

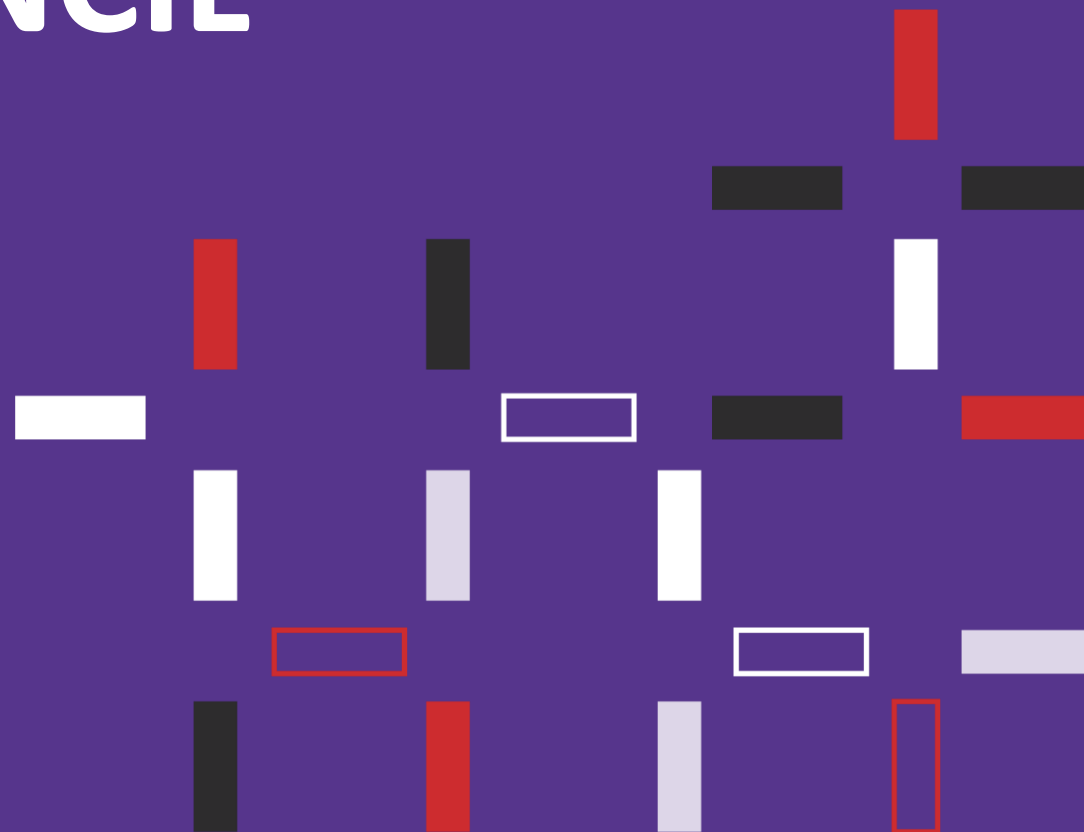


THE EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL

EIC Pathfinder - 2025

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Project Advisor, Pathfinder Unit





1. Policy context / Global overview
2. Pathfinder Open
3. Pathfinder Challenges



Recording of the EIC WP 2025 Info Day:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_n6qac_ucw

Policy context

Political Guidelines of Commission President von der Leyen

"Europe's competitiveness will depend on starting a new age of invention and ingenuity. This requires putting research and innovation, science and technology, at the centre of our economy... To do this, we will expand the European Research Council and the European Innovation Council."

Some words from Mario Draghi

*"First – and most importantly – Europe must profoundly refocus its collective efforts on **closing the innovation gap** with the US and China, especially in **advanced technologies**."*

*"Public sector support for R&I is inefficient due to a **lack of focus on disruptive innovation** and fragmented financing, limiting the EU's potential to reach scale in high-risk breakthrough technologies."*

*"**Universities and other research institutions are central actors in early-stage innovation**, generating breakthrough research and producing new skills profiles for the workforce."*

Europe's most ambitious innovation initiative

European
Innovation
Council



Budget

€ 10 billion

Unique

combines research & accelerator for SMEs, startups, scaleups

Largest deep-tech investor in Europe

Over €3 billion

Enhances the European Innovation Ecosystems

Partnerships with ERC, EIT regions...

