

*European Commission Decision C(2022) 701 of 7 February 2022*

# European Innovation Council (EIC) Work Programme 2022

European  
Innovation  
Council



European Innovation Council (EIC) established by the European Commission, under the Horizon Europe programme (2021-27)

## Who should read this document

This document is the annual European Innovation Council (EIC) Work Programme funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. It is the legal document which sets out how the EIC will allocate its funding for the corresponding year. It is prepared following the advice of the EIC pilot Advisory Board and adopted by the European Commission.

The EIC aims at **identifying and supporting breakthrough technologies and game-changing innovations** with the potential to scale up internationally and become market leaders. It supports all stages of innovation from research and development on the scientific underpinnings of breakthrough technologies, to validation and demonstration of breakthrough technologies and innovations to meet real world needs, to the development and scaling up of start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Financial support is provided through three main funding schemes: the 'EIC Pathfinder' for advanced research on breakthrough / game-changing technologies; 'EIC Transition' for transforming research results into innovation opportunities; and the 'EIC Accelerator' for individual companies to develop and scale up breakthrough innovations with high risk and high impact. All EIC awardees, as well as selected applicants, have access to a range of EIC Business Acceleration Services providing access to leading expertise, corporates, investors and ecosystem actors. The EIC also provides additional activities such as prizes.

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

**Potential applicants** who wish to apply for EIC funding will need to apply through the EU Funding & Tender Opportunities portal (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>), which can also be accessed to via the EIC website (<https://eic.ec.europa.eu>). This contains all the information necessary as well as details of the relevant **National Contact Point** who can provide information and personalised support in native language.

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# I. Introduction

## Key features of the EIC

This is the Work Programme for the implementation of European Innovation Council (EIC) activities in 2022. In accordance with the Horizon Europe legislation, this Work Programme implements the following key features:

### **Integrated, agile support across the full innovation spectrum from early stage edge research to the scale-up of genuinely innovative SMEs**

The funding and support is organised into three main funding schemes: the EIC Pathfinder for advanced research to develop the scientific basis to underpin breakthrough technologies (Section II); the EIC Transition to validate technologies and develop business plans for specific applications (Section III);<sup>1</sup> and the EIC Accelerator to support companies (SMEs, start-ups, spin-outs and in exceptional cases small mid-caps) to bring their innovations to market and scale up (Section IV). In each case, the direct financial support to innovators is augmented with access to a range of Business Acceleration Services (Section V).

Linkages between these funding schemes will be maximised through proactive management (see below) and new approaches, such as additional 'Booster' grants to ongoing EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition projects (Annex 6), a Marketplace to connect preliminary and final research results with entrepreneurs and investors (Section V and Section VII), and the Fast Track scheme from EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition successful projects to enter the EIC Accelerator (Annex 4).

This Work Programme has been prepared in coordination with the Horizon Europe strategic plan and the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022,<sup>2</sup> and in particular its part on European Innovation Ecosystems, with the aim of integrating the direct support to innovators through the EIC with improvements to the overall European ecosystem. The EIC will also link with other components of Horizon Europe, including the European Research Council (ERC), the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), and with other Union funding programmes, such as InvestEU.

A number of support actions included in this Work Programme will allow the integration and development of current EIC services such as the AI evaluation tool and

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<sup>1</sup> EIC Transition applies the Fast Track to Research and Innovation Procedure (FTRI) as defined in Horizon Europe.

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe_en).

the EIC Marketplace into a wider virtual, and ultimately physical, space allowing interactions and collaborations among European innovators. This space will be open to all interested stakeholders and parties, to stimulate the European innovation ecosystem by fostering the circulation of ideas, bringing actors together to further develop innovations and bridge them with funding opportunities, public or private. The aim is to develop further synergies with national and regional programmes, as well as interested innovation agencies to overall enhance support to innovation across the Union.

### **A balance between open funding and challenge driven funding.**

The majority of funding will be awarded through open calls with no predefined thematic priorities ('EIC Open').<sup>3</sup> The EIC Open funding is designed to enable support for any technologies and innovations that cut across different scientific, technological, sectoral and application fields or represent novel combinations.

The challenge driven approach ('EIC Challenges') provides funding to address specific technological and innovation breakthroughs. These challenges take into account EU priorities for transitioning to a green, digital and healthy society, as well as the overall strategic planning for Horizon Europe, and the inputs of stakeholders, experts and the EIC Board.

### **Tailored approach to proposal evaluation**

The EIC approach to the evaluation of proposals is tailored to the objectives of each of the EIC funding schemes. For the most mature technologies, when business and market readiness levels are close to market funding, greater emphasis is put on face to face interviews with applicants and a simplified binary scoring (GO/ NO GO).

For the EIC Pathfinder, which supports science-towards-technology breakthrough research, the evaluation follows a peer review method where proposals are evaluated, scored and ranked by experts based on weighted criteria and thresholds (see Section II).

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

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<sup>3</sup> As far as MFF budget is concerned (i.e. not taking into account NGEU budget).

For the EIC Accelerator, which supports high risk/high gain innovations to go to the market and scale up, proposals will be evaluated remotely and at face to face interviews based on a binary scoring (GO/NO GO)<sup>4</sup> (see Section [IV](#)).

### **Proactive project and portfolio management by EIC Programme Managers**

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

Moreover, the EIC takes a proactive approach of project and programme management to develop business and technology-based visions. This is performed by EIC Programme Managers,<sup>5</sup> whose task is to identify, develop and implement such visions and to nurture potential market-creating innovations out of EIC funded projects and activities. Proactive management applies to EIC Pathfinder, EIC Transition and EIC Accelerator projects and consists of the following:

- ✦ Proposals for funding will need to define a number of milestones that will be used to periodically review progress. Reviews will assess whether the activities foreseen to reach the milestone have been completed and will consider the results and outputs against the overall objectives. The reviews will be undertaken with the support of independent experts and overseen by EIC Programme Managers for projects within their portfolios.
- ✦ Following the reviews against milestones, the EIC support may be continued on the same basis, amendments may be requested or, in case the project has lost economic or technological relevance or not met agreed milestones, it may be suspended or even terminated. Reviews may also result in requests for amendments to ongoing or planned milestones, and deployment of some necessary EIC Business Acceleration Services (or other relevant ones, like those from EIC-KICs), including additional coaching days and access to crucial expertise. For EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition projects, reviews may also involve an assessment to submit a proposal directly to the EIC Accelerator under the Fast Track scheme (see Annex 4) or to submit a proposal for additional EIC Booster

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<sup>4</sup> In line with Article 25(3) and Article 26(2) of the Horizon Europe Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2021/695).

<sup>5</sup> Programme Managers are temporary staff employed by the Agency to manage one or more EIC Portfolios.

grants (see Annex 6). In addition to the reviews, the EIC awardees will be expected to keep the EIC regularly informed of progress and pre-alerted in case of difficulties.

- ✦ EIC funded projects may be included in one or more thematic or challenge-based portfolios of projects ('EIC Portfolios'), providing the projects with a productive setting in which to advance their ideas. For EIC Challenges, the portfolio will reflect the scope of the challenge ('Challenge Portfolio'). Projects to be funded through EIC Open topics may be requested to join one or more Thematic Portfolios. The EIC Portfolios will be overseen by EIC Programme Managers and the relevant EIC awardees may be requested to participate in portfolio activities together with other projects or initiatives (examples of portfolio activities can be found in Annex 6).
- ✦ The objectives and roadmap of the EIC Challenge Portfolios are defined and proposed by the EIC Programme Manager, following close consultation with EIC Awardees of the projects of the portfolio, consultation with relevant Commission services to ensure strong complementarities with other parts of Horizon Europe and, where appropriate, with other interested members of the EIC Community and other third parties. In order to take into account relevant changes in science and innovation or the portfolio's achievements or consistency, the objectives and roadmap of an EIC Challenge Portfolio may be revised. Based on any such revision, the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) (hereafter 'the Agency') may request to amend the project activities, milestones and deliverables in accordance with the grant agreement. If the project has been selected under an EIC Challenge topic, and where no amendment can be agreed upon to ensure coherence with the updated objectives of the related Challenge Portfolio, the Agency may suspend or terminate the project in accordance with the grant agreement.
- ✦ EIC portfolio activities are identified and developed by EIC Programme Managers in consultation with the EIC Awardees of the projects in the EIC Portfolio, with relevant Commission services and where appropriate with other interested EIC Community members and third parties. They aim at developing cooperation within an EIC Portfolio in order to achieve its objectives or those of its actions, enhance research, prepare transition to innovation and stimulate business opportunities, and strengthen the EIC Community. Such activities may cover participation to conferences, workshops or meetings, experience and data sharing, and participation to any relevant EIC Business Acceleration Services events.



## **Policy of open access and Intellectual Property rights<sup>6</sup>**

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

Moreover, the EIC aims to stimulate the cross-fertilisation and exploitation of results from EIC supported projects. Therefore, EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition projects may be requested by EIC Programme Managers to actively share information about results (including preliminary findings), within their EIC Portfolio and with other relevant EIC projects and parties, as detailed in Annex 7. The goal is to stimulate and nurture potential innovation out of EIC Pathfinder or EIC Transition results and explore pathways to further development. This exchange of information between EIC Awardees will be without prejudice to their own legitimate interests to exploit the results or findings. To ensure full confidentiality, such sharing will be subject to non-disclosure obligations regarding confidential results, with EIC Awardees retaining the right on a case by case basis to fully disclose or not their intellectual property.

Without prejudice to ownership of results (including preliminary findings) by EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition result owners, their inventors will be entrusted with appropriate access for the purpose of further development and exploitation be eligible to additional financial support and services offered by EIC, as further detailed in Annex 7.

## **Medium term Key Performance Indicators**

The overall objective of the EIC is to identify, develop and deploy high risk innovations of all kind with a particular focus on breakthrough, market-creating and deep-tech innovations. It aims to support the rapid scale up of innovative technologies and companies (mainly start-ups and SMEs) at EU and international level along the pathway from ideas to market. In this context the EIC is also an initiative contributing to the EU open strategic autonomy.

Following the recommendations of the EIC pilot Advisory Board, the EIC aims to achieve ambitious targets on a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These KPI targets are medium-term objectives for the EIC and not specific targets for the 2022 Work Programme., which will contribute to the following EIC KPIs:

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<sup>6</sup> For the EIC Accelerator, the Intellectual Property rules are included in the contract and/or investment agreement.

- ✦ Supporting impact-oriented companies of which over 90% address Sustainable Development Goals. This KPI will be addressed in particular through the EIC Accelerator and EIC Transition calls;<sup>7</sup>
- ✦ Crowding in of co-investments and follow-up investments in EIC funded companies of 3-5 times the level of EIC funding. This KPI will be addressed in particular through the EIC Accelerator blended finance / equity (-like) support and the role of the EIC Investment Partners, as well as through the Business Acceleration Services for other projects;
- ✦ Effectively promoting the bridging of research to deployment across EIC activities. This KPI will be addressed through all EIC funding schemes (EIC Pathfinder, EIC Transition, and EIC Accelerator) and supported through proactive management, the EIC Marketplace and the Business Acceleration Services.
- ✦ Achieving a balanced portfolio across geographical regions and with at least 35% of EIC portfolio companies led by women.

To progress towards the last of these KPIs, a number of specific actions are implemented through this Work Programme.

The EIC is committed to **support all innovation talent** including within underrepresented categories. Several measures will be undertaken in 2022 to continue ongoing efforts to increase support to women innovators within the EIC programmes, while fully respecting the principle of excellence:

- ✦ At least 40% of the EIC juries and EIC expert evaluators will be women, with the objective to reach 50%;
- ✦ The companies and projects invited to the face to face interviews with the EIC Accelerator and Transition juries will be selected on the basis of excellence,<sup>8</sup> while aiming at having a strong representation of women-led SMEs and, where relevant, work package leaders;
- ✦ The Business Accelerator Services include specific services for female founders;

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<sup>7</sup> To progress towards this KPI, the EIC Accelerator and Transition applicants and beneficiaries are encouraged to make use of EIC Greenhouse Gas (EIC GHG) programme including by using the EIC Greenhouse Gas Tool

<sup>8</sup> For any applicant to be considered for interview, they must meet all the evaluation criteria at all of the previous steps of the selection process.

- ✦ Encouragement of gender balance among Work Package leaders in EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition by using women representation as a criterion in case of equal score;
- ✦ Increased budget for the WomenTech.EU scheme from €2 million to €10 million;<sup>9</sup>
- ✦ A pilot innovation gender and diversity index to collect data, provide benchmarking/ KPIs, and track progress across the European ecosystem. The EIC will collaborate with the EIT and its KICs to exchange good practices on supporting women-led SMEs and start-ups.

These measures are complemented by actions in the European Innovation Ecosystems Work Programme to promote women across the innovation ecosystem.

For improving **balance across geographical regions** and in particular the ‘widening’ countries defined in Horizon Europe:<sup>10</sup>

- ✦ National Contact Points and members of the Enterprise Europe Network provide additional target support services for applicants from ‘widening’ countries;
- ✦ All applicants to the EIC Accelerator that receive a GO on their short proposals will receive three days of coaching to prepare their full proposals. This is expected to be particularly beneficial to those applicants from regions with less support available. The EIC will closely cooperate with relevant EIT KICs in this respect.

Applicants receiving the ‘Seal of Excellence’ will have access to EIC Business Accelerator Services and support to access other sources of funding, including from the Cohesion Policy Funds , provided that the Seal of Excellence project is in line with the Common Provision Regulation (Art. 73(4)), and potentially from EIT KICs.

These measures are complemented by actions in the European Innovation Ecosystems and the Widening parts of the Horizon Europe Work Programme.

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<sup>9</sup> The WomenTech.EU scheme is implemented under the Horizon Europe work programme part on ‘Innovative European Ecosystems’.

<sup>10</sup> According to Article 2(17) of Regulation 2021/695 establishing Horizon Europe-the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013t, ‘widening countries’/ ‘low R&I performing countries’ are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, for the whole duration of the Programme. For Associated Countries, the list of eligible countries will be defined based on an indicator and published in the Work Programme. On the basis of Article 349 TFEU, legal entities from Outermost Regions will be also fully eligible.

## EIC-EIT Collaboration

The EIC is progressively increasing collaboration and synergies with the EIT and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) with the overall aim of strengthening the European Innovation Ecosystem. In this context, the EIC and the EIT agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 8 January 2021 identifying a range of areas to strengthen collaboration. A number of these areas are already supported through this Work Programme, such as the implementation of the FastTrack process by EIT KICs. Further measures, considered in the future, such as coordination with the wide range of existing EIT KICs business acceleration services, will be considered in the future.

## Main changes with respect to the EIC Work Programme 2021

The EIC Work Programme 2022 includes a number of new elements to take into account the lessons learnt from the implementation of the EIC Work Programme 2021, and to support new emerging innovation policies, including those following the recommendations of key stakeholders reports.<sup>11</sup> These new elements include:

EIC Pathfinder:

- ✦ Clarifications of timelines for the rebuttal procedure.

EIC Transition:

- ✦ Introduction of regular cut-off dates for applications;
- ✦ Provisions to increase the number of women-led projects to be invited to the jury interview stage, if all evaluation criteria thresholds are met.

EIC Accelerator:

- ✦ More frequent cut-off dates for full applications;
- ✦ Allowing applicants to apply for investment component amounts of above 15 million under certain conditions;
- ✦ Broadening the definition of women-led companies to recognise the role of women in executive Board positions beyond the Chief Executive Officer.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://sifted.eu/intelligence/reports/scale-up-europe;>  
[https://unicorngroup.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Next-Innovation-EU-FINAL-REPORT.pdf;](https://unicorngroup.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Next-Innovation-EU-FINAL-REPORT.pdf)  
<https://theventure.city/invest-in-women-now/>

## Outlook for 2023 and future years

The EIC has been set up as an agile organisation and the activities are expected to evolve and develop in each annual Work Programme based on advice from the EIC Board, experience from implementation and the dynamics of the world of innovation.

The main provisions of the EIC Open calls are expected to remain relatively stable to provide a significant level of predictability for applicants, while incorporating necessary improvements.

In order to provide a multi-annual perspective for the identification of EIC Challenges, the first yearly EIC Emerging Technologies report is being published to provide an overall assessment of opportunities stemming from the latest scientific, technological and innovative advancements as well as relevant policy, industrial, societal and market drivers.<sup>12</sup> This report provides important considerations for the process of identifying EIC Challenges for future Work Programmes. It is however important that the EIC can react quickly to new developments and hence the selection of EIC Challenges will not be restricted to the areas identified by the report.

This Work Programme will pilot a number of actions in support of potential scale-ups, including a support action with targeted support for scale-ups, the flexibility for the EIC to make investments above €15 million and an expert group to advise on further support measures for scale-ups, the outputs of which will be considered where relevant for the EIC 2023 Work Programme and beyond.

Following the work on the pilot European gender and diversity index, further actions may be considered from 2023 to address the underrepresentation of women and other diversity categories within the EIC portfolio of projects and companies.

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<sup>12</sup> The process of identification has involved the EIC Programme Managers, external experts and Commission services as well as an analysis of the existing evidence base and third party reports.

Table 1. Summary of main calls in 2022<sup>13</sup>

Call	Who can apply	What for	EIC Open		EIC Challenges		
			Deadlines	Indicative Budget (EUR million)	EIC Challenge	Deadlines	Indicative Budget (EUR million)
<b>EIC Pathfinder</b>	Consortia of at least three different independent legal entities <sup>14</sup> established in at least three different eligible countries. Additionally, single applicants or small consortia (two partners) for EIC Pathfinder Challenges only.	Grants of up to EUR 3 million (open) or EUR 4 million (challenge driven) (or more if properly justified) to achieve the proof of principle and validate the scientific basis of breakthrough technology (TRL 1-4)	3 May 2022	183	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carbon dioxide &amp; Nitrogen management and valorisation</li> <li>• Mid-long term, systems-integrated energy storage</li> <li>• Cardiogenomics</li> <li>• Healthcare Continuum technologies</li> <li>• DNA-based digital data storage</li> <li>• Alternative Quantum Information Processing, Communication, and Sensing</li> </ul>	19 October 2022	167
<b>EIC Transition</b>	Single applicants (SMEs, spin-offs, start-ups, research organisations, universities) or small consortia (two partners) or consortia of three to five different independent legal entities established in at least three different eligible countries. Proposals must build on results from eligible EIC Pathfinder, FET or ERC Proof of Concept projects	Grants of up to EUR 2.5 million (or more if properly justified) to validate and demonstrate technology in application-relevant environment (TRL 4 to 5/6) and develop market readiness	4 May 2022  28 September 2022	70.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green digital devices for the future</li> <li>• Process and system integration of clean energy technologies</li> <li>• RNA-based therapies and diagnostics for complex or rare genetic diseases</li> </ul>	4 May 2022  28 September 2022	60.5
<b>EIC Accelerator</b>	Single start-ups and SMEs (including spin-outs), individuals (intending to launch a start-up/ SME) and in exceptional cases small mid-caps (fewer than 499 employees)	Up to EUR 2.5 million grant component for technology development (TRL 5/6 to 9); EUR 0.5 up to 15 million <sup>15</sup> investment component for scaling up and other activities. Grant only/grant first under certain conditions. Investment component only for small mid-caps or as follow up to grant only.	Short applications: continuous Full applications : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 March 2022</li> <li>• 15 June 2022</li> <li>• 5 October 2022</li> </ul>	630.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technologies for Open Strategic Autonomy</li> <li>• Technologies for 'Fit for 55'</li> </ul>	Short applications: continuous Full applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 March 2022</li> <li>• 15 June 2022</li> <li>• 5 October 2022</li> </ul>	536.9

<sup>13</sup> This table provides a simplified overview. All applicants need to read the relevant sections for the full information on eligibility and conditions for funding. The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening. The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.

<sup>14</sup> e.g. research organisations, universities, SMEs, industry.

<sup>15</sup> In duly justified cases the investment component can be higher than EUR 15 million.

## Glossary<sup>16</sup>

The **EIC Board** oversees the strategy and implementation of EIC activities and provides advice on EIC Work Programmes. It comprises 15-20 leading innovators and innovative researchers, including a President, and is appointed by the European Commission following an open call for expressions of interest.<sup>17</sup> The EIC Board members are subject to strict rules concerning conflicts of interest and confidentiality.

The **Agency** entrusted by the European Commission with the implementation of all Horizon Europe EIC activities and funding is the European Innovation Council and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Executive Agency (EISMEA).

The EIC works with various **EIC Investment Partners** for management of the investment component of EIC Accelerator blended finance. During a transition phase in 2022 the EIC Investment Partner will be the **EIC Fund** which is a dedicated fund for investing in companies selected by the EIC Accelerator with the support of the European Investment Bank. Following the transition phase, it is anticipated that such partners would also include the European Investment Bank Group, private venture capital funds and national promotional banks and institutions, as well as the EIC fund. Within the mandate given by the Commission following the evaluation process, investment decisions<sup>18</sup> (and their related conditions and management) are taken by the EIC Fund (and in future other EIC Investment Partners). These decisions will follow the agreements between the Commission and the Investment Partners as well as the EIC Fund's Investment Guidelines<sup>19</sup> which include objectives to crowd in other investors as investments are de-risked.

The **EIC Forum** is a platform bringing different innovation drivers and levels of governance closer together to discuss openly and informally relevant policy issues.<sup>20</sup> The policy recommendations and activities of the EIC Forum will aim at supporting and complementing initiatives undertaken in Horizon Europe.

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<sup>16</sup> These definitions are complemented by specific definitions regarding provisions concerning management of EIC Portfolios and Intellectual Property for EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition actions detailed in Annex 7.

<sup>17</sup> The 2021 and 2022 EIC work programme followed advice provided by the EIC pilot Advisory Board which completed its mandate on 31 May 2021.

<sup>18</sup> In the context of the investment component of a blended finance project or of an investment only project. Investment decisions range from pre-seed up to IPO (exit) stages (i.e. covering also Seed, Series A, B, C+, etc.) as well as listed companies.

<sup>19</sup> The EIC Fund investment Guidelines will be available on the EIC website and cover in full detail the investment conditions of the EIC Fund.

<sup>20</sup> The EIC Forum is supported under the 'European Innovation Ecosystems' part of the Horizon Europe work programme.

The **EIC Awardees** are the consortia, institutions and/or companies named in an EIC grant agreement (for EIC Pathfinder, Transition) or EIC contract or investment agreement for EIC Accelerator, as well as winners of EIC Prizes. In the agreements and contracts, the legal entities receiving support (including but not limited to companies, research and technology organisations) are called 'beneficiaries'. The Horizon Europe model grant agreements and contracts are available on the EIC website.

**EIC Programme Managers** are high-level experts employed by the **Agency** to manage one or more **EIC Portfolios**. They work in close relation with EIC Project Officers. They are high level experts in their field and in the EU innovation landscape (e.g. ERC, EIT and EIT KICs). They are appointed to work in the EIC for a limited duration, to develop visions for breakthrough technologies and innovations, and to proactively manage portfolios of projects to achieve these breakthroughs. They are supported by EIC Project Officers as well as by EIC Tech to Market advisers. The EIC Programme Managers are subject to strict rules concerning conflicts of interest and confidentiality.

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

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

**EIC Juries** are panels of independent investors, entrepreneurs and other external experts, carefully selected by the EIC, who conduct face to face interviews with applicants to the EIC Transition and EIC Accelerator calls as a critical part of the selection process. **Face to face interviews** may take place in either a physical or virtual setting. In cases specified in the call texts (EIC Transition Challenges), EIC Programme Managers and representatives of the EIC Investment Partners may participate in some juries.

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

**EIC expert monitors** are external independent experts in their field who assist the EIC in the monitoring of projects.



**EIC evaluation committees** are panels of **EIC expert evaluators** who evaluate proposals and rank those that have passed the applicable thresholds. In cases specified in the call texts, EIC Programme Managers may participate in some evaluation committees as specified in the call texts.

**EIC Business Acceleration Services** are services for the EIC Community members to support the commercialisation of EIC innovations and scaling up of EIC companies, namely access to coaches, mentors, expertise and training, access to global partners (leading corporates, investors, procurers, distributors, clients) and access to innovation ecosystem and peers, as described more in detail in Section V.

**EIC business coaches** are independent external experts with entrepreneurial and fundraising background who provide business development insights and improvement guidance to EIC awardees, and applicants. They are part of the Business Acceleration Services.

**EIC Community** designates EIC awardees and third parties interested to partake or contribute to EIC activities.

**EIC Community platform** is a platform available to all EIC awardees, facilitating links to Business Acceleration Services as well as enabling discussions and exchanges.

The **EIC Marketplace** is a trusted IT interface (platform) between the EIC Community and the Agency for exchange of information and data on the action, in relation notably to portfolio activities, in order to cross-fertilise activities and stimulate and nurture potential innovation out of these findings. It will also provide for co-creating new ideas and activities, including but not exclusively for the purpose of applying for additional EIC Pathfinder, EIC Transition or EIC Accelerator support. It may also be used by the Agency to interact with stakeholders at large on such issues as raising awareness and consultation on EIC Portfolio objectives, in support of the implementation of EIC Business Acceleration Services, and to contribute to the dissemination of EIC actions results.

**EIC Portfolio** is a set of actions presenting thematic similarities (**Thematic Portfolio**) or contributing to the same EIC Challenge (**Challenge Portfolio**).

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

The **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)** is a network of business intermediary organisations (chambers of commerce, technology poles, innovation support organisations, universities and research institutes, regional development organisations)

that help Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) innovate and grow internationally.

**Deep tech** is technology that is based on cutting-edge scientific advances and discoveries and is characterised by the need to stay at the technological forefront by constant interaction with new ideas and results from the lab. Deep tech is distinct from 'high tech' which tends to refer only to R&D intensity.

**Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs)** provide a guide to the stage of development. TRLs are used in the Work Programme for guidance, but do not preclude support for non-technological innovations. A strong degree of importance will also be given to market readiness and business readiness,<sup>21</sup> as described in the award criteria of the call texts. The following definitions of TRLs apply, recognising that there are important differences between technological fields:

TRL1 - basic principles observed

TRL2 - technology concept formulated

TRL3 - experimental proof of concept

TRL4 - technology validated in lab

TRL5 - technology validated in relevant environment

TRL6 - technology demonstrated in relevant environment

TRL7 - system prototype demonstration in operational environment

TRL8 - system complete and qualified

TRL9 - actual system proven in operational environment

**Seal of Excellence:** is a certification awarded to individual SMEs that apply for EIC Transition or EIC Accelerator funding and are assessed to meet the relevant evaluation criteria as defined in the call text, but which are not directly funded by the EIC. The Seal of Excellence provides access to Business Acceleration Services and facilitates funding from other sources.<sup>22</sup> It is only awarded to those applicants who agree to share the data about their proposal (basic information on the proposal, the call and the proposer) with other alternative funding bodies, which may decide to fund the project. The grant component of projects awarded a Seal of Excellence is exempted under the General Block Exemption Regulation from State Aid notification requirements under the same

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<sup>21</sup> Further information on market readiness and business readiness will be provided in the guidance documents.

<sup>22</sup> Information on funding bodies that recognise and support Seal of Excellence projects is available at <https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/seal-excellence>.

funding rates as those applicable to the EIC. The investment component of projects awarded a Seal of Excellence may be supported by other funders, including public funders as long as this does not constitute a State Aid.

**Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)** is a category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. It consists of enterprises that employ fewer than 250 persons and have either an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million. A full definition is provided in in Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC. Under the EIC, this definition includes start-ups.

**Small mid-cap** means an enterprise employing up to 499 employees.<sup>23</sup>

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

**Women-led consortia** means consortia where at least 50% of Work Package leaders including the consortium coordinator are women.

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<sup>23</sup> Where the staff headcount is calculated in accordance with Articles 3, 4, 5 and 6 of Title I of the Annex of Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC.

## II. EIC Pathfinder

The overall objective of the EIC Pathfinder for advanced research is to develop the scientific basis to underpin breakthrough technologies. It provides support for the earliest stages of scientific, technological or deep-tech research and development. Pathfinder projects aim to build on new, cutting-edge directions in science and technology to disrupt a field and a market or create new opportunities by realising innovative technological solutions through:

- ✦ 'EIC Pathfinder Open', open to proposals in any field of science, technology or application without predefined thematic priorities;<sup>24</sup>
- ✦ 'EIC Pathfinder Challenges' to support proposals within a predefined thematic area and addressing specific objectives.

### II.1 EIC Pathfinder Open

- ✦ Do you have a vision for a future technology that could make a real difference to our lives?
- ✦ Do you see a plausible way of achieving the scientific breakthrough that will make this technology possible?
- ✦ Can you imagine collaborating with an interdisciplinary team of researchers and innovators to realise the proof of principle and validate the scientific basis of the future technology?

If the answer to each one of these questions is 'yes', then EIC Pathfinder Open may be the right call for you.

#### **Why should you apply?**

You should apply if you are looking for support from EIC Pathfinder Open to realise an ambitious vision for radically new technology, with potential to create new markets and/or to address global challenges. EIC Pathfinder Open supports early stage development of such future technologies (e.g. various activities at low Technology Readiness Levels 1-4), based on high-risk/high-gain science-towards-technology

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<sup>24</sup> Innovations that significantly harm the environment (and therefore contravene the 'do not significant harm' principle of the EU Taxonomy Regulation), social welfare or that are primarily designed for military applications, or in other fields which are generally excluded from EU funding pursuant to Article 18 Horizon Europe Regulation, will not be funded (see Annex 2). Research proposals within the scope of Annex I to the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications, must be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom Framework Programme.

breakthrough research (including 'deep-tech'). This research must provide the foundations of the technology you are envisioning.

EIC Pathfinder Open may support your work, especially if it is highly risky: you may set out to try things that will not work; you may be faced with questions that nobody knows the answer to yet; you may realise that there are many aspects of the problem that you do not master. On the contrary, if the approach you want to follow is incremental by nature or known, EIC Pathfinder Open will not support you.

Before applying to this call you should verify that your proposal meets all the following essential characteristics ('Gatekeepers'):

- ✦ Convincing long-term vision of a radically new technology that has the potential to have a transformative positive effect to our economy and society.
- ✦ Concrete, novel and ambitious science-towards-technology breakthrough, providing advancement towards the envisioned technology.
- ✦ High-risk/high-gain research approach and methodology, with concrete and plausible objectives.

EIC Pathfinder Open involves interdisciplinary research and development. By bringing diverse areas of research together, often with different perspectives, terminologies and methodologies, within individual projects and within a portfolio of projects, really new things can be generated and entirely new areas of research can be opened up. It is up to you to compose the team that you need, that you can learn from, and that you can move forward with.

