

European Innovation Council (EIC) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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A. EIC PATHFINDER

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

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

In general, there is no specific expectation on the number of partners in a consortium or the duration of EIC Pathfinder projects, which should be “fit-for-purpose”, in other words 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 (minimum three entities for consortia in Pathfinder Open and minimum two legal entities for consortia applying to Pathfinder Challenges, unless specified in the Challenge text call). 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 multi-partner consortia.

2. Which range of Technology Readiness Levels should EIC Pathfinder projects cover? What are the expected project outputs?

It is expected that the various activities within the EIC Pathfinder projects should cover low Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs), typically in the range between TRLs 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 outcome of Pathfinder Open project is the proof of principle that the main ideas of the envisioned future technology are feasible, thus validating its scientific and technological basis. For Pathfinder Challenge projects, the expected outcomes are described in the given Challenge text call and

Challenge Guide. Moreover, Pathfinder Challenge projects are also expected to contribute to the outcomes of the Challenge Portfolio activities as described in the Challenge Guide.

3. Is the participation of SMEs or industrial partners within EIC Pathfinder consortia compulsory?

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

Please note, however, that applicants are encouraged to involve 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 permitted as single applicants. Consortia of several legal entities can also participate in this call, provided that they fulfil certain eligibility criteria:

- **Consortia of two entities** must be two independent legal entities from two different MS or AC.
- **Consortia of three or more entities** must include as beneficiaries at least three legal entities, independent from each other and each 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 of three 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 consortium. An **affiliated entity** to a beneficiary is not considered as an independent legal entity.

Examples of **ineligible** consortia:

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

Examples of **eligible** consortia:

- a Maltese university and a Czech SME (consortium of two legal entities with two different MS or AC represented)
- A Greek research organisation and a Swiss university (the Swiss university participates as 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. How will the rebuttal (“right-to-act”) procedure in the evaluation process of EIC Pathfinder work in practice? When and how will applicants be contacted for submitting observations to the evaluators’ assessments? What happens if an applicant does not submit observations?

Around 6 to 10 weeks after the call deadline, applicants will receive the evaluators’ comments via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal, the deadline for sending replies to these comments will be eight calendar days (at 17h00 Brussels local time) after they are received. Replies must be limited to maximum two A4 pages. They cannot be used to alter the content of the proposals, but must strictly focus providing clarifications and/or on responding to perceived misunderstandings or errors by the evaluators. The replies will be made available to the evaluation committee, who will decide on the final score on the basis of the remote score and the outcome of its consensus discussions, taking into consideration the comments from the rebuttal procedure, if any.

There are no consequences if a participant does not submit observations, as this is not compulsory.

Please note that the rebuttal procedure will be discontinued for calls under the EIC Work Programme 2024.

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

The evaluation process includes two steps: firstly, an assessment of each proposal separately and secondly, the evaluation committee will consider each proposal’s contribution to 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 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 reactive approach in 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 to allocate at least 10 person-months to these activities.

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

EIC Pathfinder Open 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 projects to achieve their objectives more efficiently and 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 to conferences, workshops or meetings, data sharing, or participation to any relevant EIC Business Acceleration Services events, just to name a few.

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

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

Pathfinder Open proposals do not need to allocate budget for these activities while those from Pathfinder Challenges should include a work package dedicated to portfolio activities and allocate at least 10 person-months to it.

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

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

The Challenge-driven approach will continue in future EIC work programmes beyond 2024. The topics identified for the challenge-driven calls in the EIC Work Programme 2024 will evolve, with new topics identified in later years, with the possibility of some topics identified in this Work Programme to be complemented with additional funding. Throughout 2024, the EIC will organise various discussions and events to help identify the most promising emerging topics for the Challenges. EIC Programme Managers are expected to play a central role in this process.

10. Will dedicated events be organised to support the formation of consortia for Pathfinder calls?

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

11. In Pathfinder Open evaluations, how is the “gender balance among work package leaders” criterion applied when prioritising proposals with the same final score?

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

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

This criterion is applied by calculating how many Member States (MS) and Associated Countries (AC) are represented in the consortium. Consortia with a larger number of MS and AC represented 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 only counted 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: 3 Member States and Associated Countries represented

Consortium A has priority over consortium B.