Annual Work Programmes (separate from Horizon Europe main WP)

- First Work Programme (2021), €1.5 billion
- Second Work Programme (2022), €1.7 billion
- Third Work Programme (2023), € 1.7 billion
- Fourth Work Programme (2024), € 1.2 billion
- Fifth Work Programme (2025), **€ 1.4 billion**



Pathfinder

- For **consortia**
- **TRL 1-4** (Early stage research on breakthrough technologies)
- Grants up to € 3 to 4 million

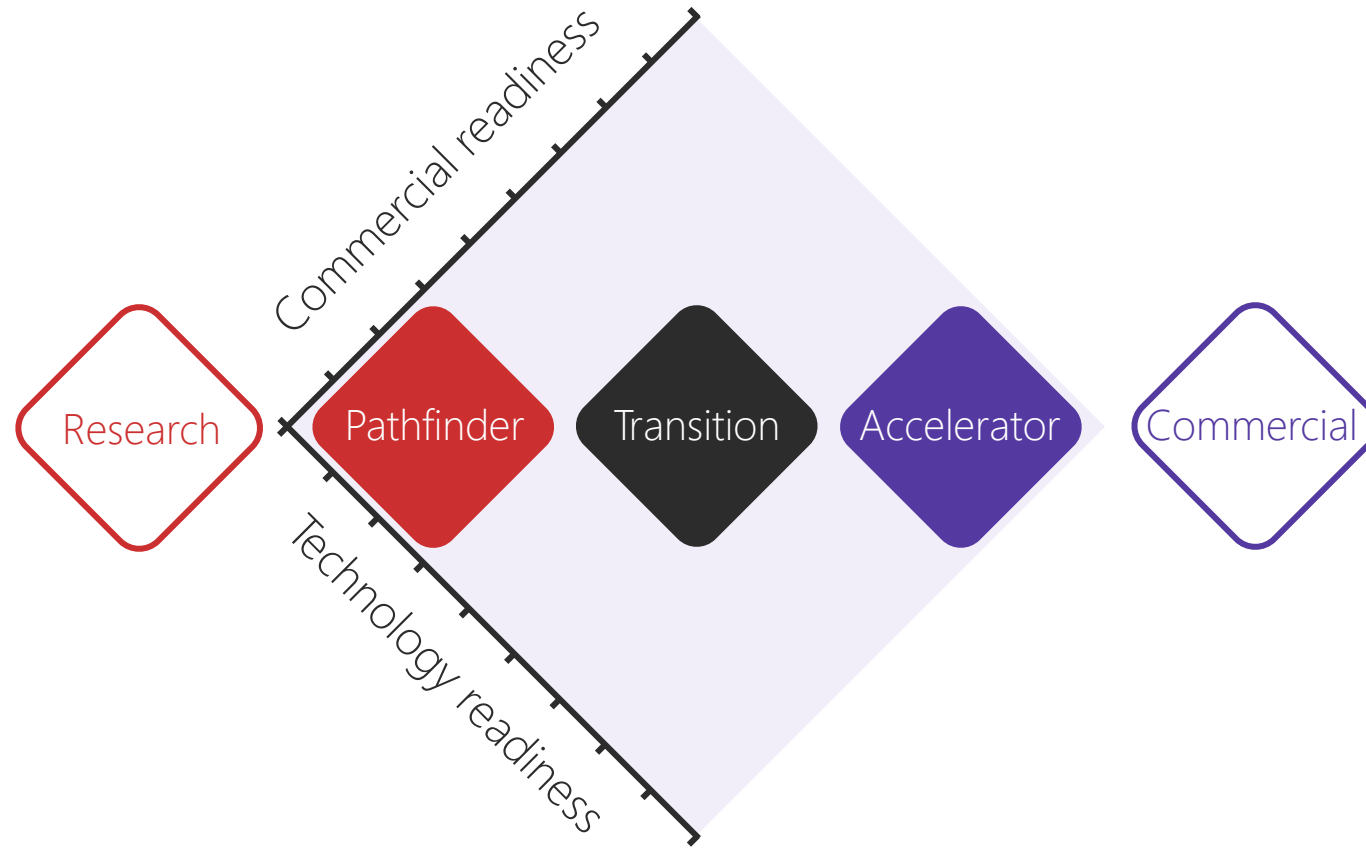
- For **consortia & single** researchers /companies
- **TRL 3-6** (Proof of concept to validation)
- Grants up to € **2.5 million**

Transition

- For **individual companies**
- TRL 6-9 (Development & scale up)
- **Blended** finance
 - grants up to € 2.5 million
 - equity up to €15 million

Accelerator

EIC stages the entrepreneurial journey as pathfinder, transition, accelerator with increasing readiness levels





