



Access2EIC

National Contact Points for Innovation



EIC ACCELERATOR ANNOTATED TEMPLATE (Full proposal)

2026

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A. AIM AND CONTENT

The EIC Accelerator is a funding programme under Horizon Europe that offers support to start-ups and SMEs with innovative, game-changing products, services, or business models capable of creating new markets or disrupting existing ones in Europe and globally. It is designed for those with the ambition and commitment to scale up their businesses, but who face challenges in securing significant funding due to the high risks involved, which may be too daunting for private investors alone.

Moreover, the applicants should demonstrate their ability to create new markets or disrupt existing ones, demonstrate a strong ambition for a rapid growth at scale in Europe & beyond, and reflect high levels of technological, regulatory, market acceptance and other types of risks to fail that prevent or withhold private investment.

The three main criteria used to evaluate the innovative aspects of an EIC Accelerator full proposal for Horizon Europe are:

Excellence (Threshold 4/5 for full proposal stage)

Innovation - Deep tech and breakthrough nature Is the proposed innovation deep tech in nature stemming from cutting-edge scientific or technological advances; does it represent a significant improvement in cost or performance compared to existing or alternative solutions?

Technology Readiness - TRL Is there sufficient demonstration that the innovation has completed all aspects of TRL 5 (validation in a relevant environment for the application of the technology)?

Intellectual Property Does the innovation have adequate IP protection and a sound IP strategy to enter the market to be addressed?



Impact (Threshold 4/5 for full proposal stage)

Market Opportunity What and how big is the total market addressed? What is the realistic expectation of the share of the total market?

Business model Are the detailed business model and revenue strategy sound? Are the financial projections realistic?

Broader Impact Will the proposed innovation contribute to European technological leadership and/or reduce dependencies on other regions? Will the innovation have broader environmental or social impacts?

Challenge Alignment (FOR CHALLENGES ONLY) Does the innovation contribute to the expected Challenge outcomes?

STEP Impact (ONLY FOR CHALLENGES WITHIN SCOPE OF STEP) Does the innovation have a clear and measurable positive impact either by: Bringing to the Union's internal market an innovative, emerging and current-edge innovation with significant economic potential; or Reducing or preventing strategic dependencies of the Union. (Note: applicants from Associated Countries will need to demonstrate contributions to the EU internal market or strategic dependencies

Level of risk, implementation and need for Union support (Threshold 4/5 for full proposal stage)

Team Capability Does the company have the necessary team in terms of skills and competences to develop the innovation and scale the company? Does the company have adequate governance and is the team sufficiently incentivised? Have any skills/ competence gaps been identified, including adequate gender balance, with a credible plan to fill the gaps?

Risk Management Have the main risks (technological, market, financial, regulatory) been comprehensively identified, together with specific measures to mitigate them?

Implementation Plan For Grant Only and Blended Finance - Is there a clear implementation plan with defined milestones, work packages and deliverables, together with realistic resources and timings? Are the milestones measurable and appropriate for tracking progress?

For Grant Only and Blended Finance - LUMP SUM: Are the estimated costs in the work packages reasonable and nonexcessive?

Risk level of the investment and leverage effect Has the company demonstrated early traction with investors? Is the financing requirement to be internationally competitive significantly higher than the amount that market actors can finance alone? For blended finance and equity only: Will EIC Fund investment be able to catalyse other public and private investments with a period of 6 months to 2 years. FOR GRANT-ONLY: Can the applicant demonstrate access to the resources needed to commercialise and scale-up the innovation? FOR GRANT ONLY: Can the company demonstrate the need for EIC grant support?



B. HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE

The text of the original EIC Accelerator Short proposal template appears in **Black**.

The recommendations of the Access2EIC NCPs appear in **Orange**.

These recommendations also include the feedback collected from evaluators and companies involved in relevant proposals.



Please note: the comments in this box are general and are intended to draw the reader's attention to some specific points

This guide is limited to annotations to the templates of the EIC Accelerator 2026 calls. For a more general overview of how the Horizon Europe grants work, see the [Online Manual](#) provided by the European Commission. Regarding the EIC Accelerator submission, see the [Guide for Applicants](#) and the [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

A comprehensive list of all Horizon Europe reference documents (including legislation, work programme and templates) can be found on the Reference documents page of the [Funding and Tenders Portal](#) and the [European Innovation Council portal](#).