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

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

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

B. EIC TRANSITION

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

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

- For proposals with at least 3 participating legal entities from 3 different countries: must include at least 1 legal entity established in an EU Member State and 2 other independent legal entities established in 2 other EU Member States or Associated Countries.
- For proposals with at least 2 participating legal entities from 2 different countries: (2 different countries): must include 2 legal entities from 2 different EU Member State or Associated Countries.
- For mono-beneficiary proposals: one legal entity established in an EU Member State or Associated Country.

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

If it becomes clear that a proposal is no longer eligible, services must inform concerned applicants that their proposal is no longer eligible due to the new circumstances regarding the current status of the candidate Associated Countries in Horizon Europe. to make a total of 6) be eligible? Yes, if all the other admissibility and eligibility criteria are fulfilled.

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

15. What range of TRLs should EIC Transition projects cover? What are the expected project outputs?

It is expected that the various activities within the EIC Transition projects should cover TRLs, typically in the range between TRLs 4 and 6. Please note that the TRL already fully achieved at the start of the project must be at least TRL 3. 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 false declarations in the proposal forms, in order to obtain EU funding, are grounds for suspension of payments, suspension of the grant and grant agreement termination, according to Article 30, 31 and 32 of the Grant Agreement.

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

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

Proposals must include the confirmation that the applicants eligible for funding are the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) owners or holders, or have the necessary rights to commercialise the results of the project for the whole duration of the EIC Transition project, as described in the proposal.

The first page of the Part B application form must contain the template table to indicate, in the template table, the project which generated the results, and specify where the results have been reported (in the periodic reporting for the project, the Horizon Results Platform, the Innovation Radar or CORDIS). Removing the template table or failing to fill the required information may make the proposal ineligible.

Applicants eligible for funding who 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 you the applicant a fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory access to such results, including IPR, for the purpose of future commercial exploitation.

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

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

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

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

Seal of Excellence holders can benefit from additional support, for example by requesting up to three days of business coaching paid by EIC through the EIC Business Acceleration Services.

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

The EIC considers proposals with a duration of between 1 and 3 years as appropriate.

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

The minimum amount envisaged for a project is EUR 500 000. Proposals requesting lower amounts will be deemed ineligible. The maximum amount envisaged for a project is EUR 2.5 million.

Exceptional cases of higher amount or longer duration need to be explicitly and very well motivated and explained in the proposal. Failing to sufficiently justify higher amount may be evaluated as a weakness.

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

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

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

Academic spin-offs may be considered as affiliated entities to the academic organisation that has created them, provided that they comply with Article 8 of the Grant Agreement. Affiliated entities are not counted in the number of partners, therefore the academic partner and its affiliated spin-off is considered as a mono-beneficiary proposal.

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

EIC Transition 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 projects in achieving more efficiently and effectively their objectives, and more widely to enhance research, prepare transition to innovation and stimulate business opportunities, and strengthen the EIC Community. Such activities may include participation to conferences, workshops or meetings, data sharing, or participation to any relevant EIC Business Acceleration Services events, just to name a few

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

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

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

Applicants that are selected for funding are expected to start their project no later than 2 to 3 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. If the applicants are not able to start within maximum 3 months after the grant agreement signature, they are advised to submit their proposal before the subsequent cut-off deadline.

23. My project result originates from an ERA-NET (including Eurostars) or from a project funded by a Joint Undertaking. Am I eligible to apply?

No, as of EIC Work programme 2024 only projects funded directly (thus, not cascading grants) by the EU and EU agencies and in direct management will be eligible. Project results funded through 'cascade funding' or in indirect management (e.g. projects funded under calls managed by Joint Undertakings) will not be eligible.

24. What are the changes in eligibility conditions compared with EIC Work Programme 2023?

In the EIC Work Programme 2024 (p.50-51), new projects will be eligible to submit to EIC Transition including other projects when the projects results on which the proposal is based concern: those directly funded under Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges and Leadership in Industrial Technologies programme parts, and those funded under Horizon Europe Pillar II with an eligible TRL.

In summary:

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

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

Projects that were funded as an "Innovation Action" type of action under Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe are not eligible, while project results that do not have an appropriate TRL (achieved already minimum TRL 3) are not eligible.

25. I have an excellent project result funded under Horizon Europe Pillar II. Is my proposal eligible?

Research and Innovation Action projects funded under a Horizon 2020 Societal Challenge and Leadership in Industrial Technologies and under Horizon Europe Pillar II, with an eligible TRL, are now eligible (see previous question).