The expected outcome of your project is the proof of principle that the main ideas of the envisioned future technology are feasible, thus validating its scientific and technological basis. Project results should include top-level scientific publications in open access. While your vision is expected to be worthwhile because of its potential for future impact, for instance to create new markets, improve our lives, or address global challenges, these are not expected to be addressed or achieved in the course of your EIC Pathfinder Open project. However, you are expected to take the necessary measures to allow future uptake to take place, for instance through an adequate formal protection of the generated Intellectual Property (IP).<sup>25</sup>

In addition, you are encouraged to involve and empower in your team key actors that have the potential to become future leaders in their field such as excellent early-career

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<sup>25</sup>IP includes industrial property (patents, trademarks, designs and geographic indications of source) and copyright. See also Section I and Annex 7 for more information on the EIC policy of Open Access and IP rights.

researchers or promising high-tech SMEs, including start-ups. Your project should reinforce their mind-set for targeted research and development aimed at high-impact applied results. This will strengthen Europe's capacity for exploiting the scientific discoveries made in Europe throughout the steps to market success or for solving global challenges. You are particularly encouraged to empower female researchers in your project and to achieve gender balance among your work package leaders.

### **Can you apply?**

This call is open for collaborative research. Your proposal must be submitted by the coordinator, on behalf of a consortium that includes at least three independent legal entities, each one established in a different Member State or Associated Country and with at least one of them established in a Member State. The legal entities may for example be universities, research organisations, SMEs, start-ups, industrial partners or natural persons. The eligibility of associated countries and third countries is detailed in Annex 3.

Your proposal will only be evaluated if it is admissible and eligible. The standard admissibility and eligibility conditions are detailed in Annex 2.

### **What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?**

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 183 million.

You will receive a grant for a Research and Innovation Action to cover the eligible costs, necessary for the implementation of your project. For this call, the EIC considers proposals with a requested EU contribution of up to EUR 3 million as appropriate. Nonetheless, this does not preclude you to request larger amounts, if properly justified. The funding rate of this grant will be 100% of the eligible costs.

Projects funded through EIC Pathfinder (including grants resulting from certain EIC pilot Pathfinder, FET-Open and oactive calls)<sup>26</sup> are eligible:

- ✦ to receive EIC Booster grants with fixed amounts of up to EUR 50 000 to undertake complementary activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation or for portfolio activities (see Annex 6);
- ✦ to submit an EIC Accelerator proposal via the Fast Track scheme (see Annex 4).

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<sup>26</sup> The eligible calls are: FETOPEN-RIA-2014-2015; FETOPEN-01-2016-2017; FETOPEN-01-2018-2019-2020; H2020-FETPROACT-2014; FETPROACT-01-2016; FETPROACT-01-2018; FETPROACT-EIC-05-2019; FETPROACT-EIC-07-2020; FETPROACT-EIC-08-2020.

In addition to funding, successful applicants will receive tailor-made access to a wide range of Business Acceleration Services (see Section [V](#)).

### **How do you apply; how long does it take?**

The deadline for submitting your proposal is 3 May 2022 at 17h00 Brussels local time.<sup>27</sup>

You must submit your proposal via the EU Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal before the given deadline.

Sections 1 to 3 of the part B of your proposal, corresponding respectively to the award criteria Excellence, Impact, and Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation, must consist of a maximum of 17, A4 pages. The standard admissibility and eligibility conditions are detailed in Annex 2, and the eligibility of applicants from third countries in Annex 3.

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

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

Your proposal will be first evaluated and scored remotely by EIC expert evaluators with respect to the award criteria. The remote score for each award criterion will be the median of the evaluators' scores. The overall remote score will be the weighted sum of the three median scores from the three award criteria.

A rebuttal procedure after the remote phase will provide you with the opportunity to reply with a strict page limit (maximum two A4 pages) to the evaluators' comments, which you will receive about 1.5-2.5 months after the call deadline via the EU Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal. The deadline for sending your replies will be eight calendar days (at 17h00 Brussels local time) after you have received the evaluators' comments. Your replies cannot be used to alter or add to the content of the proposals, but must strictly focus on responding to potential misunderstandings or errors by the evaluators. Your replies will be made available to the evaluation committee.

The evaluation committee, which will be composed of external independent experts different than those who evaluated the proposals remotely, 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. These

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<sup>27</sup> The call will open on 1 March 2022. The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening. The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.

discussions will focus on proposals with diverging evaluators' opinions that have a realistic chance of getting funded (i.e. proposals from an appropriately chosen range above and below the funding threshold). The evaluation committee may invite expert evaluators who evaluated and scored the proposals remotely to the consensus discussions, in particular for proposals with diverging evaluators' opinions.

The Evaluation Summary Report will comprise the final score, a collation of the comments from individual reports, or extracts from them, a comment that summarises the assessment by the evaluation committee (potentially taking into account the applicants' reply received via the rebuttal) as well as any additional comments, possibly including advice not to resubmit the proposal.

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

<b>Table 2. Award criteria for EIC Pathfinder Open</b>
<b>Excellence (Threshold: 4/5, weight 60%)</b>
<u>Long-term vision</u> : How convincing is the vision of a radically new technology towards which the project would contribute in the long term?
<u>Science-towards-technology breakthrough</u> : How concrete, novel and ambitious is the proposed science-towards-technology breakthrough with respect to the state-of-the-art? What advancement does it provide towards realising the envisioned technology?
<u>Objectives</u> : How concrete and plausible are the proposed objectives? To what extent is the high-risk/high-gain research approach appropriate for achieving them? How sound is the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research content, and the quality of open science practices?
<u>Interdisciplinarity</u> : How relevant is the interdisciplinary approach from traditionally distant disciplines for achieving the proposed breakthrough?
<b>Impact (Threshold: 3.5/5, weight 20%)</b>
<u>Long-term impact</u> : How significant are the potential transformative positive effects that the envisioned new technology would have to our economy, environment and society?
<u>Innovation potential</u> : How adequate are the proposed measures for protection of results and any other exploitation measures to facilitate future translation of research results into innovations? How suitable are the proposed measures for involving and empowering key actors that have the potential to take the lead in translating research into innovations in the future?



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

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

Quality of the consortium: To what extent do the consortium members have all the necessary high quality expertise for performing the project tasks?

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

Allocation of resources: How appropriate and effective is the allocation of resources (person-months and equipment) to tasks and consortium members?

For proposals with the same final score, priority will be based on the following factors, in order: higher score under the criterion Excellence; higher score under the criterion Impact; gender balance among the work package leaders as identified in the proposal; number of applicants that are SMEs; number of Member States and Associated Countries represented in the consortium; other factors related to the objectives of the call to be determined by the evaluation committee.

## II.2 EIC Pathfinder Challenges

EIC Pathfinder Challenges aim to build on new, cutting-edge directions in science and technology to disrupt a field and a market or create new opportunities by realising innovative technological solutions grounded in high-risk/high-gain research and development.

With each specific Challenge, the EIC will establish a portfolio of projects that explore different perspectives, competing approaches or complementary aspects of the Challenge. The complexity and high-risk nature of this research will require multi-disciplinary collaborations.

A dedicated Programme Manager, who establishes a need-driven plan and proactively steers the portfolio towards the goals of each Challenge, oversees a specific EIC Pathfinder Challenge. Projects in a Challenge portfolio are expected to interact and exchange, remaining flexible and reactive in the light of developments within the portfolio or in the relevant global scientific or industrial community. They will progress together towards common goals and create new opportunities for radical innovation.

This section refers to common criteria for all EIC Pathfinder Challenges. Please refer to the description below of each Challenge for specific information, particular requirements and budget.

### **Why should you apply?**

You should apply if you have a potential project that would contribute to the specific objectives of the respective Challenge. Specifically, your project must aim to deliver by its end the expected outcomes defined in the respective challenge. Project results should also include top-level scientific publications as well as an adequate formal protection of the generated intellectual property (IP).

In addition, you are encouraged to involve and empower in your team key actors that have the potential to become future leaders in their field such as excellent early-career researchers or promising high-tech SMEs, including start-ups. Your project should reinforce their mind-set for targeted research and development aimed at high-impact applied results. This will strengthen Europe's capacity for exploiting the scientific discoveries made in Europe throughout the steps to market success or for solving global challenges. You are particularly encouraged to empower female researchers in your project and to achieve gender balance among your work package leaders.

Before you decide to apply, you are strongly encouraged to read the respective EIC Pathfinder Challenge guide that will be published when the call opens on the EIC

website and the European Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal. This Challenge Guide will provide you with more information about the specific objectives of the challenge, e.g. a detailed assessment of the state of the art and related (existing) projects in the field, technical information to underpin the objectives, potential societal, economic, environmental impacts if the objectives are achieved; as well as relevant references.

### **Can you apply?**

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

The EIC Pathfinder Challenges support collaborative research and innovation from consortia or proposals from single legal entities established in a Member State or an Associated Country (unless stated otherwise in the specific challenge chapter). In case of a consortium your proposal must be submitted by the coordinator on behalf of the consortium that includes at least two independent legal entities.<sup>28</sup> The legal entities may for example be universities, research organisations, SMEs, start-ups, natural persons. In the case of single beneficiary projects, mid-caps and larger companies will not be permitted.

Your proposal will only be evaluated if it is admissible and eligible. The standard admissibility and eligibility conditions are detailed in Annex 2 and the eligibility of applicants from third countries in Annex 3.

### **What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?**

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 167 million which is expected to be allocated in approximately equal shares across the challenges.

You will receive a grant for a Research and Innovation Action to cover the eligible costs, necessary for the implementation of your project, including the portfolio activities. For this call, the EIC considers proposals with an EU contribution of up to EUR 4 million as appropriate. Nonetheless, this does not preclude you to request larger amounts, if properly justified or stated otherwise in the specific Challenge. The funding rate of this grant will be 100% of the eligible costs.

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<sup>28</sup> Consortia of two entities must be comprised of independent legal entities from two different Member States or Associated Countries. Consortia of three or above entities follow standard rules i.e. they must include at least one legal entity established in a Member State and at least two other independent legal entities, each established in different Member States or Associated Countries (see Annex 3).

The projects funded through EIC Pathfinder Challenges are eligible:

1. to receive EIC Booster grants of up to EUR 50 000 to undertake complementary activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation or for portfolio activities (see Annex 6).
2. to submit an EIC Accelerator proposal via its Fast Track scheme (see Annex 4).

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

### **How do you apply; how long does it take?**

The call deadline for submitting your proposal is 19 October 2022 at 17h00 Brussels local time.<sup>29</sup>

You must submit your proposal via the European Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal.

Sections 1 to 3 of the part B of your proposal, corresponding respectively to the award criteria Excellence, Impact, and Quality and Efficiency of the Implementation, must consist of a maximum of 25 A4 pages. The standard admissibility and eligibility conditions are detailed in Annex 2, and the eligibility of applicants from third countries in Annex 3.

You will be informed about the outcome of the evaluation 5 months after call deadline (indicative), and your grant agreement will be signed by 8 months after call deadline (indicative).

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

After the submission of your proposal it will be evaluated in two steps:

1. a remote evaluation by EIC expert evaluators will assess each proposal separately against the defined award criteria;
2. an EIC evaluation committee will consider all proposals passing the first step together in order to assess the best portfolio of projects to achieve the specific objectives of the Challenge. The evaluation committee will be composed of EIC expert evaluators and EIC Programme Managers.

For the first step, your proposal will be evaluated by EIC expert evaluators on each of the award criteria (Table 3).

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<sup>29</sup> The call will open on 15 June 2022. The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening. The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.

**Table 3. Award criteria for EIC Pathfinder Challenges**

**Excellence (Threshold: 4/5; weight 60%)**

Objectives and relevance to the Challenge: How clear are the project's objectives? How relevant are they in contributing to the overall goal and the specific objectives of the Challenge?

Novelty: To what extent is the proposed work ambitious and goes beyond the state-of-the-art?

Plausibility of the methodology: How sound is the proposed methodology, including the underlying concepts, models, assumptions, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research content, and the quality of open science practices?

**Impact (Threshold: 3.5/5; weight 20%)**

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

Innovation potential: How adequate are the proposed measures for protection of results and any other exploitation measures to facilitate future translation of research results into innovations with positive societal, economic or environmental impact? How suitable are the proposed measures for involving and empowering key actors that have the potential to take the lead in translating research into innovations in the future?

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

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

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

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

Allocation of resources: How appropriate and effective is the allocation of resources (person-months and equipment) to tasks and consortium members?

The remote score for each award criterion will be the median of the evaluators' scores. The overall remote score will be the weighted sum of the three median scores from the three award criteria.

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

As a second step, the evaluation committee will establish a list of proposals to be funded, based on the evaluation scores from the first step, as decided by the committee, and on each proposal's contribution to the setting up of a consistent Challenge Portfolio of projects. Your proposal should therefore specify which objectives, or aspects of objectives, it addresses taking into account the technical specifications in the Challenge Guide (e.g. potential applications, range and expected outcomes of the projects, and the associated risks for achieving them, TRLs of the different tools and technologies proposed).

Portfolio considerations will be detailed in the EIC Pathfinder Challenge Guide, as it is topic and domain specific. As a general principle, in order to balance out the Challenge Portfolio, a categorisation of the proposals will be used and the proposals will be allocated to different components or categories. Example of possible categories are: building blocks or subsystems, technical areas and/or competing technologies, risk level, size, budget. A suitable portfolio of proposals to be funded will be selected by the evaluation committee from the highest scoring ones for each category or component and proposed for funding.

The evaluation committee may also propose adjustments to the proposals as far as needed for the consistency of the portfolio approach. These adjustments will be in conformity with the conditions for participation and comply with the principle of equal treatment.

As a feedback, all applicants will receive a collation of the comments from the individual reports or excerpts from them. Applicants of proposals above threshold assessed further by the evaluation committee will also receive summary comments of the committee's assessment.

### **What happens after a project is evaluated and retained for funding?**

The coordinator of the proposal will receive a letter announcing the proposal has been retained for funding and the next steps regarding grant agreement signature. Grant agreement preparation and signature is expected to be finished within three months but shorter timelines may be specified.

The Project Officer and eventually the EIC Programme Manager will contact you and support during the grant signature process. You will be expected to collaborate with the other projects in the Challenge Portfolio and sign a grant agreement in principle before the project start.

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

## **II.2.1 EIC Pathfinder Challenge: Carbon dioxide and nitrogen management and valorisation**

### **Introduction and scope**

Climate change, global warming and water/soil pollution are unprecedented challenges for the planet. To overcome them, it is necessary to develop breakthrough and integrated solutions to disrupt the current production processes and introduce more sustainable consumption habits.

Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and nitrogen (N) flows strongly affect climate change and belong to the cycle of make, use and dispose. To implement CO<sub>2</sub>/N sustainable cycles there is the need to develop technologies, sustained by renewable energy, able to increase their cycle efficiency introducing novel management and valorisation practices and approaches.

This EIC Pathfinder Challenge aims at developing novel processes and technologies to enable CO<sub>2</sub> and N management/valorisation and in turn to reduce:

- ✦ greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions,
- ✦ nitrogen losses (mainly due to agricultural practices), so minimizing impact on soil and water,
- ✦ carbon losses from the energy, industrial, agricultural, and livestock sectors.

These technologies could also increase cross sector coupling of energy systems, when renewable energy is required to capture, convert and use carbon and nitrogen streams into added value products.

This Challenge focuses on new biological, chemical, physical routes that integrate the capture and/or recovery of CO<sub>2</sub> and N species, storage and their conversion into value-added products, and/or net zero commodities, chemicals, fuels and energy vectors. The processes should focus on the use of renewable energy as input to develop carbon negative or net zero systems. Reaching these objectives requires multidisciplinary

competencies and cross-sectorial approaches, with a strong focus on circularity and whole life analysis. The research could address in an integrated manner environmental, industrial, agricultural, socio-economic and logistic issues.

### **Specific objectives**

The proposals, through non-critical raw materials (CRM)-based<sup>30</sup>, systems integrated, life cycle and circular thinking driven approaches, should develop a proof of concept (PoC) or lab-scale validated innovative technology that, will manage and valorise CO<sub>2</sub>, N, or both at the same time into value-added net zero commodities, chemicals, fuels, or energy vectors. Such technology should produce added-value products optimising input/output energy balances and achieving a carbon negative or net zero process promoting sustainable business models. Besides, the different steps of the CO<sub>2</sub>/N management and valorisation process could be designed to achieve integration at system or process level, to maximize sector coupling of energy systems such as converting renewable electricity into e-fuels and materials (e.g. power to X).

### **Expected outcomes and impacts**

This Challenge aims at developing:

- ✦ a net zero carbon process involving conversion of CO<sub>2</sub> from various sources and streams into renewable fuels or net zero materials, using renewable energy as input. Such technology should involve CO<sub>2</sub> capture/conversion (directly from air or from flue gases streams, and through photosynthetic, biological, biophysical, or chemical processes), storage (e.g. through chemical, electrochemical, biogenic processes), and further valorisation (e.g. feedstock for chemical industry, high energy density fuels, energy carriers or other carbon neutral compounds for industrial or agricultural applications). The CO<sub>2</sub> valorisation processes should be based on renewable energy and adopt technologies such as co-electrolysis of CO<sub>2</sub> and water, catalytic reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>, or photoelectrochemical CO<sub>2</sub> conversion etc.;
- ✦ N integrated management cycle (nitrogen circular economy) to avoid or significantly reduce N release (e.g. from combustion, fertilizer, livestock, and wastewater) in conjunction with the conversion of N-compounds to inert N<sub>2</sub>, or N-compounds recovery (e.g. using chemical, electrochemical, physical or biological systems), recycle and reuse as feedstock for added-value products or

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<sup>30</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Critical Raw Materials Resilience: Charting a Path towards greater Security and Sustainability, COM(2020)474 final



for biological fixation (e.g. into agriculture, as ammonia, as renewable fuels and energy vectors, as liquid hydrogen carriers).

### **Specific conditions**

Applicants should propose a proof of concept or lab-scale validated innovative technology able to manage and valorise CO<sub>2</sub> and/or N by biological, chemical, or physical routes without the use of critical raw materials, using renewable energy as sources and not being harmful to the natural ecosystems.

Projects with multidisciplinary and cross-sectorial approaches, looking for inspiration, ideas and knowledge in a broad range of disciplines are particularly welcome. The safe and sustainable use of non-critical raw materials is mandatory, and the projects should include a full life cycle analysis of the proposed solutions and their impact on Europe's decarbonisation goals.<sup>31</sup>

## **II.2.2 EIC Pathfinder Challenge: Mid to long term and systems integrated energy storage**

### **Introduction and scope**

Energy storage is required to increase energy systems flexibility, sectors coupling, demand response and smart interoperability solutions. Storage technologies facilitate high penetration of intermittent renewable energy, enable energy efficiency technologies such as waste heat recovery, increase the efficiency of cold supply chains and in turn contribute to the ecologic transition.

Non critical raw materials (CRM)-based systems and processes integrated, life cycle driven technologies are needed, in order to develop low cost and competitive solutions. Particular attention will be paid to high round-trip efficiency, high energy density, stable and reliable solutions for mid to long term energy storage (from days to months), which represent the most needed services for flexible, sustainable and fully integrated energy systems.

This Challenge will support proposals from the following technologies and systems for stationary applications:

- ✦ mid/long term energy storage for power systems, with technologies such as metal air or redox flow batteries, power to heat to power, chemical bonds,

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<sup>31</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, The European Green Deal, COM(2019)640 final

electrochemical/chemical/thermal hybrid solutions, integration of energy carriers and 'storage to X' strategies; concepts for centralised or decentralised applications at grid, industrial or district scale level are included, excluding micro and small scale or single building solutions;

- ✦ mid/long term thermal energy storage (heating or cooling) at different temperature, such as building integrated and process systems integrated solutions, chemical looping or thermochemical storage, solar thermal energy harvesting and storage, combined storage of thermal and electrical energy as well as other energy vectors, storage systems integrated in cold chains and in industrial processes.

### **Specific objectives**

The proposals, through non CRM-based systems integrated, life-cycle and circular thinking driven approaches, should develop a proof of concept (PoC) or lab-scale validated innovative mid to long term storage for centralised or decentralised applications ranging from large to mid scale and excluding small micro scale such as single building solutions. The proposed technologies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ✦ computational modelling and optimisation applied to materials, components and control (i.e. charging/discharging) for storage;
- ✦ heating/cooling storage through chemical and thermochemical technologies (adsorption, absorption, etc.) included their integration in buildings or industrial processes and for different temperature;
- ✦ integration of energy storage systems into multi-vector energy grids and existing infrastructures, or into industrial processes for waste energy recovery and industrial symbiosis including concepts to enable smart control;
- ✦ systems-integrated thermal energy storage technologies for industrial and building applications (i.e. energy storage combined to solar and geothermal energy conversion, to pumped heat technologies, or to combined cooling, heat and power generation);
- ✦ innovative concepts for hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>) storage/compression combined with thermal energy management and storage.

## **Expected outcomes and impacts**

This EIC Pathfinder Challenge aims at providing solutions that will optimise European energy storage and thus enable demand response strategies and capabilities to host higher penetration of intermittent renewable technologies. Proposed solutions with multidisciplinary and cross-sectorial approaches, looking for inspiration, ideas and knowledge in a broad range of disciplines are particularly welcome.

### **II.2.3 EIC Pathfinder Challenge: Cardiogenomics**

#### **Introduction and scope**

Cardiogenomics holds the potential to address existing gaps in the diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular diseases (CVD), which would enable better outcome for the patient. Advanced genetic testing taking into account complex inheritance, or combining genetic testing, transcriptomics, proteomics and metabolomics analysis with clinical phenotype can improve clinical management of the CVD and identify more accurately, who is likely to be at risk for major cardiovascular events such as heart failure or sudden death. Many gene variants associated with CVD are of unknown significance and thus of limited clinical utility. Our ability to sub-classify CVD diseases according to their underlying molecular mechanism has been enhanced due to technological approaches such as, spatial or single-cell transcriptomics, and others.

There has been considerable funding in the past directed to support and improve the quality of life of patients with severe heart and other CVD conditions (e.g. development of bio-electronic implants/devices). On the other hand, there has been considerably less public funding allocated to demanding research targeted to the actual cause of major CVDs and their complex genetic basis and as a result, limited progress has been made in this front. Although, the complex genetic basis of some of the inherited cardiovascular conditions, such as, the cardiomyopathies is widely accepted, it remains far from being elucidated. In addition, already identified gene variants can demonstrate variable expressivity (clinical phenotype severity), challenging the clinical interpretation of the variants identified in a patient and the selection of the therapeutic tool. As per the major common diseases such as heart attack and atrial fibrillation, the genetic basis is incompletely understood.

Companies are therefore increasingly raising funding to support their preclinical CVD programs aimed to develop key molecules that can disrupt signalling pathways that regulate key cardiovascular processes including rhythm, hypertrophy, contractility, and autophagy and others, potentially leading to new therapies for heart failure or other

CVD conditions. The overall aim of this Challenge is to pave the way for novel therapies for major CVD conditions including hemorrhagic and ischemic stroke, aneurysm, cardiomyopathy and certain types of arrhythmias and other conditions, for which no effective treatments are currently available.

The gender dimension in research content should be considered, where relevant.<sup>32</sup>

### **Specific objectives**

The following specific objectives have been identified for this Challenge:

- ✦ to identify single or multiple gene variants of high biological significance or other key molecules associated with the CVDs that would allow for accurate stratification of patients and guide the physician in their clinical management and monitoring of these CVDs;
- ✦ to identify novel targets based on these variants for specific CVD indication(s) that would allow for the development of first in class therapies for the same indication;
- ✦ to seek for novel technological solutions that could contribute to the development and acceleration of first in class therapies for major CVD conditions for which no effective treatments are currently available.

### **Expected outcomes and impacts**

The following major impacts can be foreseen for this Challenge:

- ✦ impact on the practice of cardiology: identification of pathogenic mutations or multiple variants that have actionable effects (by disrupting normal biochemical pathways associated with the cause and/or progression of the disease), will have a substantive impact on the practice of cardiology;
- ✦ accelerating the implementation of personalised care in CVD: deciphering the molecular pathogenesis underlying the clinical pathology of a CVD disease, is key for implementing personalised care. Performing targeted DNA sequencing on CVD patient(s) to identify previously characterised pathogenic mutations, is expected to become part of the daily clinical routine in the CVD clinics. Targeted genetic testing is envisaged to serve a triple purpose:
  - to achieve an early and more accurate diagnosis;

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<sup>32</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/gendered-innovations-2-2020-nov-24\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/gendered-innovations-2-2020-nov-24_en)

- to guide the physician to administer the right treatment for the right patient (personalised treatment); and
  - to predict more accurately post treatment clinical course (favorable or non- clinical prognosis).
- ✦ gathering the necessary knowledge and data that would enable to apply disease modelling for CVD, including through 3D in-vitro models, to be used for screening drugs/therapies for CVDs.

### **Specific conditions**

Applicants must convincingly demonstrate that they have access to a large cohort of genomic and/or transcriptomics and/or proteomics and/or metabolomics database from CVD patients.

## **II.2.4 EIC Pathfinder Challenge: Towards the Healthcare Continuum: technologies to support a radical shift from episodic to continuous healthcare**

### **Introduction and scope**

Today, episodic (symptom-triggered) healthcare remains the norm. To a large extent, individuals are entrusted with the responsibility to self-monitor and trigger requests to the health system upon identification of relevant symptoms. In spite of the growing number of screening programmes, the diagnosis of a vast majority of disorders, including those in which early action has a direct impact on morbidity or survival, still relies heavily on the individual to initiate the process. Further, a substantial fraction of outpatients manage the post-treatment phase, particularly of non-life threatening conditions, with qualitative self-monitoring, seeking help only upon perceived evidence of disease recurrence. In essence the current approach to healthcare is mostly reactive.

While the episodic (reactive) model could be perceived as economically advantageous, drawing on healthcare resources only intermittently, it is clearly not optimal. In self-assessing their health status independently, individuals miss early signs of disease, sometimes with devastating results. The large spectrum of possible conditions and associated symptoms, particularly as age progresses, and the high behavioural resistance to seek medical assistance without clear symptomatic evidence, compounds the problem. Often the prodromal phase advances to full blown symptomatic phase before the diagnosis is triggered by the patient. Further, the emotional burden under the episodic healthcare model in which individuals are responsible to gauge severity

and make decisions on when and how to seek help, should not be underestimated. Periods of raised health awareness, chronic conditions, slow convalescent recoveries, etc. in adult and pediatric populations can be particularly emotionally draining for patients and families under the episodic care model.

Technology can support much needed progress towards continuous and preventive healthcare, in which individuals are accompanied continuously and unobtrusively by health monitoring technology and practitioners, proactively offering diagnosis, treatment or follow up at the optimal pace and with the optimal protocol as dictated by clinical evidence. Under this model, human beings will heavily rely on technology seamlessly integrated in their lives, becoming recipients of proactive healthcare with minimal disruption and cognitive load. The burden of early spotting of disease will be shifted to unobtrusive technology. This requires careful consideration of all potential ethical issues that may arise, particularly related to data processing, data ownership and trustworthy artificial intelligence. Successful examples of such technologies already exist. Continuous Glucose Monitoring (CGMs) devices in skin-patch formats, for instance, offer diabetics relative unobtrusive and uninterrupted detection of inadequate glucose levels, with the possibility for remote diabetes care. Furthermore, body motion sensors (e.g., accelerometer-based), respiration monitors and oxygen saturation (SpO<sub>2</sub>) sensors, cell phone-enabled behavioural analysis, fitness devices and many others are also available.

However, the full potential of the continuous healthcare model has not been fully realised as, for most conditions, diagnostic technologies do not exist with the required attributes: unobtrusiveness (environment-embedded, body-embedded, object-embedded, home-integrated, etc.), clinical grade reliability, affordability, etc. For example, faulting-free on-skin, under-skin or implantable bio-sensors for long-term use, new modalities for Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) sensing (breathomics), new personal imaging systems e.g. THz-based or optoacoustic, unobtrusive continuous gut microbiome monitoring, etc. still require substantial groundwork.

The objective of this EIC Pathfinder Challenge is to develop systems and technologies starting at very low TRL for unobtrusive monitoring of human health with new continuous and personal imaging and sensing modalities, implementing continuous assessment, processing and analysis of the data to identify early signs of disease.

This call can support innovative technologies ranging from the sensor level up to the system level for effective integration of multimodal data.

Proposals can aim at monitoring a family of conditions or a wider mix of health factors, using the optimal combination of single-point or historic multi-point sensor data and, if appropriate, clinical records, genomic data, etc. to realise maximal performance.

Involvement of relevant stakeholders (e.g., clinical experts and patient organizations) from an early stage is recommended.

The gender dimension in research content should be considered, where relevant<sup>33</sup> as well as the involvement of relevant stakeholders (e.g. clinical practitioners, patient organisations, etc.) from an early stage.

### **Specific objectives**

Proposals submitted to this EIC Pathfinder Challenge should tackle the following specific objectives:

- ✦ develop a novel technology (device, instrument or full system) for unobtrusive proactive healthcare. The targeted technology should offer life-long health status monitoring and elements of predictive medicine with methodologies grounded in existing scientific evidence;
- ✦ the end objective must be a Proof-of-Concept and preliminary data suggestive of adequate safety and performance, while paying attention to minimising false positives that could hamper its real-world use;
- ✦ the targeted technology should make the case for a clinically acceptable solution amenable to successful evaluation under common Health Technology Assessment (HTA) methodologies;
- ✦ the path to future integration in the European healthcare workflow, specifically in relation to the inter-operability with existing infrastructures, as well as take up and compliance by appropriate patient populations, should be plausible.

### **Expected outcomes and impacts**

The expected impact should be the establishment of the basis for the transformation of the prevailing episodic, symptom-triggered, healthcare system into continuous healthcare, in which individuals are accompanied continuously and unobtrusively by health monitoring technology and practitioners, proactively offering diagnosis and treatment.

### **Specific conditions**

Proposals for this Challenge can be submitted by single applicants or by consortia, as dictated by the activities to be performed.

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<sup>33</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/gendered-innovations-2-2020-nov-24\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/gendered-innovations-2-2020-nov-24_en)

## II.2.5 EIC Pathfinder Challenge: DNA-based digital data storage

### Introduction and scope

Current technologies for digital data storage are hitting sustainability limits in terms of energy consumption and their use of rare and toxic materials. Moreover, data integrity when using those technologies is limited in time, which complicates archival data-storage. DNA or certain classes of synthetic DNA alternatives provide an alternative that promises information densities that are several orders of magnitude higher than classical memories, and stability for millennia rather than years. Moreover, DNA-based data storage can profit from the growing range of DNA research, tools and techniques from the life sciences, while potentially also adding to it (e.g., for in-vivo data collection).