Horizon Europe terms are explained in the [Glossary](#) part of the Funding and Tenders Portal.

If you need help, you can also contact the [Horizon Europe National Contacts Points in your country](#).

The structure of this template must be followed when preparing your proposal. It has been designed to ensure that the important aspects of your planned work are presented in a way that will enable the experts to make an effective assessment against the evaluation criteria. Please be aware that proposals will be evaluated as they were submitted, rather than on their potential if certain changes were to be made. This means that only proposals that successfully address all the required aspects will have a chance of being funded. There will be no possibility for significant changes to content, budget and consortium composition during grant preparation.

Maximum page limit: The maximum page limit is 20 pages (including the cover page). At the time of submission, you can remove the text on the structure of the proposal, the history of changes, the technical description, the table of content and the instructions (including the list of annexes). Please keep the headings.

If you attempt to upload a proposal longer than the specified limit before the deadline, you will receive an automatic warning and will be advised to shorten and re-upload the proposal. After the deadline, excess pages (in over-long proposals/applications) will be automatically made invisible and will not be taken into consideration by the experts. The proposal is a self-contained document. Experts will be instructed to ignore hyperlinks to information that is specifically designed to expand the proposal.

The following formatting conditions apply.

The reference font for the body text of proposals is Times New Roman (Windows platforms), Times/Times New Roman (Apple platforms) or Nimbus Roman No. 9 L (Linux distributions).

The use of a different font for the body text is not advised and is subject to the cumulative conditions that the font is legible and that its use does not significantly shorten the representation of the proposal in number of pages compared to using the reference font (for example with a view to bypass the page limit).

The minimum font size allowed is 11 points. Standard character spacing and a minimum of single line spacing is to be used. This applies to the body text, including text in tables.

Text elements other than the body text, such as headers, foot/end notes, captions, formula's, may deviate, but must be legible. The page size is A4, and all margins (top, bottom, left, right) should be at least 15 mm (not including any footers or headers).



C. PROJECT FULL PROPOSAL - TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION (PART B)

Guidance on the use of generative AI tools for the preparation of the proposal

When considering the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the preparation of the proposal, it is imperative to exercise caution and careful consideration. The AI-generated content should be thoroughly reviewed and validated by the applicants to ensure its appropriateness and accuracy, as well as its compliance with intellectual property regulations. Applicants are fully responsible for the content of the proposal (even those parts produced by the AI tool) and must be transparent in disclosing which AI tools were used and how they were utilized. Specifically, applicants are required to:

Verify the accuracy, validity, and appropriateness of the content and any citations generated by the AI tool and correct any errors or inconsistencies.


Provide a list of sources used to generate content and citations, including those generated by the AI tool. Double-check citations to ensure they are accurate and properly referenced.

Be conscious of the potential for plagiarism where the AI tool may have reproduced substantial text from other sources. Check the original sources to be sure you are not plagiarizing someone else's work. Acknowledge the limitations of the AI tool in the proposal preparation, including the potential for bias, errors, and gaps in knowledge.

The structure of the part B is shown below in the left-hand column below, with the associated evaluation criteria in the right-hand column.

Topic Area		Main evaluation criteria addressed
1	Technology	EXCELLENCE
2	Market	IMPACT
3	Team, Financial Needs, Implementation	LEVEL OF RISK, IMPLEMENTATION AND NEED FOR UNION SUPPORT




 *Fill in the title of your proposal below.*

TITLE OF THE PROPOSAL

List of participants

Participant	Participant organisation name	Country
1 (Coordinator)		
2 Affiliated entity(ies), if any.		

 Please be aware: The EIC Accelerator is a mono beneficiary action. Affiliated entities, in the context of Horizon Europe, means having a link (e.g. capital or legal link) with a beneficiary and fulfilling the same eligibility conditions.



Which EIC topic do you want to apply for?

