



Backing visionary entrepreneurs

European Innovation Council: Support for Deep-
Tech Researchers and Innovators



BACKING **VISIONARY** ENTREPRENEURS



What's holding back EUROPEAN INNOVATION?



PERFORMANCE

- Strong research performance not translated into innovation
- Lack of breakthrough / disruptive innovations that create new markets



FUNDING & INVESTMENT

- Financing gaps “valleys of death” in Transition from lab to enterprise and scaling up for high-risk innovative start-ups

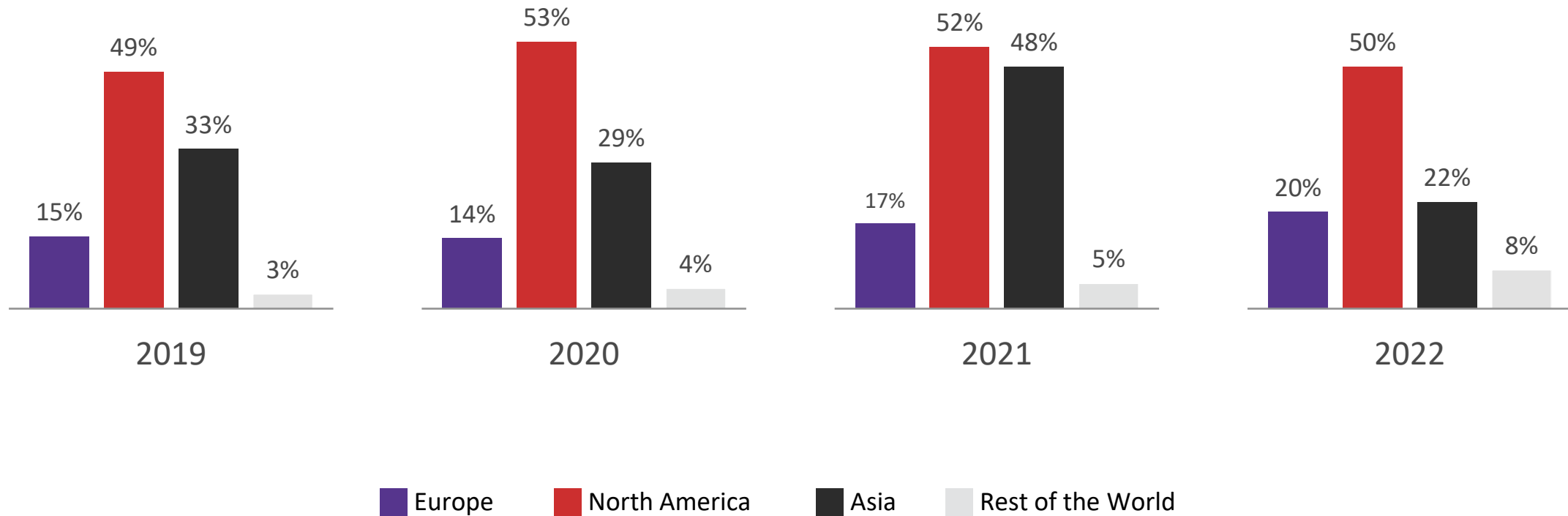


ECOSYSTEM

- Many national & local ecosystems, but fragmented at European level
- Need to include all regions and all talent (especially female)