C. EIC ACCELERATOR

26. Why is the short proposal now moving to the Submission & Evaluation Platform (SEP) on the Horizon Europe Funding & Tenders Portal?

Given the change in submission and evaluation platform for EIC Accelerator full proposals (step 2) in June 2023 to the Horizon Europe Funding & Tenders Portal (SEP), the short proposal (step 1) will also be submitted in SEP as from January 1, 2024. This will ensure that the Accelerator is fully integrated into the standard Horizon Europe proposal submission and evaluation platform for the calls under the EIC Work Programme 2024, thus providing improved efficiency and consistency between short (step 1) and full (step 2) proposal submission via the same tool.

The short proposal template questions will stay very largely the same, however the pdf submission form will allow applicants more flexibility than the current online form to prepare their proposals in a user-friendly environment. This will include, for example, the possibility to work offline and to incorporate visuals/graphs within the submission form. Applicants with a successful short proposal submitted during in 2023 will maintain their GO result and will be eligible to submit a full proposal in 2024.

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

As a general rule, you may apply to the EIC Accelerator before your first EIC Accelerator/EIC Pilot/SME Instrument project reaches its end date.

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

Ongoing blended finance projects selected under a Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Accelerator call may be eligible to submit a proposal for a related investment component under an EIC Accelerator call.

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

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

Holding a Seal of Excellence does not give, in itself, the right to apply directly to the full proposal (step 2). If your Seal of Excellence is the result of a rejection at the interview stage, you may resubmit your proposal directly at the full proposal stage (within the limit of three unsuccessful submissions in total, as outlined in the "Application submission limits" section of the EIC Work Programme 2024)

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

If your company is located outside the EU but established in an associated country to Horizon Europe, it is eligible to apply for EIC Accelerator calls the same way as a company from a Member State (unless an exception applies – please see EIC Work Programme 2024 and List of Participating Countries in Horizon Europe and, in particular, the third countries associated to Horizon Europe and can participate in all parts of the Horizon Europe Programme with the only exception of 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 non-associated third country but must prove its effective establishment in a Member State or an Associated Country at the time of submission of the full proposal. Specific conditions and milestones may be set in the contract to ensure that the interest of the Union is met.

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

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

The sister or parent company based in the associated country/EU Member State is eligible to apply itself. Activities run in other countries are not taken into account in the eligibility check (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, while also proving its effective legal establishment in the associated country or EU Member State at the time of submission of the full proposal. Specific conditions and milestones may be set in the grant agreement to ensure that the interest of the Union is met.

31. 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 reasons for losing the SME status. A change to the legal and/or 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 rendering ineligible the costs incurred after the loss of the SME status. For projects with an investment component, if the loss of the SME status and thus the GA termination takes place before a final decision on the investment component is taken by the EIC Fund, the investment component might also be rejected.

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

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

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

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

If you succeeded with your short application under the 2024 EIC Work Programme, your full proposal can be submitted to any of the subsequent cut-offs during 2024, and any of the cut-offs for 2025. Applicants who succeeded with a positive evaluation of their short proposal under the 2023 EIC Work Programme may apply to any of the following cut-offs in 2024. You may decide which cut-off to apply to. Please note that if your short proposal is successful, you will be entitled to receive coaching support to prepare a full proposal.

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

Under the 2024 EIC Work Programme, there is no longer a structured place to include improvements from previous submissions or to "rebut" comments from the previous evaluators. The evaluators will not see any previous submission or evaluation reports from previous evaluators. Proposals submitted will be assessed independently from previous submissions and based on their own merits according to standard Horizon Europe practice. The applicant is welcome to include any improvements made in the narrative Part B of the application form, however there is no structured format to include this information.

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

The rule has been simplified within the EIC 2024 Work Programme: from the start of 2024, you may submit up to 3 unsuccessful applications, at any stage of the process (short proposal, full proposal) and for any form of support (Challenge, Open, Grant only, Blended finance, Equity only). After the third rejection, you will not be able to submit again to the EIC Accelerator under Horizon Europe.

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

For example:

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

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

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

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

For the short proposal stage, applicants will be invited to submit a proposal to illustrate their innovation together with a 10-slide presentation and a 3-minute video pitch. Applicants will also have to estimate the costs required to develop their idea, in the form of grant or investment, and they will have to demonstrate the need for EU support. Please note that, at this step, the amounts are indicative and non-binding.

