....	46
130.	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? .....	47
131.	IS THERE SOME GUIDANCE AVAILABLE TO PREVENT FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY THE EIC? .....	47
132.	CAN ENTITIES IN THE UK APPLY FOR EIC FUNDING? .....	47
133.	CAN APPLICANTS USE GENERATIVE AI TOOLS WHEN PREPARING PROPOSALS? .....	48
134.	HOW CAN I APPLY FOR THE FAST TRACK OR PLUG IN SCHEME? WHEN WILL IT BE AVAILABLE AND FOR WHICH PROGRAMMES? .....	48
135.	IS THIS FAST TRACK SCHEME THE SAME AS THE 'FAST TRACK TO RESEARCH AND INNOVATION' PROCEDURES UNDER HORIZON EUROPE OR IS IT SOMETHING DIFFERENT? .....	49
136.	WHAT IS AN EIC INVENTOR? .....	49
137.	WHO OWNS A RESULT DEVELOPED BY AN EIC INVENTOR? .....	50
138.	AS AN EIC INVENTOR, CAN I PUBLISH AN EIC RESULT IN A PEER-REVIEWED SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL? .....	50
139.	I AM A RESEARCHER WHO DEVELOPED AN INNOVATIVE RESULT WITH EIC FUNDING. HOW DO I PROTECT MY INVENTION? .....	50
140.	WHAT IS CONSIDERED SUFFICIENT 'SUPPORT' BY THE EIC AWARDEE FOR THE PROTECTION AND COMMERCIALISATION OF THEIR INNOVATIONS? .....	50
141.	I WOULD LIKE TO TRANSFER MY RESULTS TO ANOTHER INSTITUTION. DO I HAVE TO INFORM THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION? .....	50
142.	I AM AN EIC INVENTOR, AND MY INVENTION WAS PATENTED BY MY INSTITUTION. CAN I COMMERCIALISE THIS INVENTION? .....	50
143.	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)? .....	51
144.	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? .....	51
145.	ANNEX 6 OF THE WORK PROGRAMME SAYS THAT IF A BENEFICIARY ('EIC AWARDEE') FAILS TO EXPLOIT OR DISSEMINATE A RESULT THE GRANTING AUTHORITY CAN IMPOSE PENALTIES; WHEN WILL SUCH PENALTIES BE APPLIED? .....	51

# EIC PATHFINDER

## 1. What is the expected budget 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 4 million for Pathfinder Open and for Pathfinder Challenges as appropriate. Nonetheless, this does not prevent you from requesting larger amounts, if properly justified. Eligible costs will take the form of a lump sum.

In general, there is no specific expectation on 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). However, the eligibility conditions of each call need to be satisfied. For some Pathfinder Challenges, projects are expected to have a set duration which is 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, in which they will compete with proposals submitted by consortia.

## 2. Which range of Technology Readiness Levels 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 Technology Readiness Levels (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 Intellectual Property that is generated (e.g. a patent application) as well as an assessment of relevant aspects related to regulation, certification and standardisation.

In addition, the expected output of Pathfinder Open projects 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 the *participation* of SMEs or industrial partners to EIC Pathfinder consortia compulsory?

The participation of SMEs or 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 consortia 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). Please note that mid-caps and larger companies are not eligible 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 MSs or ACs.
- Consortia of three or more entities must include as beneficiaries at least three legal entities, independent from each other and each of the three 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 minimum consortium composition. An affiliated entity to an applicant 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 university from the United States (the US 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 an Australian university (the Australian university participates as an 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. 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 the establishment 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 (such as that there is diversity and synergies among the projects) 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, with each other, showing a flexible and proactive approach 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-months to these activities.

## **6. Why and when may Pathfinder Open projects be added to an EIC portfolio? What kind of portfolio activities are expected?**

EIC Pathfinder Open projects may be invited to join one or more Thematic Portfolios during their execution. 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 projects to achieve their objectives more efficiently, effectively, and more widely to enhance research, prepare transition to innovation and stimulate business opportunities, and strengthen the EIC Community. Such activities may include participation in conferences, workshops or meetings, data sharing, or participation in any relevant EIC Business Acceleration Services events, just to name a few.

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. Participation to a thematic portfolio will be on a voluntary basis.

## **7. How will participation in portfolio activities be supported? At proposal submission stage, do proposals need to allocate a budget for portfolio activities?**

EIC Pathfinder Open proposals do not need to allocate budget for these activities while those from EIC 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 fixed amounts not exceeding EUR 50 000 each which can be applied for after the grant signature. A maximum number of Booster grants per project is foreseen in the WP.

## **8. Will the EIC Pathfinder Challenges still exist in future EIC work programmes?**

The Challenge-driven approach is expected to continue in future EIC work programmes beyond 2026. The topics identified for the challenge-driven calls in the EIC Work Programme 2027 may evolve, with newly identified topics. EIC Programme Managers are expected to play a central role in this process.

## **9. Will dedicated events be organised to support the formation of consortia for EIC Pathfinder calls?**

The European Commission supports the formation of consortia for EIC Pathfinder calls by means of its Partner Search tool on the Funding & 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.

## **10. In the EIC Pathfinder Open evaluations, how is the “gender balance among work package leaders” factor applied when prioritising proposals with the same final score?**

The Work Programme indicates the order of all the factors that will apply in order to establish the priority to 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 assess the gender balance factor. 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 in which the information on the gender of work package leaders is entirely missing will be considered as not demonstrating gender balance.

## **11. In the EIC Pathfinder Open evaluations, how is the ‘number of Member States and Associated Countries’ factor applied when prioritising proposals with the same final score?**

The Work Programme indicates the order of all the factors that will apply in order to establish the priority to proposals with the same final score.

This factor is applied by calculating how many Member States (MSs) and Associated Countries (ACs) are represented in the consortium. Consortia with a larger number of MSs and ACs represented are assigned priority. Associated partners not requesting funding are not taken into account. Member States or Associated Countries in which several members of the consortium are established are counted only once.

Examples:

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

Consortium’s A proposal has priority over consortium’s B proposal with the same final score.

## **12. 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.

### **13. Are applicants established in the United Kingdom eligible for funding under the EIC Pathfinder in the EIC WP 2026?**

The United Kingdom is associated to the entire Horizon Europe Programme, including Pillar III and the EIC Pathfinder and fully eligible for funding. Entities established in this country may both be consortia coordinators and partners. In this WP limitations apply to the EIC Accelerator (see EIC WP 2026).

### **14. Are applicants established in Switzerland eligible for funding under the EIC Pathfinder in the EIC WP 2026?**

Switzerland is in the list of third countries to which transitional arrangements apply. The transitional arrangement for Switzerland applies to the whole Horizon Europe Programme (all Pillars) for award procedures (e.g. call for proposals, prizes) implementing the 2025 budget and onwards.

Consequently, applicants established in Switzerland will be treated for such award procedures as entities established in an associated country, subject to the association agreement being applicable at the time of award. Therefore, grant agreements with beneficiaries established in Switzerland on the basis of the association agreement can only be signed if the association has started producing legal effects, i.e. the association agreement started to apply.

Further update is expected on 10 NOV 2025 once the association agreement is signed.

### **15. What is considered as a breakthrough innovation in the EIC Pathfinder?**

The European Innovation Council (EIC) defines breakthrough innovation as an innovation that goes beyond incremental improvements of existing solutions.

The EIC Pathfinder aims at ambitious advanced research to develop the scientific basis to underpin breakthrough technologies (including deep-tech). This means funding projects at early stages of development that involve high-risk but potentially high-gain transformative research, typically in fields where commercial applications are not yet evident. It introduces radically new ideas, technologies, or solutions that have the potential to disrupt existing markets or create entirely new ones.

### **16. How should applicants determine and propose the amount of the lump sum?**

In order to set up the budget in a lump sum proposal, applicants need to complete the detailed budget table in the application. In this table, applicants have to provide cost estimations (approximation of the actual costs) for each cost category (personnel costs, subcontracting costs, purchase costs, other cost categories) per beneficiary and affiliated entity (if any), and per work package. The cost estimations must add up to the lump sum proposed by the applicants and must meet the usual cost eligibility criteria of Horizon Europe.

## **EIC TRANSITION**

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

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

- For three or more beneficiary proposals: must include at least one independent legal entity established in an EU Member State (MS) and two independent legal entities established in two other EU MSs or Associated Countries (AC);
- For two beneficiary proposals: two independent legal entities from two different EU MSs or Associated Countries;
- For single legal entity proposals: one legal entity established in an EU MS or Associated Country.

For the purposes of the eligibility conditions, applicants established in Horizon 2020 Associated Countries or in other third countries negotiating association to Horizon Europe, will be treated as entities established in an Associated Country, provided that the Horizon Europe association agreement with the third country concerned applies at the time of signature of the grant agreement.