EIC Pathfinder **Open**

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

EIC Pathfinder **Challenges**

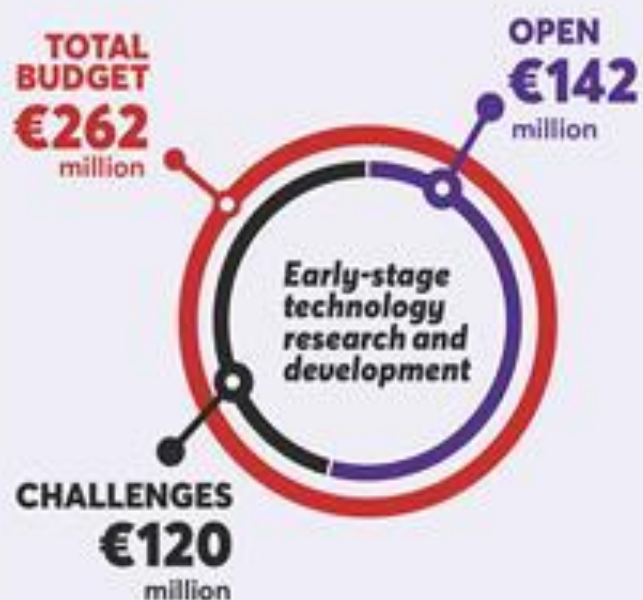
to support **coherent portfolios** of projects within predefined thematic areas with the aim to achieve specific objectives for each Challenge



EIC main calls in 2025 - overview



EIC PATHFINDER



EIC TRANSITION



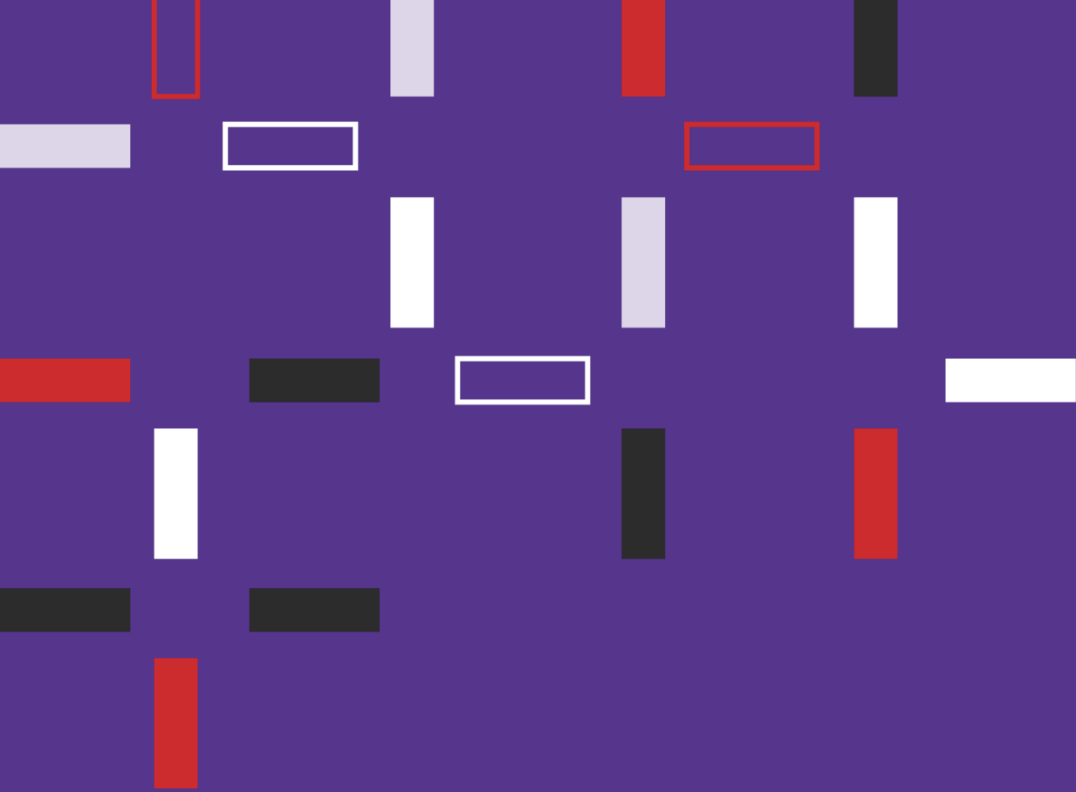
EIC ACCELERATOR



EIC STEP

EIC STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGIES
FOR EUROPE PLATFORM