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

36. 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 indicating an estimate while the full proposal should demonstrate your complete business plan and financial needs.

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

As from the EIC Work Programme 2024, the Jury may no longer propose to change the type of funding requested by the applicant (e.g. blended finance proposal to "grant only") but they may make observations in view of the grant agreement preparation, e.g. on the milestones or on proposed coaching activities. What kind of risks need to be linked to my innovation to be relevant for the EIC Accelerator? Is it strictly development risks or also risks linked to the go-to market strategy?

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

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

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

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

40. What are milestones?

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

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

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

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

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

43. Which TRL (Technology Readiness Level) scale is used under the EIC Accelerator?

Please refer to the relevant sections covering TRLs within the EIC 2024 Work Programme, for example on p.19-20.

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

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

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

For the Accelerator applications, you have to upload the following:

- The pitch deck: This is a crucial part of your application, you will use it to support your pitch at the interview stage. You will have the possibility to update it after the short application if needed.
- The lump sum detailed budget breakdown: this file will be used to determine upfront the amount of the lump sum grant. It will indicate the % of the total lump sum that each work package represents (i.e. "lump sum share") and may be used as a basis to reduce the final payment if a given work package is not implemented fully.
- The Financial plan and equity needed: these are the financial figures supporting your business plan and the equity needed. Here you will show your projection of turnover and costs, the evolution of your cash flow, of the main items on your balance sheet and off several key ratios
- Mandatory data and consent: this is to enable us to inform local authorities in your country of origin in case you receive a seal of excellence (which may help provide access to local funding), and to the EIC Fund and its partners to support you in getting equity
- The FTO analysis: please upload your freedom to operate analysis or, if you do not have one, please upload a note explaining why it may not be relevant or what you have done to assess the Freedom to Operate.
- The Data Management plan: applicants are not required to present a full Data Management Plan at the application stage. Rather, it is expected that applicants upload at least a one page document in which they take into account the need to develop such a Plan as part of their project implementation (and for which associated costs are eligible) and to demonstrate an awareness of the relevant considerations for their proposal. Detailed information may be found in the Annotated Model Grant Agreement and in the Programme Guide. A template for a DMP is [available here](#).
- CVs of key persons.
- Letters of intent: these are crucial to de-risk your proposal and demonstrate your credibility with potential partners.

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

EISMEA will not move proposals from one call to another, nor declare your proposal out of scope if you submit to "Open" despite meeting the requirements of a Challenge. The applicant has the responsibility to make the choice and take the decision to submit his/her proposal either to the EIC Accelerator Open call or to one of the EIC Accelerator Challenges.

Please note, however, that Challenges are identified as strategic areas/technologies for Europe, with a clearly assigned budget target.

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

Please consult the sections in the EIC Work Programme 2024 regarding the EIC Accelerator Challenge areas of strategic relevance in order to help you take the decision.

If you apply for the Open call, but your technology falls under the scope of Challenges 1 (Human centric generative AI made in Europe) or 3b (emerging quantum technologies) and you are invited to the interview phase of the evaluation, you will be informed prior to the interview. You will have the chance to submit your observations (regarding the scope of your proposal in relation to these Challenge areas) during the interview. If you are successful and have not yet submitted an ownership control declaration at the time of application, you will need to provide this during the GAP and your company will be subject to an ownership control assessment in the same way as proposals evaluated under the respective Challenges.

47. My application concerns generative AI/quantum , but in order to become a beneficiary, my company must not be directly or indirectly controlled by a non-associated third country. What does it mean in practice?

As an applicant to the grant component of the EIC Accelerator challenges 1 (Human centric generative AI made in Europe) and 3b (emerging quantum technologies), in order to fulfil this condition on the ownership of your company you will have to provide an ownership control declaration as an annex to the application form. Proposals under the Open call, which are identified as falling under these Challenges will have to fill in the same declaration. On top of this declaration, successful applicants will be requested to provide documents proving the ownership/control of their company and undergo a check to determine whether the company is controlled by a non-associated third country. The outcome of this assessment will determine the eligibility of the proposal.