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 new circumstances regarding the current status of the third country's association to Horizon Europe.

## **18. 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?"**

Associated Partner(s) and Affiliated entity(ies), which can be part of a proposal, do not count towards the minimum eligibility criteria for consortium composition. For additional details, you can also check the related FAQs on the Funding & Tenders Portal.

The transition towards innovation and market asks however for single legal entity proposals and/or lean consortia. The evaluation criteria Quality and efficiency of the implementation asks if the number of project partners is well justified.

## **19. What range of TRL should EIC Transition projects cover? What is the expected starting point and 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 5/6. Note that the starting TRL fully achieved at the submission of the proposal, must be at least TRL3 (i.e. TRL3 accomplished) or maximum TRL 4. Eligibility requirements of minimum achieved TRL3 and max TRL 4 apply for both the linked eligible project as well as the proposal. The overall TRL will be maximally equal to the lowest TRL of its core technological components/subsystems.

The final TRL achieved at the end of the EIC Transition project must be at least TRL 5.

For further guidance, please check the Euraxess and Horizon Europe NCP Portal pages on TRLs.

In this context, it should also be noted that additional checks to verify that a proposal is within the scope of the call may be conducted, leading, potentially, to the rejection of a proposal or the termination of the grant

preparation phase if a given proposal has been recommended for funding. False declarations in of selected proposals to obtain EU funding, are grounds, among others, for suspension of payments, suspension of the project implementation and grant agreement termination, according to Article 30, 31 and 32 of the Grant Agreement.

At the end of your EIC Transition project, you should be ready for the next stage, which can be to apply for EIC Accelerator, to enter licensing or collaboration agreements with third parties, or other routes to market deployment.

## 20. What information is to be provided in the proposal regarding the 'linked' project?

Proposals to EIC Transition calls must build on results from an ongoing or recently finished eligible project (i.e. linked project), funded from a call as indicated in the Work Programme. In the application form, the eligible linked project needs to be clearly identified, referenced, relevant results to build on described and the relation with the proposal and the innovation contribution made evident. Failing to provide the required information where it is requested in the application form, may result in the rejection of the proposal as ineligible.

For ERC PoC projects for example, aside the eligible ERC PoC project reference, the main result is also to be described, generated from the earlier ERC project for which ERC PoC was granted, to study the commercial feasibility or to look for possible/promising application domains.

The application template format is to be respected. It is provided in the Funding & Tenders Portal during the application process.

## 21. Is the 'linked' project eligible?

Your proposal must build on results already achieved within an eligible project as specified in the Work Programme, meeting all eligibility requirements. Applicants must prove the project, from which the result was generated, was funded by Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe (including Joint-Undertakings, unless they implement financial support to third parties' grants), by specifying the relevant grant agreement number and acronym as indicated in the EU Funding & Tenders Portal. Applicants must encode this information in a specific box in the application form.

Namely, the EIC Work Programme explicitly states that: "In all cases you need to specify in your application the grant number and acronym of the eligible project(s) which generated the result ...".

You also need to add the reference(s) to where the result has been reported: in the periodic reporting, the Horizon results platform, EIC Transition 'innovation discovery' tool powered by the Innovation Radar or CORDIS.

The dedicated pages are:

- Horizon Results Platform: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/horizon-results-platform>
- The dedicated page of the Innovation Radar about EIC Transition / EIC Transition innovation discovery tool: <https://innovation-radar.ec.europa.eu/eic-transition>
- CORDIS: <https://cordis.europa.eu/>

In the case of the result being already listed on the Innovation Radar platform, the unique id of that innovation/result needs to be provided during the proposal submission process and will look like this: (serving

as example for illustrative purposes) [https://innovation-radar.ec.europa.eu/innovation/\[unique\\_id\\_for\\_innovation\]](https://innovation-radar.ec.europa.eu/innovation/[unique_id_for_innovation])

Failing to provide the required information where it is requested, may result in the rejection of the proposal as ineligible.

As from the opening of the call, the EIC Transition website contains a list of indicative eligible projects (non-exhaustive, in excel format). This list does not constitute proof of eligibility and is provided as indication only.

Eligible projects funded through Flagships of the European Commission do not find the project number in the above mentioned indicative list and should refer to their Specific Grant Agreement (SGA) number instead as well as list their specific grant/project.

UK entities, having passed the ERC PoC evaluation, but funded through the UK Horizon Europe Guarantee are not eligible to apply to the EIC Transition. Namely, the Work Programme states that European Research Council Proof of Concept projects funded by Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe are eligible for EIC Transition.

## **22. What does “reference to where the result has been reported” means?**

It means indicating where it is requested in the proposal template, the weblink where the result is published (the periodic reporting, the Horizon results platform, the Innovation Radar or CORDIS).

If exceptionally there is no CORDIS link (e.g. for EDF eligible projects) or no result(s) published yet (e.g. the public part of the periodic report was not yet made available as the start date of the grant should be at least 18 months before the cut-off date of the relevant EIC Transition call), please explain and duly justify. Other accessible sources may be accepted in such exceptional cases.

Please note if you are in a situation that no result is published yet, perhaps your application might not be eligible or is too early to apply to EIC Transition. Please verify.

## **23. Can I resubmit my proposal?**

Yes, if the proposal respects all eligibility conditions as indicated in the Work Programme (e.g. within time limits of 24 months since the end of the “linked” project), using the proposal template of the respective call (i.e. making sure that any novelty in the proposal template is incorporated).

## **24. I would like to apply for an EIC Transition project to further develop the results created by someone else (another project where my legal entity did not participate). What is the commitment letter from the relevant owner(s) of the result to be included in the proposal?**

Proposals must include the confirmation that the applicants are the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) owners or holders or have the necessary rights to commercialise the results of the project on whose results the current proposal is building.

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 & Tenders Portal during the application stage.

## **25. What is the Seal of Excellence for EIC Transition projects? What support is available?**

The Seal of Excellence (SoE) will be awarded to all EIC Transition proposals that meet the evaluation thresholds on all evaluation criteria but are not funded due to lack of available budget. Previously the SoE was only available for mono-beneficiary SME proposals. In case of multi-beneficiary applications, the SoE is awarded to the coordinator, citing all other applicants. It is awarded to positively evaluated but unfunded proposals as defined in the call texts, to facilitate access to funding from other sources. SoE Awardees (coordinators and project partners, if applicable) have access to the EIC Business Acceleration Services, including the EIC Tech to Market Programme.

## **26. What is the expected budget and duration of an EIC Transition project?**

The EIC considers as appropriate proposals with a duration between 1 and 3 years. The minimum amount (requested EU contribution) envisaged for a project is EUR 500 000. The maximum amount for a project is EUR 2.5 million.

The duration or budget 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 or have longer lead times than others.

Proposals with a different duration and/or budget will be declared ineligible or scored down accordingly.

## **27. Is the participation of SMEs or industrial partners to EIC Transition consortia compulsory? Can researchers from e.g. academic partners participate?**

The EIC Work Programme allows for proposals involving a single legal entity being an academic institution or proposals composed of academic partners only, without an SME or industrial partner. However, during the evaluation the quality and motivation of the team will be assessed, notably the “necessary high-quality capabilities and high motivation to move decisively towards market” and “to what extent the applicant(s) have the necessary expertise to create a unique commercial value from the emerging technology and develop an attractive business and investment proposition”. A spin-off at some point during the project implementation or at the end of the project could therefore also be envisaged.

Otherwise, it is therefore generally 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. Technology Transfer Offices or business schools are also encouraged to actively participate in the EIC Transition project, as they can play a key role in enabling and supporting researchers with the development and commercialisation of their research results.

Academic spin-offs could possibly be considered as Affiliated entities to the academic organisation that has created them, provided they comply with Article 187 of the Financial Regulation and Article 8 of the HE Model Grant Agreement. Affiliated entities, which can be part of a consortium, are not taken into consideration for the eligibility of the consortium’s composition. For additional details, you can also check the related FAQs on the Funding & Tenders Portal.

## **28. When and how will a selected EIC Transition project be added to a portfolio of projects? 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.

## **29. How much should applicants invest upfront in the market aspects (competition, business case, business model) for the EIC Transition 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 e.g. on desk research, collaboration with their TTOs or local accelerators & incubators or business schools, etc. As indicated in the Work Programme, applicants should have conducted preliminary market research to identify potential markets for their innovation and explored potential competitors. Essential elements of an incipient business model are to be included in the proposal (e.g. value proposition, key resources) and elements of an incipient business plan are expected to be included as well and/or at least presented at the Jury phase. Proposal should include minimum performance KPIs that should be achieved during project life.

The EIC Transition projects should advance both the technology and business aspects. The business plan and business model will be further developed and refined during the project duration, with field and user research (including e.g. further customer discovery and customer validation), as to become a credible basis for entrepreneurship, business creation and investment.