1. EIC Accelerator Open
2. EIC Accelerator Challenges 2026:
 - 2.1. Advanced Materials for Renewable Energy and Energy Storage System
 - 2.2. Alternative Concepts and Key Enabling Technologies for Fusion Power Plants
 - 2.3. Biotech for Regenerating Agricultural Soils
 - 2.4. Boosting the European Critical Raw Materials value chain
 - 2.5. Deep Tech for Climate Adaptation



See EIC Accelerator Challenges description:

https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/eic-accelerator_en

In case you opt for an EIC Challenge, describe how your application fits within the scope of the Challenge and how it will meet the expected outcomes and impacts



Remember that proposals submitted for a Challenge and considered “out of scope” will not be transferred to the Open call.



Executive Summary

Prepare an executive summary of maximum half a page.

Briefly elaborate on:

- Your company and founders
- The problem your project provides the solution for
- Your solution (incl. USP)
- Business model
- Customers and partners (e.g. use logos)
- Roadmap (TRL steps up to now)
- Team
- Need for EIC support
- Include IP strategy

Avoid too much details on your technology.

Remember to focus on the business-show facts and figures.

Show willingness to pay from customers.



1. TECHNOLOGY

This section is central and relates to a number of evaluation criteria: “Innovation - Deep tech and breakthrough nature” “Technology Readiness - TRL”, and “Intellectual Property”. Make sure to check these criteria and ensure that all aspects are covered.

1.1. Novelty and breakthrough nature

Is your innovation deep tech in nature stemming from cutting-edge scientific or technological advances? Does it represent a significant improvement in cost or performance compared to existing or alternative solutions?

Please describe how your innovation is deep-tech. Please describe the novelty and disruptive potential of your technology vs existing solutions.

Please provide empirical data that demonstrate the novelty of your technology and its potential to disrupt current markets

- Describe the scientific development/steps of your innovation. How many years of research led to your deep tech innovation?
- How is your technology disruptive? What sets you apart from other solutions?
- Show that there is high technological uncertainty, describe the experimental development still required, and the remaining scientific risks that distinguish your project from incremental innovations, by clearly outlining the challenges that cannot be solved with existing knowledge, the critical hypotheses that must still be validated, and the need for iterative experimentation before the technology can reach a stable, scalable, and commercially viable form.
- Describe any fundamental scientific constraints the innovation overcomes (e.g. limits in resolution, computation, modelling, biological predictivity).
- Highlight breakthrough elements that cannot be replicated without substantial scientific expertise or IP-protected know-how by showing the unique technical components, proprietary methods, and specialised competencies that make your solution impossible to reproduce through standard approaches.
- Highlight the disruption in terms of productivity gains, reliability, cost structure, or user experience by showing how your solution delivers performance or efficiency levels that current technologies cannot achieve.



- Illustrate how your innovation enables new applications or markets that existing technologies cannot serve by showing how it unlocks functionalities or use cases that current solutions cannot support.
- Emphasise the defensibility of your competitive advantage (strong IP, data assets, technological complexity etc.).
- Include benchmarking tables or graphs comparing your metrics to the best available alternatives.
- Provide quantitative deltas (e.g. “5× faster”, “70% reduction”, “3× more accurate”).
- Show reproducibility through multiple trials, datasets, or testing environments.

Use error rates, sensitivity/specificity, throughput, cycle time, precision, or whatever KPIs are most relevant to your field.

Include numbers that prove your statements.



Deep tech is a 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 innovations are understood to be those that have the potential to deliver transformative solutions, rooted in cutting-edge science, technology and engineering, including innovation that combines advances in the physical, biological and digital spheres. Deep tech is distinct from ‘high tech’ which tends to refer only to R&D intensity by relying on fundamental scientific advances and complex engineering that create breakthroughs not achievable through incremental improvements or conventional technology development.

1.2. Technology maturity – TRL

Is there sufficient demonstration that your innovation has completed all aspects of TRL 5 (validation in a relevant environment for the application of the technology)?

Please provide evidence of TRL 5 (or higher) validation.

Describe your technological achievements so far; specify which Technology Readiness Level this has attained; and describe to what extent your solution has been validated/certified and by whom. Think about using a case study (test, pilot, PoC, etc.). For health companies, explain the specifics of what clinical trials you have conducted, if any, and to what level.



- Show that the prototype (when applicable) has been validated under conditions that realistically represent the intended operational environment.
- Demonstrate that all key modules of the technology – hardware, software, biological components, sensing, algorithms – have been integrated and tested together, showing stable and repeatable performance that meets TRL 5 expectations (system validation in a relevant environment).
- Provide a timeline with important TRL milestones.