EIC Pathfinder

Implementation: EIC Pathfinder



2021-2023

Open

2024

2499 proposals submitted
187 projects selected
€554.4 m in funding

1110 proposals submitted
45 projects selected
€138 m in funding

Challenges

1206 proposals submitted
134 projects selected
€484 m in funding

Evaluations ongoing (16 October
deadline)
~ €120 million budget



Call statistics EIC Pathfinder 2021-2024

open	eligible proposals	funded proposals	EU contribution	success rate
2021	868	60	180,2 M€	6,9%
2022	858	66	197,2 M€	7,7%
2023	783	62	179 M€	7,9%
2024	1110	45	138 M€	4,1%
Total	3619	233	694,4 M€	6,4%
challenges	eligible proposals	funded proposals	EU contribution	success rate
2021	403	42	146,8 M€	10,4%
2022	436	49	178,2 M€	11,2%
2023	371	43	163,5 M€	11,6%
2024	415	<i>evaluation</i>	120 M€	<i>Est. 7,2%</i>
Total	1625	134	608,5 M€	10,1%



2025 EIC Pathfinder **Open** call



**What's
new?**

What is the EIC Pathfinder?



The **EIC Pathfinder**

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

Why should you apply?

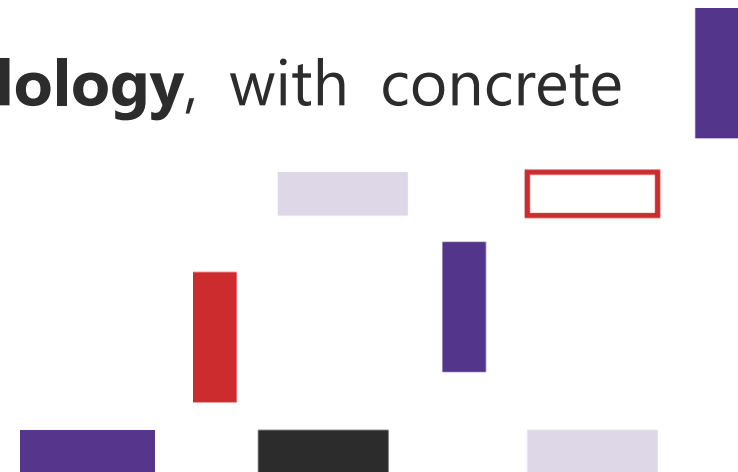


- Realise **an ambitious vision for radically new technology**, with potential to create new markets and/or to address global challenges.
- Support for **early stage development of such future technologies** (e.g. various activities at low **Technology Readiness Levels 1-4**), based on high-risk/high-gain science-towards-technology breakthrough research (including 'deep-tech').
- This research must provide the **foundations of the technology** you are envisioning.



Collaborative, interdisciplinary research, meeting the following 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 & methodology**, with concrete and plausible objectives.



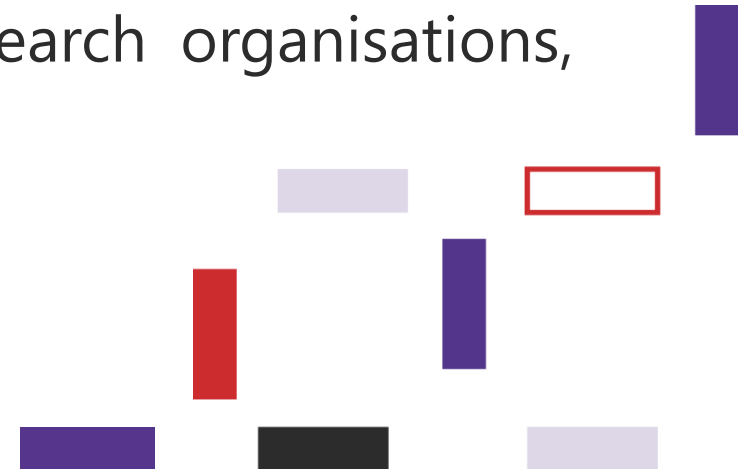


- **Proof of principle** that the **main ideas of the envisioned future technology are feasible**, thus validating its scientific and technological basis
- Project results should include **top-level scientific publications** in open access
- Projects are expected to take the necessary measures to **allow future uptake to take place**, for instance through an **adequate formal protection of the generated Intellectual Property (IP)** and **an assessment of relevant aspects related to regulation, certification, and standardization.**
- Projects are encouraged to involve and empower **key actors in their teams** 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
- Projects are also encouraged to **empower female researchers** and to achieve gender balance among the work package leaders