## **30. In case our EIC Transition proposal is selected for funding, when is it expected to start?**

Applicants that are selected for funding are expected to start their project within 2 months after grant agreement signature. The grant agreement 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, even if the information does not constitute a legal commitment for funding the proposal. If the applicants are not able to start swiftly after the grant agreement signature, they are advised to submit their proposal in the next call (or cut-off, if applicable).

## **31. My project result is coming from an ERAnet/co-funded partnership (including Eurostars). Am I eligible to apply?**

Grants funded via financial support to third parties (e.g., ERA NETs/co-funded partnerships, EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities) will not be eligible as it is not possible to verify if the result was generated by

such projects. Also, projects that fall under the QuantERA, FLAG-ERA and ChistERA ERANETs are not eligible (anymore).

### **32. What are the changes in eligibility conditions compared with EIC WP2025?**

Projects with results from Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020 research infrastructures as now also eligible for the EIC Transition call (provided all other eligibility criteria are complied with).

### **33. I have an excellent project result from a funded Pillar II Horizon Europe project. Would a proposal, based on the concerned project result, be eligible?**

Research and Innovation Action projects funded under H2020 Societal Challenge and Leadership in Industrial Technologies and/or under Horizon Europe Pillar II, with a correct TRL, are eligible, provided all other eligibility requirements are met. For more details consult the EIC Work Programme 2026 and other relevant FAQs here.

### **34. We are thinking to create a spin-off to exploit the result of our research, but we are not sure to create it just before the application or spinning it off during the EIC Transition project.**

From the process point of view both options are possible, considering the eligibility conditions. For example, a spin-off can be an additional affiliated entity for a mono-beneficiary project, provided the conditions are met as per Article 187 of the Financial Regulation and Article 8 of the HE Model Grant Agreement. Affiliated entities are not taken into consideration for the eligibility of the consortium composition. For additional details, you can also check the related FAQs on the Funding & Tenders Portal.

It is important to choose the option that makes most sense taking into account timing, market, team, readiness issues, etc. If done during project implementation, the normal grant agreement amendment procedures are to be followed as long as the changes do not call into question the award decision. A transfer of relevant tasks, roles and related budget can be envisaged in such cases as part of the request.

### **35. Can we include in the proposal other elements than the main results from the previous project (e.g. maturation and development of a further complementary technique aside of the main technologies developed as part of the linked (eligible) project) or does the EIC Transition scheme requires exclusively to further the development of the results developed as part of the eligible project?**

Your proposal should build mainly but not necessarily exclusively on the results of the previous project(s). Activities not linked to previous funded work of the eligible project for further maturation and validation could be included in the proposal provided it is essential and needed for the further development of your innovation (the same logic applies if activities would be included from (an)other additional eligible project(s)). The EIC Work Programme 2026 indicates that your proposed activities must include further technology development on the results achieved in a previous project. The proposal template asks to describe the relation between the research result of the previous project and the innovation within your proposal and whether the result from the previous project is the main component of your proposal and how it contributes to the innovation in this proposal.

### **36. Can multiple proposals be submitted stemming from the result(s) of the same eligible project? Once having obtained a Transition grant, can another proposal be submitted in a next call, stemming from the same eligible project result(s)?**

In principle this is possible in well justified cases, provided all eligibility conditions are met (e.g. end date of the eligible project), except for an eligible originating ERC Proof of Concept and FET Innovation Launchpad project, for which only one proposal in the same call is allowed (see work Programme text).

In any case, such proposals are to be different and distinctive from each other, building on the same or (a) different result(s) from the eligible originating project. For example, when the technology developed can be used for different innovations in different markets with other requirements. Also, operational capacity is to be taken into account.

A reference of the other proposal or already funded project is to be provided as part of the proposal (see proposal template).

## **EIC ADVANCED INNOVATION CHALLENGES**

### **37. What differentiates the Advanced Innovation Challenges from other EIC calls?**

The EIC Advanced Innovation Challenges introduce a new ARPA-style pilot scheme under Horizon Europe as a reinforcement of risk taking and user uptake of innovations.

As a differentiating factor, the call for Challenges is implemented through funding milestones. Projects progress in two stages: from short, feasibility validation (Stage 1) to real-world development and user testing (Stage 2).

### **38. Are the Challenges topics predefined?**

Yes. The EIC Advanced Innovation Challenges are theme focused. For the 2026 pilot, there are two predefined challenge topics:

- Accelerating Physical AI: Embodied Intelligence for the Next Frontier of AI-Powered Robotics
- Translating Disruptive New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) into Practice

Each Challenge has its own scope, objectives, and eligibility requirements.

### **39. What are the eligibility conditions to apply to this pilot? Are there any other entry requirements?**

You can apply for EIC Advanced Innovation Challenge Stage 1 under this WP 2026 as: A single legal entity established in a Member State or an Associated Country ('mono-beneficiary') if you are a start-up, SME or research performing organisation (university, research or technology organisation, including teams, individual Principal Investigators and inventors). Larger companies (i.e. which do not qualify as SMEs) are not eligible to apply as a single legal entity. Specific entry requirements are mentioned in the Work Programme text of the two

Challenges (Accelerating Physical AI: Embodied Intelligence for the Next Frontier of AI-Powered Robotics; Translating Disruptive New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) into Practice):

- a) Applicants must demonstrate the interest of potential stakeholders in the proposed solution through a letter of intent.
- b) The proposed solution should have reached TRL 4
- c) The applicant must have access to an appropriate infrastructure for data collection and testing

#### **40. What is the expected budget and duration of the Advanced Innovation Challenge?**

For the EIC Advanced Innovation Challenges pilot (Stage 1), successful applicants receive a €300,000 lump sum grant for a duration of up to nine months to validate and benchmark their solutions.

Stage 2 is expected under the 2027 EIC Work Programme, offering up to €2.5 million lump sum in funding for a duration of up to 2.5 years to further develop and test the most promising solutions of Stage 1 in real-world environments.

#### **41. Who manages the challenges?**

Each Advanced Innovation Challenge is managed by an EIC Programme Manager, who is responsible for shaping the challenge scope, overseeing the portfolio of funded projects, and guiding teams throughout both stages.

Programme Managers ensure alignment with EU policy priorities, promote cross-project learning, and support synergies among participants and users to maximise impact and portfolio coherence.

#### **42. What qualifies as 'benchmarking' in the context of Stage 1, and how critical is it to Stage 2 selection?**

Benchmarking means that your solution is compared to the state-of-the-art solution. The results of the benchmark should show the breakthrough character of your solution.

#### **43. How much flexibility exists in building consortia for Stage 2? Can new partners join who were not involved in Stage 1?**

There is possibility of forming consortia for Stage 2.

New partners may join at Stage 2 if they bring complementary expertise or user involvement necessary for testing, scaling, or regulatory validation. However, note that the legal entity participating in Stage 1 must either participate directly in Stage 2 or transfer rights to use the relevant technology and results to the new consortium.

All Stage 2 proposals must remain within the limit of three independent legal entities and comply with standard Horizon Europe eligibility rules.

#### 44. How do Programme Managers interact with funded projects?

Programme Managers play a proactive and hands-on role throughout the Advanced Innovation Challenges. They provide strategic guidance, facilitate collaboration across projects, and organise activities such as user workshops and cross-project learning sessions.

Each funded team is expected to allocate at least one person-month to such portfolio activities. Programme Managers also contribute to the portfolio-based selection for Stage 2, ensuring balanced coverage of technologies, use cases, and policy relevance.

## EIC ACCELERATOR

#### 45. Who is eligible to submit a full proposal?

The basis for eligibility of submitting a full proposal is the date which an applicant received a GO outcome on the short proposal or received an invitation to submit via the fast track or plug-in schemes. If the GO on short proposal or invitation for Fast Track/Plug-in scheme was received under the 2025 or 2026 EIC Work Programme, you may submit a full proposal. This concerns all short applications submitted after the adoption of the 2025 Work Programme on 29 October 2024. Proposals which received a GO under the 2024 work programme and have already submitted a full proposal will be eligible to submit a full proposal in 2026 as long as they remain within their submission limitations. After three unsuccessful submissions at any stage (short proposal full proposal or interview) of the same/improved proposal by the same legal entity to the EIC Accelerator call for Challenges or Open, you may not apply again to the EIC Accelerator under the Horizon Europe Framework Programme (which runs until the end of 2027).

#### 46. Can I apply to the EIC Accelerator if I am already a beneficiary under the SME Instrument, EIC Accelerator Pilot or Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator?