Proof of concept for DNA data archiving in vitro (i.e. not in living cells) is now well established. Several studies have shown that such archiving can support selective and scalable access to data, as well as error-free storage and retrieval of information. However, technical challenges remain to make this process economically viable for a broad spectrum of uses (beyond so-called 'cold data') and data types. These relate to improving the cost, speed and efficiency of technologies for reading, and especially writing and editing, DNA or other information-storing bio-polymers.

Large corporates and governments are starting to show an interest and some smaller companies offer solutions for specific archival applications. Europe has academic and commercial potential in this area. The time is right to pull together a European R&I ecosystem on DNA-based digital data storage.

This EIC Pathfinder Challenge is to explore scalable and reliable high-throughput approaches for using DNA as a general data-storage medium. Solutions would thus need to address the read/write/edit operations of digital data in synthetic DNA, capturing the expected advantages of high density and stability/longevity of this form of data storage. The use of DNA sequences as chassis for non-standard forms of information coding, or of other polymeric substrates and related coding/decoding techniques are also in scope, provided they entail at least similar benefits than state-of-the-art DNA approaches. Proposed techniques should deliver qualitative advances in key parameters such as throughput, DNA-length (well above a few hundred mers), reliability (coupling efficiency), speed and cost. Beyond the usual storage applications, there is also scope for radically different scenarios for such a technology, for instance for data-processing, in-vivo sensing or fingerprinting.



Applications submitted to this Challenge, must pay particular attention to the relevant bio-safety and ethical issues.

### **Specific objectives**

The following specific objectives for this Challenge have been defined:

- ✦ new approaches for coding, decoding, modification or computational use of digital data in synthetic DNA or other sequence-controllable polymers with quantitative targets (theoretical and technological);
- ✦ Proof-of-Concept of technical feasibility with indications of at least state of the art benefits and major operational characteristics (e.g., extreme densities, longevity, stability) and going well beyond for some of them (e.g., speed, cost, accuracy);
- ✦ end-to-end scenarios of use, be it for data storage (archival, but also shorter term storage) or other purposes (like sensing, cryptography or computation) that exploit the benefits of the technology.

### **Expected outcomes and impacts**

Proposals should contribute to achieving one or several of the following:

- ✦ a range of new techniques with clear benefits and steps towards widening scope of applicability of DNA-based data storage;
- ✦ broader range of scenarios and uses for DNA-based data technologies;
- ✦ emergence and anchoring of a European innovation eco-system on DNA-based data technologies and applications, including through involvement of relevant partners and end-users;
- ✦ contribution to standardisation in the field and benchmarks to gauge progress.

### **Specific conditions**

Proposals for this Challenge can be submitted by single applicants or by consortia, as dictated by the activities to be performed.

## II.2.6 EIC Pathfinder Challenge: Alternative approaches to Quantum Information Processing, Communication, and Sensing

### Introduction and scope

The Quantum Flagship is currently focused on mainstream quantum technologies, in qubit implementation, sensors and other areas. Nevertheless, alternative implementations/platforms and so far, unexploited (controllable) quantum principles exist and could become key elements in future quantum systems. Such new implementations and principles could lead to breakthrough innovations and enable new players to offer unique solutions for the architecture and critical building blocks of new quantum systems. This could represent a significant opportunity for European researchers and companies in this competitive field.

The scope of this call is to develop innovative approaches to encoding, manipulating, or storing information in quantum objects, or to exploiting quantum phenomena for information processing, communication, and sensing in a way that differs from the mainstream approaches currently being pursued in quantum research. Proposals should clearly identify the limits of the current quantum information processing paradigms they are trying to improve upon and propose relevant metrics to track progress and demonstrate success or a superior paradigm compared with conventional quantum information processing approaches.

### Specific objectives

The proposals under this EIC Pathfinder Challenge:

- ✦ are expected to contribute to the development of information processing, communication or sensing components, for terrestrial or space applications, exhibiting similar advantages to the mainstream quantum technology approaches, in terms of sensitivity, accuracy, energy efficiency, etc;
- ✦ should describe how their proposed information processing or communication system would be controlled and could lead to the development of an information processing or communication device using a non-classical information theory approach;
- ✦ should aim to show how information processing or communications principles and architectures would be developed that demonstrate a clear and quantifiable advantage with respect to classical approaches and mainstream quantum technology alternatives. This should be applicable to a class of relevant problems or applications;
- ✦ should show how the foundations for novel approaches to encoding, manipulating, and storing information that could lead to practical applications

would be established. Such novel approaches could find their roots in, for example, new phases of matter, exotic physical systems, biological systems, or other approaches;

- ✦ should describe how the proposed information processing or communication system would be controlled, programmed, and measured and should address relevant interfacing aspects.

### **Expected outcomes and impacts**

This EIC Pathfinder Challenge aims at the following:

- ✦ technology breakthroughs that form the basis for future information processing, communication, and sensing technologies on ground and in space;
- ✦ synergetic collaboration with existing European platforms, infrastructures, and innovation eco-systems in quantum technology;
- ✦ increased diversity of information processing technologies platforms exploiting non-classical information theory approaches.

The activity must clearly achieve the proof of principle and validate the scientific basis of the breakthrough technology (TRL starting at 2 and reaching 3-4). Proposals are expected to demonstrate collaboration in order to create a critical mass of cooperation between EU research, industry and other relevant actors in the emerging area of quantum information processing. The overall goals are to enable new players to offer unique solutions as building blocks for new information processing or communication systems, and to foster the interdisciplinary communities and innovation eco-systems that are driving this forward.

### III. EIC Transition

Have you identified EIC Pathfinder, FET (Future and Emerging Technologies) or European Research Council (ERC) Proof of Concept project results that could be the basis for ground-breaking innovations and new businesses?

- ✦ Is this novel technology ready for the next steps towards its maturation and validation in some specific applications?
- ✦ Have you performed early exploration of potential markets for your innovation as well as potential competitors?
- ✦ Do you envisage building a motivated and diverse team to develop the idea towards commercialisation?

If the answer to each one of these questions is 'yes', then EIC Transition may be the right call for you.

#### **Why should you apply?**

EIC Transition funds innovation activities that go beyond the experimental proof of principle in laboratory. It supports both the maturation and validation of your novel technology from the lab to the relevant application environments (by making use of prototyping, formulation, models, user testing or other validation tests) as well as explorations and development of a sustainable business case and business model towards commercialisation.

Your proposed activities must include further technology development on the results achieved in a previous project and follow user-centric methodologies to increase chances of the innovation's future success in the market. EIC Transition projects should address, in a balanced way, both technology and market/business development, possibly including iterative learning processes based on early customer or user feedback. These activities should include, subject to the level of maturity of the technology, a suitable mix of research, technology development and validation activities to increase the maturity of the technology beyond proof of principle to viable demonstrators of the technology in the intended field of application (i.e. up to Technology Readiness Level 5 to 6). The activities must in all cases address market readiness towards commercialisation and deployment (market research, business case, prospects for growth, intellectual property protection, competitor analysis etc.) and possibly aspects of regulation, certification and standardisation (if relevant), aimed at getting both the technology and the business idea investment-ready.

EIC Transition aims at maturing both your technology and business idea thus increasing its technology and market readiness. The expected outcomes of your EIC Transition

project are a) a technology that is demonstrated to be effective for its intended application and b) a business model, its initial validation and a business plan for its development to market. It is also expected that the intellectual property generated by your EIC Transition project is formally protected in an adequate way (Annex 7).

EIC Transition can support a number of different pathways beyond fundamental research, from technology development and product design to business modelling and commercialisation strategy to reach the market. Some non-exhaustive illustrative examples could be the following pathways:

- ✦ A focused collaborative project to further develop strategic and high impact technologies towards specific applications while improving also the market readiness. This pathway is likely to require a collaboration among several applicants ('multi-beneficiary' approach) including SMEs, research performers and potential users/customers;
- ✦ An individual SME (including start-ups, spin-offs) identifies a market opportunity to apply the results of an EIC Pathfinder or ERC Proof of Concept project towards a specific market application. This pathway is likely to require, or lead to, a licensing arrangement with the SME and could also involve a collaboration between the result owner(s) of the EIC Pathfinder/ ERC Proof of Concept and the interested SME;
- ✦ A team of entrepreneurial researchers within a research or technology organisation who want to turn selected project results into a viable product by looking for a suitable business model or creating a start-up or spin-off company, and which may involve collaboration with the host research or technology organisation. In some cases, the results may already be relatively close to market or ready for investment (e.g. often with higher TRLs) and would therefore normally not need significant further technological development and hence require lower amounts of funding.

At the end of your EIC Transition project, you should be ready for the next stage, which can be to apply for EIC Accelerator (if you are a SME, including start-ups or spin-offs), to seek other investors or sources of funding, to enter licensing or collaboration agreements with third parties, or other routes to market deployment. In case your project is not led by an SME or commercial partner, the formation and spin out of a new company can be included as part of the activities. You will be expected to describe the intended pathway and route to market in your proposal, and to specify milestones and KPIs during the implementation of your project to assess progress towards the market.

Applicants to EIC Transition 2022 can submit proposals through:

- ✦ EIC Transition Open which has no predefined thematic priorities and is open to proposals in any field of science, technology or application;<sup>34</sup> or
- ✦ EIC Transition Challenges in predefined thematic areas of emerging and strategic technologies.

### **Can you apply?**

Your proposal must build on results (demonstrated proof of principle) achieved within an eligible project. In 2022, EIC Transition is restricted to proposals based on results generated by the following eligible projects:

- ✦ EIC Pathfinder projects (including projects funded under EIC pilot Pathfinder, Horizon 2020 FET-Open, FET-Proactive) and FET Flagships calls (including ERANET calls under the FET Work Programme).<sup>35</sup>
- ✦ European Research Council Proof of Concept projects.

If you are applying on the basis of an eligible project for which the grant is still active, you may apply if the project has been active for at least 12 months (i.e. the start date of the grant is more than 12 months before the date of the selected EIC Transition call cut-off).

If you are applying on the basis of an eligible project which has already been completed, you may apply within 24 months of the completion of the project (i.e. the end date of the grant for the eligible project is less than 24 months from the date of the selected EIC Transition cut-off).

You do not need to be a participant, Principle Investigator or result owner of the previous projects; on the contrary, new participants are welcome and encouraged to apply. However,

- ✦ if you were part of the linked EIC Pathfinder, FET or ERC Proof of Concept project whose results are further developed in the EIC Transition proposal, you need to

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<sup>34</sup> Innovations that significantly harm the environment (and therefore contravene the 'do not significant harm' principle of the EU Taxonomy Regulation), social welfare or that are primarily designed for military applications, or in other fields which are generally excluded from EU funding pursuant to Article 18 Horizon Europe Regulation, will not be funded (see Annex 2).

<sup>35</sup> Eligible projects are those funded under the following calls: FETOPEN-RIA-2014-2015; FETOPEN-01-2016-2017; FETOPEN-01-2018-2019-2020;; FETPROACT-01-2016; FETPROACT-01-2018; FETPROACT-EIC-05-2019; FETPROACT-EIC-07-2020; FETPROACT-EIC-08-2020; FETPROACT-09-2020; FETOPEN-03-2018-2019-2020; FETFLAG-03-2018; FETFLAG-05-2020 H2020-FETFLAG-2014 (for projects funded under the related Specific Grant Agreements); projects resulting from a joint transnational call (both with and without EU co-funding) under any of the QuantERA, FLAG-ERA and ChistERA ERANETS.

confirm in your proposal that you are the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) owner or holder, or have the necessary rights to commercialise the results of the project;

- ✦ If you were not part of the linked EIC Pathfinder, FET or ERC Proof of Concept project whose results are further developed in the EIC Transition proposal, you need to include in your proposal 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 to negotiate with you fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory access to such results, including IPR, for the purpose of future commercial exploitation.

You can apply for EIC Transition either as:

- ✦ A single legal entity established in a Member State or an Associated Country ('mono-beneficiary') if you are an SME or a research performing organisation (university, research or technology organisation, including teams, individual Principle Investigators and inventors in such institutions who intend to form a spinout company<sup>36</sup>). Larger companies (i.e. which do not qualify as SMEs) are not eligible to apply as a single legal entity; or
- ✦ A small consortium of two independent legal entities from two different Member States or Associated Countries, or
- ✦ A consortium of minimum three and maximum five independent legal entities ('multi-beneficiary') following standard rules i.e. must include at least one legal entity established in a Member State and at least two other independent legal entities, each established in different Member States or Associated Countries (see Annex 3).

Consortia of more than 5 partners will be deemed ineligible.

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

Your proposal will only be evaluated if it is admissible and eligible (see Annex 2 as well as Annex 3 for eligibility of third country applicants).

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<sup>36</sup> A spin off from research performing organisation (university, research or technology organisation) having a legal (e.g. contractual cooperation not limited to the action, e.g. a collaboration agreement for research in a particular field) or capital (research performing organisation owning a share in the capital of the spin off) can be considered as an affiliated entity according to Article 8 of the Grant Agreement.

## **What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?**

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 131.36 million, of which EUR 40.5 million will be funded through Next Generation EU as this call contributes to the objectives to rebuild a greener, more digital and more resilient Europe. EUR 70.86 million of the total indicative budget will be allocated to Transition Open and EUR 60.5 million to Transition Challenges (see Annex 1).

If successful, you will receive a grant for a Research and Innovation Action to cover the eligible costs, necessary for the implementation of your project. For this call, the EIC considers proposals with a requested EU contribution between EUR 0.5 million and EUR 2.5 million and duration between 1 and 3 years as appropriate. Nonetheless, in exceptional cases, this does not preclude you to request larger amounts, if very well motivated and explained. The funding rate of this grant will be 100% of the eligible costs.

The projects funded through EIC Transition are eligible:

- ✦ to receive additional Booster grants with fixed amounts of up to EUR 50 000 to undertake portfolio activities (see Annex 6);
- ✦ to submit an EIC Accelerator proposal via the Fast Track scheme (see Annex 4).

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

## **How do you apply; how long does it take?**

The cut-off dates<sup>37</sup> for 2022 are:

- ✦ 4 May 2022 at 17h00 Brussels local time;
- ✦ 28 September 2022 at 17h00 Brussels local time.

It is expected that, during 2022,<sup>38</sup> the preparation and submission of EIC Transition proposals will be moved to the EIC artificial intelligence-based IT platform already used for EIC Accelerator. Until then, you must submit your proposal via the EU Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal before the given cut-off.

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<sup>37</sup> The call will open on 1 March 2022. The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening. The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months.

<sup>38</sup> Under the condition that the platform will implement the features needed by EIC Transition calls and after thorough testing and validation.



Sections 1 to 3 of part B of your proposal must consist of a maximum of 20 A4 pages.

Your proposal will be evaluated first by EIC expert evaluators. You will be informed about the result of this evaluation, including feedback on your proposal, within 9 weeks after the cut-off. If your proposal successfully passes this first evaluation phase (see details below), you will be invited for a face to face interview, which will be organised approximately 13 weeks after the cut-off. At the interview, you will be assessed by a panel of maximum 6 EIC jury members. You will be informed about the result of the interview within 4 weeks from the start of the interviews.

If you are successful, your grant agreement will be signed within 6 months from the call deadline (indicative).

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

In a first step, at least three EIC expert evaluators will evaluate and score your proposal against each award criterion (see below). The overall score for each evaluation criterion will be the average of the corresponding scores attributed by the individual evaluators. The total score of your proposal will be the sum of the overall scores from the three evaluation criteria.

Starting with the highest scoring proposal and in descending order, a pool of the best ranked proposals (highest scoring) requesting an aggregated financial support equal to approximately the double of the budget available,<sup>39</sup> will be invited to the next step. If in that pool:

- ✦ at least 30% of the applications are submitted by women-led SMEs or consortia (see definitions in the Glossary), only the applications of that pool will be invited to face-to-face interviews;
- ✦ less than 30% of the applications are submitted by women-led SMEs or consortia,<sup>40</sup> the pool will be expanded to subsequent best ranked applications (starting with the highest scoring in descending, sequential order and at least equal score under Excellence criterion) submitted by women-led SMEs or consortia until reaching, if possible, a composition of the pool of at least 30% of applications submitted by women-led SMEs or consortia. All such applicants invited to interview must have met all evaluation criteria thresholds from the remote evaluation (Table 4).

If your proposal is scored below threshold in any one of the three criteria during the remote evaluation, you will be allowed to resubmit an improved proposal once in the

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<sup>39</sup> A higher number may be invited, for example if several applications receive the same score.

<sup>40</sup> The definition of women-led SMEs and consortia is provided in the Glossary in the Introduction.

following 12 months. In case the proposal is scored below threshold in two or more evaluation criteria, no resubmission within the following 12 months is permitted.

The second step is a face to face interview with an EIC jury. At the interview your proposal may be represented by a maximum of five persons.<sup>41</sup> Only individuals mentioned in the proposal and involved in the future project implementation can represent your proposal at the interview.

The jury will be composed of a maximum of six members, which may include an EIC Programme Manager with expertise in your area or managing one of the EIC Portfolios your project could be allocated to. During the interview you should convincingly pitch your proposal to the jury, who will ask you questions aimed at clarifying various aspects of your proposal in line with the award criteria (in particular those regarding the quality of the team and the milestones). The jury will recommend your proposal for funding or not ('GO' or 'NO GO') and will not provide a separate assessment against the criteria.

The budget will be allocated approximately equally between the cut-offs. In case the amount allocated to GO applicants is less than the budget available for that cut-off, or additional budget becomes available as a result of the award of the EIC grants, then the remaining available budget will be allocated to the subsequent cut-offs. In case the amount allocated to GO applicants is above the budget available, then a number of applicants corresponding to the unavailable budget will be awarded funding using the available budget of the subsequent cut-off . This will be done within the limit of 20% of the subsequent cut-off budget to ensure that the subsequent budget is not depleted excessively).<sup>42</sup>

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

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<sup>41</sup> The number of participants to the interview must however be limited to the minimum necessary.

<sup>42</sup> Additional 20% budget may be made available. Changes within these limits will not be considered substantial within the meaning of Article 110(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046

**Table 4. Award criteria for EIC Transition Open and Challenges**

<b>Excellence (Threshold: 4/5)</b>
<p><u>Technological breakthrough</u>: Does the technology have a high degree of novelty compared to other technologies available or in development? Does the technology indicate the potential for novel application?</p>
<p><u>Objectives</u>: How credible and feasible are the objectives (and KPIs) for the planned technology development? How credible and feasible are the objective (and KPIs) for the planned business development process?</p>
<p><u>Methodology</u>: Is the proposed methodology appropriate and sound, including consideration of the gender dimension in the envisaged application? To what extent will potential users, customers or other stakeholders be involved to test potential demand and acceptability? Is the technology developed in a safe, secure and reliable manner?<sup>43</sup></p>
<b>Impact (Threshold: 4/5)</b>
<p><u>Credibility of the impacts</u>: To what extent the expected outcomes and impacts described are credible and realistic within the project and beyond?</p> <p><u>For EIC Transition Challenges ONLY</u>: To what extent the proposed application has the potential to impact on the specific objectives set out in the Challenge?</p>
<p><u>Economic and/or societal benefits</u>: To what extent does the proposed innovation creates substantial demand and new European or global markets? To what extent is the proposed innovation expected to generate other positive impacts (employment, societal, environmental, scientific, etc.)?</p>
<p><u>Investment readiness</u>: To what extent the proposed measures contribute to make the project outcomes investment ready (including through IP protection, partnership or market validation)?</p>
<b>Quality and efficiency of the implementation (Threshold 3/5)</b>
<p><u>Quality and motivation of the team</u>: To what extent do the applicant(s) bring 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?</p>

<sup>43</sup> Proposals which involve the development, use or deployment of AI based systems/techniques must be technically robust (e.g. resilient to attack, secure and safe, having fall-back plan, accurate, reliable and reproducible). To a degree matching the type of research being proposed (from basic to precompetitive) they must demonstrate that they comply with the Trustworthy Intelligence Principles (see Annex 2).

Milestones and Work plan: Are milestones adequately and clearly defined (measurable, timed, etc.) to track progress along the pathway towards objectives? How coherent and effective are the work plan (work packages, tasks, deliverables, timeline, etc.), the innovation methods and the risk mitigation methods, in order to reach the milestones and to achieve the project objectives?

Allocation of resources: How appropriate and effective is the allocation of resources (person-months and equipment) to tasks and partners?

You will receive as feedback of the evaluation an Evaluation Summary Report from the first evaluation step. If you have been invited for an interview, you will also receive feedback from the jury.

If you submit your proposal as an individual SME and it meets all evaluation criteria thresholds at the first step but is not selected for funding (including from a No-Go recommendation from the jury), it may be awarded a Seal of Excellence.

If your proposal is awarded a Seal of Excellence, you will also be asked to agree to share your relevant data with alternative funding bodies of your Member State or Associated Country, as a prior condition for such an award. 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. In such cases, you will receive feedback to justify this recommendation.

### III.1 EIC Transition Open

This topic has no predefined thematic priorities and is open to proposals in any field of science, technology or application.

For any chosen field, EIC Transition projects should address, in a balanced way, both technology and market/business development, possibly including iterative learning processes based on early customer or user feedback. These activities should include, subject to the level of maturity of the technology, a suitable mix of research, technology development and validation activities to increase the maturity of the technology beyond proof of principle to viable demonstrators of the technology in the intended field of application (i.e. up to Technology Readiness Level 5 or 6). The activities must in all cases address market readiness towards commercialisation and deployment (market research, business case, prospects for growth, intellectual property protection, competitor analysis etc.) and other relevant aspects of regulation, certification and standardisation, aimed at getting both the technology and the business idea investment-ready.

The expected outcomes of your EIC Transition project are a) a technology that is demonstrated to be effective for its intended application and b) a business model, its initial validation and a business plan for its development to market.

## III.2 EIC Transition Challenges

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 60.5 million, of which approximately half is reserved for the topic “Green digital devices for the future”, and the remaining budget is divided equally between the other two topics.

### III.2.1 EIC Transition Challenge: Green digital devices for the future

#### Introduction and scope

Digital devices and technologies in wider sense are an essential part of our modern life. Actually, we cannot talk about a modern economy without digital devices. Digital devices and technologies are a matter of Europe’s competitiveness and the competition for the most efficient and advanced devices is a race about technological and industrial leadership.

However, current digital technologies are gradually reaching the limits of performance and miniaturization while consuming higher and higher amounts of energy. For example, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML) and ever-increasing quantities of data put more and more pressure on current computing paradigms and cause an ever-increasing energy consumption.

Europe is a global leader in energy efficiency, and this will be a key requirement for next generation digital devices. Improvements will affect the whole spectrum of ICT technologies and applications, from high-performance data centres to small computing devices used in mobile applications and the wide ICT landscape of components, systems and subsystems.

At the end of their life digital devices generate also an ever-increasing ecological footprint in term of e-waste, rare and/or heavy metals that raise economic dependency issues and are difficult or impossible to recycle. The current European legislation is already setting ambitious targets for recycling e-waste and this level of ambition is only expected to grow. Next generation green and efficient digital devices designed and produced in Europe must rethink the whole concept and address this important aspect by design. This represents a business opportunity for start-ups and SMEs deploying disruptive innovative technologies in their competition or collaboration with the more established players.

Next Generation green and efficient digital devices and architectures are evolving from existing approaches, but also from the maturation of emerging technologies such as neuromorphic, spintronics, optical computing, nano/micro electromechanical systems

(NEMs/MEMs), cell and bacterial computing, etc. and could include devices, architectures, systems, subsystems and components including intelligent behavior of systems. They aim to radically improve or solve one or several of the following key issues: energy efficiency, use of non-critical and non-toxic raw materials, ensuring circular approaches and/or a high degree of recyclability, while maintaining or even improving on performance and miniaturisation.

### **Specific objectives**

Proposals submitted to this EIC Transition Challenge should focus on demonstrating novel digital devices and/or architectures that have a clear and quantifiable advantage with respect to one or several of the key issues mentioned above compared with existing alternatives for a class of relevant problems or applications.

Proposals should focus their work on harnessing a physical, chemical, or biological process not previously explored, or they should revisit existing devices while operating them in novel modes or regimes leading to a novel approach with quantifiable and demonstrable advantages.

The applicants should also identify what are the limits of the current paradigms they are trying to improve and propose relevant metrics or KPIs to track progress and demonstrate success or a superior paradigm compared with current state of the art.

Proposals should describe how the proposed novel device, architecture, system or subsystem is controlled and programmed (if applicable) and address relevant input/output (I/O) interface aspects.

### **Expected outcomes and impacts**

In the medium term, the expected outcome is the commercial emergence of new class of green digital devices that radically improve or solve one or several of the issues mentioned (i.e., energy efficiency, using non-critical, non-toxic raw materials, ensuring circular approaches and/or a high degree of recyclability) while maintaining or even improving on performance and miniaturisation. The goal is tackling as many of them as possible, ideally all. A business model, its initial validation and a business plan are also expected outcomes of the project.

Projects are expected to contribute to[at least one of the following impacts:

- ✦ novel information processing and storage devices and/or architectures based on new paradigms that exhibit a significant decrease in energy consumption while improving on speed/performance and miniaturisation.
- ✦ disruptive hardware components (e.g., memory technologies, logic devices, etc.) with significant progress towards the wafer-scale integration of computational

building blocks and provide industry compatible solutions for memory, imaging, communication or computation technologies.

- ✦ novel designs of large-scale complete systems that include next generation information processing and storage devices with emphasis on compatibility, integration of different materials and technologies including complementary metal–oxide–semiconductor (CMOS).

At the end of the project, you should come up with a mature prototype device validated or demonstrated in relevant environment (TRL 5/6) and demonstrate the proposed advantage in specialised, niche applications or in a general-purpose device that can unlock the full potential of the field and generate high impact in term of economic returns (e.g. innovative companies created, increased market share, competitive advantage) and societal benefits (e.g. reduced energy consumption, reduced environmental impact, improved recyclability).

### **Specific conditions**

In order to capitalise on and deploy the EU deep-tech know-how as well as comply with the EU policy objectives activities foreseen in this EIC Transition Challenge, the topic will aim to have impact on sustainability, using non-critical and non-toxic raw materials and ensuring circular approaches and/or a high degree of recyclability in the whole lifetime.

If at the end of the jury stage the combined budget of GO proposals exceed the allocated budget, the portfolio considerations will be applied. For this specific Challenge, the portfolio consideration will be a balanced portfolio of projects in term of technologies and/or type of device.

The general Transition eligibility conditions apply.

## **III.2.2 EIC Transition Challenge: Process and system integration of clean energy technologies**

### **Introduction and scope**

Energy recovery, conversion and storage are essential components of the technological efforts to reach 2030 emissions reduction targets and 'Fit for 55' goals<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> "Fit for 55: delivering the EU's 2030 Climate Target on the way to climate neutrality", COM(2021)550, 14 July 2021.



Renewable fuels and clean energy technologies are integral parts of these efforts and can provide significant contributions to diversify the fuel supply, while increasing sustainability of energy production, conversion, storage and final use.

These technologies/system components have received vast research and development (R&D) support in the last decades, generating promising application opportunities in residential and industrial sector, including cross-sector coupling and systems integration of conventional and novel technologies to facilitate the energy transition.

While promising a solid market potential, several of these technologies have insufficient maturity for early adoption and present still a low TRL and, therefore, still a significant technological risk for private investment.

The integration of these technologies at process or systems level is a critical, yet necessary fundamental step to identify, design, test and de-risk the most suitable application.

The integration sought in this call is the combination of at least one technology resulting from an eligible project in a system or complex process comprising the elements of energy production or conversion, storage, including renewable fuels, and / or final use.

### **Specific objectives**

Proposals submitted to this Challenge call should focus on the following specific objectives:

- ✦ further develop energy technologies, including renewable fuels enabling the decarbonisation of energy sector and;
- ✦ facilitate the selection of different and appropriate applications and use cases, and integration of these sustainable technologies into existing and new energy systems and devices, both at component, process or at infrastructure level.

Reaching these objectives requires the combination of different skills and expertise and contribution from several players in the value chain, by validating existing and exploring new use cases for research results from eligible projects. These results should have already provided promising results in laboratory at the stage of proof of concept.

### **Expected outcomes and impacts**

This EIC Transition Challenge aims at maturing the proposed energy technology through its integration in a fully functioning energy system and the emerging of the ecosystem actors and value chain needed for the market uptake of the technology.

The expected outcomes of your proposal are:

- ✦ an energy generation/recovery/storage technology that can positively demonstrate a clearly defined use case, with clear indication and quantitative measurement of the investment costs, efficiency, dynamic performance, durability and sustainability versus established alternative technologies, and integration of the proposed technology at system/process level (both as component of a device or as part of existing system infrastructure);
- ✦ a credible business model for the deployment and use of the energy system in the relevant environment;
- ✦ an exploitation strategy including the formal IP protection (see Annex 7) of the novel results integrated in the energy system.

The de-risking process is primarily focused on the technological aspects that represents the higher uncertainty at this stage of development of any energy technology.

Applicants are asked to fully identify the supply and value chain actors necessary to integrate their energy technology inside an energy system. Relevant methodologies to develop this process can include Design, Build, Test and Learn with frequent “strategic” iterations. The proposals may consider particular applications, where conditions of use of the energy system requires the involvement of final users.

### **Specific conditions**

If at the end of the jury stage the combined budget of GO proposals exceeds the allocated budget, portfolio considerations will be applied. For this specific Challenge the portfolio consideration will be a balanced portfolio of projects in term of technologies and/or application domains.

The general EIC Transition eligibility conditions apply.

## **III.2.3 EIC Transition Challenge: RNA-based therapies and diagnostics for complex or rare genetic diseases**

### **Introduction and scope**

With the success of the recent COVID messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) vaccines, a new era into the utilisation of mRNA-based technologies has emerged. RNA-based therapeutics has nearly unlimited capacity to address unmet clinical needs and mRNA therapeutics are poised to become an important element in the healthcare landscape. The number of RNA drugs under development, and in clinical trials, is growing rapidly, and so is the number of biotech start-ups and academic groups in the field with transformative ideas. As of January 2021, 35 RNA therapeutics were approved for clinical use or undergoing clinical trials of which 23 were on mRNA. They address all

areas, from infectious diseases to cancers, degenerative diseases and physiological disorders.

The advantage of the RNA-based therapeutics relies on the potential to be used for precise and individualized therapy and enable patients to produce therapeutic proteins in their own bodies without struggling with the comprehensive manufacturing issues associated with recombinant proteins. Compared with the current therapeutics, the production of RNA is more cost-effective, faster and more flexible because it can be easily produced by in vitro transcription. Moreover, RNA therapies allow for rapid administration of the medication in a personalised manner. Along with the great potential from bench to bedside, RNA pharmaceuticals are facing challenges and technical obstacles. Specifically for mRNA-based therapeutics, one of the biggest challenges is the efficient and safe delivery of mRNA to targeted cells. This is because the size of mRNA is significantly larger than other types of RNAs. The clinical translation of mRNA-based therapeutics requires delivery technologies that can ensure stabilisation of mRNA under physiological conditions. Hence, novel delivery strategies providing more effective and safer delivery of the mRNA-based therapeutic into most type of cells, are required for mRNA based clinical candidates.