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

Proposals under the Open call which are identified as falling under the Challenges, which have control restrictions and are requesting grant support, will have to fill in an ownership control declaration at the submission stage. EISMEA will screen the open applications that fall under the

scope of the restricted challenges and will inform the applicants prior to the interviews where they will be able to provide observations (see also question 45).

Successful applicants will undergo the same process of ownership and control assessment as applicants to the respective Challenges.

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

Each applicant is entitled to submit up to three unsuccessful applications, so you will have (in case of a second submission) another chance. Nonetheless, if you believe that there has been a procedural error in the evaluation, you will find the means of redress in your rejection letter. For more information, please refer to the section on the evaluation review procedure within the EIC Work Programme 2024.

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

The deadline for full proposal submission is 17:00:00 (CET) on the cut-off date published in the Horizon Europe [F&T Portal](#). It is highly recommended to submit your proposal as early as possible and at least 48 hours before the deadline. This will avoid technical problems from occurring.

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

You will not receive an error message in response to your late proposal submission. Your proposal status will be listed as “submitted” and will be admissible to be evaluated under the following cut-off deadline unless it is the last cut-off deadline of the year. You will have the option to keep it in the submission system until the subsequent cut-off.

Alternatively, you can withdraw the proposal, update it and then submit in time for the upcoming deadline. Withdrawing the proposal before receiving the evaluation result will not count towards the resubmission limit. As a condition to be allocated a Seal of Excellence, applicants have to agree that some information within their proposal is shared.

52. What information is shared and with whom?

Applicants who managed to reach the stage of submitting full proposals will be given a possibility to share specific project-related data. This is limited to 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 this option, applicants give 'consent' to share this information with National Contact Points (NCPs) of their Member State or Associated Country, Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) members, relevant public organisations from the EU, EU Member States and Horizon Europe associated countries (including regional innovation organisations, European Structural and Investment Funds managing authorities).

These entities may assist Seal of Excellence (SoE) holders in receiving additional support at national level. In particular, the EEN has been contracted by the EIC to support SoE holders to obtain funding from private and/or public sources. (This service will be offered to a limited number of companies). In case applicants choose not to share the above-mentioned data, the SoE will unfortunately not be granted. The data will be made available subject to the fulfilment of confidentiality obligations agreed with the NCPs, EEN members and relevant authorities. Applicants are asked to give consent at Step 1 (short application) so their data can be shared with other authorities.

National Contact Points, Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) members and Knowledge and 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 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.

53. 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 companies to find alternative sources of funding.

It is up to applicants to decide if they choose to receive services from NCPs and EEN members and they will be given such an option in the application tool.

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

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

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

55. *Clinical trials*

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

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

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

For the correspondence between TRLs and clinical trials steps, the following considerations are made ([Euraxess website](#)) TRL5 stands for animal testing and clinical protocols for phase 1 clinical testing, TRL 6 for exploratory phase 1 trials support proceeding to phase 2, TRL 7 for phase 2 clinical trial completed, and TRL8 stands for completed phase 3 clinical trials and regulatory approval.

D. LUMP SUMS

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

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

As from the 2024 EIC Work Programme, 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 showed in a simplified version of the previous financial annex now named "Financial plan and equity needed".

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

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

57. 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.

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

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

E. EIC INVESTMENTS

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

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

Until 2020, the EIC Investment Partner was only the [EIC Fund](#) (transition phase). After 2023, the EIC may work with other Investment Partners in addition to the EIC Fund.

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

The [European Investment Bank](#) (EIB) is investment adviser to the EIC Fund. The EIB and the EIC Fund manager are separate legal entities. The EIB provides advice and support to the EIC Fund but does not take the investment decisions. It is the EIC Fund manager (the AIFM) that makes decisions on investments, their structure and terms, follow-on investments and divestments, in accordance with the EIC investment guidelines and having regard to the recommendations of the EIB as investment adviser.

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

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

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

The restructuring of the EIC Accelerator investment process will not have any impact on funding offered by the EIC or the selection process. The European Innovation Council and SME Executive Agency (EISMEA) will continue conducting the evaluation and selection of proposals and the EIB will continue its role in implementing due diligence as investment adviser. The EIC Investment Guidelines will provide information on the investment strategy.

EISMEA will continue coordinating the grant and the equity components.

60. *What are the investment scenarios?*

The EIC investment guidelines provide details on investment scenarios.