As a current or previous beneficiary of the above programmes, you may apply under the following conditions:

- You may apply for grant-only if you have not already received a grant-only under the current Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator. As per the EIC Work Programme 2026 grant-only support under the EIC Accelerator can only be provided once to a beneficiary during Horizon Europe for a maximum of EUR 2.5 million to cover activities of TRL 6 to 8. Moreover, beneficiaries of ongoing or finalised 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 calls may be eligible to apply for a related investment component under Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator call.
- Beneficiaries of blended finance projects where the grant component of the blended finance project is finalised may apply for blended finance, grant only or equity only.

In summary:

- Horizon 2020 beneficiaries
  - Grant only
    - Project finalised -> You may apply for grant only, blended or equity only.
    - Project ongoing -> You may apply for blended finance or equity only.
  - Blended

- Project finalised -> You may apply for grant only, blended or equity only.
  - Project ongoing -> You may apply for equity only.
- Horizon Europe beneficiaries
  - Grant only
    - Project finalised -> You may apply for blended or equity only.
    - Project ongoing -> You may apply for blended finance or equity only.
  - Blended
    - Project finalised -> You may apply for grant only, blended or equity only.
    - Project ongoing -> If the grant component is finalised, you may apply for blended, grant only or equity only.
  - Equity only -> You may apply for grant only, blended or equity only.

#### **47. 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 in itself give the right to apply directly to the full proposal. In order to be able to submit a full proposal, the applicant must have a GO on a short proposal as laid out in the 2026 EIC Work Programme. If the GO on short proposal or invitation for Fast Track/Plug-in scheme was received under the 2025 or 2026 EIC Work Programme, you may submit a full proposal. This concerns all short applications submitted after the adoption of the 2025 Work Programme on 29 October 2024. Proposals which received a GO under the 2024 work programme and have already submitted a full proposal will be eligible to submit a full proposal in 2026 as long as they remain within their submission limitations

#### **48. 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 funding under the EIC Accelerator calls the same way as a company from a Member State (unless an exception applies – please see EIC Work Programme 2026 and List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe and, in particular, the third countries associated to HE that cannot participate in the EIC Fund, if you plan to apply for blended finance or equity-only). If 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 company from 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. The jury may make recommendations to be taken into account when negotiating the grant or investment component.

Please also take into account that in some cases, economic security measures may apply (see detailed information in the EIC Work Programme).

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?"

#### **49. 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 as long as it meets the eligibility requirements (including SME status). 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, 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.

## **50. 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 grant agreement and considering not eligible the costs incurred as from the date of the completion of the transaction (i.e. loss of SME status). 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 revoked in line with the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines. Please note that the EIC Accelerator may also support small mid-cap companies which are defined as having up to 500 employees.

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

If your proposal is successful at the short proposal stage under the 2025 or 2026 work programme, you may submit a full proposal at any time in 2026 (see below) or 2027 (dates to be established in the 2027 EIC Work Programme).

The proposals will be batched at 17:00 Brussels time on the following dates:

- 7 January 2026
- 4 March 2026
- 6 May 2026
- 8 July 2026
- 2 September 2026
- 4 November 2026

Proposals which received a GO under the 2024 work programme and have already submitted a full proposal will be eligible to submit a full proposal in 2026 as long as they remain within their submission limitations.

Please note that if your short proposal is successful, you will be entitled to receive coaching support from the EIC Business Acceleration Services to prepare a full proposal.

## **52. Will evaluators see my previous submissions or evaluator comments?**

The remote evaluators will not see any previous submission or evaluation reports from previous evaluators. At the interview stage jury members will have access to the full proposal documents including the technology expert and evaluation panel comments from the full proposal only. 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 describe any improvements made in the narrative part B of the application form, however there is no structured format to include this information.

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

From January 1, 2024, you may submit up to 3 unsuccessful applications (i.e. your application can be rejected maximum 3 times), at any stage of the process (Short Proposal, Full Proposal remote or Interview) 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 the end of 2027). After the third rejection, you will not be able to submit again to the EIC Accelerator under the Horizon Europe Framework Programme.

If you are successful at the short proposal stage, this does not count within the limit of three applications. If you are successful at the remote evaluation stage of a full proposal but then unsuccessful at the interview phase, this counts as one unsuccessful application. For example:

- If you are successful at your first submission to the short proposal stage, you may apply up to three times at full proposal stage.
- If you are rejected one time at short proposal stage, you may still apply two further times at short proposal stage. If you are successful the second time at short proposal you may then apply two times at full proposal stage.
- If you are rejected one time at full proposal (at either the remote evaluation or the jury interview), you may still submit up to two further times at the full proposal stage (unless you have been unsuccessful at the short proposal stage which will be counted as one of the three unsuccessful applications).

Please note that applications submitted before 2024 are not taken into account for the purpose of the 3 rejections limit (your counter restarts from zero as from 1 January 2024).

### **54. 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 12 page 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 questionnaire with focused questions related to the evaluation criteria as well as full information on the finances of the company and company 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 lump sum budget table for the grant component and a financial plan document.

### **55. 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 an estimate while the full proposal should demonstrate your complete business plan and financial needs.

## **56. What is the difference in applying for “Grant only” versus “Blended Finance” or “Equity only”?**

All applications are evaluated on an equal basis against the relevant evaluation criteria for the type of funding requested and there are no pre-set allocations of funding to the different forms of support.

However, if your application is for “grant only”, you must demonstrate in your application that you have access to the resources needed to commercialise and scale up your innovation (given that the EIC Fund will not be able to provide equity investments and help attract other investors).

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

The Jury may not 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 the grant amount (for example to exclude TRL9 activities) and 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).

## **58. 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 EIC Jury during the interview and will be assessed accordingly by the EIC Jury. Any change will be assessed whether it has an impact on the eligibility of the applicant, e.g. SME status. 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.

## **59. Are all proposals requested to describe their market activities?**

In line with the objective and target of 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. The market activities should be explained under the relevant questions in the submission form especially on commercialisation questions.

## **60. What are the 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.

### **61. 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 agreement will be set in alignment with the indicated duration of the "innovation activities work packages" flagged by you (in your proposal) as to be co-financed by the grant component during its duration, 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. Such "innovation activities work packages" flagged as to be covered by the investment component will not be part of the work packages included in the Annex 1 – Part A of the Grant Agreement, hence they will not have an impact on the duration of the grant agreement.

### **62. 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.

### **63. Which TRL (Technology Readiness Level) level makes a proposal eligible for EIC Accelerator?**

For the EIC Accelerator, the applicant should demonstrate, in the proposal and through the evaluation process, that at least all activities for TRL 5, i.e. "Validation in relevant environment", has been achieved. For more information regarding the "Technology Readiness Levels" please refer to the Glossary of the EIC Work Programme.

### **64. Where will it be possible to insert the graphs and pictures in the proposal? 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, 20 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 should you be invited to the interview stage.

### **65. What documents should be uploaded with a full application to the EIC Accelerator?**

For the EIC Accelerator applications, you must upload the Part B questionnaire and in addition:

- Pitch deck. There is no pre-defined template nor limit of slides, however, please keep in mind that you will have 10 minutes to present this pitch deck if you are invited to the face-to-face interviews. The pitch deck should be provided in PDF file format.
- Video. You must upload a video pitch of up to three minutes. You may decide to reuse or update the video pitch submitted with your short proposal.

- Lump Sum (mandatory for grant only and blended finance proposals). Please use the template for the lump sum detailed budget breakdown.
- Implementation plan (mandatory for grant only and blended finance proposals) – 10 pages max. Please use the template with description of work packages and deliverables, including milestones, resources and timings.
- Financial plan and equity needed (both for grant only and blended finance proposals). Please use the template provided.
- Results of the freedom to operate (FTO) analysis. If you do not have one, please upload a note of maximum 2 pages outlining your freedom to operate and providing as much information as possible on this issue. In cases where the FTO is not relevant (e.g. software), please upload a simple statement.
- Letters of intent. Please use the guidance template available in the Funding & Tender Portal.
- Ownership control declaration. Only for proposals submitted in the Challenge 2.4 “Boosting the European Critical Raw Materials value chain” and Open proposals in the scope of the aforementioned Challenge requesting a GRANT ONLY funding.

## **66. If I submit my proposal to one of the Challenges instead of the Open call, will it be moved to the Open call or vice versa, if I submit to the Open but my proposal fits within the scope of a Challenge will it be moved**

EISMEA will not transfer 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. Also, there may be different eligibility conditions applying.

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

Please take a close look at the sections in the relevant Work Programme regarding the EIC Accelerator Challenge areas of strategic relevance in order to take the decision.

Nevertheless, should you make an obvious clerical error and submit to the wrong topic by mistake, please contact the helpdesk as soon as possible and ask for the proposal to be moved the correct topic.