Can you apply? Consortium composition



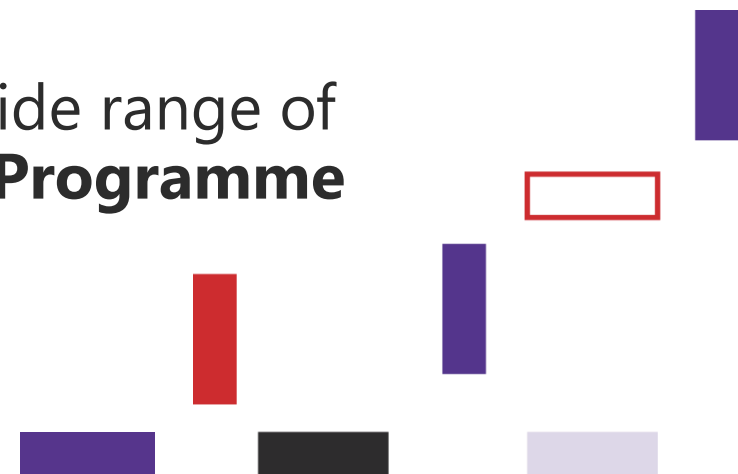
- Proposals must be **submitted by the coordinator**, on behalf of a consortium including as beneficiaries at least three legal entities, independent from each other and each established in a different country as follows:
 - at least one legal entity established in a Member State; and
 - at least two other independent legal entities, each established in different Member States or Associated Countries.
- The legal entities may, for example, be universities, research organisations, SMEs, start-ups, industrial partners or natural persons.



What support will you receive if your proposal is funded?



- 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.
- The total indicative budget for this call is EUR **142 million**.
- Successful applicants will receive tailor-made access to a wide range of **Business Acceleration Services** and interactions with **EIC Programme Managers**



Additional opportunities for Pathfinder selected projects



Projects funded through EIC Pathfinder are eligible:

- to receive additional **EIC Booster grants** (up to 3 per project or more if duly justified) of up to EUR 50 000 to undertake complementary activities:
 - to explore potential pathways to commercialization
 - for portfolio activities
- to submit an **EIC Transition** proposal
- to submit an **EIC Accelerator** proposal via the **Fast Track** scheme
- to participate in '**Next Generation Innovation Talents**' scheme (personnel costs of participating researchers are eligible under Pathfinder grants)



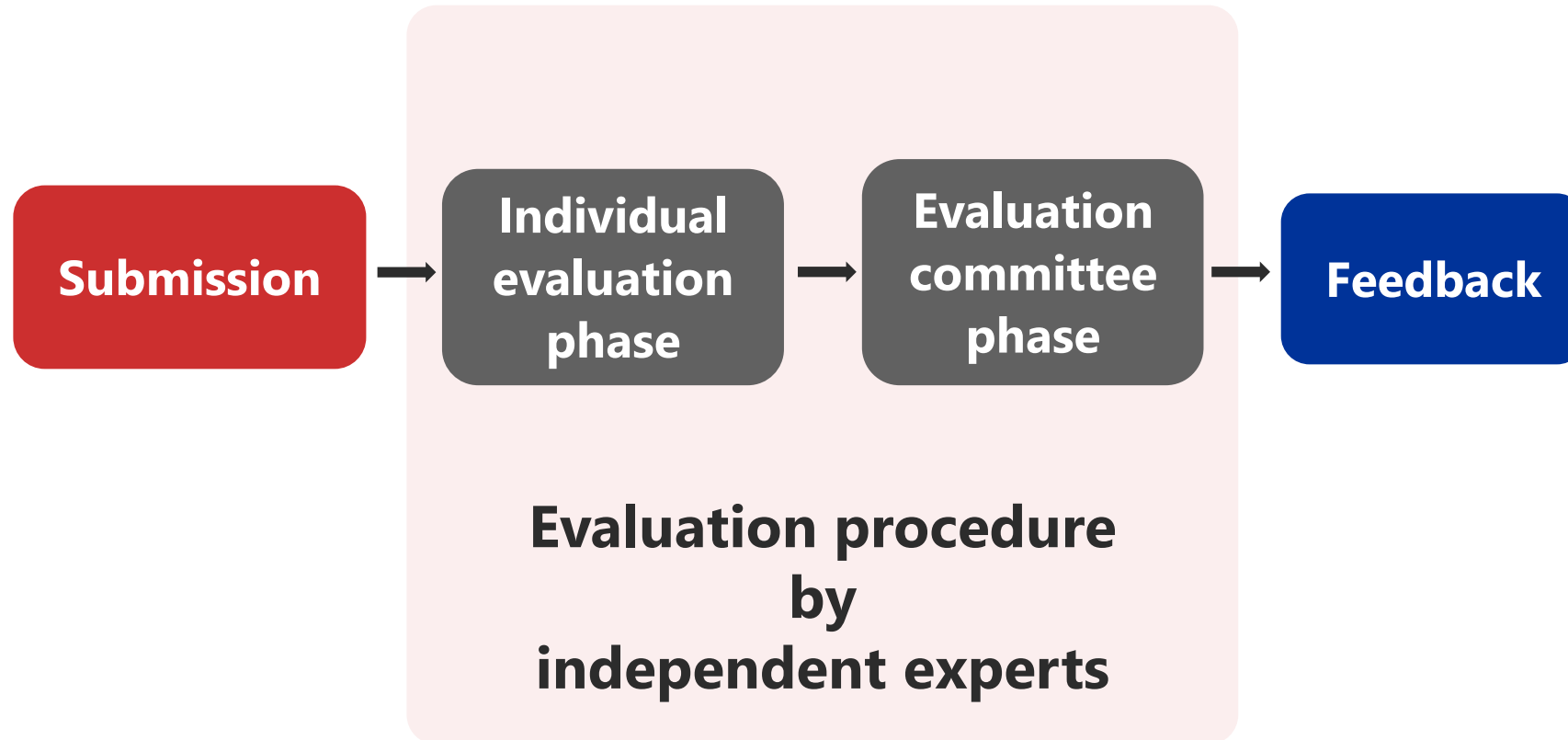
How do you apply; how long does it take?