- Highlight that key performance metrics have been reproduced consistently across multiple test runs, showing that the prototype behaves reliably rather than in a one-off experiment, and demonstrating that its performance is stable, repeatable, and ready for further scaling.
- Describe tests conducted with representative users, datasets, biological models, or environmental conditions, demonstrating that the technology works with inputs similar to those expected in real operation.
- Prepare a manageable summary (facts & figures-like) that could be easily explained during the tech due diligence meeting.

Explain how your solution will be further developed within the proposed EIC project.

1.3. IP strategy

Does your innovation have adequate IP protection? What is your intellectual property strategy to enter the market to be addressed?

Please describe your IP strategy in terms of patents (granted or pending), trade secrets and/or other IP elements and FTO status (please upload your freedom to operate analysis or, if you do not have one, please upload a note explaining why it may not be relevant or what you have done to assess FTO).



- Gain a comprehensive understanding of your IP assets and their role in bolstering your competitive advantage.
- Describe your strategy for developing, safeguarding, and utilizing your intellectual property (IP) assets to realize your business objectives and generate value for both your customers and investors.
- Illustrate your approach to mitigating IP-related risks, such as infringement, litigation, or challenges to validity.
- Highlight how you proactively monitor the IP landscape, conduct thorough due diligence, and enforce your IP rights to safeguard your competitive advantage and protect your innovations.

- Make sure you describe not only the existence of patents and their current status, but also their geographical coverage, scope of claims, and how they protect the core of your technology, so that evaluators can understand the strategic strength of your protection framework and see clear evidence that your IP assets create meaningful competitive advantages, long-term defensibility, and effective barriers to entry for potential competitors.
- Describe how your patenting timeline, planned jurisdictions, and protection layers reflect your market rollout strategy.
- If patents were not filed by the company, ensure that it is clear that the company has their full exploitation rights.

For your FTO, consider covering the following steps:

- Identify product features for analysis.
- Conduct a patent search based on the product features.
- Review patent claims against the product features to make an assessment and communicate to stakeholders.
- While a single FTO search may suffice in certain instances, it's advisable to engage in continuous FTO search efforts throughout different phases of the product life cycle for optimal practice.



An effective FTO search report uncovers patents that might require licensing or contestation, thus saving time and mitigating the risk of litigation. Additionally, such a report empowers the business to proactively navigate potential obstacles before committing substantial resources to research and development. This may involve exploring alternative technology paths or even considering the possibility of discontinuing the project altogether.

If your FTO assessment identified any risks, describe how you will mitigate them – for example through design-around strategies, licensing opportunities, or complementary patent filings.



2. MARKET

This section mainly refers to the evaluation criteria “Market Opportunity”, “Business model”, “Broader Impact”, “Challenge Alignment (FOR CHALLENGES ONLY)” and “STEP Impact (ONLY FOR CHALLENGES WITHIN SCOPE OF STEP)”.

2.1. Market opportunity

What and how big is the total market to be addressed by your innovation? What is the realistic expectation of the share of the total market you plan to achieve? Please describe your go-to-market and commercialisation strategy to scale-up your innovation.

Please describe your customer value proposition, your partnerships, who your customers are and why they will adopt your solution.

- Describe the targeted market - Total Addressable Market (TAM); Serviceable Available Market (SAM); Serviceable Obtainable Market (SOM); and market growth (Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)).
- Include market segmentations here and include future (new, different) markets and market segments.
- Provide a clear and credible rationale for the market share you expect to capture (SOM), using benchmarks from comparable technologies, adoption curves, early customer commitments, or pilot results to show that your expected SOM is based on concrete evidence and realistic market dynamics, not on speculative assumptions.
- The EIC Accelerator is looking for companies that may become their reference in their markets. In that sense, ensure that the SOM you provide may position yourself as one of these companies. Be aware that this market share may look different per sector and will also be dependent on the granularity you are able to set to your target market.
- The EIC Accelerator is looking for companies where VCs may invest if the technology is derisked enough. This type of company tends to focus on markets which sizes may allow them to grow drastically. As a rule of thumb, If SAMs are below 500M€, their business opportunity may be too small.
- Combine market size figures (TAM/SAM/SOM) with a concise competitive analysis to demonstrate why your innovation can outperform incumbents or substitutes. It could be relevant to see how your competitive advantage translates into achievable market traction and share. Make this comparison using your customer value proposition as a basis, ensuring that your target market is adequately segmented.