In addition, other types of RNAs e.g. transfer RNA (tRNA), small interfering RNA siRNAs, micro RNAs (miRNAs), with other mechanisms of action can be used to target nearly all disease-related genes of interest. In the case of these RNAs too, challenges exist like the intracellular delivery of mRNA limiting their clinical utility and the possible induction of off-target effects, both of which represent major hurdles. With regards to the latter, and in the case of siRNA, expression of disease-causing genes in tissues outside the liver and kidney, has been reported.

### **Specific objectives**

Proposals submitted to this EIC Transition Challenge call should focus on one or more of the following specific objectives:

- ✦ advance, beyond the state-of-the-art, RNA delivery methods, including robust mRNA formulations, that would enable effective and safe delivery of mRNA into the cells;
- ✦ design, develop and preclinical validate of novel miRNAs (miRNA lncRNA, tRNA or siRNA-based) therapies for complex or rare genetic diseases;
- ✦ develop and validate novel RNA-based diagnostics and RNA-based predictive biomarkers that would allow for early and more accurate diagnosis and for favourable or non- post-treatment prognosis, respectively.

## Expected outcomes and impacts

Proposals are expected to contribute to at least one of the following outcomes:

- ✦ novel technological solutions leading to more effective and safer RNA delivery methods applicable to a wide range of non-infectious diseases;
- ✦ utilisation of RNAs to molecularly classify sub-types of different solid tumours that would allow for stratification of patients leading to more effective and precise treatments in complex diseases with high-unmet medical needs;
- ✦ novel and sound ideas for the development and validation of RNA-based therapeutic platforms and drugs;
- ✦ all the projects should lead to a sufficiently mature and sound data for being ready to be up taken to the (pre-) clinical trials.

Proposals are expected to address both technology maturation and demonstration as well as business development activities searching for a sustainable business model.

Proposals submitted to this EIC Transition Challenge should aim to

- ✦ perform the necessary R&D to advance from an existing/demonstrated proof-of-principle technology to a mature version ready to initiate clinical evaluation;
- ✦ develop a commercialisation/exploitation strategy, including the formal IP protection (Annex 7) of the novel result, qualitatively and quantitatively outlining the proposed path to patient and describing an investable proposition.

The gender dimension in research content should be considered, where relevant.<sup>45</sup>

The starting point in the project should be a preliminary technology or protocol of an RNA-based therapy for complex or rare genetic diseases with unmet medical needs that demonstrates, in a lab or preclinical context, the essential features that underpin the disruptive nature of the innovation (TRL 3-4). The endpoint in the project should be a completely functional version of the technology suitable for clinical validation (TRL5-6), supported by a sound and implementable commercialisation/exploitation strategy.

## Specific conditions

If at the end of the jury stage the combined budget of GO proposals exceed the allocated budget, portfolio considerations will be applied. For this specific Challenge, the portfolio consideration will be a balanced portfolio of projects in terms of technologies and/or type of disease addressed. The general Transition eligibility conditions apply.

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<sup>45</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/gendered-innovations-2-2020-nov-24\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/gendered-innovations-2-2020-nov-24_en)

## IV. EIC Accelerator

- ✦ Do you have a high-impact innovative product, service or business model that could create new markets or disrupt existing ones in Europe and even worldwide?
- ✦ Are you a start-up or a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) with the ambition and commitment to scale up?
- ✦ Are you looking for substantial funding but the risks involved are too high for private investors alone to invest?

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

### **Why should you apply?**

The EIC Accelerator supports companies (principally SMEs, including start-ups) to scale up high impact innovations with the potential to create new markets or disrupt existing ones. The EIC Accelerator provides a unique combination of funding from EUR 0.5 to EUR 17.5 million and Business Acceleration Services (see Section [V](#)).

The EIC Accelerator focuses in particular on innovations, building on scientific discovery or technological breakthroughs ('deep tech') and where significant funding is needed over a long timeframe before returns can be generated ('patient capital'). Such innovations often struggle to attract financing because the risks and time period involved are too high. Funding and support from the EIC Accelerator is designed to enable such innovators to attract the full investment amounts needed for scale up in a shorter timeframe.

The EIC Accelerator supports the later stages of technology development as well as scale up. The technology component of your innovation must therefore have been tested and validated in a laboratory or other relevant environment (e.g. at least Technology Readiness Level 5/6 or higher and have fully completed Technology Readiness Level 4). The EIC Accelerator looks to support companies where the EIC support will act as a catalyst to crowd in other investors necessary for the scale up of the innovation.

Applicants to EIC Accelerator can submit proposals through:

- ✦ EIC Accelerator Open, which has no predefined thematic priorities and is open to proposals in any field of technology or application;<sup>46</sup> or,
- ✦ EIC Accelerator Challenges in predefined thematic topics in areas of emerging and strategic technologies.

The EIC Accelerator Challenges supports companies (principally SMEs, including start-ups) to scale up high impact innovations with the potential to create new markets or disrupt existing ones in identified areas of strategic relevance. Like EIC Accelerator Open (Section IV.1), the EIC Accelerator Challenges focus on innovations building on scientific discovery or technological breakthroughs ('deep tech') and where significant funding is needed over a long timeframe before returns can be generated ('patient capital'). The EIC Accelerator Challenges is open to innovations in the specific fields of technology or application described by the specific challenges below (IV.2.1 and IV.2.2).<sup>46</sup>

### **Can you apply?**

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

- ✦ a single company classified as a SME and established within a Member State or an Associated Country (see Annex 3); or
- ✦ a single company classified as a small mid-cap (up to 499 employees) established in a Member State or an Associated Country, but your proposal can only be for rapid scale up purposes (e.g. Technology Readiness Level 9) and only for the investment component; or
- ✦ One or more natural persons (including individual entrepreneurs) or legal entities, which are either:
  - a.** From a Member State or an Associated Country intending to establish an SME or small mid-cap (as defined above) in a Member State or Associated Country by the time of signing the EIC Accelerator contract or, in case the equity only is awarded, at the latest when agreeing on its investment component;
  - b.** Intending to invest in an SME or small mid-cap in a Member State or an Associated Country and who may submit a proposal on behalf of that SME or

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<sup>46</sup> Innovations that significantly harm the environment (and therefore contravene the 'do not significant harm' principle of the EU Taxonomy Regulation), social welfare or that are primarily designed for military applications, or in other fields which are generally excluded from EU funding pursuant to Article 18 Horizon Europe Regulation, will not be funded (see Annex 2).

small mid-cap, provided that a prior agreement exist with the company. The contract will be signed with the beneficiary company only; or

- c. From a non-associated third country intending to establish an SME (including start-ups) or to relocate an existing SME to a Member State or an Associated Country. Your company must prove its effective establishment in a Member State or an Associated Country at the time of submission of the full proposal. The Commission may set specific conditions and milestones in the contract to ensure that the interest of the Union is met.

The standard admissibility and eligibility conditions are detailed in Annex 2 and information on eligible Associated Countries in Annex 3.

There are limitations on the number of times you can submit a proposal described in the section on resubmission limits below.

If you are currently a participant in an eligible project funded by Horizon Europe or Horizon 2020 then you may be able to apply through your existing project under the Fast Track scheme (see Annex 4). This scheme is managed by the funding body responsible for the existing project and for 2022 it applies to funding bodies managing projects under the EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition (including EIC pilot 2018-20); ERC Proof of Concept; the Eureka Secretariat; and Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). Applicants may also be able to apply if they have a project financed by an eligible programme managed by a Member State or an Associated Country under the pilot Plug-in scheme. The Plug-in scheme to apply to the EIC Accelerator is detailed in Annex 5.

### **What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?**

The total indicative budget for this call is EUR 1 167.84 million, of which EUR 396.32 million will be funded through Next Generation EU as this call contributes to the objectives to rebuild a greener, more digital and more resilient Europe. EUR 630.96 million of the total indicative budget will be allocated to Accelerator Open and EUR 536.88 million to Accelerator Challenges (see Annex 1). The total indicative budget for Accelerator Challenges is expected to be allocated in approximately equal shares across the challenges.

The EIC Accelerator provides *blended finance* (Innovation and Market Deployment Action) which is composed of:

- ✦ An *investment component* usually in the form of direct equity or quasi-equity such as convertible loans.<sup>47</sup>
- ✦ A *grant component* to reimburse eligible costs incurred for innovation activities, including demonstration of the technology in the relevant environment, prototyping and system level demonstration, R&D and testing required to meet regulatory and standardisation requirements, intellectual property management, and marketing approval (e.g. at least TRL 5/6<sup>48</sup> to 8).

Applicants for EIC blended finance can choose to request the investment component only.

You may request a *grant component only* ('Grant Only') or 'Grant First' (i.e. maximum EUR 2.5 million to cover TRL 5/6 to 8 and without requesting an investment component for TRL 9) if you have not previously received EIC Accelerator grant-only support.<sup>49</sup> In your proposal for grant-first support, you will have to include a milestone at mid-term or at the latest 6 months before the end of the project, for the EIC to assess deployment perspectives and capabilities.

Small mid-caps (i.e. companies that do not comply with the definition of an SME but have fewer than 499 employees) can only apply for the investment component and are not eligible to receive the grant component.

### **EIC Accelerator investment component**

The minimum investment component is EUR 0.5 million and the maximum is EUR 15 million. a. A more than EUR 15 million investment request<sup>50</sup> is allowed in duly justified cases for:

- ✦ proposals in technologies that are strategic for the Union;

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<sup>47</sup> In future years, the investment component may also include reimbursable advance, loan guarantees and other forms of financial instruments, in complementarity with support under the InvestEU programme.

<sup>48</sup> To be interpreted as all aspects of TRL 4 completed as a minimum.

<sup>49</sup> If you have received a previous *grant only* support you may apply for investment component only support. However, you may still request a *grant-only or grant-first* if the support you received previously was under Horizon 2020 (including the EIC Pilot phase 2018-2020) and your project is terminated, as well as if you are submitting a completely new proposal.

<sup>50</sup> In a pilot phase in 2022, projects with a more than EUR 15 million investment request a) cannot represent more than 15% of the budget over the year and b) will be submitted to the EIC / EIE Programme Committee for opinion.



- ✦ where there is a global competition; and
- ✦ where the funding needs significantly exceed what is available in Europe.

The investment component is intended to finance market deployment and scale up but may also be used for other purposes (including co-financing or even fully financing innovation activities). Within the maximum budget awarded by the Commission, the terms of investment will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis by the EIC Fund.<sup>51</sup> In the case of equity, investments will not exceed 25% of the voting shares of the company (except where for strategic reasons the Commission subjects its support to the acquisition of a blocking minority). Investments will normally be made with a long average perspective (7-10 years) with a maximum of 15 years ('patient capital'). The Fund's main guiding principles are described in the Investment Guidelines.<sup>52</sup>

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

When implementing investments approved by the Commission, 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.

### **EIC Accelerator grant component**

Eligible costs for the grant component are reimbursed up to a maximum of 70%. The remaining 30% of the costs for these activities and the costs incurred for the commercial introduction of the product or service and full scale up operations (e.g. Technology Readiness Level 9 or above) will not be reimbursed by the grant but can be financed by the investment component if and when this investment component is awarded and implemented.

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<sup>51</sup> Following the transition phase in 2022, investment decisions may also be taken by other EIC Investment Partners. In the case of the investment component, the financial support may exceptionally be revised following a periodic or final review of an EIC Accelerator project (in line with Article 48(12), second paragraph of the Horizon Europe Regulation), also in light of the terms and conditions established in the investment agreement.

<sup>52</sup> The EIC Investment Guidelines will be made available on the EIC website.

The grant component should normally not exceed EUR 2.5 million but may be for a higher amount in exceptional and well justified cases.<sup>53</sup> The innovation activities to be supported should normally be completed within 24 months but may be longer in well justified cases. The proposed duration should genuinely reflect your current TRL and the nature of the technology to be developed and demonstrated. The grant component may be used for subcontracting including, only if justified, for activities which are essential for the objectives of the project.

### **Grant Only and Grant First**

You may request a Grant Only or Grant First support under the following conditions:

- *Grant Only:* You must provide evidence that you have sufficient financial means (e.g. revenue flow, existing investors or shareholders) to finance the deployment and scaling up of your innovation. In such a case, you will have to detail in your proposal all elements demonstrating that you possess or are in the process to obtain those necessary resources and financial means to provide for necessary expenditures normally covered by the investment component.
- *Grant First:* Your innovation is based on a scientific discovery or novel technology and still requires significant work to validate and demonstrate in relevant environments in order to properly assess its commercial potential. Such innovations may include, but are not limited to, those at relatively early stage (e.g. TRL 5 -6) or based on research results from the EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition, as well as from the European Research Council. Grant-first companies are eligible for a follow on equity component subject to a milestone assessment attesting that the innovation activities are well under way and that the innovation has the potential for deployment.

If the milestone assessment for a *Grant First* proposal is positive, you will be:

- a. required to demonstrate that you have sufficient financial means (e.g. revenue flow, existing investors or shareholders) to finance or any remaining innovation activities and the deployment and scaling up of your innovation;  
or

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<sup>53</sup> In the case of the grant component, the financial support may exceptionally be revised upon advice by the EIC Board and subject to a project review by external independent experts (in line with Article 48(11), second paragraph of the Horizon Europe Regulation). For “grant only” applications the maximum is €2.5 million.

- b. invited to enter due diligence and negotiations to receive an EIC equity investment, including to complement any other third party investments if insufficient. Allocation of the equity investment is conditional to the due diligence assessment.

To provide for the co-financing of TRL5 to 8 activities, the EIC in cooperation with EIC investment partners, may introduce the option for grant-first applicants to request in their full proposal an investment component to co-finance the 30% of the costs for their TRL5 to 8 activities not covered by the grant component. If and when this option becomes available, the application form will be modified accordingly.

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

The EIC Accelerator model contract for the grant component can be found on the Funding and Tenders Portal.

### **How do you apply; how long does it take?**

The application process consists of a number of steps:

1. *Short proposals* which may be submitted at any time and which will be evaluated remotely by EIC expert evaluators on a first come, first served basis;
2. If successful, you will be invited to prepare a *full proposal*, where you will have access to support through the EIC artificial intelligence-based IT platform and from EIC business coaches to develop a detailed business plan;
3. Full proposals will first be assessed remotely by EIC expert evaluators. If successful, you will be invited to a *face to face interview* with an EIC jury as the final step in the selection process;
4. If selected for funding, you will be invited to *negotiate an initial contract* for the grant component and to start the *due diligence* for the investment component.

#### **1. Submission of short proposals**

You may submit a short proposal at any time via the European Funding & Tender Opportunities Portal that will direct you to the EIC artificial intelligence based IT platform. The short proposal consists of:

- ✦ A 5-page form where you must summarise your proposal and respond to a set of questions on your innovation, your potential market and your team;

- ✦ A pitch-deck of up to ten slides in pdf format;
- ✦ A video pitch of up to three minutes where the core members of your team (up to three people) should provide the motivation for your proposal.

All personal data and information in your proposal will be kept strictly confidential.<sup>54</sup> However, before submitting your full proposal, you will be offered the opportunity to share basic or all data and information with your Member State or Associated Country National Contact Point, for any support they may provide you with.

Within approximately 4 weeks, you will receive the evaluation result of your short proposal specifying whether or not your proposal met the evaluation criteria (set out in the next section) and can therefore proceed to submit a full proposal. In both cases, you will receive feedback from the expert evaluators.

## **2. Submission of full proposals**

If your short proposal is successful then you will be entitled to receive coaching support to prepare a full proposal which can be submitted to one of the cut-off dates within the next 12 months from the date of the response to your short proposal. You may decide which cut-off to apply to. The cut-off dates for 2022 are:<sup>55</sup>

- ✦ 23 March 2022 at 17h00 Brussels local time;
- ✦ 15 June 2022 at 17h00 Brussels local time;
- ✦ 5 October 2022 at 17h00 Brussels local time;

You must prepare your full proposal on the EIC AI-based platform, which includes methodology to help you to develop your detailed business-plan and a number of automatic checks and feedback to guide you through the process. The full proposal consists of that full business plan and full information on you company's finances and structure. You will also need to propose a set of milestones to be used as a basis for the EIC to manage the funding for your innovation.

As support for the development of your full proposal, you will be entitled to receive coaching from one of the business coaches from the EIC Business Acceleration

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<sup>54</sup> All personal data will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data.

<sup>55</sup> The call will open on 1 March 2022. The Director-General responsible for the call may decide to open the call up to one month prior to or after the envisaged date(s) of opening. The Director-General responsible may delay the deadline(s) by up to two months. Applicants will be invited to select an EIC business coach out of a dedicated database and will receive 3 days of remote coaching.

Services.<sup>56</sup> You can only receive this support once for a proposal and it will not be provided for resubmissions.

The automatic checks and feedback from the IT platform and the optional coaching support are designed to help you prepare your full proposal. However, it is your decision how to respond to the feedback and support, and the content of your proposal is your sole responsibility.

All personal data and information in your proposal will be kept strictly confidential.<sup>57</sup> However, before submitting your full proposal, you will need to give consent to share necessary information with the EIC Fund. You 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 your company or project and assist you in developing your idea into a business plan. You will also be asked to agree to share your relevant data with alternative funding bodies of your Member State or Associated Country in case your proposal is awarded a Seal of Excellence, as a prior condition for such an award.

Once you submit your full proposal, it will be assessed remotely against award criteria (set out in the next section) by EIC expert evaluators. Within approximately five-six weeks you will be informed about the result of the remote evaluation and will receive feedback. If successful, you will be invited to attend a face to face interview with an EIC jury.

### **3. Face to face interviews with an EIC jury.**

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

- a.** All companies that were invited by the jury to resubmit directly to one of the next interview sessions (see Table 8 on resubmission limits);
- b.** Gender balance: companies with female CEOs (up to 40% of invited companies is reached);

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<sup>56</sup> It is nevertheless up to the applicants to decide if and when to use the coaching services.

<sup>57</sup> All personal data will be processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data

- c. Submission date and time: any remaining companies will be prioritised based on the date and time submission of their short proposal.

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

Face to face interviews will be organised approximately eight-nine weeks after the cut-off date (or longer if there is a need for a further set of interviews). At the interview, you will be assessed by a panel of maximum six jury members. EIC Programme Managers and representatives from EIC Investment Partners may participate in the interview, but will not be members of the jury and will not take part in the jury's decisions. Detailed information about the format of the face to face interview will be communicated to you in the invitation. You will be informed about the result of the interview within approximately two-three weeks.

#### **4. Invitation to negotiate grant component and due diligence process**

Blended finance will be awarded through a single process under an overall coordination by the Agency.

If you are selected for funding, you will be invited to negotiate. Once the grant negotiations are concluded, a single award decision will be adopted by the Commission and will serve as the basis for the signature of the Accelerator Contract. The single award decision will also define, if applicable, the maximum amount of the investment component. Following the award decision, you will be invited to sign an initial contract that will provide for the grant component and, if applicable, for an *indicative* amount investment component. You will then receive, a first pre-financing payment on the grant component.

In parallel, if your proposal included an investment component, the EIC Fund will start the negotiation process to structure the potential investment agreement (compliance checks,<sup>58</sup> due diligence, syndication of potential co-investors, tranches of investment and related objectives and milestones, etc.).

During this stage, and in particular if you have not yet secured other investors, the EIC Fund or the Agency will also look for other investors. You will be asked for your consent before other investors are contacted or engaged in negotiations.

At the end of this process, which should usually take between two to six months, an investment component will be agreed. The initial contract will have to be amended to integrate this agreement, and any relevant corresponding changes (e.g. in definitions

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<sup>58</sup> Such as KYC (Know Your Customer), AML/CTF (Anti-Money Laundering / Combating the Financing of Terrorism), Tax compliance, Sanctions, etc.

of milestones). The decision to invest as well as the amount and the terms of the investment component will be made by the EIC Fund in compliance with the EIC Fund Investment Guidelines. The investment decisions will also be reported to the Programme Committee in accordance with Article 14 of Council Decision (EU) 2021/764.

As an outcome of the due diligence process, the investment may be rejected, notably due to the results of the due diligence, compliance checks, existence of irregularities, in cases of misrepresentation by the applicant or in the case of a manifest error in its assessment. In such a case, the Commission may also request amendments or, in the cases of misrepresentation, submission of false information, non-submission of information, suspicion of fraud or any other ground listed in the EIC Accelerator contract, it may terminate your initial EIC contract covering the grant component. The EIC Accelerator contract may also be terminated if the non-investment is likely to affect the implementation of the action or puts into question the decision awarding the financial support.

Should the outcome of the due diligence conclude that the innovation or your company is not yet mature for equity investment, the EIC Fund may recommend to the Commission that you start with the grant component first, and that the investment component will be subject to reaching defined milestones that will be included in the contract for the grant component via an amendment.

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

The EIC Accelerator is highly selective and only the very best proposals can be funded. Your proposal will be assessed on its merits by leading experts and the Commission will ensure open and fair competition to all eligible proposals submitted.

#### **1. Evaluation of short proposals**

Short proposals will be evaluated by four EIC experts as soon as they are submitted. These four evaluators' competences will match the area of technology and market application of your innovation. They will have access to analyses (for example on related scientific publications and patents) generated by the EIC artificial intelligence-based IT platform. The analyses produced by the artificial intelligence IT platform are not part of the evaluation, and will not be used to score your proposal. The independent evaluators will essentially look at the innovativeness/disruptiveness of your idea, its impact and your team using the evaluation criteria specified below.

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

- ✦ If at least two evaluators give a GO, then your short proposal will be successful and you will be invited to prepare a full proposal.
- ✦ If more than two evaluators give a NO GO, then your proposal is considered unsuccessful.<sup>59</sup>

<b>Table 6. Evaluation criteria for EIC Accelerator Open and Challenges at short proposal stage</b>
<b>Excellence</b>
<u>Breakthrough and market creating nature:</u> Does the innovation have a high degree of novelty – compared to existing products, services and business models – with the potential to create or significantly transform markets?
<u>Timing:</u> Is the timing right for this innovation in terms of market, user, societal or scientific or technological trends and developments?
<b>Impact</b>
<u>Scale up potential:</u> Does the innovation have scale up potential, including the potential to develop new markets and impact on the growth of the company? Does the company show a clear and convincing vision, taking into account its current level of development and maturity, in relation to the targeted market, the business model and growth forecasts?
<u>Broader impact:</u> Will the innovation, if successfully commercialised achieve positive broader societal, economic, environmental <sup>60</sup> or climate impacts?
<b>Level of risk, implementation, and need for Union support</b>
<u>Team:</u> Does the team have the capability and motivation to implement the innovation proposal and bring it to the market? Is there a plan to acquire any critical competencies which are currently missing, including adequate representation of women and men?

<sup>59</sup> If your proposal is unsuccessful at short proposal stage and you wish to resubmit an improved proposal, you will be offered the opportunity to rebut comments provided by the experts on your initial proposal. For your resubmission, the four new experts assigned to assess your proposal will be requested to take these elements into account. If your resubmission is unsuccessful and within 5 working days after receiving notification, you may file a complaint if you believe that the evaluator(s) made an incorrect assessment on the following grounds: a) a factual mistake; b) absence of information which is not required at short proposal stage; and c) a manifest error of appreciation on the scope and purpose of the Accelerator. In cases where within 5 working days the Agency finds that there is an error on one of the above grounds, it will be assessed again by the concerned expert(s) within 5 working days. If your proposal is reevaluated as a GO, you will be eligible to introduce your full application to the same cut-off date that you would have been able to submit to, with a GO from the initial evaluation. Otherwise, your proposal will be definitively rejected and you will only be able to resubmit in accordance with the resubmission rules (Table 8).

<sup>60</sup> Projects must comply with the 'do no significant harm' principle enshrined in Article 17 of the EU Taxonomy Regulation as part of the eligibility criteria.



## 2. Evaluation of full proposals and face to face interviews

Full proposals will be assessed following the cut-off dates listed above. This will start with a remote evaluation where your full proposal will be sent to three EIC expert evaluators, who will be matched against the area of technology and application of your innovation. The expert evaluators will then assess your proposal more in depth against the award criteria set out below. They will have access to analyses (for example on related scientific publications and patents, market trends and perspectives, etc.) generated by the EIC artificial intelligence-based IT platform. If your proposal is a resubmission, the evaluators will also assess the changes and improvements made since the first submission and take into account any comments you may wish to make to respond to the feedback from the first evaluation.

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

- ✦ If all three evaluators give a GO for all the criteria, then your full proposal will be successful and you will be invited to a face to face interview with an EIC jury.
- ✦ If one or more evaluators give a NO GO under any of the criteria then you will not be invited to the interview, but you will be eligible to resubmit an improved proposal (see Table 8).<sup>61</sup>

At the face to face interviews, the EIC jury will have prior access to your short and full proposal and the evaluation results. Jury members will also have access to analyses (for example on financial metrics) generated by the EIC AI-based platform and in certain cases the independent assessment of a specialised expert in the field of science or technology. Such analyses will be made available to applicants after the decision.

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

- ✦ If the proposal receives a GO and is recommended for funding, the jury may recommend lowering the grant amount if activities above TRL 8 are detected. Should the jury find the level of risk to be lower than initially identified by the

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<sup>61</sup> If your proposal is unsuccessful at full proposal stage and you wish to resubmit an improved proposal, you will be offered the opportunity to rebut comments provided by the experts on your initial proposal. For your resubmission, the three new experts assigned to assess your proposal will be requested to take these elements into account. Should the resubmitted proposal be considered as NO GO, the proposal will be definitively rejected, and you will only be able to resubmit in accordance with the resubmission rules (Table 8).

applicant, the jury may also recommend another combination of components, including substitution of the grant component by a reimbursable advance.<sup>62</sup> The jury is not expected to propose a different amount of investment than initially requested by the applicant, except in duly justified cases. Applicants are reminded that the amounts awarded by the Commission are subject to negotiation, including due diligence. The jury may also make recommendations to be taken into account when negotiating the grant or investment component, including for example on the milestones and the valuation, and on proposed coaching activities.

- ✦ If your proposal receives a NO GO and is not recommended for funding, the jury will recommend whether:
  - a. Your proposal has the potential to be a GO if specific targeted improvements are made. In this case, you will be allowed to resubmit a revised proposal (see resubmission rules in Table 8) directly to the face to face interviews. Such a specific, targeted resubmission will only be permitted once.
  - b. Your proposal will be awarded a Seal of Excellence<sup>6364</sup> 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. In such cases, you will receive feedback to justify this recommendation.

Indicatively, the budget will be allocated approximately equally between the cut-offs. In case the amount allocated to GO applicants is less than the budget available for that cut-off, or additional budget becomes available as a result of the contract concluded with EIC awardees, then the remaining available budget will be allocated to the subsequent cut-off. In case the amount allocated to GO applicants is above the budget

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<sup>62</sup> Reimbursable advances may be introduced during the course of 2022 in which case the terms and conditions will be made available on the EIC website. Once introduced, they would be considered by the jury in cases where the innovation cycle (market deployment) is short. The amount would be limited to a maximum of EUR 2.5 million and will reimburse up to 70% of the eligible costs of innovation activities. The reimbursable advance will have to be paid back to the EU on an agreed schedule as an interest-free loan. In case you are not able to reimburse or do not want to reimburse, the reimbursable advance will be transformed into equity. In case of bankruptcy, the reimbursable advance will be considered as a grant and hence written off.

<sup>63</sup> Seals of Excellence are only awarded if you have given consent to share data about your application with other alternative funding bodies.

<sup>64</sup> Seals of Excellence will also be awarded to companies who attended the jury interviews following the cut-offs in the 2021 EIC Work Programme but were not awarded funding, as long as they have given consent to share data about their application with other alternative funding bodies.

available, then a number of applicants corresponding to the unavailable budget will be awarded funding using the available budget of the subsequent cut-off. Such applicants will be identified using the ordering set out above for the invitation to interviews.

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

<b>Table 7. Award criteria for EIC Accelerator Open and Challenges at full proposal stage and face to face interview</b>
<b>Excellence</b>
<u>Breakthrough and market creating nature</u> : Does the innovation have a high degree of novelty – compared to existing products, services and business models – with the potential to create or significantly transform markets?
<u>Timing</u> : Is the timing right for this innovation in terms of market, user, societal or scientific or technological trends and developments?
<u>Technological feasibility</u> : Is the innovation based on a technology or technologies that have been adequately assessed at least in a laboratory environment and relevant environments to characterise the potential and assess the level of risk (at least TRL 5/6)? Is the technology developed in a safe, secure and reliable manner?
<u>Intellectual Property</u> : Does your company have the necessary Intellectual Property Rights to ensure freedom to operate and adequate protection of the idea?
<b>Impact</b>
<u>Scale up potential</u> : Does the innovation have scale up potential, including the potential to develop new markets and impact on the growth of the company? Are the associated financial needs well assessed and realistic?
<u>Broader impact</u> : Will the innovation, if successfully commercialised achieve positive broader societal, economic, environmental <sup>65</sup> or climate impacts?
<u>For EIC Accelerator Challenges ONLY</u> : Does the proposed application have the potential to contribute to the specific objectives and achieve the expected impacts set out in the Challenge?
<u>Market fit and competitor analysis</u> : Has the potential market for the innovation been adequately assessed, including conditions and growth rates? Has a competitive analysis been thoroughly performed, including identification of potential customers and relevant types of

<sup>65</sup> Projects must comply with the ‘do no significant harm’ principle enshrined in Article 17 of the EU Taxonomy Regulation as part of the eligibility criteria.

users, including women and men, definition of unique selling points and key differentiation from competitors?

Commercialisation strategy: Is there a convincing and well thought-through strategy for commercialisation, including regulatory approvals/compliance needed, time to market/deployment, and business and revenue model?

Key partners: Have the key partners required to develop and commercialize the innovation been identified and engaged, including their roles/competences and a sufficient level of commitment and incentivisation?

### **Level of risk, implementation, and need for Union support**

Team: Does the team have the capability and motivation to implement the innovation proposal and bring it to the market? Is there a plan to acquire any critical competencies which are currently missing, including adequate representation of women and men?

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

Risk level of the investment: Does the nature and level of risk of the investment in your innovation mean that European market actors are unwilling to commit the full amount alone? Is there evidence that market actors would be willing to invest, either alongside the EIC or at a later stage?