- You must submit your application via the **Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal** before the given deadline.
- You will be informed about the outcome of the evaluation within **5 months from the call deadline** (indicative).
- If your proposal is selected for funding, you can expect your grant agreement to be signed by **8 months after the call deadline**.
- The deadline to submit the proposal is **21 May 2025 at 17h00 CET**.



How is proposal funding determined?



Proposal Application Form

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- **Part A:** to be filled online (no page limit). It contains administrative details, the summarised budget and call specific questions.
- **Part B:** to be uploaded as a single document (page limit: maximum of **20** A4 pages – Section 1 to 3). It contains the technical description of the project. Modified to reflect the award criteria as indicated in the EIC Work Programme 2024.

Template available on the [Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal](#)



- At least four EIC expert evaluators evaluate the proposals with respect to the **award criteria**:
 - Excellence
 - Impact
 - Quality and efficiency of the implementation
- The **remote score** for each evaluation 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 evaluation criteria.

Award criterion “Excellence”



Threshold
4/5

Weight
60%

- **Long-term vision:** How convincing is the vision of a **radically new technology** towards which the project would contribute in the long term?
- **Science-towards-technology breakthrough:** 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?
- **Objectives:** How concrete and plausible are the proposed objectives to reach the envisaged proof of principle? 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, alternative directions and options, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research content, and the quality of open science practices?
- **Interdisciplinarity:** How relevant is the interdisciplinary approach from traditionally distant disciplines for achieving the proposed breakthrough?

Award criterion “Impact”

Threshold
3.5/5

Weight
20%

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- **Long-term impact:** How significant are the potential transformative positive effects that the envisioned new technology would have to our economy, environment and society?
- **Innovation potential:** To what extent does the envisioned new technology have potential for generating disruptive innovations in the future and for creating new markets? 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 scientific publications, communication activities, for raising awareness about the project results’ potential to establish new markets and/or address global challenges?

Award criterion “Quality and efficiency of the implementation”



Threshold
3/5

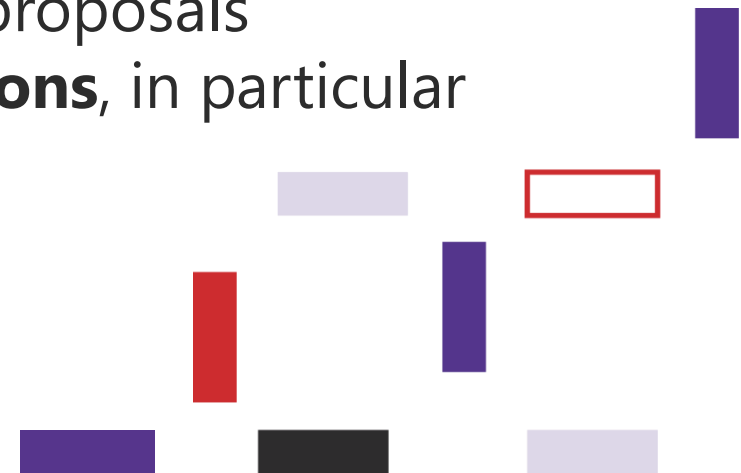
Weight
20%

- **Work plan:** How coherent and effective are the work plan (work packages, tasks, deliverables, milestones, time-line, etc.) and risk mitigation measures in order to achieve the project objectives?
- **Allocation of resources:** How appropriate and effective is the allocation of resources (comprising person-months and other cost items) to work packages and consortium members?
- **Quality of the consortium:** To what extent do all the consortium members have the necessary capacity and high quality expertise for performing the project tasks?