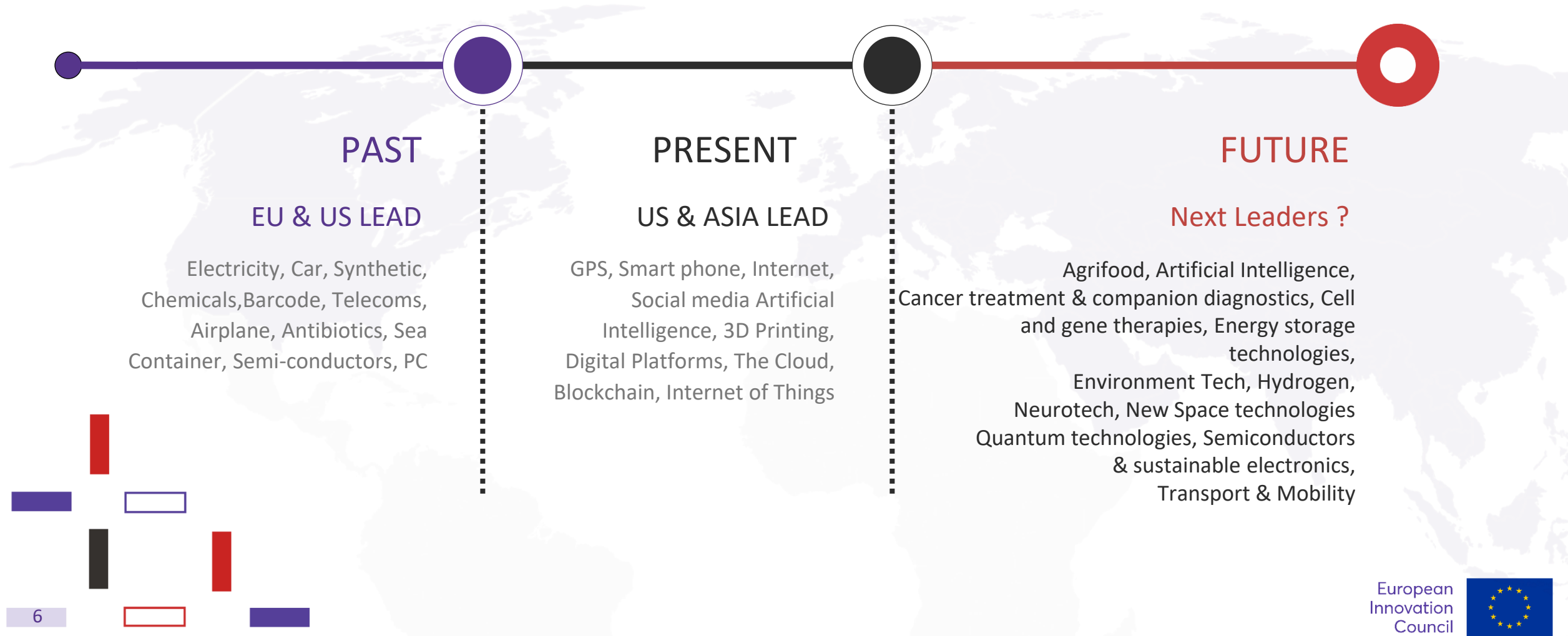
US Venture Capital Investments 4-5 TIMES HIGHER THAN EU





“You never run as fast as when
you have other people to catch
up and pass.”

Who will lead the next STRATEGIC INNOVATIONS?





What makes ***EIC UNIQUE?***

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- **€10 billion budget** under Horizon Europe to identify, develop and scale up breakthrough technologies and disruptive innovations ;
- **One-stop-shop for all TRLs**: early-stage research ideas to tech transfer/commercialisation to scaling finance for startups and SMEs
- **Bottom up (open) and top downs (challenges)** funding approach;
- Strategy steered by independent **EIC Board** involving entrepreneurs, investors, researchers etc.
- Portfolio overseen by Programme Managers to identify new and emerging opportunities and **pro-active management of portfolios**;
- **Partnerships** to enhance the European innovation ecosystem (Business Acceleration Services, Plug in from national programmes, from EIT, ERC, Seal of Excellence, etc.)
- **Dedicated EIC Fund** to invest in EIC selected companies, and syndicate and crowd in private VC



EIC IMPACTS (2023)

CROWDING IN OTHER INVESTMENTS

- **€ 12 billion** follow on investments to EIC supported companies
- Leverage effect: **3.5** times private co-investment on EIC Fund investments
- **8 unicorns** - value €1 billion+
- **150 centaurs** - value €100 million+

ADDRESSING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- Main thematic in:
 - ✓ **Health**
 - ✓ **Digital, industry and space**
 - ✓ **Clean tech**

GROWING SUPPORT TO START-UPS & SMEs

- **Nearly €70 billion** portfolio value
- EIC companies averaging **35%** employment growth and **68%** revenue growth

A PIPELINE OF BREAKTHROUGH TECHNOLOGIES

- **450** research projects
- **1686** unique innovations generated from EIC research projects



EIC Board

ROLE TO ADVISE:

- EIC strategy

DIVERSE EXPERTISE:

- Entrepreneurs, investors, researchers, innovation ecosystem
- Gender balance (parity), geographic balance (17 nationalities)



EIC Proactive Management

- Strategic **assessment** and **clustering** of projects
- Building of **portfolios** based on strategic intelligence
- Portfolio management (**scientific and business advice**)
- **IP management** advice (in collaboration with the technology transfer offices)





Orsolya Symmons

Health and Biotechnology

Hedi Karray

Artificial Intelligence

Stella Tkatchova

Space systems & technologies

Samira Nik

Quantum tech & electronics

Franc Mouwen

*Architecture engineering
construction technologies*

Federica Zanca

Medical imaging and AI in healthcare

Ivan Stefanic

Food chain technologies, novel & sustainable food

Isabel Obieta

Responsible electronics

Carina Faber

Renewable energy conversion & alternative resource exploitation

Paolo Bondavalli

Advanced materials for energy

EIC
PROGRAMME
MANAGERS



EIC GOVERNANCE

EIC Board & President

- To advice on strategy & implementation

European Commission

- To define strategy, adopt the Work Programme & appoint the EIC board

EISMEA

- Implementation of EIC, hosting EIC Programme Managers

EIB & AIFM

- To manage EIC Fund equity investments



EIC PRIZES

- Women innovators
- Capital of innovation



SEAL OF EXCELLENCE

Fast track to other funding

EIC ACCELERATOR

- For single companies
- Grants up to **€2.5 million**
- Equity up to **€10 million**
- To enter the market & scale-up (TRL 6-9)



EIC ACCELERATOR SERVICES

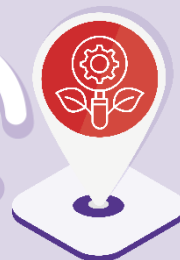
- Mentors, coaches
- Global partners
- Innovation ecosystems
- EIC Community Platform



EIC STEP

Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform

- Co-investments up to **€30 million**
- Digital, deep tech, biotech, clean tech



EIC TRANSITION

- For consortia & single companies
- Grants up to **€2.5 million**
- To develop business cases (TRL 4-6)



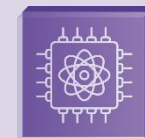
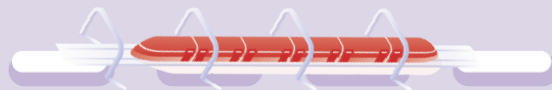
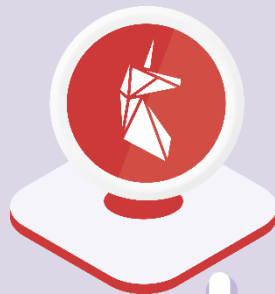
EIC PATHFINDER

- For consortia
- Grants up to **€4 million**
- To research technology breakthroughs (TRL 1-4)



EIC PROGRAMME MANAGERS

- In-house leading experts
- Identifying potential challenges in **emerging deep tech areas**
- Pro-actively managing EIC Pathfinder, Transition and Accelerator portfolios



EIC main instruments – Budget in 2025



EIC OPEN & CHALLENGES OVERVIEW 2025



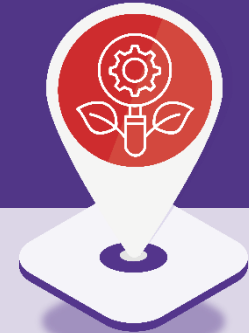
EIC PATHFINDER



EIC TRANSITION



EIC ACCELERATOR



EIC STEP

OPEN

DEADLINES

- 21 May 2025
- 17 September 2025
- Short Applications: continuous
- Full Applications: 12 March 2025; 1 October 2025
- Submit application anytime

INDICATIVE BUDGET

- € 142 MILLION
- € 98 MILLION
- € 384 MILLION
- € 300 MILLION

CHALLENGES

DEADLINES/CUT-OFFS

- 29 October 2025
- Short Applications: continuous
- Full Applications: 12 March 2025; 1 October 2025