*Note: Small mid-caps will be expected to provide documentary evidence that their bank has refused the financing needed for the project.*

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

The following limitations on resubmission apply to the EIC Accelerator proposals submitted in 2021 and in 2022 (both Open and Challenge based topics) (Table 8):

<b>Table 8. Limitations on resubmission of proposals to the EIC Accelerator</b>	
<b>Remote evaluation of short proposals</b>	
If rejected one time	You may resubmit to the short application stage at any time, but will be expected to have made improvements.
If rejected second time	You will not be allowed to submit another proposal for 12 months, starting from the date of submission of your revised short proposal, at which point you may only submit a new or significantly improved proposal to the short application stage.
<b>Remote evaluation of the full proposal</b>	
If rejected one time	You may resubmit directly to the remote evaluation of the full proposal at one of the following cut-offs, but will be expected to have made improvements.
If rejected a second time	You will not be allowed to submit another proposal for 12 months, starting from the date of submission of your revised full proposal, at which point you may only submit a new or significantly improved proposal to the short application stage.
<b>Face to face interviews with EIC Juries</b>	
If rejected one time but the jury decides your proposal is a potential GO if specific targeted improvements are made	You may be invited to resubmit a revised proposal directly to one of the next face to face interviews within a maximum 12 month period. Your revised proposal must address the issues identified by the jury. Such a resubmission direct to the face to face interviews will only be permitted once.
If rejected one time (including following a resubmission direct to the face to face interviews)	You may resubmit directly to the remote evaluation of the full proposal at one of the following cut-offs, but will be expected to have made improvements
If rejected a second time	You will not be allowed to submit another proposal for 12 months, starting from the date of submission of your revised full proposal, at which point you may only submit a new or significantly improved proposal to the short application stage.

## IV. EIC Accelerator

### IV.1 EIC Accelerator Open

EIC Accelerator Open has no predefined thematic priorities and is open to proposals in any field of technology or application.<sup>66</sup>

The EIC Accelerator supports the later stages of technology development as well as scale up. The technology component of your innovation must therefore have been tested and validated in a laboratory or other relevant environment (e.g. at least Technology Readiness Level 5/6 or higher). The EIC Accelerator looks to support companies where the EIC support will act as a catalyst to crowd in other investors necessary for the scale up of the innovation

The EIC Accelerator focuses on innovations building on scientific discovery or technological breakthroughs ('deep tech') and where significant funding is needed over a long timeframe before returns can be generated ('patient capital'). Such innovations often struggle to attract financing because the risks and time period involved are too high. Funding and support from the EIC Accelerator is designed to enable such innovators to attract the full investment amounts needed for scale up in a shorter timeframe.

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<sup>66</sup> Innovations that significantly harm the environment (and therefore contravene the 'do not significant harm' principle of the EU Taxonomy Regulation), social welfare or that are primarily designed for military applications, or in other fields which are generally excluded from EU funding pursuant to Article 18 Horizon Europe Regulation, will not be funded (see Annex 2). Research proposals within the scope of Annex I to the Euratom Treaty, namely those directed towards nuclear energy applications, must be submitted to relevant calls under the Euratom Framework Programme.

## IV.2 EIC Accelerator Challenges

### IV.2.1 EIC Accelerator Challenge: Technologies for Open Strategic Autonomy

#### Introduction

In a multipolar world characterised by increasingly strong economic rivalries, Europe seeks to preserve its open strategic autonomy. Such an open strategic autonomy increasingly relies on technologies and innovative solutions that respond to social needs, that are the cornerstones of new markets and wealth, and that may have an impact on individual and collective security.

In this context, Europe needs to maintain its capacity to act autonomously by building and strengthening its supply and value chains for strategically important deep-tech solutions for Europe, and to avoid situations where it remains dependent on other regions for access to or development of the related technologies. Furthermore, strategic technologies underpin and accelerate the shift to a greener and digital economy, are instrumental in modernising Europe's industrial base and drive the development of entirely new knowledge-based industries. These aims are key to Europe's renewed industrial strategy and action plan on synergies between civil, defense and space industries.

#### Scopes and specific objectives

This EIC Accelerator Challenge identifies the following set of key strategic areas and corresponding specific objectives for which highly innovative start-ups and SMEs are invited to propose new technologies, pioneering solutions and breakthrough innovations:

- ✦ **Components, technologies and systems for the pharmaceutical industry** to ensure security of supply including through synthetic biology and novel manufacturing technologies;
- ✦ **Strategic healthcare technologies** building on Europe's research strengths in cell and gene therapies, including ribonucleic acid (RNA) based therapies to ensure EU leadership;
- ✦ **Sustainable and innovative approaches, including circular approaches to critical raw materials (CRM)** for new sources of supply/extraction, processing, use, recovery or replacement aimed at improving efficiency use,

so reducing EU dependency on external providers, and to build EU capacity at all stages of the raw materials value chains;

- ✦ **New applications of quantum technologies** on the ground and in space building on Europe's research strengths including the Quantum Flagship to put EU at the forefront of the second quantum revolution and leader in the deployment of such technologies as well as to support the EU Secure Connectivity initiative;
- ✦ **Edge computing applications** including new business models to foster EU leading role in their development;
- ✦ **Innovative applications making use of data and signals from EU space infrastructures** (Galileo, Copernicus, etc.) to ensure more prominent exploitation of newly available functionalities creating opportunities for breakthrough innovations across multiple downstream sectors;
- ✦ **Development of space technologies**, including those needing in-orbit demonstration (IOD) / in-orbit validation (IOV) services, for space transportation, telecommunications, satellite navigation, earth and ocean observation, space surveillance and tracking as well as on-orbit services, in support of EU competitiveness and non-dependence;
- ✦ **Critical security technologies** for secure communication, data security and protection of borders (while respecting fundamental human rights and freedoms such as the rights to privacy and data protection) to ensure safeguarding of EU and citizens' interests.
- ✦ **Technologies for innovative financial and payment infrastructures and services** supporting the development of pan-European payment solutions, as enabler for the digitalization of Europe's economy.

### **Expected impacts**

The expected impact of this Challenge is a significant reduction of the European dependency on other regions for deep-tech innovations and services of EU key strategic interest, and consequently strengthening of European competitiveness, security and open strategic autonomy.

This EIC Accelerator Challenge targets highly innovative SMEs (including start-ups, spinouts) and small midcaps from any sector provided that they are developing innovative solutions within key strategic areas defined above, in order to be ahead of the evolution of the related technologies and capture the competitive advantages they can yield, accelerating their deployment and adoption within value chains.



## **Specific conditions**

Applications to this EIC Accelerator Challenge may request an investment component of above EUR 15 million in duly justified cases.

In order to protect the strategic interests of the Union and its Member States, the Commission may set specific conditions and milestones if this is necessary to ensure that technologies of a strategic nature for open autonomy are not directly or indirectly controlled by third countries not associated to Horizon Europe or by legal entities of non-associated third countries.

## **IV.2.2 EIC Accelerator Challenge: Technologies for 'Fit for 55'**

### **Introduction**

In July 2021, the Commission adopted the 'Fit for 55'<sup>67</sup> package of proposals to make the EU's climate, energy, land use and transport fit for reducing net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 55% by 2030. Achieving these emissions net reductions is a key milestone in reaching climate neutrality by 2050, making the European Green Deal a reality.

The radical changes needed to achieve a climate neutral economy and the 'Fit for 55' plan require breakthrough, scalable solutions in the related areas by start-ups and SMEs. These innovations together with sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion are key core values in line with the ambition of 'New European Bauhaus' initiative<sup>68</sup>. Many relevant technologies to achieve decarbonisation exist already, but often these technologies are not yet demonstrated at scale and have yet to prove their commercial viability and sustainability of related business models.

### **Scope and specific objectives**

This EIC Accelerator Challenge aims at supporting the development and scaling up of technologies and boosting breakthrough innovations that strengthen the green transition. Breakthrough innovations for this Challenge should have the potential to create significant economic, competitiveness and employment benefits for Europe.

This Challenge targets ground-breaking innovations in any field of technology that have a high potential to meet the following goals:

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<sup>67</sup> "Fit for 55: delivering the EU's 2030 Climate Target on the way to climate neutrality", COM(2021)550, 14 July 2021.

<sup>68</sup> <https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus>

- ✦ **Higher clean energy conversion and use** through energy harvesting, conversion and storage, including renewable energy carriers, their integration into energy systems and hybrid energy generation;
- ✦ **Decarbonisation of hard-to-abate industries** including carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions capture/conversion, transport, storage and utilisation/valorisation, process-integrated energy harvesting, recovery and storage, use of renewable hydrogen, waste heat recovery and valorisation of by-products for co-production of energy and materials;
- ✦ **Energy efficiency and safety in the built environment** including the use of innovative climate-neutral materials, smart windows, technology and natural carbon removal solutions, design and engineering concepts that increase the energy performance, comfort and safety, indoor air management, the integration of renewable energy, facilitate the development of energy communities and smart grid, circularity and integrated food-energy-water management;
- ✦ **Zero emission mobility solutions** for all modes of transport, both for passenger vehicles and for light and heavy duty vehicles, with a particular focus on automation, connectivity solutions, and solutions that enhance interaction with the energy system;
- ✦ **Climate neutrality in the land use** to increase climate resilience, decontaminate soils, and abate nitrogen and methane emissions, increase carbon stock in the soil and, other carbon pools on land and coastal zones;
- ✦ **Water, gas and indoor air management/monitoring systems** both for quality and indexing purposes (global warming measurements) and early warning tools, gas leakage monitoring systems, treatment systems, sustainable gas grids (for hydrogen);
- ✦ **Green digital technologies** to enhance energy system integration to enable supply and demand side management and costs optimisation, real time monitoring, control, digitalised maintenance; tools to enhance digital protection of energy systems, smart grids and net zero energy communities; blockchain concepts adapted to energy performance in buildings and to power systems increased reliability; quantum computing for energy systems; digital solutions/sensors to improve efficiency.

## **Expected impacts**

This EIC Accelerator Challenge seeks to support highly innovative SMEs (including start-ups, spinouts) and small midcaps that are developing novel and breakthrough innovations that can contribute effectively to the goals enshrined in the 'Fit to 55' plan accelerating decarbonisation by having high potential impact on reducing net CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as per the specific objectives set out above and assist further innovation. The expected impact of this Challenge is a more inclusive and steady acceleration towards climate neutrality by 2050 while considering design and aesthetics of proposed solutions (where relevant).

Applicants should provide description and quantitative assessment of impacts such as reduction or avoidance of GHG emissions, indicating the methodology and assumptions, as part of their full proposals.

## V. EIC Community and Business Acceleration Services

The EIC support goes far beyond funding and it aims at supporting the emergence, acceleration and growth of EIC innovations and top deep tech companies. In order to further leverage the EIC investments, as EIC funded researcher, innovator or entrepreneur you will be provided with access to a range of tailor-made EIC Business Acceleration Services (BAS) at any stage of development of your activities and of the EIC research and innovation cycle. The EIC uses its pan-European reach to connect you with partners from all around Europe, across borders and will also contribute to further develop the innovation ecosystem in Europe.

### **Who can benefit and what services are offered?**

All the EIC awardees (from the EIC Accelerator, EIC Transition, EIC Pathfinder and Women Tech.EU<sup>69</sup> funding schemes) have access to BAS. Some of the services will also be made available to EIC Accelerator applicants (invited to prepare a full proposal), to companies receiving the Seal of Excellence <sup>70</sup> as well as to innovators and companies coming from other European or national initiatives that have entered into a specific agreement with the EIC.

Specific actions will be taken to support promising green innovations as well as EIC funded SMEs reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Women innovators, including those supported under the Women Tech.EU funding scheme will be offered a targeted leadership and development programme including coaching and mentoring (EIC Women Leadership Programme).

The services described below are available through the [EIC Community](#) platform or provided through the EIC Investment Partners.

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<sup>69</sup> The Women Tech.EU funding scheme is implemented under the 'European Innovation Ecosystems' part of the Horizon Europe work programme.

<sup>70</sup> Seal of Excellence companies will have access to all BAS services except those linked to the direct management of the project like investor mentoring provided alongside management of the EIC equity and access to expertise.

The EIC BAS are structured around three main pillars:

### **1. Access to coaches, mentors, expertise and training**

EIC researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs will be able to benefit from tailor-made coaching, mentoring, expertise and training delivered by specialised providers and adapted to their innovation stage.

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

Mentoring aims to develop the business and leadership skills, such as resilience, tenacity and strategic insight, of the individual founders and CEOs. The impact is especially high when mentors share their own experience about business innovation and fundraising.

Coaching and Mentoring are delivered by qualified, experienced business coaches, entrepreneurs, investors. Specific mentoring will be provided to companies receiving EIC blended finance in coordination with the management of the equity component. When looking for co-investors, the EIC will also incentivise other investors to provide mentoring tasks and independent advice to the company.

As part of the proactive portfolio management by EIC Programme Managers, access to specific expertise, trainings, incubation or acceleration will be provided to meet individual needs of the EIC awardees and their innovations. Such services provided by professional service providers and ecosystem partners could include: expertise in the area of Intellectual Property protection, legal & financial advisory, privacy and data protection, certification and standardisation, competition analysis, and assistance in negotiations. In addition, access will be provided to relevant entrepreneurial and innovation/IP strategy trainings, prototyping workshops, business plan development oriented summer schools, boot camps, incubators and accelerators.

The deployment of such services will be subject to a recommendation from the project review, Project Officer, the EIC Programme Manager or EIC Investment Partners, if a similar service cannot be provided by national or European initiatives, e.g. Enterprise Europe Network or the European IP Helpdesk.

Access to specific expertise and training or acceleration services will mainly be provided through a pool of certified innovation ecosystem actors and service providers.

Regarding business coaching, EIC Accelerator applicants<sup>71</sup> invited to submit a full proposal, Seal of Excellence companies and all EIC awardees will receive three coaching days. Additional coaching days for EIC awardees, (in principle up to 12 days) will depend on the project review and input from Programme Managers. When duly justified for exceptional cases the amount of coaching days could be extended.

## **2. Access to global partners (leading corporates, investors, procurers, distributors, clients)**

The BAS facilitate cooperation and co-creation with international business partners: leading corporates, investors, procurers, distributors, clients. This includes exploration of commercialisation potential with industry, dedicated and impact focused matchmaking events (e.g. Corporate Days, Procurers Days), venture client model, structured pilot and trials collaborations with corporates and private and public innovation procurers.

EIC funded SMEs will be offered a specific support when expanding to new markets within Europe and abroad in form of participation to global business trade fairs, visiting major European innovation hubs and specific soft landing programmes.

The EIC will facilitate collaboration with (co-) investors for the EIC Community. The service will be supported through a dedicated matching platform, for both investments and tailor-made services including mentoring, strategic advice, curated presentation to investors' networks as well as investment readiness preparation and pitching sessions.

The most mature and promising EIC funded companies will be able to benefit from curated services, tailor-made to their needs connecting them to top level corporates and investors, supporting them to raise further funding or succeed in an Initial Public Offering.

Unless specified otherwise, all above services are open to all EIC awardees and Seal of Excellence companies based on a proposal and, when relevant, selection process. The process involves a publication of a proposal by an interested EIC company or project on the EIC Community platform (see below) and, depending on the type of service sought, a pre-selection by business partners/experts can be applied.

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<sup>71</sup> For this purpose, EIC Accelerator applicants include Fast Track and Pilot Plug-in applicants to EIC Accelerator.

### **3. Access to innovation ecosystem and peers**

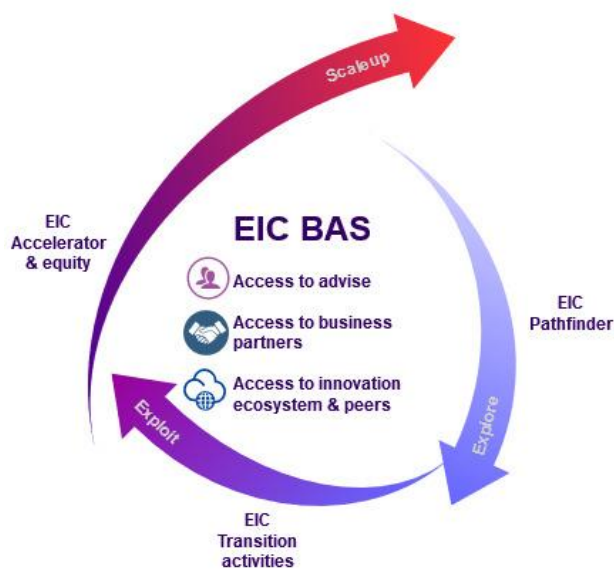
The EIC ambition is to engage partners from across the European innovation ecosystem within the EIC Community (see below), in order to benefit from cross-fertilisation and diversity inspiring innovation and creativity. It aims to stimulate unprecedented and unforeseeable encounters between peer inventors, researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs as well as other actors from the ecosystem, including corporates, investors, business angels, mentors and coaches, innovation procurers, innovation agencies, business associations, clusters, accelerators, incubators, technology transfer offices and many more.

### **4. The EIC Community Platform**

The EIC Community rely on the EIC Community platform: an exclusive, virtual meeting place, where EIC awardees can connect with their peers and leverage potential business partnerships complemented by Community activities. This platform is open to all EIC beneficiaries and it gathers innovators, entrepreneurs, researchers, investors, corporates, procurers and small companies.

It hosts matching and collaboration features including partner search, groups, as well as stories and event calendars. Another feature within the EIC Community Platform enables any EIC Community member to post a challenge and ask the Community to provide solutions.

A new tool will be the development of an EIC Marketplace that will collect and organise information on preliminary findings and results generated by EIC projects and proactively makes this information, together with supporting services and expertise, available to potential partners, investors and entrepreneurs that could take the results further or incorporate in their innovations.



To further strengthen the BAS' scope and provide even more tailored services EIC also seeks for partnerships with ecosystem partners bringing in specific experience, specific expertise or access to a specific networks in certain innovation areas. Such collaboration could include exchange of information, co-organisation of specific EIC events (e.g. pitching events or specific trainings, bootcamps, summer schools), data mining or mapping service e.g. of tech infrastructure, piloting plants and test-

beds. It also aims to extend, in a cost-efficient manner, the support for EIC awardees to a range of existing and effective services, implemented by the European Commission and also by specific entities in the Member States and Associated Countries; In particular the EIC will seek for operational synergies with EEN, national and regional clusters, the European IP Helpdesk, Start-up Europe, EIT KICs, national innovation agencies, NCPs' networks, top European accelerators and incubators, business and investors associations.

Potential partnerships can take the form of a win-win collaboration or in some specific cases directly being made via (co)funding to the organisers.

## Budget and implementation

The described activities are implemented through multiannual contracts, some of them initiated under Horizon 2020. The 2022 budget includes the following activities.

### a. Coaching

Remote coaching<sup>72</sup> to be implemented through expert contract actions with experts providing advice to EIC Accelerator applicants invited to submit a full proposal, Seal of Excellence companies, Women Tech.EU companies and all EIC awardees, including women innovators supported with specific BAS leadership actions.

<sup>72</sup> Coaching involving travel may take place in duly justified cases when the physical presence of the coach is expected to bring significantly better results, mainly for coaching to EIC Funded beneficiaries and projects. Coaching 2021 budget may also be used for the Horizon 2020 EIC legacy projects.



These coaching services will be provided by highly qualified specialised business coaches. The coaches will register their profile and expertise in the Commission's corporate database, through a single Call for Expression of interest published for experts across all EU programmes. The selection of the business coaches will be made following this call, in accordance with Article 237 of the Financial Regulation. Under the terms of the call, applicants to become EIC business coaches must have at least five years of professional experience in managerial positions with responsibilities in developing business innovation. In addition, they must have at least five years of coaching experience supporting new business development within a corporate's departments or with start-ups. The fields of new business development includes technical expertise as well as practical involvement on go-to-market processes, building/acquisition of strategic partnerships and organisational and financial development.

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

To increase the quality of the coaching services available to the recipients of EIC BAS, the EIC Coaching Casetracker system will be updated to provide improved user experience, responsiveness, monitoring and reporting features of the coaches activities.

**Type of action:** Expert contracts action.

**Indicative budget:** EUR 4 500 000 from 2022 budget

**Indicative timetable:** from Q1 2022

### **b. EIC Marketplace supporting services**

This action contributes to the development of a European innovation ecosystem by mobilising and connecting a new generation of deep tech innovators, talent, entrepreneurs and ecosystem partners from across Europe. The objective is to provide innovation support services to match those results from EIC projects, in a proactive manner, with potential users: innovators, entrepreneurs, investors, corporates, and public procurers. The support could include dedicated matchmaking activities, outreach activities and promotion events, venture building, entrepreneurship trainings, technology scouting, IP specialist services, market scanning and customer need analysis, negotiations support etc.

**Type of action:** Public procurement action.

**Indicative budget:** EUR 4 000 000 from 2022 budget.

**Indicative opening:** Q1 2022.

### **c. Bridging EIC awardees to innovation procurement.**

To provide EIC funded projects and companies with services to enhance their capabilities to take part in innovation procurement bids in and outside Europe. Services would include, among others: trainings, scanning of relevant bidding opportunities, matching with potential bidding partners, support to internationalisation and presenting their solution to key innovation procurers.

**Type of action:** Public procurement action.

**Indicative budget:** EUR 4 000 000 from 2022 budget.

**Indicative opening:** Q1 2022.

## VI. EIC Prizes

### VI.1 EU Prize for Women Innovators

#### **Objectives and scope**

The opportunities created by novel technologies and disruptive innovations promise to deliver the fair and sustainable recovery Europe needs. But Europe risks missing out on these opportunities if half its population is overlooked as a source of innovation and creative talent.

The EU Prize for Women Innovators celebrates the women entrepreneurs behind game-changing innovations. In doing so, the EU seeks to raise awareness of the need for more women innovators and create role models for women and girls everywhere.

The Prize is awarded to the women who have created the largest impact on the EU innovation ecosystem by transforming ideas into new and advanced products and services to benefit people and planet.

The Prize is launched and managed by the Agency, and the winners are chosen by an independent expert jury.

There are two prize categories: Women Innovators and Rising Innovators. In the first category, three prizes of EUR 100 000 each are awarded to the three highest-ranked applications. In the second category, three prizes of EUR 50 000 are awarded to the three highest-ranked applications from promising 'Rising Innovators' under the age of 35.

#### **Eligibility criteria**

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

1. The applicant must be a woman<sup>73</sup>;
2. The applicant must be an ordinary resident<sup>74</sup> in an EU Member State (including overseas countries and territories, OCTs) or a country associated to Horizon Europe;

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<sup>73</sup> This Prize celebrates women in all their diversity. The word 'woman' equates to a cis woman, or a transgender woman who is legally defined as a woman.

<sup>74</sup> A person is ordinarily resident in a given country, if she is recognised as resident under national law in that country, and proof of such recognition can be provided upon request to fulfil the eligibility criteria.

3. The applicant must be the founder or co-founder of an active innovative company registered at least two years before the call year<sup>75</sup>;
4. Applicants that have already received an EU or Euratom prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.

In addition to the above, those applying for the Rising Innovators category must be under 35 at the start of the call year.<sup>76</sup> There is no age limit to apply for the Women Innovators category, though applicants eligible for both prize categories can only apply to one.

Applicants are expected to provide proof of eligibility upon request.

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

### **Award criteria**

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

1. **Breakthrough innovation** – the company founded or co-founded by the applicant provides a truly innovative product or service in the EU market.
2. **Impact** – the product or service addresses a specific societal need or challenge, with significant benefits for people and/or planet.
3. **Inspiration** – the applicant has played a pivotal role in the success of their company, and has the power to lead and inspire other women and girls.

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

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

### **Expected results**

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

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<sup>75</sup> The company must be registered before 1 January 2020.

<sup>76</sup> Those applying for the Rising Innovator prize must be born on or after 1 January 1987.

## Type of Action: Recognition Prize

### Indicative Timetable:

Stages	Indicative period
Opening of the contest	Q1 2022
Deadline for submission of proposals	Q3 2022
Award of the prize	Q4 2022

### Indicative Budget

Category	Amount
'Women Innovators' category	EUR 300 000 (Three prizes of EUR 100 000 each)
'Rising Innovators' category	EUR 150 000 (Three prizes of EUR 50 000 each)

## VI.2 The European Capital of Innovation Awards (iCapital)

Cities are faced with most severe societal and sustainability challenges, but do also have the means to develop and apply effective innovative solutions. They are the place where ideas, people, public and private actors meet and engage among themselves to improve the quality of citizens' lives. They are the natural playground where breakthrough innovation flourish and nourish. They provide ground to experiment new technologies and products in a real environment, their interaction with people and their added value.

### Objectives and Scope

The traditional city innovation ecosystem is opening up to new models of innovation engaging citizens. An increasing number of cities are acting as test beds for innovation and run citizens-driven initiatives to find solutions for their relevant societal challenges.

The public domain is particularly challenged with finding effective ways to ensure the mainstreaming of these practices into the ordinary urban development process. Successful practices are particularly crucial to enhance the city's capacity to attract new resources, funds and talents to stimulate the growth of breakthrough innovations. Moreover, collaboration and strengthening synergies among innovation ecosystems boost cities' development and resilience to tackle urban challenges.

For this reason, the European Capital of Innovation Awards will recognize the cities' role as catalysers of the local innovation ecosystem and will stimulate new activities aimed at boosting game-changing innovation.

### Categories

In 2022, the European Capital of Innovation Awards will feature two categories. The first one, the **European Capital of Innovation category**, would include cities which have a population of minimum 250 000 inhabitants and, based on the below cumulative criteria, would reward the winner (ranked 1<sup>st</sup>) with EUR 1 million and two runners up (ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>) with EUR 100 000 each one.

The second one, the **European Rising Innovative City category**, would include towns and cities which have a population of 50 000 and up to 249 999 inhabitants; and, based on the below cumulative criteria, would reward the winner (ranked 1<sup>st</sup>) with EUR 500 000 and two runners up (ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>) with EUR 50 000 each one.

Each application must contain a specific endorsement to apply signed by the city Mayor (or the equivalent highest political representative).

## Eligibility criteria

1. The candidate cities must be located in one of the Member States or Associated Countries.
2. For the category of European Capital of Innovation, the candidate city must have a minimum population of 250 000 inhabitants. In countries where there are no such cities, the city coming closest to 250 000 inhabitants is eligible to apply for the European Capital of Innovation category, provided that it has a minimum population of 50 000 inhabitants and that the city did not apply for the European Rising Innovative City category. The candidate cities for the European Rising Innovative City category must have a population of 50 000 and up to 249,999 inhabitants.
3. Winners of former European Capital of Innovation Awards editions, as well as runners-up of the edition organised one year prior to the current edition are not eligible. This does not apply to previous finalist cities.
4. Applicants that have already received an EU or Euratom prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.

## Award criteria

The award is launched and managed by the Agency. For this yearly competition, six prizes will be awarded after closure of the contest to the applicants who, in the opinion of the jury, best address the following cumulative criteria:

1. **Experimenting** – innovative concepts, processes, tools, and governance models proving the city's commitment to act as a test-bed for innovative practices, while ensuring the mainstreaming of these practices into the ordinary urban development process.
2. **Escalating** – accelerating the growth of highly innovative start-ups and SMEs by establishing innovation friendly legal framework, creating an environment that stimulates growth, private and public investments, resources, diversity and talents; and driving innovation demand through efficient innovation public procurement. The city is expected to provide details on concrete results of the showcased initiatives.
3. **Ecosystem building** – unlocking cities potential as local innovation ecosystem facilitators by fostering synergies among different innovation ecosystem players, from public, industry, startups, civil society, citizens to academia, to contribute to the development of an innovation ecosystem within the city.

- 4. Expanding** – acting as a role model for other cities by supporting the dissemination and replication of tested solutions that boost the local innovation ecosystem; by promoting mutual learning, knowledge transfer and capacity building; and by enhancing cooperation and synergies between cities that are front-runners in driving the local innovation ecosystem, and those that are still exploring and testing their role as innovation enablers.
- 5. City innovative vision** – applicants should demonstrate their long-term strategic vision/plan, highlighting the innovative initiatives that have positively contributed to the transformation of the city and which will further support the development of a sustainable and resilient innovation ecosystem ensuring the green and digital transition.

The jury will review and score eligible applications, and invite the shortlisted applicants to a hearing in front of the jury members to defend their application. This hearing may take place remotely.

Further details on the evaluation process and award criteria, as well as promotional activities will be specified in the rules for this contest published at the launch of the yearly contest. For the common rules of contest for prizes, please see the Funding and Tenders Portal.

### Expected results

A European prize to the most innovative cities ecosystems. The award will raise the profile of the cities that have developed and implemented innovative policies; established frameworks that boost breakthrough innovation; enhanced the city attractiveness towards investors, industry, enterprises and talents; helped to open up connections and strengthen links with other cities, promoting the replication of best practices in the innovation field; enhanced citizens' involvement in the decision-making process; and supported cities resilience.

**Type of Action:** Recognition Prize

**Indicative budget:** the following 2022 budget will be allocated as follows:

<b>European Capital of Innovation winner</b>	<b>EUR 1 000 000</b>
<b>European Capital of Innovation 1<sup>st</sup> runner-up</b>	EUR 100 000
<b>European Capital of Innovation 2<sup>nd</sup> runner-up</b>	EUR 100 000
<b>European Rising Innovative City winner</b>	<b>EUR 500 000</b>
<b>European Rising Innovative City 1<sup>st</sup> runner-up</b>	EUR 50 000
<b>European Rising Innovative City 2<sup>nd</sup> runner-up</b>	EUR 50 000



## Indicative timetable of contest(s)

Stages	Date and time or indicative period
Opening of the contest	Q1 2022
Deadline for submission of application	Q2 - Q3 2022
Award of the prize	Q4 2022

## VI.3 The European Innovation Procurement Awards

### Objectives and scope

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the global context and created an opportunity for the EU to redefine and affirm its role as a leader to achieve the necessary transformations ahead. Innovation procurement should play a key role to supporting the European priorities set up in the Green Deal<sup>77</sup> and to securing the European technological sovereignty.

Innovation procurement boosts the process of transforming research results and ideas into innovative solutions. It represents an untapped potential to stimulate the demand for innovation. By using innovation procurement, the public and private sectors can provide state-of-the-art services and goods to the society and, at the same time, offer new growth and commercialisation opportunities for suppliers of disruptive solutions, particularly start-ups and SMEs.

The European Innovation Procurement Awards aim to recognise public and private buyers, natural persons and those legal entities supporting these practices across Europe in their efforts to promote and stimulate innovation procurement and the innovative ways the solutions are procured.

The Awards also aims to demonstrate how innovation procurement positively transforms the economy by not only creating new and sustainable markets, but also by tackling societal challenges such as climate change.

These Awards complement other EIC initiatives aimed at supporting and fostering innovation procurement in the European Union.