Evaluation committee phase



- The evaluation committee will be composed of **ELC expert evaluators different** than those who evaluated the proposals individually;
- the **final score** will be decided based on the score from the individual evaluation phase and the outcome of the consensus discussions;
- **ELC expert evaluators** who evaluated and scored the proposals individually may be **invited to the consensus discussions**, in particular to clarify diverging evaluators' opinions.



Ranking list – Equal score resolution



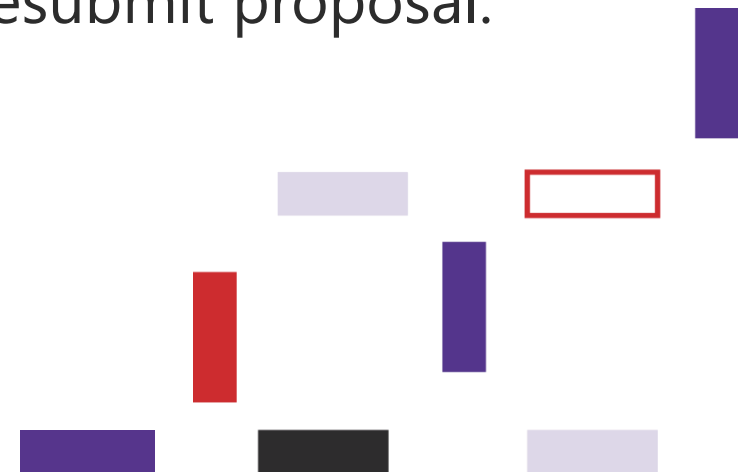
Proposals with the same scoring will be untied based on the following factors, in order

- 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
- If needed, other factors determined by the evaluation committee



Applicants will receive an **Evaluation Summary Report** that will comprise of:

- the **final score**;
- a **collation of the comments from individual reports**, or extracts of them
- a **comment that summarises** the assessment by the evaluation committee;
- **additional comments**, possibly including advice not to resubmit proposal.



2024 EIC
Pathfinder
Challenges call &
its main
novelties

A wooden clothespin is holding a light green card. The card has the text "What's new?" written on it in a bold, brown, sans-serif font. The clothespin is positioned vertically, with the card held between its two wooden pieces. The background is a dark, out-of-focus surface, and the foreground is a light brown, textured wooden surface.

**What's
new?**



Orsolya Symmons

Health and Biotechnology

Hedi Karray

Artificial Intelligence

Federica Zanca

Medical imaging and AI in healthcare

Isabel Obieta

Sustainable Semiconductors

Stella Tkatchova

Space systems & technologies

Samira Nik

Quantum tech & electronics

Franc Mouwen

Architecture engineering construction technologies

Ivan Stefanic

Food chain technologies, novel & sustainable food

Paolo Bondavalli

Advanced materials for energy

Carina Faber

Renewable energy conversion & alternative resource exploitation

EIC PROGRAMME MANAGERS

Former PMs

**Iordanis
Arzimanoglou**
*Biotechnology &
Health*

**Enric Claverol-
Tintur **
*MedTech & Medical
Devices*

Francesco Matteucci
*Materials for Energy &
Environment*

**Antonio Marco
Pantaleo**
Energy Systems

EIC Pathfinder challenges 2025

PATHFINDER CHALLENGES



Biotech for Climate Resilient Crops and Plant-Based
Biomanufacturing

€ 30 million



Generative-AI based Agents to Revolutionize Medical Diagnosis
and Treatment of Cancer

€ 30 million



Towards autonomous robot collectives delivering
collaborative tasks in dynamic unstructured
construction environments

€ 30 million



Waste-to-value devices: Circular production of renewable fuels,
chemicals and materials

€ 30 million

Indicative call budget € 120million

Infoday on Pathfinder
Challenges with
Programme Managers
in Spring 2025

Main characteristics – Pathfinder Challenges



- **Continuation of lump sum funding**
- Page limit for sections 1-3 of application form (part B) is **30 pages**
- **Consensus meetings during evaluation process**
- **Eligibility** (Single legal entities, Consortia of two entities, or ≥ 3)

Lump sum funding



- Funding rate is 100% of the eligible costs **in the form of a lump sum**
- Applicants must **propose the amount of the lump sum** based on their estimated costs → **detailed budget table**

Practically:

- No changes to the pre-financing rates
- **One lump sum share per work package and beneficiary, paid upon its completion**
- Very simple financial reporting