INDICATIVE BUDGET

- € 120 MILLION
- € 250 MILLION

CHALLENGES

- Biotech for climate resilient crops and plant-based biomanufacturing
- Generative-AI based agents to revolutionise medical diagnosis and treatment of cancer
- Towards autonomous robot collectives delivering collaborative tasks in dynamic unstructured construction environments
- Waste-to-value devices: circular production of renewable fuels, chemicals and materials
- Acceleration of advanced materials development and upscaling along the value chain
- Biotechnology driven low emission food and feed production systems
- Creating European Champions in Generative AI
- Innovative in-space servicing, operations, robotics and technologies for resilient EU space infrastructure
- Breakthrough innovations for future mobility



EIC Pathfinder: Breakthrough Research



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The EIC Pathfinder is an instrument that offers support to research teams, organised in international consortia, by:

- funding research to develop the scientific basis to underpin breakthrough technologies
- supporting the earliest stages of scientific, technological or deep-tech R&D
- aiming to build on new, cutting-edge directions in science and technology to disrupt a field and a market or create new opportunities
- realising innovative technological solutions to identify, develop and scale up breakthrough technologies and disruptive innovations in Europe

EIC Pathfinder: Funding



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- ❑ Grants of up to 3 to 4 million euro to support early-stage development of future technologies (e. g. various activities at low TRL 1-3), up to proof of concept.
- Pathfinder Challenges - grants of up to EUR 4 million or more if duly justified.
- Pathfinder Open - grants of up to EUR 3 million or more if duly justified.
- ❑ Pathfinder projects can also receive additional funding for testing the innovation potential of their research outputs, and Access to a range of tailor-made Business Acceleration Services (BAS).

EIC Pathfinder: Challenges vs Open

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- **EIC Pathfinder Challenges**

- For projects that match any of the predefined thematic areas of the Pathfinder Challenges.
- The overall budget for the EIC Pathfinder Challenges in 2025 is €120 million.
- Deadline for submitting your proposal: 29 October 2025.

- **EIC Pathfinder Open**

- For projects in any field of science, technology or application without predefined thematic priorities.
- The overall budget for the EIC Pathfinder Open in 2025 is €142 million.
- Deadline for submitting your proposal: 21 May 2025

EIC Pathfinder: Who can apply ?



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Consortia from EU Member States and countries associated to the Horizon Europe programme.

- Consortia of at least three different independent legal entities
- At least one legal entity established in a Member State
- At least two other independent legal entities, each established in different Member States or Associated Countries
- Additionally, single applicants, small and larger consortia (two partners) for EIC Pathfinder Challenges only.

EIC Pathfinder: Requirements



Your proposal must meet all the following essential characteristics:

- Ambitions long-term vision for a radically new technology that has the potential to create new market and provide solutions for global challenges.
- High-risk/high-gain breakthrough research that provides the foundations of the technology that you envisioning.





The EIC Transition is an instrument targeting innovation activities that goes beyond the experimental proof of principle in laboratory. It supports both the maturation and validation of novel technologies from the lab to the relevant application environments.

The EIC Transition offers support to SMEs, start-ups and organisations that:

- have identified EU-funded project result(s) with promising commercial potential that could be the basis for innovation and promising new businesses
- envision novel promising technology that is ready for the next steps towards its maturation and validation, to be further developed and validated for some specific, high potential, commercial applications
- have conducted a preliminary market research to identify potential markets for their innovation and explored potential competitors
- envisage building a motivated and entrepreneurial team with a mix of skills, including researchers, business people, marketers etc. to develop and drive the idea towards commercial success.

EIC Transition: Funding



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- Grants of up to EUR 2.5 million to validate and demonstrate technology in application-relevant environment (starting at TRL 3/4 aiming to achieve TRL 5/6) and develop business and market readiness.
- Booster grants of a fixed amount not exceeding EUR 50 000 to undertake complementary activities to explore potential pathways to commercialisation or for portfolio activities.
- Access to a range of tailor-made Business Acceleration Services:
 - ✓ Access to global partners
 - ✓ Access to coaches, mentors, expertise and training
 - ✓ Access to innovation ecosystem and peers.

EIC Transition 2025 is fully Open



- The EIC Transition Open has no predefined thematic priorities and is open to proposals in any field of science, technology or application.
- The overall budget for the EIC Transition Open in 2025 is EUR 98 million.