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

As an applicant to the grant only component of the EIC Accelerator challenge Boosting the European Critical Raw Materials value chain, you will have to provide an ownership control declaration as an annex to the application form. Proposals under the Open call whose scope is identified as falling under this Challenge (for 2026, Boosting the European Critical Raw Materials value chain) will have to fill in the same declaration, only if they are selected for funding. On top of this declaration, successful applicants will be requested to provide documents describing their ownership/control structure. These documents will then be assessed in order to determine whether your company is directly or indirectly controlled by a non-eligible third country or a legal entity in a non-eligible third country.

In case the applicant is found to be controlled directly or indirectly by the above-mentioned entities, the proposal may be rejected as ineligible.

### **68. I will submit a proposal to the EIC Accelerator Open call which content could also fit in an EIC Accelerator Challenge call with ownership control restrictions. What does this imply?**

Applicants with proposals within the scope of the Challenge calls are encouraged to submit to the Challenge as there is reserved budget specifically for the Challenge.

Proposals under the Open call which are identified as falling under the Challenges with ownership control restrictions and are requesting grant only support, should also fill in an ownership control declaration. On top of this declaration, successful applicants will be requested to provide documents proving their ownership/control.

In case the applicant is found to be controlled directly or indirectly by the above-mentioned entities, the proposal may be rejected as ineligible.

### **69. For Generative AI: How will you evaluate if a proposal is deep tech, and what does TRL 5 achieved mean?**

A GenAI proposal that will consider, for instance, explainability, dealing with hallucinations, transparency, trust, reliability, Multimodality, Models size, etc is "deep tech". TRL 5 achieved means that the technology is tested and validated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies). Which means that the AI system is tested and validated in a simulated or laboratory environment that closely mimics real-world conditions. This includes using real datasets to evaluate and validate the system's performance and making necessary adjustments.

### **70. 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. Please keep in mind that such means of redress should not be used to challenge the technical and scientific assessment made by the evaluators. For more information, please refer to section "E. EVALUATION REVIEW PROCEDURE" of the EIC Work Programme.

### **71. How far in advance should I submit my short proposal in order to meet the deadline for a full proposal.**

Short proposals are collected for evaluation on the first Tuesday of every month at 17h00 Brussels time, and the results transmitted to applicants within 4 to 6 weeks of the date at which the evaluation is started.

It is therefore recommended to submit a short proposal at least 10 weeks ahead of the foreseen submission of a full application (up to 6 weeks to evaluate the short application, leaving at least 4 weeks to prepare the full application). However, it is recommended to submit earlier than this, in particular to benefit from the coaching services provided to successful applicants at the short proposal stage.

## 72. When is the deadline for the submission of my full proposal?

The full proposal is continuously open, and you may apply at any time. Proposals will be batched for evaluation every two months at 17:00:00 (CET) on

- 7/01/2026;
- 04/03/2026;
- 06/05/2026;
- 08/07/2026;
- 02/09/2026;
- 04/11/2026

It is highly recommended to submit your proposal as early as possible and at least 48 hours before the batching date if you want to ensure you are included in that evaluation session. Like this you will avoid technical problems (system requirements, local configuration settings, system congestion, etc).

## 73. I have submitted my proposal after 17:00 CET on the batching 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 retained for evaluation under the following batching date unless it is the batching of the year. If you would like to make any changes once submitted, you must contact the Funding and Tender Portal Service Desk [EC-FUNDING-TENDER-SERVICE-DESK@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EC-FUNDING-TENDER-SERVICE-DESK@ec.europa.eu) to ask to 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 towards the resubmission limit.

## 74. 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 provide their consent and 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 may not be activated.

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

## **75. Applicants are asked to give consent at the short application stage 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.

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

## **76. 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 for 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 holders 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.

## **77. When can I receive a Seal of Excellence?**

If your proposal meets the overall threshold at the full proposal of 13/15 but is not invited to interview. In addition, if your proposals receives a NO GO at the interview it will normally be awarded a Seal of Excellence to facilitate funding from alternative funding sources and access to EIC Business Acceleration Services.

## **78. What is the format of the EIC Accelerator Interview and who may represent the applicant company?**

If your application is successful at the full proposal stage, you will receive a letter inviting you to an interview with a panel composed of a maximum of 6 jury members. The interview will take place either in Brussels or

remotely (via video conference tool). In addition to the jury members, EIC Programme Managers and representatives from EIC Fund may also participate in the interview and ask questions, however they will not be members of the jury and will not take part in the jury's decisions (no right to vote).

The interview will last 45 minutes which will begin with a 10-minute pitch by the applicant (using the same pitch deck that was submitted for the full proposal application) and then followed by a 35 minute Q&A session with the jury members, EISMEA Programme Managers and/or EIC Fund representatives. The jury will provide their assessment in the binary GO/NO GO. You will be informed of the result of the interviews approximately 3 weeks after the interview week session ends.

The persons participating in the interview must be directly affiliated to the applicant's company/legal entity and/or are meant to be working on the project for its entire foreseen duration. Thus, participation is limited to:

- employed staff
- board members
- investors

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.

Consultants or other third parties must not take part in the interview. Any misrepresentation discovered during or after the interview could result in rejection of a proposal for funding.

Applicants will not be reimbursed for costs related to participation in the interviews.

## 79. 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 6 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 (Euraxess 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.

## 80. Access to High Performance Computing for AI for EIC Beneficiaries

EIC beneficiaries requiring access to supercomputing resources to perform artificial intelligence and data intensive activities can apply to the EuroHPC Joint Undertaking calls for access to their supercomputers. All information is available here:

### **81. 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.

## **EIC INVESTMENTS**

### **82. 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 the unique 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.

Further information can be found in the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines.

Investments made under Horizon 2020 EIC Pilot are managed by the EIC Fund as well.

### **83. 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 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 on a temporary basis 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.

EISMEA will continue to be responsible for the evaluation process, for managing EIC grant agreements and for coordinating the grant and the equity components. The investments by the EIC Fund are authorised by an Award Decision of the European Commission.

#### **84. What happens when my company is sent to the EIC Fund, what are the investment scenarios?**

If your company is evaluated positively by the Jury and recommended for an investment component, the information about your application will be transmitted shortly after the Jury interview to the EIB acting as investment advisor for the EIC Fund. Your company will then be contacted by the EIC investment officer to ascertain the urgency of the investment decision. If your company is in the process of finalising an investment round which is time critical, the EIB will prioritise the due diligence such that an investment decision can be made in a relevant time frame to participate in the round. If your company does not intend to proceed with a fund-raising round in the short to medium term, then your company may proceed with the grant agreement and the due diligence for the investment will be delayed for a certain time.

For the investment decision by the EIC Fund, 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 Fund), the EIB, as investment advisor, 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.

In addition, the EIC Fund may recommend that the applicant continues with the grant support and returns for consideration of the investment at a later stage. The investment for a blended finance project must take place no later than 12 months following the end date of the grant.

#### **85. 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 uses 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 by other 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 Portfolios.

## **86. 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.

## **87. What is a 'qualified investor'?**

According to the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines, 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.

## **88. Can companies request EIC Investments higher than EUR 10 million?**

Under the 2026 EIC Work Programme, the maximum investment amount that can be requested by applicants to the EIC Accelerator call is EUR 10 million.

Higher amounts for equity investments (between EUR 10 million and 30 million) can be requested under the EIC STEP Scale up call.

## **89. Who can apply for equity only support? 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?**

Under the 2026 EIC Work programme there are no preconditions to apply for equity only support (previously, this was conditional on an eligible prior grant support).

Grant-only beneficiaries under the EIC Accelerator pilot in Horizon 2020 can apply for an investment component in Horizon Europe. Companies awarded a grant only under the Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Accelerator and the Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator may be eligible for fast track.

## **90. 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 and the EIC Fund has and will continue to co-invest with investors based in other regions. However, the EIC is an initiative of the EU and where relevant, considerations will take into account risks to EU economic security. In specific areas of strategic technology (described in the Work programme 2026) 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) or equity only support, 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.

## **91. Why and how is the technological due diligence performed?**

In order to prepare an informed and tailor-made investment recommendation, the EIB in its role as Investment Advisor performs the commercial and financial due diligence. In addition, technological due diligence (full technological due diligence in the case of the STEP Scale Up call) is performed as part of the overall due diligence process. The technical due diligence may performed at this stage may also build upon the technology assessment performed beforehand during the evaluation phase.

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 may also help the EIC and the company to take a critical looking at the proposed technological and commercial milestones, and to structure the investment accordingly.

The report is based on the strong technical background and the proven expertise of the selected expert that may interrogate 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.

## **92. When is the technological due diligence performed?**

The technological due diligence exercise is launched in coordination with the EIB investment Officer. Generally, it is initiated immediately after the finalization of the evaluation and the selection processes, aiming for the best possible timing in view of an upcoming investing opportunity.

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 with the negotiation phase and therefore does not slow down the Investment process.

## **93. 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 provisions of 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 for the EIC Accelerator and a €5 million flexibility for STEP.