	WP1	WP2	WP3	WP4	WP5	WP6	WP7	WP8	Total
Beneficiary A	250.000			50.000	300.000	250.000		300.000	1.150.000
Beneficiary B		250.000	350.000	50.000			100.000	150.000	900.000
Beneficiary C	100.000	100.000		50.000		280.000			530.000
Beneficiary D		120.000		50.000			100.000	150.000	420.000
Total	350.000	470.000	350.000	200.000	300.000	530.000	200.000	600.000	3.000.000

Shares of the lump sum per beneficiary

Share of the lump sum per WP

Lump sum = Maximum grant amount

Evaluation of a lump sum proposal



- Cost estimations will be assessed under the **implementation** criterion.
- Experts will:
 - ensure that the cost estimations are **reasonable and non-excessive**
 - evaluate whether the proposed resources and the split of the lump sum **allow completing the activities described in the proposal**.
- If the experts find overestimated or underestimated costs, they make **concrete recommendations** on the budget. This will be reflected in a modified lump sum (overall or per work package).
- Changes to the budget normally do not lead to a **decreased score** (except if there are major issues with the budget).





Significant simplification potential

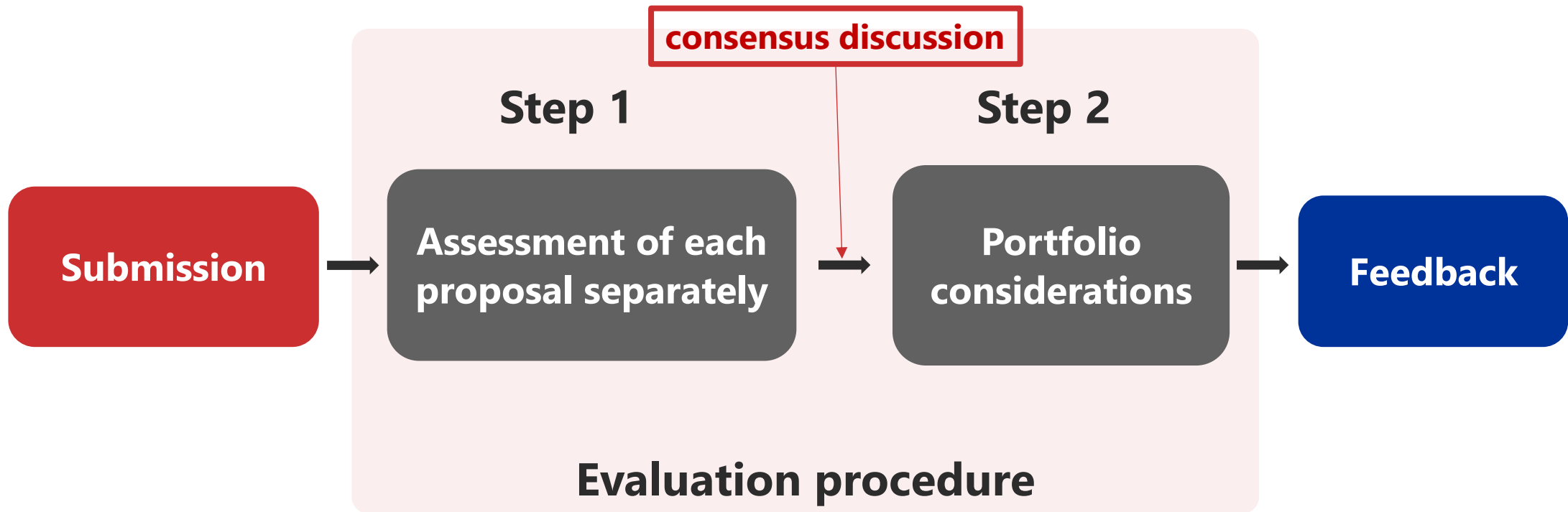
- Lump sums remove the obligation to report actual costs and resources
- Easier to use for beneficiaries with limited experience

Focus on content

- Focus less on financial management and more on content



How is proposal funding determined?



Pathfinder calls 2025 – Summary table



	Pathfinder Open	Pathfinder Challenges
Total budget	€142 million	€120 million
Proposals (indicative)	Up to €3 million or more if justified	Up to €4 million or more if justified
Funding rate	100% of eligible costs	100% of eligible costs
Opening	20 February 2025	28 July 2025
Deadline	21 May 2025 at 17.00 CEST	29 October 2025 at 17.00 CET
Length of proposal	20-page proposal (part B)	30-page proposal (part B)
Applicants	Consortia: min. 3 partners from 3 different Member States /Associated Countries of which at least 1 partner in a Member State	Consortia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If 2 partners: from different MS/AC, • If 3+ partners: from min 3 different MS/AC of which at least 1 partner in a MS Single legal entities in a MS/AC



Thank you !

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