Following an initial assessment implying some level of due diligence, including 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) compliance checks (by the EIC Fund¹), the EIB, as investment 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 recommend to the Agency to reject an investment when initial assessment or due diligence, at any stage, reports substantial negative issues in accordance with the EIC investment guidelines.

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

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

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

The EIC Fund may use direct equity in cases where potential investors show immediate interest in co-investing into EIC selected companies. The EIC Fund will seek to ensure that the equity investment is at least matched by these other potential, qualified investors (i.e. which will cover at least 50% of the round), having an objective of 1:3 leverage for the full EIC investment cycle.

62. 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.

63. What is a 'qualified investor'?

Qualified Investor means an investor deploying privately sourced funds in an EIC Fund Final Recipient with demonstrable know-how and experience in the relevant market, technology and jurisdiction. Such a qualified investor adds to EIC Fund due diligence with the purpose of both valuing the relevant asset or

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

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.

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

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

There is no explicit list of strategic technologies and applicants can propose innovations they consider strategic, with a justification included in their application. However, as guidance, the EIC Work Programme 2024 (p.75) states that “investments will be considered strategic where without securing the investment in the Union there is a risk of dependency of a critical technology on a limited number of third country suppliers. See also section of the Introduction on economic security”.

The areas included in the Accelerator challenge on “technologies for open strategic autonomy” would normally be considered as strategic. Other relevant examples include those identified under EU industry policy, such as Advanced Materials, Advanced Manufacturing, Artificial Intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, Big Data, Blockchain, cloud technologies, connectivity, Industrial Biotechnology, Internet of Things, Micro- and Nanoelectronics, Mobility, Nanotechnology, Photonics, Robotics, and IT for Security/Cybersecurity. (<https://ati.ec.europa.eu/>).

Other areas such as critical raw materials, batteries, green hydrogen, semiconductors, cloud and edge technologies, space technologies, quantum computing, zero emission aircraft, RNA and cancer vaccines could also be considered as relevant. This list of potential examples is neither exhaustive, nor are the examples definitive confirmations that the respective sectors will be considered as strategic at the time when a given proposal is examined – this depends on the specificities of the proposal and on the developments in the respective sectors.

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

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

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

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

There are no excluded investors by geography *a priori*. However, the EIC is an initiative of the EU and where relevant, considerations will take into account EU technology sovereignty. When implementing investments, the EIC Fund will ensure that supported companies keep most of their value, including their IP, in the EU or in the Associated Countries in order to contribute to their economic growth and job creation. The Agency may set specific conditions and milestones in the grant agreement to ensure that the interest of the Union is met.

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

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

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

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

67. Why is the technological due diligence performed?

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

The purpose of the technological due diligence is not to re-assess the project, but to complement the evaluation process and dig in depth specifically on the technology (protection, validity, "investibility") and

its potential market (landscape, competition, positioning), beyond the information initially provided and the statements made by the company in the proposal.

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

68. How is the technological due diligence prepared?

The EIC selects the most qualified expert from the wider European Commission experts' database, to lead the research and draft a 5-10 pages report in 3 weeks' time.

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

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

69. When is the technological due diligence performed?

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

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

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

70. Companies who previously benefited from a grant-only support are allowed to request an "equity-only" in the EIC Accelerator. However, which equity-only schemes are these?

Equity only funding is intended for non-bankable SMEs, including start-ups, which have already received grant-only support under a). Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator, b). grant-only support under the Horizon 2020 EIC Pilot or c). grant-only support under the Horizon 2020 SME Instrument.

71. How is the investment amount established?

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 1:3 throughout the investment horizon).

F. EIC COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS ACCELERATION SERVICES

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

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

For more information, please see here: https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/business-acceleration-services/coaching-under-eic/call-expression-interest-establishing-list-eic-business-coaches_en

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An EIC business coach, working through online face-to-face interactions, will primarily evaluate your business goals and test your presumptions. They guide you in identifying areas for improvement, focusing on learning and resolving business development challenges. Coaching covers a wide range of topics based on your needs, including evaluating your value proposition and business model, enhancing strategy and investor business case, team building, leadership, processes, and even international expansion.

While this coaching support is not mandatory for proposal development, it is highly recommended. You will always remain fully responsible yourself for the content of your proposal. EIC coaching assignments cannot be used for proposal writing or other consultancy activities.