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 co-investors at least 1:1 (and seeking a leverage effect of at least 1:3 throughout the investment horizon and across the portfolio). The investment amount will also take into account the amounts available in the accounts of the EIC Fund.

#### **94. What is the difference between EIC Accelerator investments and support under the InvestEU programme?**

In close synergy with the Investee Programme, the Accelerator, in its blended finance and equity financial support forms, should finance projects run by SMEs, including start-ups, and, in exceptional cases, small mid-caps, which are either not yet able to generate revenues, or not yet profitable, or not yet able to attract sufficient investment to implement fully their projects' business plan. Such eligible entities would be considered to be "non-bankable", while a part of their investment needs could have been or could be provided by one or several investors, such as a private or public bank, a family office, a venture capital fund or a business angel. In that way the Accelerator is intended to overcome a market failure and finance promising, but not yet bankable entities engaged in breakthrough market-creating innovation projects. Once they become bankable, those projects could be financed under the InvestEU Programme.

#### **95. Can the EIC Fund invest in companies which can partially cover their investment needs from support provided under the InvestEU programme?**

Yes, provided that the following conditions assessed positively by the EIC Fund's advisor:

- a. The EIC Fund investment in companies shall not crowd out any financing or investment from the market or InvestEU supported sources, and the total amount of investment or financing does not exceed investment needs of the company to implement its business plan in a given funding round.
- b. Companies that can only partially cover their investment needs to implement its business plan in a given funding round from any market or InvestEU supported sources are considered as "non-bankable" for the purposes of EIC support, as set out under the Horizon Europe Regulation.

In these cases, the investment by the EIC Fund is considered necessary to de-risk co-investments from the market sources but also the InvestEU programme, and to act as a catalyst to enable the co-investments.

## 96. If a company has an EIC Fund investment and it subsequently receives financial support from InvestEU, does this mean that the company has to repay the EIC Fund investment?

No. The EIC Fund makes equity investments which are not repayable in the same way as loan financing. Rather the EIC Fund would exit a company when another investor buys the shares of the EIC Fund and the company no longer needs the EIC Fund investment to fulfil its financing needs for equity. In any case EU support (e.g. InvestEU covered financing) cannot be used to repay another Union support.

## 97. What does it mean if my company is identified by the Commission as “a company requiring specific safeguard measures to protect European Interests in Strategic areas”?

The Commission will assess whether applicant companies in certain technology areas (currently areas within the fields of AI, semiconductors, quantum, biotech) would pose economic security risks if the technology is acquired by a non-EU actor. This is a case-by-case assessment. If a risk is identified, then the Commission will authorise the EIC Fund to include a relevant measure in the investment agreement. The potential measures are set out in the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines and include, for example, a provision for the company headquarters to remain in Europe during the investment period. The measures will be agreed with the company and with other investors in line with the objectives of the successful growth of the company while avoiding that technology is acquired or leaked in way that could damage European economic interests.

Where companies are identified as developed strategic technologies, the EIC will also aim to provide additional support such as access to follow on funding, larger investments (through the STEP call), and where relevant providing a highly experienced external person to join the company board as a non-executive director.

# EIC STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGIES FOR EUROPE PLATFORM (STEP) SCALE UP CALL

## 98. What types of technologies are considered eligible for the EIC STEP Scale Up call?

Eligible technologies must align with the priority areas defined in the STEP Regulation, which include:

- Digital and deep tech innovations (e.g., semiconductors, AI, quantum technologies, advanced robotics).
- Clean and resource-efficient technologies (e.g., solar, wind, hydrogen, energy storage, circular economy solutions).
- Biotechnologies (e.g., DNA/RNA-based therapies, nanobiotechnology, critical medicinal products).

These technologies are deemed critical if they either bring innovative and cutting-edge elements to the internal market or contribute to reducing the EU's strategic dependencies.

## 99. Why should I apply for the STEP Scale Up call instead of the EIC Accelerator?

The EIC Accelerator and STEP Scale Up call are very different instruments. The STEP call is for companies focused on a strategic technology area and ready to raise a large funding round (at least EUR 50-150 million). Such companies are expected to have already succeeded with early funding rounds and will need a pre-commitment of 20% of their targeted funding round from an investor when they apply. This includes both companies that have a pre-existing support or investment from the EIC, as well as companies with no previous EIC support.

Under the STEP Scale Up call, companies can request equity amounts of between EUR 10 million and EUR 30 million.

In contrast, the EIC Accelerator is open to any area of technology, does not require a pre-commitment from an investor, and companies can request a maximum of EUR 10 million. As such, the EIC Accelerator is more suitable for earlier-stage companies with smaller funding needs.

## 100. How does the funding work for the EIC STEP Scale Up call as part of a larger overall funding round?

Example: A European start-up developing a breakthrough technology in a strategic area (such as cleantech) needs to raise EUR 100 million to scale up production and expand into global markets.

- Pre-commitment from an investor: The applicant secures a EUR 20 million pre-commitment from a venture capital fund, meeting the requirement that at least 20% of the total funding round is committed by a single qualified investor.
- STEP Scale Up investment: The company applies successfully to the EIC STEP Scale Up call and requests an investment of EUR 20 million from the EIC Fund. STEP allows investments between EUR 10 million and EUR 30 million.
- Catalysing further investment: The EIC Fund works with the company and pre-committed investor to help attract additional investors to complete the EUR 100 million funding round. Other investors contribute EUR 60 million, completing the total funding requirement.

## 101. Can non-EU companies apply for the EIC STEP Scale Up call?

Only companies established in EU Member States or Associated Countries are eligible.

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

How does the EIC STEP Scale Up call ensure alignment with the EU's strategic interests and economic security?

The EIC ensures that companies receiving funding under the STEP Scale Up call contribute to the EU's strategic and economic security. The supported companies are required to keep key assets, including IP, within the EU or Associated Countries. Measures may also be introduced in the EIC Fund investment agreements on a case-by-case basis to protect European interests.

## 102. What support, beyond financial investment, do successful applicants receive under the EIC STEP Scale Up call?

Besides financial investment, selected companies benefit from Business Acceleration Services, which offer tailored support, networking opportunities, and access to expertise and markets to further scale their innovation.

Successful applicants also receive a Sovereignty (STEP) Seal, facilitating access to additional EU programmes and funding sources.

## 103. What is the evaluation process for proposals submitted to the EIC STEP Scale Up call?

The evaluation process for the EIC STEP Scale Up call involves several steps:

- a. Proposal Submission: Applicants submit a full proposal, including a full business plan, pitch-deck (maximum 15 pages) in pdf format (this version will be presented to the jury if invited to interview), a pre-commitment (according to the official template), a financial plan and consent agreement document (according to the template available on the EIC website), results of the freedom to operate (FTO) analysis, CVs of key personnel.
- b. Eligibility Check: The proposal is assessed to ensure it meets the eligibility criteria, including alignment with STEP priority areas and the requirement for a pre-commitment by a single qualified investor.
- c. Technology Due Diligence: In cases where a Technology Due Diligence report is not already available, this will be conducted by a suitably qualified external expert.
- d. Jury Interview: If the proposal meets the eligibility requirements, the applicant is invited to an interview with a Jury of up to six experts. The interview will focus on various aspects of the proposal, including technological feasibility, market potential, and scale-up strategy.
- e. Evaluation Criteria: Proposals are assessed based on three key criteria:
  - ✓ Excellence: Innovation – Deep tech and breakthrough nature; Technological feasibility; Intellectual property.
  - ✓ Impact: Market opportunity; Business model; STEP Impact.
  - ✓ Risk: Team capability; Risk level of investment; Investment leverage; Risk management.
- f. Decision and Follow-up: After the interview, applicants are informed of the decision within approximately two to three weeks after the week of interviews have finalised. The Jury may provide observations for consideration by the EIC Fund regarding the investment amount or other considerations for the investment decision or management. Accordingly, the Jury may recommend a different investment amount than requested by the applicant in line with the call's requirements. The relevant information from the successful proposal will be passed to the investment adviser for the EIC Fund, to proceed with the detailed due diligence and, subject to a positive due diligence and subsequent EIC Fund Investment Committee decision, the investment agreement. Proposals selected for funding as well as proposals meeting the evaluation criteria, but which do not receive immediate investment due to budget limitations will be awarded the Sovereignty (STEP) Seal.

g. Investment Process: Following a successful interview and due diligence, the EIC Fund's Investment Committee will make a final investment decision, ensuring that the investment aligns with the company's needs and the EIC STEP's objectives.

A qualified Investor is an investor — public or private — with demonstrable know-how and experience in the relevant market, technology and jurisdiction, and which has been subject to KYC/AML screening and not considered high-risk. In case of high risk, such an investor can be exceptionally considered qualified if duly justified to protect against risks to economic security.