- **Competitor analysis:** Map out your solution alongside your competitors using a matrix or chart, focusing on three or more criteria crucial to your target audience. This visual representation will provide insight into your market position and aid in identifying opportunities for differentiation. Additionally, develop a concise and persuasive value proposition that succinctly communicates why your solution surpasses alternatives. While the business model typically covers all the parts within the Business Model Canvas, the template requests you to split the BMC between point 2.1 and 2.2. In the former (2.1) you will need to cover the operative of the business while in the latter, you should concentrate on the financial dimensions of your business.
- This operative dimension of the business will include your commercialization channels (alone, through intermediaries or with partnerships) and its current level of maturity, as well as your supply chain commitment/dependencies (especially in the case you may need to manufacture).
- As opening new markets takes time, ensure that you describe your plans with relevant milestones in terms of time and investment needed, highlighting how you envisage entering each market geography/market segment.

- **Commercialisation strategy:** what is your marketing approach and pricing policy? (upload any letters of intent, if relevant).
- Describe the potential for scaling up (turnover, licensing). Describe the scale-up plan by year, territory and approach taken with all associated costs. Provide an outlook for the 5-10 years after market entry (depending on the innovation), ensuring full coherence with the information presented in the financial Excel sheet.
- Explain who are the key partners and their expected contributions (e.g. a first lead customer, a university, potential user groups, partners for clinical trials, etc.). Highlight the top 3 to 5 clients or sell side partners and their share of revenues (if applicable), the top 3 to 5 suppliers and share of cost of goods sold (COGS) or operational expenses (OPEX), and the top 3 to 5 advisors (business, scientific, other) their role and their OPEX cost.
- **Willingness to pay:** explain why there is a willingness to pay from your targeted market customers. List POC runs with users and clients.



2.2. Business and revenue model and growth strategy

Which are your detailed business model and revenue strategy? Which are your financial projections?

Please describe the assumptions behind your business model and how you will achieve your planned revenues.

- While the business model typically covers all the parts within the Business Model Canvas, the template requests you to split the BMC between point 2.1 and 2.2. In the former section 2.1 you should focus on the business operations, while in the next section you should address the financial aspects—namely your chosen revenue model (one-off, recurring, or hybrid) and how you plan to monitor the key KPIs that drive growth, such as pricing, number of clients or transactions, and recurrence.
- When using a business model based on asset licensing, ensure you include relevant comparables to support that the upfront payment and the licenses fees that you foresee may make sense (similar phase, similar technology positioning, similar focus...). Furthermore, in this model, you may need to guarantee that the growth strategy of the company goes beyond this licensing exercise.
- Include here your financial projections, consistent with the data from the Annex, and discuss how your margins will evolve over time, including if relevant how you plan to obtain economies of scale for your upscaling phase.
- Business model: what will be your business model, including the revenue model: key activities, resources, customer relationship, channels, revenues, scalability, geographical market.
- Refer to the annex “Financial plan and equity needed” and optionally include screenshots of the Excel columns you are referring to.

2.3. Broader impact

Will your innovation contribute to European technological leadership and/or reduce dependencies on other regions? Will your innovation have broader environmental or social impacts?

Clarify how it reduces dependency on non-EU sources for critical technologies or raw materials



- Explain whether and how your proposal contributes to the development of technologies that are of strategic importance to Europe.
- Do you produce a material or technology that is beneficial for Europe's sovereignty and increases the independency from global supply chains and vulnerabilities?
- Research official EU documents, regulations, directives etc. and refer to the political dimension of your innovation and its impact.
- Describe the societal, economic, environmental and/or climate impact of your proposal.
- Describe your company's potential to create jobs each year for the next 5 years, including indirect jobs if applicable.
- Explain how your proposal contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

2.4. Challenge alignment (FOR CHALLENGES ONLY)

How will your innovation contribute to achieve the objectives of the Challenge to which you are applying?

Which metrics will you use to measure such contribution?