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

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

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

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

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

Business Acceleration Services are tailored as much as possible to the EIC beneficiaries' needs and aim to guarantee the best match possible with relevant business partners. This is why most offered EIC services will have a certain selection process based on specific criteria relevant to the specific event or service. If this

is the case, the criteria and the selection process are announced in the event publication and/or the registration website. If there are no selection criteria, the event may also be based on a 'first come first serve' basis or an unlimited attendance approach. Please check out any details in this regard in the event publication (in the [EIC Community](#)). Please note that, even if your grant or EIC funding is contractually finished, you are still eligible and invited to apply to the EIC BAS services.

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

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

76. 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 use the coaching services once. Therefore, you may choose to use them directly after the short proposal to prepare your full proposal for the first time. You may also choose to apply for the full proposal without using a coach and should you be rejected, you can use the coach to prepare your resubmission. If you passed the step 1 evaluation, you may use this link to reach the coach selection dashboard: <https://eic.eisma.eu/mydashboard/mycoaching>.

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

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

Business Acceleration Services form an integral part of the EIC programmes and are offered for free (in-kind) to eligible EIC funded projects and companies, Seal of Excellence as well as to innovators and companies coming from other European or national initiatives that have entered into a specific agreement with the EIC.

Nevertheless, if the event or service requires travel or accommodation these aspects should be taken care of by the attendee. For the EIC funded companies and projects, there are possibilities to claim those costs under your current grant, please contact your project officer in this regard.

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

78. How can I get access to other BAS services (access to expertise, trainings, matching, community

events, services provided by EIC ecosystem partners)?

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

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

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

If you are...

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

- Register to EIC Business Acceleration Services, such as the EIC Corporate Programme, EIC (Co-)Investor Programme, EIC Innovation Procurement Programme, EIC Tech 2 Market Programme, EIC International Trade Fairs Programme, EIC Women Leadership Programme;
- Create a personal and company profile.
- Use the powerful search engine to find like-minded companies.
- Promote your achievements.
- Explore business opportunities among EIC peers;
- Expand networks with EIC ecosystem partners and access their services through the [EIC Service catalogue](#).
- Share your experience and get support from peers via horizontal and thematic groups;
- Co-create ideas and knowledge;
- Promote interesting other events to the EIC Community;
- Apply to our EIC Partner Calls and get access to special offers for the EIC Community.
- Reduce your GHG emissions using EIC GHG Tool.

To have access to these sections, you will be requested to log in using your EU Login username and password. If you do not have one, you can create your [EU Login here](#). If you are funded by the European Innovation

Council, it may be that your user profile has been already automatically registered. In this case, just log in with EU Login username and password and you are already in!

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

- The most relevant news, success stories, open calls and events promoted by the EIC Business Acceleration Services are available outside the platform;
- Spread the words: share the great news with your network: you can do it directly on your digital page.

G. GENERAL CONDITIONS AND ELIGIBILITY

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

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

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

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

- If you decide to apply to both the 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.

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

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

- For Pathfinder, please make sure that you explain in your proposal how your ongoing H2020 grant(s) relate to your current application.

- For Transition, please make sure to fulfil the eligibility conditions described in the Work Programme (e.g. applications should be based on results generated by eligible projects specified in the Work Programme).
- Ongoing blended finance projects selected under a Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Accelerator call may be eligible to submit a proposal for a related investment component under an EIC Accelerator call.

83. How do I know which countries are associated to the EIC (including to the EIC Fund in case of blended finance)? Can I apply if I am based in a third country, which is not associated?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For award procedures implementing 2024 budget activities, UK entities may apply to calls of the EIC funded by grants, including the Pathfinder scheme, Transition activities, and the grant only part of the EIC Accelerator. However, UK entities will only be eligible for funding (and to meet the minimum requirements for eligible partners within consortia) if the Horizon Europe association agreement with the UK applies at the time of signature of the grant agreement. Further guidance for UK applicants is available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research_and_innovation/strategy_on_research_and_innovation/documents/ec_rtd_uk-participation-in-horizon-europe.pdf

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Fast Track is being implemented by a number of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and further information can be found on their websites.