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<sup>77</sup> Communication from the Commission on the Green Deal issued on 11.12.2019 (COM(2019) 640 final

## Categories

In 2022, the European Innovation Procurement Awards will feature the following three categories:

- ✦ **Innovation procurement strategy category:** to reward holistic and dedicated strategy/action plan that trigger sustainable innovation procurement practices.
- ✦ **Facing societal challenges category:** to reward those innovative procurement practises aimed to face covid-19 pandemic and/or its consequences during the recovery phase.
- ✦ **Procurement leadership category:** to reward the outstanding individual(s) and/or legal entities (s) that create strong role models; who empower others to succeed in the use and further deployment of innovation procurement; or develop, support and promote the establishment of new innovative procurement practices within the innovation ecosystem.

Each category would reward the winner with EUR 75 000 (1st ranked) and one runner-up (ranked 2nd) with EUR 25 000.

## Eligibility criteria

- ✦ For the innovation procurement strategy and the facing societal challenges categories, eligible applicants are any public and/or private procurer, as well as individuals/natural persons, located in one of the Member States (including overseas countries and territories, OCTs) or Associated Countries to Horizon Europe;
- ✦ For the procurement leadership category, eligible applicants are any public and/or private procurer, individuals/natural persons and/or legal entities located in one of the Member States (including overseas countries and territories, OCTs) or Associated Countries to Horizon Europe;
- ✦ The awarded procurement practice must have taken place in a Member State (including overseas countries and territories, OCTs) or in an Associated Country to Horizon Europe;
- ✦ For the Innovation procurement strategy and the Facing societal challenges category, the awarded procurement practice must relate to completed or ongoing initiatives started after 1 January 2018. In the case of ongoing activities, only work completed by the submission deadline will be considered for the prize (Applicants will be required to prove the starting date of the practice by providing supporting documents);

- ✦ Participants can only apply to one of the three categories with the same application and set of activities;
- ✦ Winners of former European Innovation Procurement Awards editions, as well as runners-up of the edition organised one year prior to the current edition are not eligible;

Applicants that have already received an EU or Euratom prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.

### **Award criteria**

The award is launched and managed by the Agency. The prize will be awarded after closure of the yearly contest to the applicants who, on the opinion of the jury, best address the following cumulative criteria:

- 1. Transformation** – stimulating the conversion of procurement practices towards innovation procurement with the aim to ensure a sustainable and inclusive growth.
- 2. Uptake** – the innovative procurement practice is replicable and scalable, and therefore, contributes to providing, more efficient and effective solutions.
- 3. Collaboration** – demonstrated co-operation linked to the innovation procurement practice. Special attention should be paid to the establishment of synergies, to the promotion of best practices, to the support to capacity building and skill development, and to the efforts of knowledge sharing between stakeholders within the different territories, especially among those at different state of maturity in innovation procurement practices.
- 4. Societal impact** – practices with a demonstrated positive quantitative and qualitative impact on society, with special emphasis to achieving the green deal and digital transformation priorities.

The jury will review and score eligible applications, and will invite the shortlisted applicants to a hearing in front of the jury members to defend their application. This hearing may take place remotely.

Further details on the evaluation process and award criteria, as well as promotional activities, will be specified in the rules for this contest published at the launch of the yearly contest. For the common rules of contest for prizes, please see the Funding and Tenders Portal.

## Expected results

The awards would:

- ✦ Stimulate the innovation procurement uptake;
- ✦ Acknowledge and support the efforts done by procurers, and legal entities supporting them, to deliver better services and/or to bring products to the market in an innovative way; and
- ✦ Build a diverse European community of public and private buyers to share, work together and inspire each other in the design of innovative procurement processes, and particularly in the delivery of public services.

Indicative timetable of the contest

Stages	Date and time or indicative period
Opening of the contest	Q1 – Q2 2022
Deadline for submission of applications	Q3 2022
Award of the prize	Q4 2022

**Type of Action:** Recognition prize

**Indicative budget:** the following 2022 budget will be allocated as follows:

<b>Innovation procurement strategy award winner</b>	<b>EUR 75 000</b>
Innovation procurement strategy category runner up	EUR 25 000
<b>Facing societal challenges category winner</b>	<b>EUR 75 000</b>
Facing societal challenges category runner up	EUR 25 000
Procurement leadership category winner	EUR 75 000
Procurement leadership category runner up	EUR 25 000

## VI.4 The European Social Innovation Competition

The European Social Innovation Competition aims at stimulating the potential of social innovation to provide solutions to societal challenges that we face and to foster sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe. It will directly support ideas best illustrating this rationale. It will engage people, businesses and start-ups in a large range of sectors,

as well as universities, engineering schools and civil society organisations thereby creating new connections, sources of sustainable growth and meaningful job opportunities.

This competition is launched and managed by the Agency. This competition is composed of the European Social Innovation Challenge Prize 2022 and the European Social Innovation Impact Prize 2022.

#### **VI.4.1 The European Social Innovation Challenge Prize 2022**

##### **Objectives and scope**

The European Social Innovation Challenge Prize 2022 will focus on ‘the future of living, innovation for affordable, and sustainable housing districts’.

The objective of the New European Bauhaus movement is to re-invent our current way of living to meet the goals of the European Green Deal. By creatively addressing the way we construct and renovate our city buildings, major determinants of greenhouse gas emissions, the EU Bauhaus Initiative aims to engage citizens and all relevant actors to ignite a cultural change leading to more sustainable living. The ‘Renovation Wave for Europe strategy’<sup>78</sup> is pivotal to contributing to this aim and to achieving a successful EU post-COVID recovery and long-term green transition. Beyond addressing energy poverty of the current building stock in the EU, the Renovation Wave – and the Affordable Housing Initiative in particular - represents a chance to rethink and restore not only the economic activities linked to renovation of buildings and housing districts, but also the way we live in them.

Social innovation can be a driver to make housing districts not only spaces to live, but also more livable, sustainable, inclusive and closer to the residents’ needs. Social innovation in this case can boost employment and improve energy efficiency, while ensuring cities’ and regions’ sustainability and citizens’ well-being. When approached from an innovative perspective, renovation of buildings shifts from a cost into an opportunity for local creativity and business’ market.

Against this background, the European Social Innovation Challenge Prize 2022 will support proposals coming from social innovators and bringing forward innovations expected to generate economic and/or societal benefits (i.e. positive impacts on

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<sup>78</sup> The Renovation Wave for Europe strategy was launched on 14 October 2020 through the European Commission Communication “A Renovation Wave for Europe - greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives”, COM(2020) 662 final.

employment, societal, environmental, scientific, vulnerable groups etc.). Gender-sensitive solutions with regards to energy consumption, mobility patterns, waste management, and other sustainable living aspects should be taken into account, where relevant.<sup>79</sup>

In addition to non-technological social innovations, the competition will look for projects with a particular focus on breakthrough, market-creating and deep-tech innovations embracing the policy objectives of this year's editions, which will boost innovation within housing districts and, consequently, will have an impact on local prosperity and sustainability.

### **Eligibility criteria**

- 1.** The applicant must be a natural person or a legal entity (such as universities, research organisations, SMEs, start-ups or NGOs, except public administrations) located in one of the Member States (including overseas countries and territories, (OCTs)) or Associated Countries to Horizon Europe.
- 2.** Proposed solutions that harm the environment or social welfare are not eligible<sup>80</sup>
- 3.** The proposed solutions or activities contained in the application must have taken place (or, in case of early stage solutions, must target beneficiaries) in a Member State (including overseas countries and territories, OCTs) or in an Associated Country to Horizon Europe.
- 4.** The proposed solutions must relate to ongoing (even in an early phase) or completed initiatives started after 11 December 2019).<sup>81</sup> In the case of ongoing activities, only work achieved by the submission deadline will be considered for the prize. (Applicants will be required to prove the starting date of the proposed solution by providing supporting documents)
- 5.** Winners of all categories, including both from the Challenge and the Impact Prizes, of previous editions of the European Social Innovation Competition are not eligible.
- 6.** Applicants that have already received an EU or Euratom prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.

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<sup>79</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/gendered-innovation-2-how-inclusive-analysis-contributes-research-and-innovation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/gendered-innovation-2-how-inclusive-analysis-contributes-research-and-innovation_en)

<sup>80</sup> Innovations that significantly harm the environment (and therefore contravene the 'do not significant harm' principle of the EU Taxonomy Regulation), social welfare or that are primarily designed for military applications, or in other fields which are generally excluded from EU funding pursuant to Article 18 Horizon Europe Regulation, will not be funded (see Annex 2).

<sup>81</sup> A Communication from the Commission on the Green Deal was issued on 11.12.2019 (COM(2019) 640 final) setting the COM policy objectives, including the 'Renovation Wave'.

## **Award criteria**

For the 2022 edition, this prize is organised in a two-stage submission. The same award criteria apply to both stages, as specified below.

Three prizes will be awarded after closure of the contest to the applicants who, in the opinion of the jury of independent experts, best address the following cumulative criteria:

- 1. Degree of Innovation** - the degree to which any new product, service or model is new for its given context in connection to the challenge of the competition . The idea must be new and innovative within its given socio-economic and geographical context;
- 2. Impact** - the potential of the proposal to tackle the competition challenge. The applicant must demonstrate how the proposed solution will contribute to solving the challenge;
- 3. Sustainability**- the financial and environmental sustainability of the proposal;
- 4. Scalability and replicability** - the idea's potential to scale and be replicated, be it at regional, national, European or global level.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> stage, applicants will be required to submit a short application. Based on the four award criteria mentioned above, the jury of independent experts will review and score eligible applications and shortlist a maximum of 30 applicants.

Afterwards, the 30 finalists will be required to submit a full application of their original application, which will be evaluated based on the same four award criteria mentioned above.

On this basis, the jury will propose three winners (ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>). Each winner will receive EUR 50 000.

The competition provides other benefits for finalists. In this regard, once the competition will be finished, all 30 finalists will be offered business acceleration services during a maximum period of three months.

Further details on the evaluation process and award criteria, as well as promotional and supporting activities, will be specified in the rules for this contest published at the launch of the yearly contest. For the common rules of contest for prizes, please see the Funding and Tenders Portal.

## Expected results

The European Social Innovation Challenge Prize aims at raising awareness about social innovation across a wide audience, sparking the creation of new socially innovative ideas, creating a network of like-minded practitioners and supporting finalists to transform early-stage ideas into structured businesses.

## Indicative timetable of the competition:

Stages	Date and time or indicative period
Opening of the contest	Q1-Q2 2022
Deadline for submission of applications	Q2 – Q3 2022
Opening of the submission of full applications	Q2 – Q3 2022
Deadline for submission of full applications	Q2- Q3 2022
Award of the prize	Q4 2022

**Type of Action:** Recognition Prize

## Indicative budget:

Challenge prize (3 winners)	EUR 150 000 (EUR 50 000 x 3)
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## VI.4.2 The European Social Innovation Impact Prize 2022

### Objectives and scope

The European Social Innovation Impact Prize 2022 aims at recognizing the efforts made by the semi-finalists of the European Social innovation competition challenge prize 2021 edition to evolve their original applications, develop the best impact methodology, and demonstrate the best results among all participants.

### Eligibility criteria

1. The applicant must have been one of the 30 semi-finalists of the European Social Innovation Competition Challenge Prize 2021 edition.
2. Winners of the Social Innovation Competition Challenge Prize 2021 are not eligible.



- Applicants that have already received an EU or Euratom prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.

### Award criteria

For the 2022 edition, one prize will be awarded after closure of the contest to the applicant who, in the opinion of the jury of independent experts, best addresses the following cumulative criteria:

- Quality and clarity** of the theory of change and of the impact measurement methodology with relevant indicators developed by the applicant;
- Demonstrated results** over the previous year, on the basis of the chosen indicators.

The jury will review and score eligible applications.

Semi-Finalists of the 2021 edition will be invited to submit an impact report with their application to show the progress of their idea presented to the European Social innovation competition 2021. On the basis of the impact reports received, the jury will propose the winner of the impact prize (1<sup>st</sup> ranked) rewarded with EUR 50 000.

Further details on the evaluation process and award criteria, as well as promotional and supporting activities, will be specified in the rules for this contest published at the launch of the yearly contest. For the common rules of contest for prizes, please see the Funding and Tenders Portal.

### Expected results

The European Social Innovation Impact Prize 2022 aims at raising awareness about social innovation across a wide audience, sparking the creation of new socially innovative ideas, creating a network of like-minded practitioners and supporting semi-finalists to transform early stage ideas into structured businesses.

### Indicative timetable of the competition

Stages	Date and time or indicative period
Opening of the contest	Q2 – Q3 2022
Deadline for submission of applications	Q2- Q3 2022
Award of the prize	Q4 2022

**Type of Action:** Recognition Prize

### Indicative budget:

<b>Impact prize winner</b>	<b>EUR 50 000</b>
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## VII. Other Actions

### VII.1 Honoraria and expenses of the EIC Board

As highly qualified, specialised, independent advisors appointed following an open and transparent procedure, the members of the EIC Board will be remunerated for the services they offer from the budget of the EIC work programme.

Remuneration is justified on the grounds of the personal commitment of the members and their work providing high level strategic advice to the Commission and bringing prestige and visibility to the EIC.

Remuneration will be proportionate to the specific tasks to be assigned to EIC Board members and it will closely mirror compensation schemes for other EU, international or national entities of similar nature. Remuneration will take the form of honoraria for their effective participation at the Board's plenary meetings or any other additional meetings where EIC Board members are asked to attend. It will be accompanied by a compensation for travel ('travel allowance') and other expenses ('per diem') for meetings on location.

1. The rules on the compensation of the members of the EIC Board (other than its President) are the following: Honoraria of members of the EIC Board other than the President, as well as their travel and subsistence expenses (per diem), will be paid by the Agency. Honoraria will be paid irrespective of the length (i.e. number of days) of the meeting, and will be governed by the provisions of the individual expert contract in accordance with points 2) to 7).
2. The honoraria of the members referred to in point 1 will be:
  - EUR 2 000 for full attendance at a plenary meeting, and;
  - EUR 1 000 for partial attendance.
3. Payments will be authorised by the Agency on the basis of an attendance list validated by the EIC Board President and the Director of the Agency or their deputies. The attendance list must indicate if each member attended the entire meeting (full attendance) or only part of it (partial attendance).
4. For other meetings than plenary meetings, the Agency will, where appropriate, reimburse those travel and subsistence expenses necessary for members of the

Board to carry out their activities in accordance with their contract and the Commission's rules on the compensation of external experts.<sup>82</sup>

5. In the case of participation at plenary meetings through the use of remote communication, the duration of the communication link must count as a physical presence at the meeting for the purpose of establishing the appropriate honoraria.
6. The maximum number of paid meetings must not exceed twelve meetings, including plenary meetings, in total per year.
7. The honoraria and travel and subsistence expenses will be paid from the operational budget indicated in this Work Programme.

**Type of action:** Expert contract action.

**Indicative budget:** EUR 500 000 from the 2022 budget.

**Indicative Opening:** From Q1 2022.

## VII.2 EIC Data and IT systems integration

The objective of this action is to provide the complementary IT development and the maintenance resources to consolidate, curate and contextualise key data and information coming from internal and third party sources, including using artificial intelligence. Expected results: dynamic, flexible and reactive management of EIC activities, based on high quality and real time strategic and operational insights.

The developed system would allow additional data-driven decision-making processes and business intelligence strategy by combining data outputs from the "Innospace" platform and its various components (see Outlook for 2023 and future years in Section I) with existing Commission corporate platforms, for the efficient and effective delivery of services to EIC funded projects and companies and stakeholders. Finally, they should allow to provide to relevant Member State and Associated Country authorities an enriched data service on innovative companies and projects in their respective countries and regions.

Following up on the ongoing work and taking into account future needs of the EIC AI based services and Marketplace, the EIC IT and data management systems developments will focus on the following key components:

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<sup>82</sup> Commission Decision C(2007) 5858.

- ✦ Improve and expand the IT tools and interfaces built to support the daily operations management of EIC stakeholders;
- ✦ Expand the integration of EIC IT tools with other relevant IT systems, including those of the European Commission, EIT KICs, EU MS and regional ecosystems, relevant EU programmes and third parties (i.e. national business registries, granting and procurement platforms etc.);
- ✦ Ensure continuous access to relevant, accurate and fresh data sources for the systems above, connecting to high quality data services from EU Institutions, Member States and Associated Countries, and third parties. Acquire data from external sources to improve intelligence on relevant scientific, technological and market trends;
- ✦ Further expand the existing back-office IT tools and improve the EIC data collection and transformation capabilities ensuring higher quality and reliability of data made available across all the above mentioned systems;
- ✦ Further improve and expand the matching tools developed to help the EIC funded projects and companies in finding partners and relevant support to their activities and projects;
- ✦ Update, improve and maintain the EIC online community platform to facilitate business development, networking activities and the establishment of communities of practice (see Section V) for EIC funded projects and companies;
- ✦ Update and improve the EIC Coaching Casetracker system to automatise administrative operations, generate statistics automatically and better integrate with the other EIC corporate tools;
- ✦ Further develop and expand the event management tools as a critical component of effective events for EIC funded projects and companies and stakeholders (including Corporates, public procurers);
- ✦ Further improve expert management tools in support to the services to the EIC funded projects and companies (incl. coaches, mentors, experts etc.);
- ✦ Support capacity development and learning for SMEs on-line and through academy training events;
- ✦ Improve integration and seamless user experience across all the above tools;
- ✦ Ensure proper user support for all the tools made available. The above developments will follow, as much as possible, the principles of open source code and open data standards ensuring that both the tools and data generated

can be reused by other institutions, Member States, Associated Countries and relevant third parties.

**Type of action:** Public procurement action.

**Indicative budget:** EUR 3 700 000 from 2022 budget.

**Indicative opening:** From Q1 2022.

### VII.3 AI-based technology rating tool for applications to the EIC

#### **Rationale**

There is an information asymmetry between innovators and private and public funders that weakens the evaluation performance of innovation projects. Indeed, while innovators usually highlight scientific and technology topics as the innovation basis of their projects, funders assess the opportunity to provide financial support based on the systemic risks and market potential. This asymmetry is significantly larger for breakthrough / game-changing innovations as they hold both high risk and technological /market potential. Therefore, the asymmetry should be reduced to provide public and private funders with additional information on these risks and potential to support their investment decisions.

#### **Scope**

To this end, non-financial rating systems for innovative companies and comparative sectoral analysis methods have been developed and some work has also been carried out on disruptive innovation projects to measure their risks and potential based on a data-driven approach. Under the previous framework programme, the EU has also supported such development, in particular with the INNORATE project (H2020 GA 821518).

From these various existing efforts, it appears that a more holistic analysis of a given innovation lead to a more sophisticated and relevant assessment of the risk and potential of an innovation, by building on technology and market data, and going beyond the analyses of accounting and financial data carried out at the level of a company in general.

The objective of this action is consequently to further reduce cognitive biases in the evaluation of innovation, and thus achieve a higher level of confidence in the analyses and processing of the underlying data to encourage public and private investment in breakthrough innovations. The aim is to develop artificial intelligence (AI)-based

approach(es) and tool(s) and make them available to stakeholders of the European innovation ecosystem, in particular public but also private investors.

Thanks to its various calls and its decision to move for a full data submission system starting with the Accelerator in 2021 and to be extended to other instruments in 2022, the EIC has and will continue to collect (via proposals received) and produce (via their non-financial evaluation) a critical mass of data. Combined with the additional complementary metadata produced by the Innolooop platform, such a critical mass could prove a solid basis to develop AI-based rating methodologies and tools.

To that end, a grant is hereby allocated to the provider of the Innolooop platform in order to:

1. develop such methodologies and tools, allowing for a more extensive and in-depth use of artificial intelligence to improve and make more objective the evaluation of the risks and potential of disruptive innovation projects;
2. develop and disseminate these as a common reference framework in the European innovation ecosystem, that can be used to assess both risk and innovation potential of projects by all interested stakeholders, of which the EIC.

After carrying out a state of the art on the work already carried out in this topic, the beneficiary will identify and select, together with the actors of the European innovation ecosystem, the key criteria for analysing the risks as well as the market potential of a technology. It will also be necessary to collect and process relevant complementary data from other suitable data sources in order to check the materiality of statements made about a technology or innovation on an objective basis.

This work should also be an opportunity to mobilise intermediary financial institutions (venture capitalists, corporate venture capitalists, business angels, promotional banks, etc.), in particular through workshops, surveys or other data collection techniques, in order to define a commonly accepted evaluation and rating reference framework. The technological rating of innovative projects could possibly also be used as an input to a financial valuation of companies.

### **Expected impact**

Free access AI-based decision support methodologies and tools, providing analyses based on objective data to support public and private funding bodies of the European ecosystem.

Such analyses will be carried out in line with the European legal framework, in particular Regulation (EU) No 2018/17251 on the protection of individuals with regard to the

processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data.<sup>83</sup>

**Type of Action:** Coordination and support action (CSA) / Grant to named beneficiary (*as the implementation of this grant is intrinsically linked to collection of data via the EIC AI-based Platform, it will be awarded to an identified beneficiary according to Financial Regulation Article 195(e)*).

**Legal entity:** The Innovation Loop SAS, 165 Avenue de Bretagne 59 000 Lille, France

**Indicative budget:** EUR 700 000 from 2022 budget

**Indicative opening:** From Q1 2022

## VII.4 Training and onboarding on the EIC AI-based Platform for the stakeholders of the European innovation ecosystem

### Rationale

The EIC has launched its first calls for proposals on April 2021 with innovative funding schemes for deeptech startups aiming to support the emergence and acceleration of breakthrough innovation onto the market. The EIC has successfully provided an AI-based platform as a vehicle to route startups throughout the application process, with outstanding features, facilitating proposals set-up for applicants and supporting evaluators in their decision-making.

The EIC AI-based platform is increasingly considered as an inclusive digital ecosystem for all stakeholders of the European innovation ecosystem (national contact points, the Enterprise Europe network, Programme Committee members, evaluators, experts, innovation agencies, incubators, accelerators, etc.). It becomes, then, necessary to provide intelligence and guidance to those actors to maximise the use of the different functionalities of the EIC AI-based platform in the benefit of the direct users (the applicants).

The objective of this call is to develop all necessary materials to raise awareness and understanding and improve the use of the EIC AI-based platform, through European training campaigns (workshops, webinars, etc.) and other digital tools that target European intermediaries' public stakeholders.

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<sup>83</sup> Regulation (EU) No 2018/17251 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data (OJ L295/39 of 21.11.2018).

## Scope

The training programme will have to cover both :

- ✦ Functional aspects: Providing a high degree of control over all modules and functionalities provided by the platform all along the applications (including resubmission cases) and evaluation process;
- ✦ Content aspects: Providing all necessary information to improve the ability to capture all conceptual and technical topics related to the EIC Accelerator programme (strategy, implementation...), the EIC AI-based platform (methodology and concepts), and the innovation management (value chain, business model, KPIs, finances).

For both aspects, means and tools will be provided to enable a smooth understanding of the different elements and to anchor methodologies and concepts enhancing the support capability of the different stakeholders provided to applicants. This will include:

- ✦ Dedicated digital environment to train on the EIC AI-based platform: This will cover an user profile analysis, an on-line training toolkit (including a knowledge base about the different topics addressed by the platform), specific training materials, and specific tools to capture feed-back on users' experience.
- ✦ Training workshops (physical (provided sanitary conditions) and virtual): This will be preceded by an onboarding step which will essentially capture trainees' needs and expectations thanks to an online training toolkit. Workshops will offer efficient and seamless interaction with attendees to inform about both theoretical approaches and practical use cases where groups of attendees will be able to test and validate the different concepts. Innovative education tools from EdTech will be included and gamification will be encouraged to facilitate the uptake. To maximise efficiency and interaction, each session will not exceed 10 participants and will be followed by a user feedback exercise to monitor satisfaction and level of control as well as to implement remedial actions if needed. At least four one-day sessions (two physical and two virtual) per EU Member State or Associated Country shall be ensured.

## Expected impact

The goal is that:

- ✦ All participants will be capable of knowing and effectively using the basic concepts, knowledge and skills in innovation management;
- ✦ All participants will be able to master the methodological framework reflected within the EIC AI-based platform;



All participants will be able to leverage their learnings in their respective support missions to European applicants.

**Type of Action:** Coordination and support action (CSA) / Grant to named beneficiary *(as the implementation of this grant is intrinsically linked to the ongoing service contract for the provision of the EIC AI Platform, it will be awarded to an identified beneficiary according to Financial Regulation Article 195(e))*

**Legal entity:** The Innovation Loop SAS, 165 Avenue de Bretagne 59 000 Lille, France

**Indicative budget:** EUR 500 000 from 2022 budget

**Indicative opening:** From Q1 2022

## VII.5 External expertise for monitoring, ethics and policy advice

The EIC uses external independent experts for monitoring of projects<sup>84</sup> and ethics compliance, for technology assessments, for policy advice on the optimal achievement of the EIC objectives, as well as for the implementation of scientific/innovation intelligence and proactive management of EIC activities including support to BAS activities and to the EIC Programme Managers. The EIC also reimburses the costs of applicants invited to attend face to face interviews during the evaluation of their proposals.

**Type of action:** Expert contracts action.

**Indicative budget:** EUR 4 600 000 from 2022 budget.

**Indicative opening:** From Q1 2022.

## VII.6 Expert group on the design of the EIC Marketplace and Tech to Market activities

The expert group on design of the EIC Marketplace and Tech to Market activities will carry on the work initiated in 2021. As foreseen in the EIC 2021 Work Programme, the deployment of the EIC Marketplace is taken forward 'through a staged approach, where purpose and scope are adjusted as experience and buy-in accumulate'. This Expert Group will also continue advising on the design of Tech to Market activities and their

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<sup>84</sup>Including projects financed by the EIC pilot, SME instrument, Fast Track to Innovation, FET Open and FET Proactive under Horizon 2020.

implementation, and to serve as a 'sounding board' for EIC so as to step by step develop a stronger proactive EIC portfolio management practice and policy.

### **Design of EIC Marketplace**

Based on the benchmark analysis on the similar endeavors in Europe and beyond and the overarching vision of the EIC Marketplace developed in 2021 and taking into account the current Intellectual Property Regime related challenges in the European innovation ecosystem, e.g. the fragmentation of part of the EU's IP system, the complex and costly procedures, the EIC seeks advice on how to enable the EIC Marketplace to analyse, combine and/or transfer project results to other application areas, through e.g. the use of blockchain technologies to ensure traceability and guarantee protection.

The group must reflect notably on how to integrate the EIC Marketplace with the current Tech to Market process; how to integrate the protection element/ Intellectual Property regime; how to make the EIC Marketplace a tool for the EIC Programme Managers, the EIC Tech to Market Advisers and the wider EIC community in relation to EIC proactive management and portfolio management policy.

A critical aspect of the success of the EIC Marketplace will be the engagement of other players in the European Innovation ecosystem: not only national funding agencies, technology transfer offices, venture capitals, accelerators, but also existing platforms and services. The Expert Group will provide actionable strategy to engage and collaborate with established and new players in the European Innovation ecosystem.

### **Design of Tech to Market activities**

The Expert Group will take stock of the main European challenges related to bringing deep tech to the market performed in 2021 and on the development of transition strategies, ecosystem engagement plans, and transition working groups. The EIC seeks recommendations on how to provide more patient capital, collaborate with deep-tech accelerators/ incubators/ startup studios, and develop venture building in a way to enhance and accelerate the creation of companies and the growth of tech SMEs on the basis of EIC inventions (e.g. coming from EIC Pathfinder or EIC Transition).

A special allowance of EUR 450/day will be paid to the experts appointed in their personal capacity who act independently and in the public interest. This amount is considered to be proportionate to the specific tasks to be assigned to the experts, including the number of meetings to be attended and possible preparatory work.

**Type of action:** Expert contracts action.

**Indicative opening:** Q2 2022.

**Indicative budget:** EUR 300 000.

## VII.7 Pilot European innovation gender and diversity index

The limited diversity of talent in the tech world is frequently identified as an issue that can hamper the performance and growth of innovative start-ups and scale-ups,<sup>85,86</sup> and as such is a concern for the European Innovation Council. In particular, high diversity in terms of gender and ethnicity has been correlated with higher financial performance of private ventures,<sup>87</sup> while diversity at executive level (also including e.g. in socioeconomic status and disability) has been shown to be important for effective decision-making.<sup>88</sup>

In order to improve the availability of all talent, and particularly female talent, to the EIC portfolio of projects and companies and the EU innovation eco-system, and following the recommendations of the ScaleUp Europe report,<sup>89</sup> the EIC seeks the development of an innovation gender and diversity index, providing consistent information to the EIC, other investors and funding bodies, market actors and policy makers across Europe. Such information includes gender and diversity data for innovative start-ups and scale-ups as well as for investors and funds investing in such companies and should cover and be comparable across at least all Member States and Associated Countries. Such information is currently missing or fragmented or collected according to different methodologies and definitions. The expected impacts arising from the development of such an index are:

- ✦ To enable gender and diversity gaps to be identified, relevant measures to be designed, and progress to be assessed
- ✦ To enable better informed investment decisions; and
- ✦ To encourage diversity at all levels across the innovation ecosystem.

Building on existing efforts to measure diversity within EU companies<sup>90</sup> and consistently with the objectives of the EU's sustainable finance strategy,<sup>91</sup> this action will support a multidisciplinary consortium to:

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85 <https://content.sifted.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/15162949/Scale-Up-Europe-Report.pdf>;

86 <https://2020.stateofeuropeantech.com/>

87 <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>

88 <https://www.frc.org.uk/getattachment/3cc05eae-2024-45d8-b14c-abb2ac7497aa/FRC-Board-Diversity-and-Effectiveness-in-FTSE-350-Companies.pdf>

89 <https://sifted.eu/intelligence/reports/scale-up-europe>

90 <https://europeanwomenonboards.eu/portfolio/gender-diversity-index-2020/>

91 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/banking-and-finance/sustainable-finance/overview-sustainable-finance\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/banking-and-finance/sustainable-finance/overview-sustainable-finance_en)

- ✦ Develop a pilot innovation gender & diversity index based on agreed definitions and indicators that can be applied to startups/ SMEs and to innovation investment actors in the EU;
- ✦ Identify relevant sources of reliable and robust data;
- ✦ Develop methodologies and conduct data collection in order to fill data gaps;
- ✦ Implement and produce a first pilot gender & diversity index using available data from different sources as well as additional data collection as appropriate;
- ✦ Provide recommendations for further development and implementation of an innovation gender and diversity index and additional measures needed to improve data availability and benchmarking, such as voluntary reporting standards by start-ups, scale-ups and investment funds;
- ✦ Disseminate and promote the results of the project to investors, policy makers and the wider innovation ecosystem.