2.5. STEP Impact (ONLY FOR CHALLENGES WITHIN THE SCOPE OF STEP)

Will your innovation have a clear and measurable impact on the technology areas identified by the STEP Communication, either by:

Bringing to the Union's internal market an innovative, emerging and current-edge innovation with significant economic potential; or

Reducing or preventing strategic dependencies of the Union. (Note: applicants from Associated Countries will need to demonstrate contributions to the EU internal market or strategic dependencies).

Which metrics will you use to measure such impact?



3. TEAM, FINANCIAL NEEDS, IMPLEMENTATION

This section mainly refers to evaluation criteria “Team Capability”, “Risk Management”, “Implementation Plan” and “Risk level of the investment and leverage effect”.

3.1. Team Capability

Does your company have the necessary team in terms of skills and competences to develop the innovation and scale the company?

How is the governance of your company and how is your team incentivised?

Which are your company’s current skills/competence gaps, including adequate gender balance? Which is your plan to fill the gaps?

Please describe who are the key team members, what are their relevant competencies and how are they incentivised (e.g.: ESOP plan).

Please describe how the company is governed and how you take decisions.

Please include any critical gaps (including gender balance) and how they will be filled.

- Present your team, including: the track record of the founders and key managers; available skills and experience; how you plan to ensure gender balance among your team members, including those in executive positions (at least CEO, CSO and CTO); missing skills identified (target recruitment); recruitment plans, and employee retention plans designed to address the identified missing skills.
- Describe your team, the different roles, commitment and achievements/experience (strategic, technical and commercial) in relation to your innovation. Explain the role of the company’s owner(s) if not part of the team. For each team member (including management and company founders where relevant) please provide relevant information, including shareholding and stock options in the company. What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the team, and what is the plan to acquire currently missing competences? How are the team members incentivized? When talking about gender balance, describe how you will achieve it.



Team and management description:

Team Member (Name and Surname)	Gender (man/ woman/non binary)	Founder (Y/N)	Position - department	Key competences	Commitment (from 1% to 100%)

- Do you have an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) in place to incentivise key non-founding members of your team?
- The rationale behind the ESOP is that key employees can be incentivized for their contribution to the growth of a company. The stock options are a way to reduce fixed salary costs while offering a more attractive compensation package to employees.
- To have some way of sharing the profit with the team is very important to the remote evaluators and the jury. In almost all interviews the jury asks for ESOP. If you haven't thought about introducing ESOP now is the right time to come up with a plan and detail it in the proposal.
- Governance: describe your board of directors, consultants and advisors, and explain their added value and defined role in the project.

Governance description:

Name	Type (founder, investor, other)	% fully diluted
TOTAL		100%



3.2. Risk level of the investment and leverage effect

Has your company demonstrated early traction with investors? Is the financing requirement to be internationally competitive significantly higher than the amount that market actors can finance alone?
FOR BLENDED FINANCE AND EQUITY ONLY PROPOSALS: will the EIC Fund investment be able to catalyse other public and private investments with a period of 6 months to 2 years?

FOR GRANT-ONLY PROPOSALS: Can you demonstrate access to the resources needed to commercialise and scale-up the innovation? Can you demonstrate the need for EIC grant support?

Please describe your traction with investors and detail the timing and size of your future financing round.

Please explain why you need EIC funding. And why market actors will not commit to fund the full amount of the funding you need.

FOR GRANT ONLY: please describe how you will commercialise and scale-up the innovation

- The EIC Accelerator is looking for companies which, thanks to their co-investment, can raise their next founding round. This means that they expect you have already raised some private funds previously and that you are already planning your next funding round.
- If you already had a previous round, it is important to highlight its pre-money valuation and how this money, together with the EIC support, will generate higher valuation to your company in the short future.
- Similarly, you will have to explain if and how your current investors will contribute to the founding round where the EICF will invest.
- Be aware that the grant covers 70% of the costs, so you also need to describe how you plan to cover the remaining 30% not covered by the grant.

- Explain your funding (public/private) so far. Are you in discussion currently, or planning to start a discussion, with private or public investors? If so, please explain and demonstrate early traction. Refer to the Lols (if applicable).
- Explain why you have not been able to raise sufficient investment to carry out the project, and why private investors have not committed funding due to the current level of technological risk or maturity, making public support necessary at this stage.