Investors who have not undergone a KYC by the EIC Fund or EIF may also provide pre-commitments, but this will be subject to the completion of a KYC during the eligibility checks.

The pre-committed investor may be an existing investor in the company and does not necessarily need to be the investor who intends to lead the investment.

In cases where the pre-committed investor is not the lead investor, the EIC Fund investment will also normally be contingent on the participation of a qualified lead investor, as defined in the EIC Investment Guidelines available on the EIC website.

#### **104. How often will the proposals be evaluated?**

Proposals can be submitted at any time. Proposals will be batched for evaluation at 17:00 Brussels time on the following dates: (11/02/2026; 06/05/2026; 09/09/2026; 25/11/2026).

#### **105. How can an investor submit on behalf of a company?**

An investor can help the SME prepare the application. However, the proposal must be submitted using the PIC (unique identifier) of the applicant SME or small mid cap. The investment agreement will be signed with the investee company.

#### **106. Are there resubmission limits for the STEP call?**

The EIC STEP Scale Up call applies limitations on the number of unsuccessful submissions of the same/improved proposal by the same legal entity.

As from 1 January 2026, after three unsuccessful submissions of the same/improved proposal by the same legal entity to the EIC STEP Scale Up call which can be at any stage of the process (eligibility check, interviews), an applicant may not apply again to the EIC STEP Scale Up call under the Horizon Europe Framework Programme.

#### **107. What is the Sovereignty (STEP) Seal; how will it be awarded?**

The Sovereignty (STEP) Seal will be awarded to all proposals that meet the evaluation thresholds in calls contributing to STEP. In the EIC, this concerns proposals under the five Accelerator Challenges included in the 2026 EIC Work Programme as well as the EIC STEP scale-up call.

The Sovereignty (or STEP) Seal will be awarded irrespective of whether your proposal is retained for funding (to facilitate access to complementary funding sources) or not (to facilitate access to alternative funding sources) – provided that your project meets the evaluation thresholds set out in the call. For the five Accelerator challenges, proposals that reach the 13/15 threshold at the remote stage as well as those reaching the interview will receive the Sovereignty (STEP) Seal. In the STEP call applicants selected for funding and

those that meet all evaluation criteria but do not receive immediate investment due to budget limitations will be awarded the Sovereignty (STEP) Seal.

### **108. What is the advantage of the Sovereignty (STEP) Seal?**

The Sovereignty (STEP) Seal is a quality label awarded to projects that align with STEP objectives and meet the minimum quality criteria set by the relevant calls for proposals. The Seal makes it easier for your project to receive combined or cumulative funding from various EU budgetary instruments, as well as national funding programs.

Furthermore, projects which were awarded the Sovereignty (STEP) Seal under the EIC are eligible to receive Business Acceleration Services. For more information, see the EIC WP 2026.

### **109. Does the Sovereignty (STEP) Seal guarantee EU funding for my project?**

The sovereignty (STEP) seal aims to facilitate combined and cumulative funding for projects and will be awarded to projects that meet the evaluation thresholds independent of whether the proposal was selected for funding. Hence, the seal does not guarantee EU funding for your project. However, the sovereignty (STEP) seal aims to increase chances for your project to attract alternative investments by enhancing visibility among investors and facilitating funding by national funding programs, as well as by providing you access to business acceleration services.

### **110. What is the difference between the Sovereignty (STEP) Seal and the Seal of Excellence?**

[The STEP \(Sovereignty\) Seal](#) is a novelty under STEP and is awarded to STEP projects (which meet the evaluation thresholds) irrespective of whether your proposal is retained for funding. The STEP Seal aims at facilitating funding opportunities for your project from other Union programmes covered by STEP, such as Cohesion Policy funds and the Recovery and Resilience Facility. For more information, see: For investors - [European Union \(europa.eu\)](#) and [Inforegio - 2021-2027 Technical seminars \(europa.eu\)](#)

The Seal of Excellence (SoE) is a quality label under the Horizon Framework Programmes and is only awarded to projects (which meet the evaluation thresholds) that were not retained for funding due to budgetary constraints. The SoE allows your project to benefit from State Aid exemptions which includes aid up to EUR 2.5 million per SME per research and development project. You can find more information here: [How can seal holders use the Seal of Excellence? - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

In few cases, both Seals may be awarded simultaneously (this is the case for projects in the STEP-relevant EIC Accelerator Challenges calls which meet the evaluation thresholds but are not retained for funding) in which case the project will benefit from the advantages of both the STEP (Sovereignty) Seal – for example in terms of access to ERDF funding, and the Seal of Excellence – for example in terms of State Aid exemption.

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

## **111. 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. 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](https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/business-acceleration-services/coaching-under-eic/call-expression-interest-establishing-list-eic-business-coaches_en)

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

First, use the Coach Matching Tool to pick up to 6 coaches you think are a good fit. We will then email them to check if they are available. Link: <https://eic.eisma.eu/mydashboard/mycoaching>

Here are the next steps:

(Optional) You can have a short "chemistry call" with the coaches who are available to see if you work well together.

After the call (or even without one), you choose your final coach.

Your chosen coach will then write a coaching plan for you in our Casetracker system.

Once you approve the plan, our team at EISMEA will make the contract, and your coaching can begin.

If you need any help during this process, please email our Coaching team at [EISMEA-COACHING@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EISMEA-COACHING@ec.europa.eu).

## **112. I am a EIC Pathfinder or EIC Transition beneficiary. Can I benefit from Coaching?**

Beneficiaries of the EIC Pathfinder and EIC 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 beneficiary(ies) receive the coaching services.

Unlike the EIC Accelerator, applicants of the EIC Pathfinder and EIC 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.

## **113. 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 interactions, will primarily evaluate your business goals and test your assumptions. 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 business needs, for example evaluating your value proposition and business model, enhancing strategy and investor

business case, . 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.

#### **114. How can I benefit from coaching and EIC BAS? 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 expected outcome. As an example:

- For EIC Accelerator applicants (full application stage) and Seal-of-Excellence and Sovereignty STEP seal holders, your objective may be to improve the value proposition and investor pitch.
- For EIC Pathfinder beneficiaries the objective may be to discover innovation opportunities and to provide insight in your entrepreneurship potential.
- For EIC Transition beneficiaries the objective may be to get to know the industry and to create a value proposition.
- For EIC 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 EIC Women Leadership Programme, Coaching is offered to help you tackle potential glass ceiling issues.

For EIC Accelerator applicants, Seal-of-Excellence and Sovereignty STEP Seal holders, three days of coaching are offered. For the EIC beneficiaries financed under the EIC Pathfinder, Transition and Accelerator Programmes, 96 coaching hours are offered in separate blocks of 24 coaching hours.

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

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](mailto:EISMEA-COACHING@ec.europa.eu) for assistance.

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 (on the EIC Community Platform or Calendar on the EIC website, EIC BAS section).

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.

### **115. 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 short proposal evaluation, you may use this link to reach the coach selection dashboard: <https://eic.eisma.eu/mydashboard/mycoaching>.

Important: Please choose your coach and start your coaching at least 4 weeks before the deadline for your Stage 2 application.

Should you encounter any technical difficulties, feel free to reach out to [eic@support.eisma.eu](mailto:eic@support.eisma.eu) for assistance.

### **116. Do I have to pay for the EIC Business Acceleration Services? Which are the eligible costs?**

Business Acceleration Services form an integral part of the EIC calls and are offered for free (in-kind) to eligible EIC funded projects and companies, EIC Accelerator applicants invited to prepare a full proposal (successfully passed short proposal), Women Tech EU Awardees, 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. If the grant is still ongoing, the beneficiary can support and deduct these costs from the grant. 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. The eligible EIC funded projects and companies can request a financial support to cover up to 50% of costs of EIC partners' services through the EIC Access+ scheme, within a threshold of up to €60000.

### **117. How can I get access to other EIC Business Acceleration 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 Platform. You will find there an event/service agenda and information relevant to application/expression of interest to participate in each individual BAS. To access services from the EIC ecosystem partners, you can consult the searchable EIC Service catalogue also available through the EIC Community Platform. Access to some services, like specific expertise and advice, is triggered through the project review process or programme manager.

### **118. How can I access the EIC Community Platform 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, Seal of Excellence and Sovereignty STEP seal holders and Women TechEU programs.

If you are...

an EIC awardee, access a one-stop-shop to:

- If you already accepted our invitation to join the EIC Community Platform, log in with your ECAS credentials choosing Already a member on the home page.
- If you are not registered, choose Register on the home page and use your ECAS credentials to sign in.
- Create a personal and company profile;
- Use the powerful search engine to find like-minded companies;
- Promote your achievements: you can publish your own news or reach out to us via the Helpdesk (<https://eic.eisma.eu/community/contact>) to support you;
- Expand networks with EIC ecosystem partners and access their services through the EIC Service catalogue;
- Promote interesting other events to the EIC Community;
- Apply to our EIC Partner Calls and get access to special offers for the EIC Community;

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

Not part of the internal EIC Network yet? Access the public side of the EIC Community Platform and find:

- The most relevant news, success stories, open calls and events promoted by the 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.