Why to
apply for EIC
Accelerator?



EIC Accelerator is the biggest European public investor in deep-tech

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Grant component

- maximum of less than **€ 2.5 million**
- eligible costs are reimbursed up to a maximum of **70%**
- small mid-caps are not eligible for a grant only



Investment component

- € 0.5 million and **maximum € 10 million**
- usually in the form of direct **equity** or quasi-equity
- **minority ownership** (maximum 25% of the voting shares of the company)
- **“patient capital” principle** (7-10 years perspective on average, max 15 years)



EIC Accelerator – funding options

Grant only

If you can prove that you have sufficient financial means for deployment and scale-up (TRL 9)

Grant & Investment

If you need support for development (TRL 5/6 → 8), deployment and scale-up (TRL 9)

Investment Only

If you are looking to fill the funding gap for rapid scale-up of your high-risk innovation and you don't need a grant

What are we looking for?



Start-ups and SMEs seeking to **scale-up** high impact innovations with the **potential to create new markets** or disrupt existing one

Innovation building on **scientific discovery** or technological breakthroughs
(„**deep tech**“)

Innovations where **significant funding** is needed over a **long timeframe** and are **too risky** for private investors alone

EIC Accelerator – Who can apply?



☐ **Natural person(s) or legal entity**

- From Member State (MS) or Associated Country (AC) intending to establish an SME or small mid-cap in MS or AC by the time of signing the EIC Accelerator contract.
- From a non-associated third country intending to establish an SME or to relocate an existing SME to a MS or AC (establishment prior to full proposal!)

[* More details and self-assessment tool](#)



EIC Accelerator Open



to support **projects in any field** of science, technology or application without predefined thematic priorities ('bottom-up')

EIC Accelerator Challenges



to support projects within **predefined thematic areas** with the aim to achieve specific objectives for each Challenge

EIC Accelerator challenges



ACCELERATOR CHALLENGES



Acceleration of advanced materials development and upscaling along the value chain	€ 50 million
Biotechnology driven low emission food and feed production systems	€ 50 million
GenAI4EU: Creating European Champions in Generative AI	€ 50 million
Innovative in-space servicing, operations, robotics and technologies for resilient EU space infrastructure	€ 50 million
Breakthrough innovations for future mobility	€ 50 million
Indicative call budget	€ 250 million

Infoday on Accelerator Challenges with Programme Managers on 6/11/2024.

EIC Accelerator Open
Indicative budget
€ 384 million

The selection process in a nutshell



- The **Accelerator evaluation process** is composed of the **following phases**:



- **Screening of short proposals**: performed by remote evaluators, which leads to a GO or NO-GO to the next evaluation stage,
- **Evaluation of full proposals**, performed by remote evaluators, which leads to a GO or NO-GO to the next evaluation stage,
- **Interviews with participation of Jury Members** which leads to establishing the list of GO (funded) and NO-GO (non-funded) proposals

EIC Accelerator: Croatian companies already selected for funding

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- AGRIVI DOO ZA PROIZVODNJU, TRGOVINU I USLUGE – www.agrivi.com – “Robi” project – Grant only – € 1.2 M – AI-based advisor for agronomy and food safety - October 2021 cut-off.
- GENERA ISTRAŽIVANJA d.o.o. - <http://www.genera.hr/> - “OSTEOforUNION” project – Blended Finance - € 2.5 M Grant + significant recommended EIC Fund investment - Drug solution for bone fracture nonunions – March 2024 cut-off.

Pre-Accelerator for widening countries



- ❑ EIC **Pre-Accelerator** call foreseen under the Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area (WIDERA) WP 25 to support early-stage deep tech startups in widening countries to develop the technology, business and investment readiness. Complementary Business Acceleration Services supported by EIC Work Programme.
- ❑ Total budget = €20M; grants 300-500K



What is EIC
STEP Scale
up call?



What is STEP?