- You need the support of the EIC. Elaborate on how the EIC funding will benefit the development of your innovation and scalability of your business. Which exit strategy do you foresee including the timeline and expected return on investment? Explain the assumptions behind this.
- What is your overall funding strategy for the future? Give numbers, if possible.
- Companies submitting a grant only proposal must provide detailed information on the activities and evidence that they have (or are in the process of obtaining) sufficient financial means (e.g. revenue flow, existing investors or shareholders) to finance the deployment and scaling up of your innovation.

3.3. Risk management

What are the main risks (technological, market, financial, regulatory) which may impact the success of your project?

Which are your planned measures to mitigate them?

Please indicate any technological, market, financial and regulatory risks and how you plan to mitigate them. Please describe how your innovation is compliant with industry standards and how you are taking into account future regulations.

- Describe the strategy for regulatory approvals and compliance; and what applicable EU legislation or standard might affect your project or, conversely, be affected by your projects?
- Be sure that there are some risks still related to the development of your solution and/or the product-market fit of your solution. The rationale of the EIC Accelerator is to support start-ups and SMEs that for the time being cannot find investors who will take the full risk, simply because the risk currently is still too high. It therefore makes no sense to play down the risks.



CVs

Please provide a link to online CVs for key team members (for example company website, LinkedIn etc.)

4. ANNEXES TO PROPOSAL PART B

Please upload the following documents. The annexes must be uploaded as separate documents in the submission system. For some of them, standard templates are published in the Horizon Europe Funding & Tenders portal:

Mandatory



- Pitch deck. There is no pre-defined template nor limit of slides, however, please keep in mind that you will have 10 minutes to present this pitch deck if you are invited to the face-to-face interviews. The pitch deck should be provided in PDF file format.
- Video: You must upload a video pitch of up to three minutes. You may decide to reuse or update the video pitch submitted with your short proposal.
- Lump Sum: (mandatory to fill in for grant only and blended finance proposals). Please use the template for the lump sum detailed budget breakdown. For equity only, please upload the excel as a blank document.
- Implementation plan (mandatory to fill in for grant only and blended finance proposals) - 10 pages max. Please use the template with description of work packages and deliverables, including milestones, resources and timings. For equity only, please upload a blank document.
- Financial plan and equity needed. Please use the template provided.
- Results of the freedom to operate (FTO) analysis. If you do not have one, please upload a note of maximum 2 pages outlining your freedom to operate and providing as much information as possible on this issue. In cases where the FTO is not relevant (e.g. software), please upload a simple statement.
- Letters of intent. Please use the guidance template available in the Funding & Tender Portal.
- Ownership control declaration. Only for proposals submitted in the Challenge 2.4 “Boosting the European Critical Raw Materials value chain” and Open proposals in the scope of the aforementioned Challenge requesting a GRANT ONLY funding.



Focus: “PITCH DECK”

GENERAL TIPS on interview



- The Pitch Deck provides a snapshot of important issues from the proposal. It can have an impact on the evaluation - since some evaluators look at it before going into detail with the proposal to get a first impression. It must complement and confirm what is written in the proposal.
- In case the applicant is successful at STEP 2, he will be invited to the jury panel the indicative date of which falls within the week that had preliminary been set by EISMEA in advance.
- Be at the interview site on time (or even early) and plan for possible delays.
- It is recommended to take a look at the Evaluation Criteria in the Guide for applicants
- Please note that it is not possible to change the Pitch Deck before the interview.
- Contact your NCP for additional advice and support schemes

WRITING THE PITCH DECK AND YOUR STORY



- Have your audience in mind. These are not your fellow colleagues. Only one of the jury members reads through the entire proposal, the others base their judgment entirely on the proposal abstract (which all review before the interview), the briefing, and your presentation.
- Choose the most outstanding detail/ figure/ fact to begin with - in order to engage and “recruit” the audience right away. It is a good start to secure the audience’s attention and curiosity within the first minutes.
- A good presentation should not be too wordy. Do not overburden the presentation, but instead highlight, focus on and emphasize the key messages and figures. Remember, the proposal cannot be conveyed in detail in 10 minutes, choose where to focus.
- There is a difference between a PowerPoint presentation and a handout. Do not design your presentation like a handout!
- The presentation should be simple, clear, concise and cohesive. It must be reader-friendly for non-experts also. Do not only design a presentation - the pitch must be a story that someone who hears it for the first time would be able to repeat and report about to someone else.