Applications for this action should include a proposed list of experts that will be consulted on the development of the index and be ready to interact with additional experts identified by the EIC and European Commission or other relevant EU bodies including the European Investment Bank and European Investment Fund.

**Type of action:** Coordination and support action (CSA).

**Indicative call opening:** 5 April 2022.

**Indicative deadline for applications:** 8 September 2022

**Indicative budget:** For this call, the EIC considers proposals with a requested EU contribution of up to EUR 700 000 as appropriate. Nonetheless, this does not preclude you to request larger amounts, if properly justified. The funding rate of this grant is 100% of the eligible costs.

## VII.8 Expert Group on late-stage scale-up financing

Following the introduction of the equity component of the EIC Accelerator, there has been a strong demand and clear market gap for this type of high finance. However, for Europe to be able to scale up innovative companies into global leaders in new areas of breakthrough innovation may require amounts of finance which are beyond the scale that can be provided by the EIC and where the risk level is too high for other EU instruments such as InvestEU.

To address this gap, a number of reports<sup>92</sup> have recommended the creating of a funding mechanism for such larger scale, high-risk investments. The Expert Group must provide recommendations on the following issues:

- ✦ What is the size and nature of the financing needs, and the gap with instruments that already exist at EU and national levels and by public and private bodies?
- ✦ What is the overall level of financial means that makes sense in terms of critical mass and filling the identified needs?
- ✦ What are the options for financial structures in order to mobilise the level and nature of financing required, and what are the options for incentives to attract private investors?
- ✦ What are the options for the operation and implementation of the required scale up financing, and how would these options relate to the EIC and other major instruments for innovative financing?

A special allowance of EUR 450/day will be paid to the experts appointed in their personal capacity who act independently and in the public interest. This amount is considered to be proportionate to the specific tasks to be assigned to the experts, including the number of meetings to be attended and possible preparatory work.

**Type of Action:** Expert contracts action

**Indicative opening:** Q1 2022

**Indicative budget:** EUR 100 000

## VII.9 EIC Scale Up 100

### Rationale

Startups and scaleups are key to Europe's economy, as they create employment (providing around 50% of all jobs created) and are instrumental for the twin transition to a digital and green economy. Scaleup financing is particularly challenging for deep-tech startups where the risks are high and significant amounts of capital are needed.

A key challenge in Europe is a relative shortage of successful scale-ups pursuing the position of world tech leaders. Studies show that in the United States, there are three times more scale-ups than in Europe while Asia is also far ahead of Europe in terms of the number and financing of scale-ups. This challenge is highlighted in the EU's SME

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<sup>92</sup> Respectively on 10 April 2021 and 10 May 2021, Commission services received reports from two stakeholder groups: A Lean Canvas for Next Innovation EU by the Unicorn group, and the Action plan to make Europe the new global powerhouse for start-ups by the Innovation Ecosystem Leaders' group.

Strategy while the Digital Compass for the digital decade sets a target of doubling the number of EU unicorns.

As high growth companies are the ones largely responsible for job creation and economic benefit, this is a missed opportunity. The growth barriers are very high for truly high-risk deep tech innovators. In consequence, an important target are the European Innovation Council (EIC) instruments and beneficiaries. Because they have a longer time to market than digital start-ups, access to a broader pan-European and international market is a key factor to succeed.

### **Scope**

The EIC Scaleup 100 should help identify a cohort of 100 deep-tech companies from the portfolio of EIC supported startups as well as from similar programmes at EU level (such as the Digital Europe Programme and the EIT) and at Member State and Associated Country level, with the potential to scale up as global leaders or potential unicorns. Taking into account the diversity of national programmes, this action is also open to companies not being supported by national programmes as long as they meet the requirements for scaling up.

The initiative should provide a package of support including bespoke networking, access to finance, internationalisation and marketing to these potential European unicorns. It should also provide support to the selected companies regarding emerging scaling up issues in an agile way. For topics where acting at EU level would be required, it can contribute in an open, constructive and proactive way to the EIC Forum discussions and workshops. The initiative should leverage existing networks in the startup domain (such as the Startup Europe and the Europe Startup Nations Alliance)<sup>93</sup> and capitalise on established methodologies. Links to national programmes and efforts to provide support for scaleup companies should be promoted, including through providing networking and best practice. The initiative should play a proactive role to help the EU to build growth, expertise and leadership in the field of scaling up companies. The number of 100 promising companies is targeted for ensuring a critical mass of companies having the potential to become Unicorns. The final aim is to have at least ten to twenty companies being on a sustainable path of reaching the status of a Unicorn at the end of the project.

The proposed action will focus on EIC beneficiaries on one hand and European scaleups not currently benefitting from direct EIC support on the other hand. Both categories have to be ready for series B+ funding rounds. It is estimated that at least 50 companies

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<sup>93</sup> <http://www.europestartupnationsalliance.eu/>

would be identified<sup>94</sup> from the EIC portfolio and up to 50 from other programmes at EU, Member State and Associated Country level, or supported by other relevant EU programmes or private initiatives, ensuring a geographical, and sector diversity. Particular attention should be paid to attracting women-led companies.

The proposal will have to describe their methodology, both for identifying the supported companies and for scaling them up, the concrete set of proposed actions for scaling up and argument, why the action is proposed and is suitable for scaling up European companies.

Some illustrative examples of expected actions are:

- ✦ Actions to accelerate investments and business development among the most mature EIC beneficiaries with scaleup potential and create European deep-tech success stories. EIC Scaleup 100 will connect the targeted scaleups to funding and business opportunities e.g. provided by corporates, private or public buyers, Mergers and Acquisition, (Corporate) Venture Capital, other investors (including National Promotional Banks and Institutions or/and Regional Banks that provide strong networks and late stage investment (equity or venture debt)), stock exchanges and other players;
- ✦ Actions to support Internalisation, soft landing, expansion to foreign markets are another set of measures in support of growing and scaling up companies and should be part of the proposal;
- ✦ Actions to support operational excellence of the supported companies;
- ✦ Actions to foster inclusion and growth of women talent at selected companies
- ✦ Actions to Provide access and organise bespoke peer learning, networking and mentoring sessions for selected companies in conjunction with the EIC Business Acceleration Services;
- ✦ Actions to Support networking and development of best practice between Member States on providing support for scaling up in general (including on regulatory issues) and for EIC Scaleup 100 companies in particular, in conjunction with relevant activities under the EIC Forum, as well as with the European Startup Nations Alliance (ESNA);
- ✦ Development and Management of a European Scaleup Report to investigate key parameters and trends for a startup to scale and succeed in Europe and provide intelligence on what is happening locally in various European innovation ecosystems;

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<sup>94</sup> The final list will have to be agreed with EISMEA.

- ✦ Actions to Generate awareness of the EIC Scaleup 100 companies and the report through marketing and branding (e.g. “powered by EIC”) campaigns involving key European publications and participation at key technology events, in coordination with EIC communication actions.

### **Expected impact**

The selected entity or consortium should have the knowledge, expertise and means, to foster substantial growth of deep-tech and digital European scaleups that will increase their number and value of commercial deals, investments deals and initial public offerings (IPOs)/acquisitions of the cohort.

For this, the selected entity or consortium should enable:

- ✦ Networking successful founders/CEOs, corporates, public and private investors, policymakers across the EU etc.;
- ✦ Attraction of European equity and improved matchmaking services, access to production facilities and equipment;
- ✦ Personalised advice and coaching on fundamental growth barriers such as gender-inclusive work culture, talent, international expansion, and funding;
- ✦ Strengthen the image of the European scaleup scene and position the selected cohorts as successful, fast-growing and sustainable future global leaders.

For general award criteria please check Annex 2.

**Type of action:** Coordination and support action (CSA). This action will be evaluated partially or fully by representatives of Union institutions or bodies, according to Article 29 paragraph 1 of Horizon Europe Regulation.

**Number of projects expected to be funded:** 1

**Indicative call opening:** 26 April 2022

**Indicative deadline for applications:** 05 October 2022

**Indicative budget:** EUR 7 000 000 from the 2022 budget.

## **VII.10 Communication, outreach, events**

The success of the EIC lies in attracting highly innovative and diverse companies and researchers that can generate fast and high growth, as well as co-investors and global corporates that can further maximise the impact of EIC support.



The objective of this action is to prepare and implement the communication and outreach activities for the EIC as well as for a continuous campaign to strengthen the reputation of the EIC towards stakeholders, potential applicants, policymakers, and the broader EU innovation ecosystem. This action covers the design of the strategy, the maintenance and management of the EIC website and its social media channels and the creation of relevant informative content and materials. In addition, it allows to organise the EIC Summit, EIC Awards Ceremonies and the EIC participation in key events, including the EU Research and Innovation Days, stakeholder events to contribute to future EIC Work Programmes, as well as other outreach and stakeholder engagement actions with a focus of increasing the number of newcomers, particularly from underrepresented groups. These include training events for remote experts and outreach events with EIC Jury members during interview weeks.

This should allow the EIC to become a prominent voice in the ongoing debates relevant to innovation policy in Europe and globally. The communication and outreach campaign should generate awareness and impact at international, European, national, regional and local levels.

**Type of action:** Public procurement actions.

**Indicative opening:** from Q1 2022.

**Indicative budget:** EUR 1 200 000.

## VII.11 Creating communities, stakeholder engagement and impact from EIC portfolios

This action aims to raise the visibility and impact of EIC portfolios of projects through novel and creative approaches for:

- ✦ stimulating synergies, inter-disciplinary exchanges and serendipitous effects among the projects in a thematic portfolio;
- ✦ building broader, diverse and gender-inclusive communities around each portfolio, well beyond the beneficiaries of the portfolio projects as such; and
- ✦ reaching out to relevant stakeholders that can further enhance the portfolio's impacts.

The action will also:

- ✦ promote interactions across EIC portfolios, in particular for co-creating new visions and directions for research and innovation in future deep-tech.

These activities will be implemented with a mix of real/virtual/hybrid formats, as appropriate, and should all result in concrete material that demonstrates the added

value of the EIC portfolio construct as 'being more than the sum of its parts', in particular by producing high-quality reports or mixed-media material, testimonials, case studies and aggregated information and knowledge, making the portfolio's subject matter intelligible and stimulating for others while also providing a basis to strengthen the outcomes and impacts from portfolio activities overall. This action will be implemented in close cooperation with the EIC Programme Managers that are overseeing thematic and challenge-based portfolios, and in close connection with the EIC communication strategy.

The proposer/s is/are expected to demonstrate strong familiarity with deep-tech research and innovation, a proven capacity to credibly engage with EIC communities, and a track record in creative approaches with high-quality outputs. The action is expected to cover a representative range and mix of portfolios from different thematic and EIC challenge areas, while leaving flexibility to adjust and choose others, in agreement with EIC as granting authority.

**Type of action:** Coordination and support action (CSA).

**Indicative call opening:** 5 April 2022

**Indicative deadline for applications:** 8 September 2022

**Indicative budget:** EUR 1 000 000.

## VII.12 Upskilling for outreach and EIC proactive management

The objective of this action is to share best practice and connect relevant stakeholders involved in implementing programmes and projects in the area of breakthrough technologies and market creating innovation, similar to EIC, in Europe and elsewhere. In particular, this action will provide outreach training to EIC remote expert evaluators and jury .

Furthermore, this action will strengthen the EIC proactive management by building a geographically and gender-balanced community of practice on proactive management across different programmes (national, European and global). In particular, a series of workshops and experience-gathering events (virtual or on-site) will be organised for exchange with and learning from other professionals that manage programmes and projects in the area of breakthrough technologies and market creating innovation, similar to EIC, in Europe and elsewhere.

**Type of action:** Public procurement action.

**Indicative opening:** From Q1 2022.

**Indicative budget:** EUR 650 000.

## VII.13 Enhancing synergies between the EIC and Startup Europe

### Rationale

To support scaling up of companies in Europe, the EIC is seeking to build synergies with the wider European startup ecosystem via a second wave of actions under the Commission's Startup Europe initiative. The actions will act as a catalyst to fulfil the potential of European startups, in delivering market-ready applications and technology solutions that can contribute to the competitiveness and strategic autonomy of EU industry in key technology areas and value chains. Actions will reinforce the activities of the European Innovation Council by targeting digital and deep tech startups that have received support from EIC to support their scale up in Europe. The actions can support also deep tech startups not yet been supported by the EIC, including startups that have already received private investment or EU funding (e.g. under Horizon Europe or the Digital Europe Programme), and raise their awareness of the opportunities on offer from the EIC. It is foreseen that the targeted startup communities will contribute to development of applications that foster climate-neutrality, digital and circular economy, clean industry and user-centric technology development, while also encouraging inclusiveness, and incorporating European social and ethical values.

### Scope

Connecting local digital and deep tech startup ecosystems and supporting crossborder acceleration activities for startups. Among the startups ecosystems to be connected, specific attention will be given to including of ecosystems in Widening countries. Actions should also ensure the integration of startups with the Digital Europe Programme (for example from European Digital Innovation Hubs), the non-EIC parts of Horizon Europe (for example leveraging the Innovation Radar<sup>95</sup> intelligence) and national programmes targeting startups. Actions should be published on the Startup Europe one-stop-shop<sup>96</sup> and where relevant in the EIC Community<sup>97</sup>, raise broad awareness of support for startups, while knowledge generated by the project(s) should contribute to EIC Business Acceleration Services and the general activities of the EIC Forum. Special attention will be given to support digital and deep tech startups and scaleups, wherever they are situated in Europe, to access innovation procurement opportunities (public or corporate procurers).

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<sup>95</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/innovation-radar>

<sup>96</sup> <https://startupeuropeclub.eu/>

<sup>97</sup> <https://community-smei.easme-web.eu/>

The scope of proposals submitted to this call should be complementary to the scope of projects financed under “Enhancing synergies between the EIC and Startup Europe” call for proposals outlined in the EIC Work Programme 2021.

Each proposal should demonstrate sustainability of proposed actions beyond the lifetime of the project.

### **Expected Outcome**

Projects are expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- ✦ Increasing the market footprint of European Startups in strategic digital technologies and deep tech innovation notably AI, Advanced Computing, Cybersecurity, Next Generation Internet, Blockchain, IoT, Greentech and Fintech;
- ✦ Better connection of EIC-supported startups and Seal of Excellence holders to relevant local and/or European ecosystems and communities;
- ✦ A scaling up of capabilities in matching technology solutions developed by highly innovative EU-funded digital and deep tech startups with investment and growth opportunities including, but not limited to, EIC, InvestEU, Digital Europe Programme, innovation procurement, investors and corporate innovation ventures.

### **Expected Impact**

Proposals should address the following and provide appropriate metrics for measuring success with respect to a defined baseline:

- ✦ Increased links between European startup ecosystems with the larger business ecosystem delivering lasting synergies;
- ✦ Increased access to customers, both private and public, better access to qualified employees, and prospects for scaling up across borders;
- ✦ Stimulation of European investments in digital and deep tech sectors through increasing the number of cross-border investments;
- ✦ Engagement of startups in the targeted ecosystems with the European Innovation Council.

The action may be implemented through financial support to third parties or directly by the consortium partners to allow startups to best benefit from the services described above. The monitoring of the support to third parties provided for each action, as well as the management of the financial support to third parties, will be ensured by the coordinator.

The applicants must put in place proper communication and publicity of the actions engaged. The applicants must put in place a system that allows the proper monitoring

of the benefit gained by the third parties as consequence of the actions described above and, ultimately, the proper reporting of the impact obtained.

Applicants must allocate at least 75% of the total proposed budget to financial support to third parties.

**Eligible entities:** Startup ecosystem builders, business angel organisations, venture capital entities, accelerators, incubators, startup associations

**Type of Action:** Coordination and support actions

Indicative call Opening: 1 June 2022

**Indicative deadline for applications:** 17 November 2022

**Indicative budget:** EUR 6 million for 3-4 Coordination and Support Actions

For general award criteria check Annex 2.

For more details on the evaluation process, please refer to the heading 'How does the EIC decide if your proposal will be funded' under EIC Transition Open.

# Annexes

## Annex 1 Estimated Indicative Budget <sup>98</sup>

	<b>Budget-line</b>	<b>Budget in EUR millions <sup>99</sup></b>	
		Horizon Europe budget	Next Generation EU budget
<b>Calls<sup>(1)</sup></b>			
<b>HORIZON-EIC-2022- PATHFINDEROPEN-01<sup>(2)</sup></b>		183.00	
<b>HORIZON-EIC-2022- PATHFINDERCHALLENGES-01<sup>(2)</sup></b>		167.00	
<b>HORIZON-EIC-2022- TRANSITIONOPEN-01-01<sup>(2)</sup></b>		70.86	
<b>HORIZON-EIC-2022- TRANSITIONCHALLENGES-01- 01/02/03<sup>(2)</sup></b>		20.00	40.50
<b>HORIZON-EIC-2022- ACCELERATOROPEN-01-01<sup>(3-6)</sup></b>	<b>Grant component</b>	170.66	145.50
	<b>Investment component</b>	314.81	
<b>HORIZON-EIC-2022- ACCELERATORCHALLENGES-01- 01/02<sup>(3-6)</sup></b>	<b>Grant component</b>		250.82
	<b>Investment component</b>	286.06	
<b>HORIZON-EIC-2022-GENDER- INDEX-01</b>		0.70	

<sup>98</sup> These figures remain estimated figures that are not legally binding.

<sup>99</sup> These figures include an estimated amount of third country credits and do not include possible EFTA appropriations.

<b>HORIZON-EIC-2022-SCALEUP-01</b>		7.00	
<b>HORIZON-EIC-2022-COMMUNITIES-01</b>		1.00	
<b>HORIZON-EIC-2022-STARTUPEU-01</b>		6.00	
<b>HORIZON-EIC-2022-AIBP-TRAINING-01</b>		0.5	
<b>HORIZON-EIC-2022-AIBTRTOOL-01</b>		0.7	
<b>Business Acceleration Services</b>			
<b>EIC Marketplace</b>		4.00	
<b>Coaching</b>		4.50	
<b>Support for innovation procurement</b>		4.00	
<b>Other actions</b>			
<b>Prizes</b>		2.75	
<b>Public Procurement Actions</b>		5.55	
<b>Expert contracts</b>		5.50	
<b>Contribution to Women Tech.EU initiative <sup>(7)</sup></b>		[10.00]	
<b>Contribution to Angel Investors initiative <sup>(7)</sup></b>		[2.00]	
<b>Estimated total budget</b>		1 254.59	436.82

- (1) The budgets set out in the calls and topics are indicative. Unless otherwise stated, final budgets may change following evaluation. The final figures may change by up to 20% compared to the total budget indicated in this Work Programme. Changes within these limits will not be considered substantial within the meaning of Article 110(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046.
- (2) Max. 1% of the budget dedicated to this call may be used for additional grants (Booster grants) to existing projects for a fixed amount of EUR 50 000 as set out in the relevant Call section.
- (3) The total indicative budget is expected to be allocated in approximately equal shares across the Challenges. If: a) the entire indicative budget initially dedicated to funding the Challenge related proposals is not allocated, the remaining balance will supplement the budget to be allocated to funding the Accelerator Open call; b) the entire indicative budget initially dedicated to funding the Accelerator (Open) call is not allocated the remaining balance will supplement the budget to be allocated to funding Accelerator Challenges call; c) both the entire indicative budgets dedicated to funding the Accelerator Open and the Accelerator Challenges calls are not allocated, the remaining balance will be allocated to indicative budgets of subsequent cut-off dates.

- (4) The Accelerator is a continuously open call and hence this amount may be increased by any amounts committed but not allocated under the cut-offs of the previous EIC annual Work Programme. The share of the budget dedicated to investments (e.g. equity, equity-like, debt/guarantees, etc.) and grants will be a result of the evaluation and due diligence process for applications to the EIC Accelerator. The contribution from Next Generation EU budget will only be used for the grant component. In case the full budget allocated for investments in year N will not be committed fully in year N+1 at the latest, the unused budget will be reallocated to subsequent EIC Accelerator calls.
- (5) The EIC Investment Partners will receive an annual amount from the EIC Work Programme budget to cover administrative expenses and fees. This administrative budget covers the operation and administration expenses of any investment. These costs include any cost in relation to the acquisition, ownership or realisation of the investments. The administrative budget also covers, among others, the fees payable to service providers, advisory, compensations to external experts, staff, depositary and administrative agent fees, accounting, auditors, compliance procedures, communication and marketing, litigation or arbitration, statutory or regulatory fees, insurance premiums, taxes and other governmental charges and any other operational and administration costs and expenses as required. This budget will in average not exceed 10% of the budget transferred for investments purposes.
- (6) A maximum of 10% of the HORIZON-EIC-2022-ACCELERATOROPEN-01 call and of the HORIZON-EIC-2022-ACCELERATORCHALLENGES-01 call earmarked for investments can be used for follow-up investments.
- (7) The EIC will contribute financially to the Women Tech.EU initiative and the angel investors action implemented by the EU Innovation ecosystems programme (EIE) through budgetary transfer.



## Annex 2 General conditions for proposals

### A. ADMISSIBILITY

#### Admissibility

Proposals must be submitted before the call deadline.

Proposals must be submitted electronically directly via the Funding & Tender Opportunities portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the call topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section); or indirectly via the EIC Community Platform where applicants will be redirected to the Portal. Paper submissions are NOT possible.

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

The Application Form for EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition will have two parts:

- ✦ **Part A** (to be filled in directly online) — contains administrative information about the applicant organisations (future coordinator and beneficiaries and affiliated entities), the summarised budget for the proposal and ethics and security specific questions;
- ✦ **Part B** (to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded as PDF in the system) — contains the technical description of the project.

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

The **page limits** and sections subject to limits will be clearly shown in the application templates and must be respected. Excess pages will be automatically made invisible, and will not be taken into consideration by the evaluators.

For the EIC Accelerator, the applicant must not be in a situation of **concurrent submission/implementation**. Concurrent submission exists when an applicant submits more than one proposal for evaluation to any EIC Accelerator call before the evaluation feedback has been provided for the earlier submission. If a case of concurrent submission is identified, only the proposal submitted first will be deemed eligible. Concurrent implementation occurs when the awardee of an ongoing EIC

Accelerator/EIC Pilot/SME Instrument project submits another proposal before the first project is finalised.<sup>100</sup>

In no circumstances can the same costs be financed twice by the budget (article 191 of the Financial Regulation).

Applicants will be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, etc.*).

## B. ELIGIBILITY

### Entities eligible for participation

Any legal entity,<sup>101</sup> regardless of its place of establishment, including legal entities from non-associated third countries or international organisation (including international European research organisations)<sup>102</sup> is **eligible to participate** (whether it is eligible for funding or not), provided that the conditions laid down in the Rules for Participation<sup>103</sup> have been met together with any other **conditions laid down in the specific call or topic**.

In order to be **eligible for funding**, the applicants must be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e., Member States (including their outmost regions and overseas countries and territories (OCTs)), countries associated to Horizon Europe and low- and middle-income third countries (see Annex 3).<sup>104</sup>

Legal entities which are established in countries not listed above will be eligible for funding if provided for in the specific call conditions, or if their participation is considered essential for implementing the action by the granting authority.

A 'legal entity' means any natural or legal person created and recognised as such under national law, EU law or international law, which has legal personality and which may, acting in its own name, exercise rights and be subject to obligations, or an entity without legal personality.

Beneficiaries and affiliated entities must register in the Participant Register before submitting their application, in order to get a participant identification code (PIC) and be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation) before signing the grant

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<sup>100</sup> Ongoing grant-only 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.

<sup>101</sup> For the definition of 'legal entity', see Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

<sup>102</sup> International European research organisation means an international organisation, the majority of whose members are Member States or Associated Countries, and whose principal objective is to promote scientific and technological cooperation in Europe.

<sup>103</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/695.

<sup>104</sup> See complete list in the [Horizon Europe Programme Guide](#).

agreement. For the validation, they will be asked to upload the necessary documents showing their legal status and origin during the grant preparation stage. A validated PIC is not a prerequisite for submitting an application.

### **Eligible activities**

Eligible activities are the ones described in the call conditions. In addition, all projects

- ✦ must have a focus on civil applications;
- ✦ must not: aim at human cloning for reproductive purposes, intend to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such changes heritable (with the exception of research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads, which may be financed); or intend to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer; or lead to the destruction of human embryos (for example, for obtaining stem cells);
- ✦ must comply with the 'do no significant harm' principle<sup>105</sup> as enshrined in the EU Taxonomy Regulation.<sup>106</sup> More in particular, EIC funding will not be awarded to projects that contravene the objectives of the Green Deal, including any proposals dedicated to increase the efficiency of fossil fuels and related technologies for example.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> 'Do no significant harm' principle. For the purpose of definition, this Work Programme follows the definition of 'significant harm to environmental objectives' contained in Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 on the establishment of a framework to facilitate sustainable investment (the 'EU Taxonomy Regulation'). Projects are considered to significantly harm (taking into account, if appropriate, the production, use and end of life of their products and services): a) climate change mitigation, where the project leads to higher greenhouse gas emissions as compared to typical standards or benchmarks in similar economic activities sectors; b) the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources, where the project is detrimental to the good status of bodies of water or marine waters; c) the circular economy, including waste prevention and recycling, where the project generates more waste or uses more natural resources (including non-renewable energy sources) as compared to typical standards in similar economic activities sectors, or where the long-term disposal of waste may cause significant and long-term harm to the environment; d) pollution prevention and control, where the project leads to a significant increase in the emissions of pollutants into air, water or land, as compared to typical standards in similar economic activities sectors; e) the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems, where the project is significantly detrimental to the conservation status and resilience of ecosystems, habitats and species.

<sup>106</sup> There is no requirement to apply the full range of requirements enshrined in the EU Taxonomy before the adoption of the delegated acts complementing and developing the provision of the EU Taxonomy Regulation ([https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/banking-and-finance/sustainable-finance/eu-taxonomy-sustainable-activities\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/banking-and-finance/sustainable-finance/eu-taxonomy-sustainable-activities_en))

<sup>107</sup> See also the Horizon Europe Programme Guide

## **Ethics**

Projects must comply with:

- ✦ ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity), and
- ✦ applicable EU, international and national law

Particular attention must be paid to the principle of proportionality, to the right to privacy, the right to the protection of personal data, the right to the physical and mental integrity of a person, the right to non-discrimination and to the need to ensure protection of the environment and high levels of human health protection.

Applicants must complete the Ethics issues table and Self-Assessment as part of their proposal in accordance with the guidelines.

Projects involving ethics issues will have to undergo an ethics screening/assessment to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific ethics requirements (which become part of the grant agreement). Projects may be also subject to ethics checks/reviews and ethics audits.

## **Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence**

All AI-based systems or techniques need to be developed in a safe, secure and responsible manner, with a clear identification of and preventative approach to risks. Depending on the type of research being proposed (from basic to precompetitive) and as appropriate, AI-based systems or techniques should be, or be developed to become (implicitly or explicitly contributing to one or several of the following objectives):

- ✦ technically robust, accurate and reproducible, and able to deal with and inform about possible failures, inaccuracies and errors, proportionate to the assessed risk posed by the AI-based system or technique;
- ✦ socially robust, in that they duly consider the context and environment in which they operate;
- ✦ reliable and function as intended, minimising unintentional and unexpected harm, preventing unacceptable harm and safeguarding the physical and mental integrity of humans;
- ✦ able to provide a suitable explanation of its decision-making process, whenever an AI-based system can have a significant impact on people's lives.

All proposals involving the development, use and/or deployment of AI based system/technique must ensure that the proposed AI system/technique is technical robust (e.g. resilient to attack, safe and secure, having fallback plan, accurate, reliable and reproducible) and must describe how they will uphold the principles of human

agency and oversight, fairness, diversity, non-discrimination, societal and environmental well-being, transparency and accountability.

### **Security — EU classified and sensitive information**

Projects involving classified and/or security sensitive information will have to go through the Security Appraisal process to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific security rules (detailed in a Security Section, which is annexed to the grant and contract agreement). Specific provisions for EU-classified information (EUCI) and sensitive information (SEN) will be included in the grant agreement and contract agreement, as necessary and appropriate.

The rules for protecting EU-classified information (governed by Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) [2015/444](#)<sup>108</sup> provide for instance that:

- ✦ projects involving information classified TRES SECRET UE/EU TOP SECRET (or equivalent) CANNOT be funded,
- ✦ EU-classified information must be marked in accordance with the applicable security instructions in the Security Classification Guide appendix of the Security Aspects Letter (SAL) which is contained in the Security Section of the grant and contract agreement,
- ✦ generation of, or access to, information with classification levels CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL or above (and RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED, if required by national rules) may take place only on the premises of entities which have been granted a facility security clearance (FSC) issue by the competent national security authority NSA);
- ✦ handling of information classified CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL or above (and RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED, if required by national rules) may take place only in a secured area accredited by the competent NSA;
- ✦ access to and handling of information classified CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL or above (and RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED, if required by national rules) may be granted only to individuals with a valid personnel security clearance (PSC) and an established need-to-know, who have been briefed on the applicable security rules;

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<sup>108</sup> See Commission Decision 2015/544/EU, Euratom of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information (OJ L 72, 17.3.2015, p. 53.

- ✦ access to, and handling of, information classified RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED may be granted only to individuals who have a need-to-know and have been briefed on the applicable security rules;
- ✦ at the end of the grant, the classified information must either be returned or continue to be protected according to the applicable rules;
- ✦ subcontracting of tasks involving EU-classified information is subject to prior written approval by the European Commission, which is the originator of EU-classified information. It is only possible to subcontract these tasks to entities established in an EU Member State or in a non-EU country with a security of information agreement with the EU(or an administrative arrangement with the Commission);
- ✦ disclosure of EU-classified information is subject to prior written approval by the European Commission.

Please note that, depending on the type of activity, facility security clearing (FSC) may have to be provided before grant signature. The Agency will assess the need for clearings in each case and will establish their delivery date during grant preparation. Please note that, in no circumstances can we sign any grant and contract agreement until at least one of the beneficiaries in the consortium has a facility security clearing.

In certain cases, the project results might not require classification but they might be security sensitive and consequently require restricted disclosure or limited dissemination due to security reasons, in accordance with the applicable security instructions in the Security Section. This means that, in principle, third parties should have no access to results subject to this type of restriction. Disclosure of this information is subject to prior written approval by the European Commission.

Further security recommendations may be added to the grant and contract agreement in the form of security deliverables (*e.g. create Security Advisory Board, appointment of Project Security Officer, limit the level of detail, use fake scenario, etc.*).

In addition, EIC awardees must ensure that their projects are not subject to national/third country security requirements that could affect the implementation or put into question the award of the grants (*e.g. technology restrictions, national security classification, etc.*). The Agency must be notified immediately of any potential security issues.