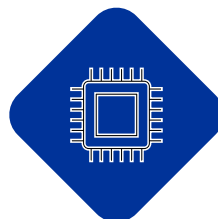
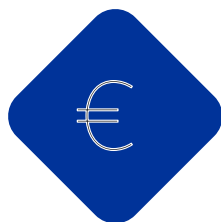


- The Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) Regulation was adopted in February 2024
- It identifies three main strategic technology areas:
 - **Digital and deep tech**
 - **Clean tech**
 - **Biotech**
- It aims to bring major new technologies to Single Market and avoid technology dependencies on other regions
- It is implemented in a coordinated way across 11 EU programmes (including Horizon Europe/ EIC) and through Structural Funds (ERDF)

Main elements for EIC STEP Scale up



- **Budget €300m** (2025), expected to be €900m (2025-27)
- **Equity only** support
- **Larger tickets** (EUR 10m-30m)
- Catalyze **rounds of €50-150m**



Pre-commitment from investors required (min. 20%)
Facilitated **access to Invest EU Venture Debt**

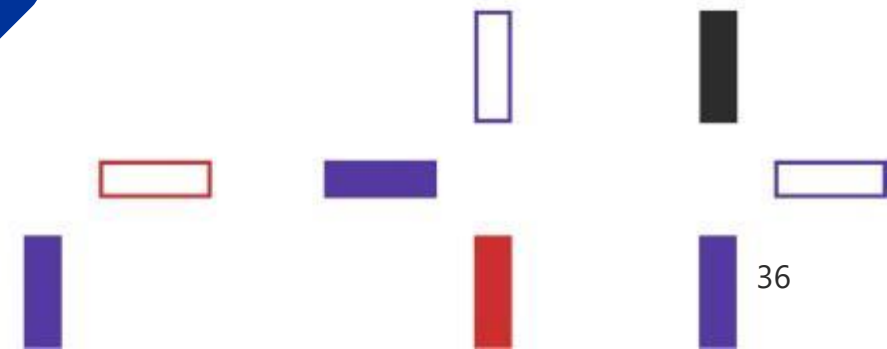
STEP Sovereignty Seal
(if fulfill necessary conditions)



EIC STEP Scale up Call



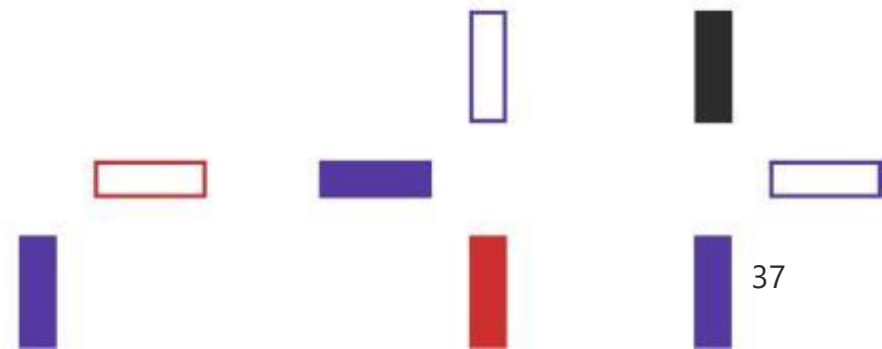
Evaluation/ award criteria include specific STEP conditions





Target companies/applicants:

- **Developing strategic technologies** within scope of already secured initial funding rounds and **aiming to raise major funding round** (e.g., EUR 50-150 million) to scale up and become a global leader
- Commercialising and scaling the technology/innovation **represents significant risks** which cannot be financed from market investors along (no change in evaluation criteria on risk)
- Incl. companies with **existing EIC support**/ already in the EIC Fund portfolio and companies with **no previous EIC Support**



- **Manages the EIC investment** in startups & SMEs selected by EIC Accelerator.
- The EIC Fund is a **venture capital fund** established in June 2020 by the European Commission.
- The Fund started operations under the **EIC Pilot** phase, €2.5 billion investments approved, **€1.050 million already invested** (€623 million HE + €427 million H2020-pilot) in **266 companies** (150 from HE + 116 from H2020-pilot).
- **Leverage Effect : 3.0x**
- For Horizon Europe, the Commission has **restructured** the EIC Fund :
 - The main novelty is the appointment of an **external fund manager** that makes investment/divestment decisions and portfolio management.
 - The EIB is the investment **advisor** to the EIC Fund.



Thank you!

<https://eic.ec.europa.eu>

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