## **119. How can I be updated on all the open opportunities of the EIC Business Acceleration Services?**

The EIC Business Acceleration Services Newsletter is your go-to source for the latest updates on open calls for applications, inspiring success stories, exclusive interviews, partner calls and other engaging news.

To stay up to date, subscribe to the EIC Business Acceleration Services Newsletter [here](#).

## **120. What is EIC Pre-Accelerator and who can apply?**

The EIC Pre-accelerator aims to increase the innovation potential of early-stage deep tech startups from Horizon Europe widening countries.

The grant funding is specifically focused on enabling these companies to develop their technology, business & investment readiness to levels that would allow them to successfully attract funding from EIC Accelerator or other sources.

In addition, the Pre-Accelerator call awardees will receive access to EIC Community platform and dedicated business acceleration training services such as 12 days of coaching, participation in bootcamps and pitching sessions.

The successful pre-accelerator companies will be also eligible for the EIC Accelerator Fast Track.

The Pre-Accelerator call was launched in June 2025 under the Horizon Europe widening work programme (WIDERA), and subject to decisions taken for said work programme.

Additional FAQs are available here: [EIC Frequently asked questions - European Innovation Council](#)

## OTHER ACTIONS

### 121. What is the scope European innovation gender and diversity index?

The European Innovation Gender and Diversity Index aims to measure and address gender and diversity disparities across the EU's innovation and investment ecosystems, particularly in deep tech, start-ups, and venture capital. Building on the GENDEX Pilot Project and the European Parliament's Gender Gap in Investments pilot, it provides a fully operational, data-driven framework with bi-annual reporting, interactive dashboards, benchmarking tools, and practical resources for investors, funders, and innovators. The index complements existing tools like She Figures, offering actionable insights to support policy-making, investment decisions, and diversity mainstreaming across EU countries and sectors.

## LUMP SUM BUDGETS AND FINANCIAL ANNEXES

### 122. Which EIC instruments require a 'lump sum budget'?

In 2026, all EIC instruments will require a lump sum budget, i.e. EIC Accelerator Open and Challenges 2026, EIC Transition Open 2026 and EIC pathfinder Open and Challenges 2026. Only EIC Pathfinder Challenges and NOT EIC Pathfinder Open require a lump sum budget annex.

For all lump sum guidance material, see the Lump Sum info on EU Funding & Tenders Portal, in particular the guidance material how to manage your lump sum grants.

Advanced Innovation Challenge Stage 1 projects use a pre-defined lumpsum and therefore it is not needed to add a lump sum budget annex.

### 123. How to prepare the budget for a lump sum proposal?

For lump sum grant proposals, the estimated budget must be described in a detailed budget table (excel), annexed to Part B. As part of the budget figures in Part A, you need to add the totals of the maximum grant amounts requested, copied from detailed budget table. The lump sum scheme for EIC is type 2.

Under Lump Sum Type 2, proposals must contain a detailed budget table for the lump sum defined by the applicants. In this table, cost estimations for each cost category are resolved per beneficiary and per work package. The table automatically generates the breakdown of the lump sum per beneficiary and per work

package that will become the Annex 2 in the grant agreement. The lump sum budget table is a key component of the proposal and guidance and instructions should be followed very carefully by applicants. Figures should be always double checked and reconciled against information in part A and B.

#### **124. In Accelerator, why are the financial annexes needed and how are they used in the evaluation process?**

Since 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”. 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 “lumps 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.

#### **125. In Accelerator, 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.

## **GENERAL CONDITIONS AND ELIGIBILITY**

#### **126. How should proposals for the EIC Pathfinder, Transition, Accelerator, and STEP Scale Up calls be submitted, and what are the key components of the application process?**

Proposals must be submitted electronically directly via the Funding and Tender portal electronic submission system (accessible via the call topic page in the Search Funding & Tenders section); or indirectly via the EIC Community Platform where applicants will be redirected to the Portal. Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Proposals must be readable, accessible, printable and complete (contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents) and must be submitted using the forms provided inside the electronic submission system.

The Application Form for EIC Pathfinder, EIC Transition, EIC Accelerator and EIC Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) Scale Up calls will have two parts:

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

Part B (to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded as PDF in the system) — contains the technical description of the project. For the EIC Accelerator, Part B will consist of the questionnaire which replies to the evaluation criteria.

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

### **127. Under EIC calls, are there geographical criteria used to achieve a balanced portfolio across different countries/ regions?**

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 encourages high quality applications from all EU countries and associated countries. To this end, the EIC 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.

### **128. 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, but if the same proposal is successfully evaluated under different calls, only one will be selected. Please note however, that each call may have its own specific conditions (eligibility and award criteria, objectives, etc.) and each proposal should respond to the specific conditions of the call under which it is submitted. The EIC Accelerator and STEP scale up call have specific concurrent submission rules:

- If you decide to apply to both EIC 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 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. You may not apply to the Accelerator and STEP calls at the same time. In the event of multiple submissions, only the proposal submitted most recently will be evaluated, and it will be assessed according to the merits and evaluation criteria of its respective call (Accelerator or STEP).

### **129. 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 new proposal does not include activities already supported by ongoing financial support.

- For EIC Pathfinder, please make sure that you explain in your proposal how your ongoing H2020 grant(s) relate to your current application.
- For EIC 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 beneficiaries of ongoing or finalised 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. **Companies awarded a grant only under the Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Accelerator and the Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator may be eligible for fast track.**, Other eligible applicants will have to submit a new proposal via the short application stage of the evaluation procedure for the EIC Accelerator.

### **130. 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 & Tenders portal. In addition, legal entities based in a third country which is currently negotiating the association to Horizon Europe are in principle eligible provided that the Horizon Europe association agreement (including Pillar III) with the third country concerned is in force at the time of signature of the grant agreement. Such an association agreement will be made public on the European Commission's Horizon Europe website.

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

A legal entity based in a third country which is not currently negotiating the association to Horizon Europe can apply at the short application stage for the EIC Accelerator but must relocate an existing SME or establish an SME 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). Your company must prove its effective establishment in a Member State or an Associated Country at the time of submission of the full proposal.

### **131. Is there some 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>

### **132. Can entities in the UK apply for EIC funding?**

As from 1 January 2024, UK entities may apply to calls of the EIC for grant funding implementing budget for the year 2024 onwards including the EIC Pathfinder scheme, EIC Transition activities, and the grant only part of the EIC Accelerator.

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 EIC Accelerator funding at the short proposal phase 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 are selected for EIC funding will also be eligible to receive Business Acceleration Services (coaching, mentoring, events, etc.), except these relating to access to investors.

Further information: [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/europe-world/international-cooperation/association-horizon-europe/united-kingdom\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/europe-world/international-cooperation/association-horizon-europe/united-kingdom_en)

### 133. Can applicants use generative AI tools when preparing proposals?

Applicants may use generative AI tools when preparing proposals in relation to both the structure of the proposal (e.g. generation of graphs/charts) and its substance (e.g. language review, development of narratives from a set of ideas, search for background information). Considering that applicants bear the legal responsibility for their proposal, applicants must be fully transparent towards the granting authority and declare the use of generative AI tools and the way the tools have been utilised.

In particular, in the Horizon Europe proposal application form, applicants are provided with specific guidance on the use of generative AI tools for the preparation of proposals.

Applicants are reminded: -

- to exercise caution and careful consideration while using generative AI tools;
- to review and validate thoroughly any AI-generated content to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations;
- that they remain fully responsible for the content of the proposal (including the parts produced by the AI tool);
- to be transparent in disclosing which AI tools were used and how they were utilised.

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

### 134. 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 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 EIC 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. If a project is deemed suitable for the Fast track, a first assessment shall take place at least 5 months before the project's ending date in order to have the time to organise the project review.

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 short proposal 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 same rules on submission and resubmission as the short proposals.

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

The Fast Track scheme referred to in Annex 3 to the Work Programme 2026 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.

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

### **136. What is an EIC Inventor?**

An EIC Inventor is any named (or entitled to be named as) inventor on a patent filed to protect a result obtained with EIC funding ('EIC result'). 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.

### **137. 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)

### **138. As an EIC Inventor, 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.

### **139. 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. However, any protection/commercialisation plans from the EIC inventor should not contravene the 'Dissemination and Exploitation Plan' already agreed for the project.

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

The EIC Awardee is expected to provide to the EIC Inventor 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.

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

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

### **142. 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.

**143. 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.

**144. 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.

**145. Annex 6 of the Work Programme says that if a beneficiary ('EIC Awardee') 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 EIC Awardee 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."