## **Use of Copernicus and Galileo/EGNOS**

Projects involving earth observation, positioning, navigation or timing data, services or technologies must make use of at least Copernicus and Galileo/EGNOS data, services and technologies.

## **Gender Equality Plans and gender mainstreaming**

Each legal entity being a public body, a research organisation or a higher education establishment must have a Gender Equality Plan, covering the following minimum process-related requirements:

- ✦ Publication: a formal document published on the institution's website and signed by the top management;
- ✦ Dedicated resources: commitment of resources and in gender equality to implement the plan;
- ✦ Data collection and monitoring: sex/gender disaggregated data on personnel and students and annual reporting based on indicators;
- ✦ Training: Awareness raising/trainings on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers;
- ✦ Recommended areas to be covered and addressed via concrete measures and targets:
  - work-life balance and organisational culture;
  - gender balance in leadership and decision-making;
  - gender equality in recruitment and career progression;
  - integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content;
  - measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.

A self-declaration will be requested at proposal stage, while the existence of the Gender Equality Plan is checked before grant signature. If all the above-mentioned mandatory requirements are met through another strategic document, such as a development plan or an inclusion or diversity strategy, it can be considered as an equivalent. This eligibility criterion does not apply to other categories of legal entities, such as private for-profit organisations, including SMEs, non-governmental or civil society organisations.

Relevant EIC awardees must also take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in implementing the action and, where applicable, in line with their gender equality plan. They must aim to achieve, to the extent possible, a

gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, including at supervisory and managerial level.

### **Open Science and Data Management**

For the EIC Pathfinder and Transition, the EIC funded projects must comply with the open science requirements as described in the Model Grant Agreement (article 17). These concern:

- ✦ providing immediate open access to scientific publications under the conditions required by the grant agreement;
- ✦ managing responsibly research data generated or reused by projects in line with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable data)'. Producing and updating a data management plan; providing open access to research data under the principle 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary', that is with exceptions, under the conditions required by the grant agreement;
- ✦ providing information about the research outputs/tools/instruments needed to validate the conclusions of scientific publications or to validate/re-use research data;
- ✦ providing digital or physical access to the results needed to validate the conclusions of scientific publications, unless exceptions apply (the same as with open access to research data);
- ✦ in cases of public emergency, if requested by the granting authority, providing immediate open access to all research outputs under open licenses or, if exceptions apply, access under fair and reasonable conditions to legal entities that need the research outputs to address the public emergency .

Further, open science practices that are not mandatory but recommended, may be included in projects at the design phase, such as involving all relevant knowledge actors, including citizens, early and open sharing of research, output management beyond research data, open peer-review. This is a non-exhaustive list of practices that proposers are expected to adopt when possible and appropriate for their projects. Recommended open science practices are incentivised through their the evaluation at the proposal stage. Proposers should be aware of both mandatory and recommended practices and integrate them into their proposals.

### **Data Management**

All EIC funded projects must develop and update a data management plan in case they generate or reuse research data or any other research outputs (except for publications). All personal and non-personal data must be managed responsibly in line with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable data), the EU General Data



Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the respective European, international and national legal frameworks. Personal data must not be made public unless explicitly agreed by the data subjects. Non-personal data will be open in principle but exceptions to open access apply (following the principle 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary').

### **EIC investments**

The requirements concerning the list of non-cooperative jurisdictions (as amended from time to time) for tax purposes issued by the Council (OJ C 438, 19.12.2017, p. 5) (the "Council Conclusions") are applied by the EIC in respect of EIC Accelerator investments.

The EIC shall not enter into any contract or maintain a business relationship with any institution or individual listed on sanction lists<sup>109</sup>, and in particular shall not make any funds available directly or indirectly to any institution or individual listed on sanction lists.

The EIC applies the EU rules, policies and procedures, addressing the requirements in respect of money laundering, terrorism financing, tax avoidance, tax fraud, tax evasion contained in Article 155(2)(a) of the Financial Regulation and complies with the prohibition to enter into new or renewed operations with entities incorporated or established in jurisdictions listed under the relevant Union policy on non-cooperative jurisdictions or that are identified as high-risk third countries<sup>110</sup> or that do not effectively comply with Union or internationally agreed tax standards on transparency and exchange of information, as well as the possibility to derogate from this requirement when the action is physically implemented in one of those jurisdictions, contained in Article 155(2)(b) of the Financial Regulation.

The breach of these obligations may lead to the interruption of the equity investment process.

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<sup>109</sup> Consolidated list of sanctions: [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage\\_en/8442/Consolidated%20list%20of%20sanctions](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/8442/Consolidated%20list%20of%20sanctions)

<sup>110</sup> Pursuant to Article 9(2) of Directive (EU) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2015 on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing, amending Regulation (EU) No 648/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Directive 2005/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Directive 2006/70/EC (OJ L 141, 5.6.2015, p. 73), as may be amended.

## C. FINANCIAL and OPERATIONAL CAPACITY

### Financial capacity

Applicants to EIC Pathfinder calls must have stable and sufficient resources to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

The financial capacity check will be done by the Agency on the basis of the documents you will be requested to upload in the Participant Register during grant preparation (e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc.). The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects, such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years.

The check will normally only be done for the coordinator and if the requested grant amount is equal or greater than EUR 500 000, except for:

- ✦ public bodies (entities established as public body under national law, including local, regional or national authorities) or international organisations, and
- ✦ cases where the individual requested grant amount is not more than EUR 60 000 (low-value grant).

For more information, see [Rules on Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

### Operational capacity

Applicants to EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition calls must have the know-how, qualifications and resources to successfully implement their tasks in the project and contribute their share (including, when appropriate, sufficient experience in EU/trans-national projects of comparable size).

This assessment of operational capacity will be carried out during the evaluation of the award criterion 'quality and efficiency of the implementation', on the basis of the competence and experience of the applicants and their project teams, including its operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain it by the time of the implementation of the tasks.

If the evaluation of this award criterion leads a score above the applicable threshold, then the applicants are considered to have sufficient operational capacity.

Public bodies, Member State organisations and international organisations are exempted from the operational capacity check.

For the EIC Accelerator, the operational capacity of the applicant will be assessed during the evaluation of the award criterion 'Level of risk, implementation, and need for Union support'. Experts will judge whether each participant has, or will have in due time thanks to EIC support, sufficient operational capacity to successfully carry out their tasks in the proposed work-plan. This assessment will be based on the competence and experience of the applicant, including their operational resources (human, technical, other) and the measures proposed to secure these resources by the time of the implementation of the tasks.

### **Exclusion**

Applicants that are subject to EU administrative sanctions (i.e. exclusion)<sup>111</sup> or are in one of the following exclusion situations<sup>112</sup> banning them from receiving EU grants can NOT participate:

- ✦ bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts),
- ✦ they are in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts),
- ✦ they are guilty of grave professional misconduct (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant),
- ✦ they are guilty of fraud, corruption, having links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant),
- ✦ they have shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement or grant decision (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant),

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<sup>111</sup> See Article 136 EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

<sup>112</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

- ✦ they are guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No 2988/95 (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant), or
- ✦ they have created under a different jurisdiction an entity with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that<sup>113</sup>:

- ✦ during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information, or
- ✦ they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

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<sup>113</sup> See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

## D. AWARD CRITERIA

If admissible and eligible, the proposals for Coordination and Support Actions will be evaluated and ranked against the following award criteria:

Excellence	Impact	Quality and efficiency of the implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Clarity and pertinence of the project's objectives.</li> <li>✦ Quality of the proposed coordination and/or support measures including soundness of methodology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the Work Programme, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions due to the project.</li> <li>✦ Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall.</li> <li>✦ Capacity and role of each participant, and extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.</li> </ul>

Evaluation scores will be awarded for the criteria, and not for the individual sub-criteria. For full proposals, each criterion will be scored out of 5. The threshold for individual criteria will be 3. The overall threshold, applying to the sum of the three individual scores, will be 10.

For other types of actions, including 'Research and Innovation Actions' (EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition) and 'Innovation and Market Deployment Actions' (EIC Accelerator), the award criteria are detailed in the relevant call sections.

## Annex 3 Entities eligible for funding

In order to be eligible for funding, the applicants must be established in one of the eligible countries, i.e.:

- ✦ Member States of the European Union (including overseas countries and territories (OCTs))
- ✦ Eligible non-EU countries:
  - countries associated to Horizon Europe<sup>114</sup>

At the date of the publication of the Work Programme, not all negotiations on association to Horizon Europe have been completed. Considering the Union's interest to retain, in principle, relations with the countries associated to Horizon 2020, most third countries associated to Horizon 2020 are expected to be associated to Horizon Europe in due course of time. In addition, other third countries may also become associated to Horizon Europe during the programme. For the purposes of the eligibility conditions, applicants established in Horizon 2020 Associated Countries or in other third countries negotiating association to Horizon Europe will be treated as entities established in an Associated Country, provided that the Horizon Europe association agreement with the third country concerned applies at the time of signature of the grant agreement. If the association agreement provides for an exclusion from the EIC Accelerator investment component, legal entities from that country are only eligible to apply for the 'grant-only' component of the EIC Accelerator.

- Low- and middle-income countries.<sup>115</sup>

Legal entities which are established in countries not listed above will be eligible for funding when provided for in the specific call conditions, or their participation is considered essential for implementing the action.

*Specific cases:*

**Affiliated entities** — Affiliated entities are eligible for funding if they are established in one of the countries listed above.

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<sup>114</sup> Please see the Horizon Europe Programme Guide for up-to-date information on the current list of and the position for Associated Countries.

<sup>115</sup> See the Horizon Europe Programme Guide for a complete list of these countries.

**EU bodies** — Legal entities created under EU law may also be eligible to receive funding, unless their basic act states otherwise.

**International organisations** — International European research organisations are eligible to receive funding. Unless their participation is considered essential for implementing the action by the granting authority, other international organisations are not eligible to receive funding. International organisations with headquarters in a Member State or Associated Country are eligible to receive funding for 'Training and mobility' actions and when provided for in the specific call conditions.

### **Single legal entity ('Mono-beneficiary') and consortium ('multi-beneficiary') composition**

Unless otherwise provided for in the specific call conditions:

- ✦ Applicants for mono-beneficiary actions must be established in a Member State or Associated Country.
- ✦ Proposals for multi-beneficiary actions (must be submitted by a consortium including at least three independent legal entities, with at least one legal entity established in a Member State and at least two other independent legal entities, each established in different Member States or Associated Countries).

Unless specified otherwise, proposals for EIC Pathfinder Challenge and EIC Transition may be submitted as well by multi-beneficiary comprising of two legal entities, provided that those two legal entities are established in two different Member States or Associated countries. The JRC, international European research organisations and legal entities created under EU law are deemed to be established in a Member State other than those in which the other legal entities participating in the action are established.

Proposals for Coordination and Support actions may be submitted by one or more legal entities, which must be established in a Member State, Associated Country, or in exceptional cases and if provided for in the specific call conditions, in another third country.

## Annex 4 Fast Track scheme to apply for the EIC Accelerator

The 'Fast Track' scheme is a novelty under Horizon Europe and a specific process applicable to the EIC Accelerator. It provides for a specific treatment of proposals that result from existing Horizon Europe or Horizon 2020 projects.

Under the Fast Track scheme, applicants do not apply directly to the EIC Accelerator call (Section [IV](#)). Instead, a project review is carried out by the responsible funding body to assess the innovation or market deployment potential of an existing project, to decide whether the project is suitable for support under the EIC Accelerator.

The project review – implemented by the funding body responsible for the programme – must be conducted using:

- ✦ award criteria equivalent to the ones set out for the short application stage of the EIC Accelerator (Section [IV](#)), centred on the underlying idea of that potential new action;
- ✦ an evaluation process that guarantees an independent assessment of proposals in compliance with Article 48 of Horizon Europe.

The responsible funding body can submit the outcome of the projects review to the EIC Accelerator, if the project review concludes that the following conditions are met:

- ✦ the proposal meets the two first criteria of the EIC Accelerator (excellence and impact),
- ✦ there is no duplication of funding of activities to be supported under the EIC Accelerator with the existing grant, and
- ✦ the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for the EIC Accelerator.

The applicant will then be invited to prepare a full proposal for the EIC Accelerator to one of the cut-off dates within the next 12 months following initial review. Applicants are free to decide to which cut-off date within the next 12 months they apply. They will receive support through the EIC artificial intelligence based IT platform and coaching as specified in Section [IV](#).

Full proposals to the EIC Accelerator stemming from the Fast Track scheme will be assessed as set out in Section [IV](#), and will be treated in exactly the same way as all other full proposals.

In 2022, the funding bodies and schemes which are eligible for the Fast Track for EIC Accelerator cut-off dates are:

- ✦ The EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition projects (including under EIC pilot);



- ✦ The ERC Executive Agency for Proof of Concept;
- ✦ The Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT);
- ✦ The Eureka secretariat for SMEs supported under the Eurostars-2 Joint Programme and the Partnership on Innovative SMEs.

These funding bodies are responsible for implementing the Fast Track scheme in accordance with the above provisions. They may decide not to implement the scheme or to introduce it at a later stage.

Subject to experience with the Fast Track scheme in 2021 and 2022, it may be opened to other parts of Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020, and to the funding bodies responsible for their implementation.

The EIC website will provide up to date information about how the Fast Track scheme will be implemented by the relevant funding bodies.

## Annex 5 Pilot Plug-in scheme to apply for the EIC Accelerator

The pilot Plug-in scheme is a novelty under Horizon Europe and a specific process applicable to the EIC Accelerator only. Its process is equivalent to the Fast Track scheme's, as described under Annex 4, except that it applies to proposals that result from existing national or regional programmes.

Following the results of a mapping of national and regional programmes, a pilot initiative by the European Commission in close cooperation with Member States and Associated Countries, is included in the first Work Programme of Horizon Europe.

Under the 'Plug-in' scheme, applicants do not apply directly to the EIC Accelerator call (Section IV). Instead, a project review is carried out to assess the innovation or market deployment potential of an existing project at national or regional level, to decide whether the project is suitable for support under the EIC Accelerator

The project review - implemented by the funding/managing body responsible for the programme or by other appointed authority under the responsibility of the funding body - must be conducted using:

- ✦ award criteria equivalent to the ones set out for the short application stage of the EIC Accelerator (Section IV), centred on the underlying idea of that potential new action;
- ✦ equivalent evaluation processes that guarantee an independent assessment of proposals in compliance with Article 48 of Horizon Europe

The responsible funding/managing body or other appointed authority under the responsibility of the funding body, can submit the outcome of the projects review to the EIC Accelerator, if the project review concludes that the following conditions are met:

- ✦ the proposal meets the two first criteria of the EIC Accelerator (excellence and impact),
- ✦ there is no duplication of funding of activities to be supported under the EIC Accelerator with the existing grant allocated at national or regional level, and
- ✦ the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for the EIC Accelerator.

The applicants will then be invited to prepare a full proposal for the EIC Accelerator to one of the cut-off dates within the next 12 months following initial review. . Applicants may decide to which cut-off they apply. They will receive support through the EIC artificial intelligence based IT platform and coaching as specified in Section IV.

Full proposals to the EIC Accelerator stemming from the Plug-in scheme will be assessed as set out in Section IV and will be treated exactly the same way as all other full proposals.

The pilot Plug-in scheme will be implemented with a limited number of programmes, which are assessed by a group of experts and certified by the Commission. To guarantee the effective implementation of this pilot, only public programmes – both national and regional – will be considered initially. The experts will assess the programmes<sup>116</sup> submitted by the Member States and Associated Countries, their related national or regional evaluation procedures, and whether the project review is equivalent to the assessment of proposals under the EIC Accelerator.

The Commission will certify which programmes are suitable for the pilot Plug-in scheme based on the experts' assessment. The experts will collaborate with the EIC plug-in contact points (representatives of Member States and Associated Countries) who will have to provide accurate information regarding the programmes. Only programmes for which all the key elements and information are provided by the EIC Plug-in contact points will be considered for the certification. The mapping exercise is the basis and starting point of the experts' work. The result of the mapping exercise and the certification will be published on the EIC website.

The Commission services<sup>117</sup> will be notified if any future changes in the criteria and/or evaluation of the regional or national programmes may impact the assessment and certification of those programmes.

The Commission may withdraw the certification, if it finds out that:

- ✦ false information were used to obtain the certification;
- ✦ the project review did not comply with the provisions as set out in the EIC WP.

The funding/managing bodies in charge of these national/regional programmes, or other appointed authority under the responsibility of the funding body, are responsible for implementing the Plug-in scheme in accordance with the above provisions. They may decide not to implement the scheme or to introduce it at a later stage. A coordination among the different national and regional funding bodies will have to be ensured at national level to avoid duplication of the proposals.

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<sup>116</sup> Programme in this context is to be understood in the widest possible sense; in particular, it refers to all systems and institutions of organised services, activities and opportunities to support and scale up high impact innovations at the national or regional level.

<sup>117</sup> From Directorate General in charge and/or Executive Agency to which the tasks/programme will be delegated.

The EIC website will provide information about how the Plug-in scheme will be implemented by the relevant funding/managing bodies.

After the certification process is concluded, the responsible funding/managing bodies or other appointed authorities under the responsibility of the funding body, will be entitled to present the projects that have passed the project review and were funded under those certified programmes.

Plug-in proposals will be accepted starting from the first EIC Accelerator cut-off in 2022 at the earliest. The pilot Plug-in scheme will be subjected to an assessment after the first implementation to verify the effectiveness of the process and the quality of the proposals, in view of the renewal of the Plug-in process under subsequent cut-offs and possibly the inclusion of other programmes.

## Annex 6 EIC Booster grants for EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition awardees

The Awardees of EIC Pathfinder projects (including grants resulting from certain EIC pilot Pathfinder, FET-Open and FET-Proactive calls, see Section II) and of EIC Transition projects are eligible to receive EIC Booster grants with fixed amounts of up to EUR 50 000, as specified in the relevant call sections of this Work Programme.

In line with Article 47(2) of the Horizon Europe Regulation,<sup>118</sup> the EIC Booster grants are not subject to any call. They reflect the necessity and hence the possibility for the EIC to proactively support, at any stage of a project implementation, the assessment of any potentially innovative lead stemming from a EIC Pathfinder project, or reinforce the coordination and management of an EIC Portfolio where needed.

These EIC Booster grants will fund either complementary activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation or portfolio activities.

Complementary activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation could include, but are not limited to:

- ✦ definition of a commercialisation process;
- ✦ market and competitiveness analysis;
- ✦ technology assessment;
- ✦ verification of innovation potential;
- ✦ consolidation of IP rights;
- ✦ business case development;
- ✦ exploratory / preparatory work for creating start-ups or spin-offs.

Portfolio activities could include, but are not limited to:

- ✦ defining common objectives and activities;
- ✦ building synergies within the EIC Portfolio and with any outside relevant partners, including within the EIT Community;
- ✦ engaging strategic partners to overcome common challenges;
- ✦ (co)-organising events;
- ✦ maximising data sharing;

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<sup>118</sup> See also Article 195(e) of the Financial Regulation.

- ✦ raising visibility of the EIC Portfolio's community and the EIC.

These EIC Booster grants do not fund research or activities that were already foreseen in the original project or that cannot be obtained from other EIC services, in particular through Business Acceleration Services. A maximum of three EIC Booster grants can be awarded for each EIC Pathfinder project and more than three may be awarded in exceptional and duly justified cases. A maximum of one EIC Booster grant can be awarded for each EIC Transition project. Any such EIC Booster grant can be awarded to an individual EIC awardee or a group of EIC awardees.<sup>119</sup>

EIC awardees, after discussion with an EIC Programme Manager or following a project review, can apply for such an EIC Booster grant. Each proposal will be assessed in accordance with Article 29, paragraph 2, of Horizon Europe Regulation taking into account the following considerations:

For activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation:

- ✦ Timeliness and pertinence of the activities proposed (Excellence);
- ✦ Potential of the proposed deep-tech innovation to create new market or to solve pressing societal needs / problems (Impact);
- ✦ Expertise, capabilities and motivation of the applicants to take this innovation forward to the market (Quality and efficiency of implementation).

For portfolio activities:

- ✦ Contribution of the activity to the objectives of the EIC Portfolio (Excellence);
- ✦ Timeliness of the activity proposed to maximize its impact (Impact);
- ✦ Engagement of EIC Portfolio's projects and relevant external partners (Quality and efficiency of implementation).

The final decision will be motivated and communicated to the EIC awardees and the Programme Committee. Successful applicants will be invited for grant preparation, which might take into account adjustments proposed by the EIC Programme Manager.

Following successful grant preparation, the Agency will award the EIC Booster grant (Coordination and Support Action)<sup>120</sup> to cover the eligible costs necessary for the implementation of the proposed activities. The funding rate of this grant will be 100% of the eligible costs.

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<sup>119</sup> This includes affiliated entities that are participating in the Pathfinder or Transition projects.

<sup>120</sup> This may be a new grant agreement or an amendment to the existing grant agreement.

## Annex 7 Additional provisions concerning Intellectual Property for EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition

In accordance with the Horizon Europe Regulation,<sup>121</sup> the Work Programme may provide for additional exploitation obligations, in particular to put more emphasis on exploitation of results, and highlight the role the Commission should play in identifying and maximising exploitation opportunities in the Union.

Together with specific intellectual property rules provided for under Annex 2 in relation to emergency situations and standardisation, the following rules will apply to EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition actions and be reflected into the applicable Model Grant Agreement adopted by the Commission.

In addition, the said Model Grant Agreement will also address the specific objectives and means assigned to the EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition activities by the Council Decision<sup>122</sup> adopting the Horizon Europe Specific Programme, i.e. the regrouping of projects into EIC Portfolios,<sup>123</sup> with the aim to stimulate cross-fertilisation, exchange between innovation actors and to nurture market creating innovation out of EIC Pathfinder results, but also the role to be played by EIC Programme Managers<sup>124</sup> in this context and in developing a proactive management culture of EIC activities.

### 1. Definitions

The following definition is complementing those provided in the Glossary in the introductory section of this Work Programme for the purpose of this Annex.

EIC Inventors: with reference to information and results owned by any EIC awardee that is a not-for-profit legal entity, any of their employees and subcontractors, established in a Member States or Associated Country, and appearing or entitled to appear as inventor in any corresponding publication or patent filing.

### 2. Exchange of information for the purpose of EIC portfolio activities

#### 2.1 – Access to information about preliminary findings and results

- a. At any time and without prejudice to the EIC awardee's ownership and its rights and obligations to protect personal data and results according to the grant agreement, the EIC Programme Manager may request any EIC awardee to make

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<sup>121</sup> In accordance with Recital (85) and notably the second indent of Article 39(1) of Horizon Europe Regulation.

<sup>122</sup> Section 1.1.1 of Pillar III of Council Decision.

<sup>123</sup> Each Pathfinder or Transition action will be allocated to at least one Thematic or Challenge Portfolio.

<sup>124</sup> Section 1.2.2 of Pillar III of Council Decision.

available through the EIC Marketplace information on preliminary findings and results generated by the action, subject to paragraphs b) and c) below, with the aim to probe their potential for further innovation.

- b. Where any such preliminary finding or result was not already made public through agreed dissemination activities or a patent or protection by any other intellectual property right, that information must be earmarked and treated by the Agency as confidential and disseminated only to:
- ✦ other EIC awardees, bound by an EIC grant agreement or an EIC contract, that refers to or includes the obligations detailed under section 2.2 below;
  - ✦ EIC inventors having signed a non-disclosure agreement with the Agency, providing for the obligations detailed under section 2.2 below;
  - ✦ other member of the EIC Community established in a Member State or an Associated Country and having signed a non-disclosure agreement with the Agency, providing for the obligations detailed under section 2.2.

Where based on that confidential information any of these entities request disclosure or access to the underlying detailed data and results, the EIC awardee may refuse it based on its legitimate interests, including commercial exploitation and any other constraints, such as data protection rules, privacy, confidentiality, trade secrets, Union competitive interests, security rules or intellectual property rights.

- c. EIC awardees may object to the obligation provided for under paragraph b) when:
- ✦ committing to either publish or patent or protect by any other intellectual property right and without unreasonable delays, or
  - ✦ demonstrating concrete exploitation of the said preliminary findings and results, subject to initial discussion with and final agreement of the Agency on the corresponding update of the Plan for dissemination and exploitation referred to in Section 3.1.

## **2.2 – Non-disclosure obligations**

Where EIC awardees are informed on or given access or disclosure to any preliminary findings, results or other intellectual property generated by other EIC actions, and where this information is earmarked as confidential in accordance with section 2.1.b, they must:

- ✦ a keep it strictly confidential; and



- ✦ not disclose it to any person without the prior written consent of the owner, and then only under conditions of confidentiality equal to those provided under this section; and
- ✦ use the same degree of care to protect its confidentiality as the EIC awardee uses to protect its own confidential information of a similar nature; and
- ✦ act in good faith at all times; and
- ✦ not use any of it for any purpose other than assessing opportunities to propose other research or innovation activities to the EIC, or any other initiative agreed by the owner.

The EIC awardee may disclose any such information to its employees and, with the prior authorisation of the owner, to its subcontractors established in a Member State or an Associated Country and:

- ✦ who have a need to access it for the performance of their work with respect to the purpose permitted above; and
- ✦ who are bound by a written agreement or professional obligation to protect its confidentiality in the way described in this section.

No obligations are imposed upon the EIC awardee where such information:

- ✦ is already known to the EIC awardee before and is not subject to any other obligation of confidentiality; or
- ✦ is or becomes publicly known through no act by or default by/of the EIC awardee; or
- ✦ is obtained by the EIC awardee from a third party and in circumstances where the EIC awardee has no reason to believe that there has been a breach of an obligation of confidentiality.

The restrictions in this section do not apply to the extent that any such information is required to be disclosed by any law or regulation, by any judicial or governmental order or request, or pursuant to disclosure requirements relating to the listing of the stock of the EIC awardee on any recognised stock exchange.

Upon the end or termination of the grant agreement or of the participation of the EIC awardee, it must immediately cease to use the said information, except if otherwise directly agreed with the owner, or if the EIC awardee remains a member of the EIC Community referred to under section 2.1.b.

The provisions of this section will be in force for a period of 60 months following the end or the termination of the grant agreement or of the participation of the EIC awardee, at the end of which period they will cease to have effect.

### **3. Specific provisions on intellectual property and related dissemination and exploitation activities**

#### **3.1 – Plan for exploitation and dissemination**

EIC awardees must report to the Agency on their exploitation and dissemination activities:

- ✦ in accordance with the grant agreement, together with any updated version of the plan for exploitation and dissemination;
- ✦ within 30 days upon request from the EIC Programme Manager for the purpose of EIC portfolio activities.

The Granting Authority may also request an update of the plan for exploitation and dissemination of the results at any time during the implementation of the action.

EIC awardees must address and agree in their Consortium agreement on all related intellectual property issues, from ownership and co-ownership of results to the consortium's internal approval process for their dissemination. EIC awardees must also identify therein any pre-existing technology fitting the action's needs and objectives and try to reach appropriate licensing agreement between them to prevent research funding redundancy.

The EIC awardees are deemed to have signed the Consortium agreement at the date of the signature of this grant agreement. The Agency may require a copy at any time in accordance with the grant agreement.

#### **3.2 – Dissemination activities**

Each EIC awardee will propose and undertake dissemination activities of the plan for exploitation and dissemination agreed by the Agency with the aim of supporting innovation in the European Union and fostering the development of the EIC Community, opting for publications as main route to bring technical and scientific knowledge to the public.

When approving the plan for exploitation and dissemination of the results or any update, the Agency may subject any proposed dissemination activity to one or a combination of the following conditions:

- ✦ the prior assessment of any innovation potential of the results to be disseminated,

- ✦ the prior protection of the result to be disseminated, in accordance with the grant agreement, the cost being eligible;
- ✦ the simultaneous unrestricted dissemination through the EIC Marketplace.

Where the Agency disagrees to a dissemination activity, it will actively assist the EIC awardees to achieve compliance with the required conditions, without unreasonable delay and in due time, notably by proposing complementary EIC support for exploitation or a support of the EIC Business Acceleration Services, as detailed and referred to under section 3.5. Where the Agency agrees to a dissemination activity, it will abide to the grant agreement.

The Agency is hereby entrusted with the right to also disseminate and promote the exploitation of any results that are made public by the EIC awardee or with its assent.

### **3.3 – Exploitation of results**

EIC awardees must use their best efforts to exploit their results or have them exploited by a third party, in priority those established in a Member State or an Associated Country, including through transfer or licensing.

Each EIC awardee agrees that any of its EIC Inventors is entrusted upon signature of the grant agreement with the necessary access rights<sup>125</sup> to the result they have contributed to for the purpose of further developing and exploiting it. If the EIC awardee provides support to the EIC Inventor for any such exploitation, royalties may be shared with the EIC awardee in mutually beneficial terms, provided the conclusion of any such agreement does not prevent the EIC Inventor(s) to exercise its(their) rights.

EIC awardees must report on any exploitation operation at:

- ✦ the reporting periods provided for in the grant agreement;
- ✦ periodicity agreed at the end of the action together with the final exploitation and dissemination plan;
- ✦ within 30 days upon request from the Agency, within 4 years after final payment.

### **3.4 – Failure to exploit or disseminate**

The Agency is entrusted with the right to disseminate and promote the exploitation of results that have not been made public through dissemination activities or patent or protection by any other IPR, where the EIC awardee owning it:

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<sup>125</sup> By default “royalty free”, except in the case described at the end of the paragraph.

- ✦ does not provide any information regarding exploitation or dissemination of those results; or
- ✦ neither intends to exploit nor disseminate those results; or
- ✦ declares to continue research activities on those results but without a view of their subsequent exploitation; or
- ✦ where, despite its best efforts, no exploitation or dissemination takes place within the delays provided in the final exploitation and dissemination plan and in the absence of any demonstrated alternative exploitation or dissemination opportunity.

Where the EIC awardee continues to oppose to the dissemination by the Agency or refuses to provide any data or document necessary for the said dissemination, the Agency will impose penalties in accordance with the grant agreement.

### **3.5 – Possible additional or complementary EIC support for exploitation**

Any EIC awardee or group of EIC awardees or the consortium of an EIC Pathfinder action, including EIC inventors, may be awarded an additional EIC Booster grant of up to EUR 50,000 to undertake limited EIC transition activities in relation to any of its results as set out in Annex 6.

This additional grant may be shared with or fully awarded to a third-party partaking in or undertaking the said activities, under the condition that the said third-party respects the ownership rights of the EIC awardee and confidentiality conditions detailed in this Annex.

Beneficiaries, including EIC inventors, are eligible to apply for EIC Transition and EIC Accelerator calls under specific conditions detailed therein and to benefit from EIC Business Acceleration Services as set out in the relevant sections of this Work Programme.