In 2024, the funding bodies and schemes which are eligible for the Fast Track for EIC Accelerator cut-off dates are: EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition projects (including under EIC pilot) managed by the Agency; Relevant schemes managed by the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), as identified as relevant by each KIC; Funding schemes for SMEs supported under the Eurostars-2 Joint Programme and the Partnership on Innovative SMEs managed by the Eureka secretariat and relevant national bodies; Companies awarded a grant only under the Horizon 2020 EIC pilot Accelerator and the Horizon Europe EIC Accelerator managed by the Agency.

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

The Fast Track scheme referred to in Annex 4 to the Work Programme and the Fast Track to Research and Innovation (FTRI) referred to in Horizon Europe Regulation are two different things.

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

On the other hand, the Fast Track scheme stems from Article 43(5) of Horizon Europe Regulation. Its purpose is to allow eligible funding bodies to directly submit for evaluation under the last award criterion (Article 43(4)(c)) a proposal for an innovation and market deployment action which already fulfils the first

two criteria, provided that cumulative conditions as set out in the Regulation, in the Specific Programme, and in the Work Programme are met.

I. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROVISIONS FOR EIC PATHFINDER AND TRANSITION PROJECTS

88. What is an EIC Inventor?

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

Examples of EIC Inventor could be PhD students or postdoctoral researchers and their Principal Investigators, who obtained the said results as part of an EIC grant.

89. Who owns a result developed by an EIC Inventor and/or EIC Awardee?

The EIC Awardee owns any results developed by EIC Inventors with EIC funding. When patented, EIC Awardees are the named patent owners of such results.

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

EIC Awardees are expected to detail their plans to disseminate their results in the 'Dissemination and Exploitation Plan' that they are usually requested to submit as a deliverable for EISMEA's approval 6 months after the start of Pathfinder projects.

Publications remain the expected means for dissemination of scientific results. However, EISMEA expects that the innovation potential and patentability of such results is assessed by the EIC Awardee and, should the assessment be positive, that the innovation is suitably protected before it is disclosed, through publication or other dissemination means. The aim here is not to prevent publications but to ensure that publications do not inadvertently prevent innovation.

91. 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 the Technology Transfer Office of the EIC Awardee, when such service is available. Following a formal request from the EIC Inventor, the EIC Awardee has 6 months to communicate its decision to whether it will support the protection of the invention.

92. How can an EIC Awardee 'support' the EIC Inventor in the protection and commercialisation of their innovations?

In this context, support refers to 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.

93. I would like to transfer my results to other institution. Do I have to inform the Commission?

The grant agreement has a provision whereby the granting authority may object to a transfer of ownership or the licensing of results under certain conditions. Please follow the procedure as indicated in the grant agreement.

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

If the EIC Awardee provides financial or other support to the EIC Inventor for any such exploitation, royalties or other returns may be shared with the EIC Awardee on mutually beneficial terms, provided the conclusion of any such agreement does not prevent the EIC Inventor(s) to exercise their rights. Such financial support should include as a minimum the full or partial funding of the costs of relevant Intellectual Property Right protection in major jurisdictions. The royalties and other returns to the EIC Awardee should be fair and proportionate to the financial and other support provided.

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

Following a formal request from the EIC Inventor, the EIC Awardee has 6 months to communicate its decision to support or not the protection and commercialisation of the innovation.

Importantly, any protection/commercialisation plans from the EIC inventor should not contravene the 'Dissemination and Exploitation Plan' already agreed between the EIC and the EIC Awardee. In such circumstances, the EIC Inventor must inform the EIC Awardee in a reasonable time before any exploitation activity they intend to undertake, and report to the EIC Awardee on the implementation of the exploitation activity.

96. 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)?

If 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.

97. 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 the access rights of the EIC Inventor have been suspended by the EIC Awardee on the basis that they contravene the 'Dissemination and Exploitation Plan' agreed by the EIC Awardee and the EISMEA, the EIC Inventor may request that the EISMEA lifts that suspension by demonstrating that the exercise of the access rights does not affect the said plan.

98. Annex 6 of the Work Programme states that beneficiaries may object to the dissemination of their preliminary findings or results by the granting authority when they demonstrate concrete exploitation. In this context, what is meant by "demonstrating concrete exploitation"? Would an on-going negotiation with an entity be considered as demonstrating concrete exploitation?

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

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

99. Annex 6 of the Work Programme says that if a beneficiary fails to exploit or disseminate a result the granting authority can impose penalties; when will such penalties be applied?

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