- Include only the most important facts, numbers and diagrams that “catch the eye” and are relevant to a specific part of the pitch (such as company growth, market opportunities, financial projections, known companies that will support or be part of the project). Do not use small fonts or a great amount of numbers.
 - Make figures understandable, do unit calculations and pricing. Balance between visual vs. text.
 - If you want to show a video of your product (at the beginning or end), use one which is silent (some background music is ok) and which serves as a tool for you to give the audience a feel of the product. It is recommended to avoid a video that attracts more attention than you do.
 - Scalability - the company must convince that the project (as well as the company), has the ability to scale up. For instance, show market traction, commercialisation strategy, potential strategic collaborations, realistic timeline, etc.
 - Remember that during the pitch you will have to prove the need for the EIC fund. If you have submitted a grant-only proposal, you must demonstrate your ability to secure other resources for the activities above TRL 8. If you have submitted a blended proposal, be sure to emphasise that the project is not appealing enough to attract sufficient funding.
 - Make sure the project is presented in a cost-effective way (be ready to defend your reasonable estimations).
 - Show that you have interacted with your future customers and how their feedback affects your business model and your product.
 - Show your project’s EU contribution and its social and environmental impact.
 - Balance between tech and business during the pitch: do not forget to explain the technological side but focus on the business model and the process of commercialisation. Explain the market segmentation, how you intend to enlarge your market share and the scalability of your commercial strategy.
 - Other important aspects are related to the ability to properly demonstrate market traction through STRONG partners, pilots or any other means.
 - If there are IP aspects in the project, you should be able to clearly explain their scope and status.
-



PREPARING TO PRESENT THE PITCH



Make a list of things you want to say:

- Check the consistence of the information you will present as you may be challenged on gaps/ inconsistencies.
- Timing is crucial: there is a timer during the interview which will not allow continuing after exactly 10 minutes. You will be interrupted - even in the middle of a sentence. Practice your presentation as much as possible to fit the timing; perhaps include half a minute buffer time to make sure you are within the limit.
- Prepare in such a way that you will speak naturally during the pitch, do not read or do assisted reading from the PowerPoint slides.
- Film yourself while rehearsing and identify possible improvements this way. After recording the presentation, type and trim it in order to make it more effective. Use easy words and easy sentences. Every word counts!
- Pitch the presentation to outsiders unfamiliar with your project. Do this at least 2 or 3 times. Practice presenting as a team: Who is the main speaker, who speaks when, where does everyone stand. When someone else speaks, do not take the attention away from them (do not move around or make hand gestures. Instead listen or nod). “Let the best driver drive “, but make sure that everyone has a role in the pitch and/or in the Q&A session.
- Sometimes the pitching room is small and crowded - be prepared for that.
- If you have a handy exhibit of your prototype, bring it with you and demonstrate it.

DURING THE PITCH AND Q&A



- Describe your innovation in simple words which are easy to understand for everyone. Also, avoid detailed technical explanations and describe your product in view of its application (“putting products in real life situations”).
 - Pay attention to body language during the pitch and when responding to questions of the jury. Pay attention to the interaction between team members.
 - Pitching is not acting: Be yourself, find your style, be emotional, have fun, have energy on stage. Use your voice - fit your voice to what you say.
 - Be ready to answer questions about issues that you did not include in your presentation. The questions’ section is very important: even the best pitch cannot “save” you if you do not convince with your answers during the Q&A.
-



THE TEAM



- Most recommended is a pitch team of 3 team members (thus showing seriousness and commitment).
- The dynamics, synchronicity and interaction between the team members and their individual roles in the success of the project will be observed.
- The team members included in the pitch team should have diverse experience and roles (such as CEO, CFO or CTO). All team members should contribute their specific expertise. There should be more than one presenter.
- The jury will check team cohesion, commitment of all members and management skills of the CEO. If you have key opinion leaders on your advisory board, you can mention them (as they raise credibility and trust in your project and in this team to carry it out).
- The team should prove that it has the capacity to execute the project and make a successful, profitable business from your innovation, thanks to its qualifications, skills and experience. Mention relevant experience in the business sector (such as being a serial entrepreneur, leading other similar companies to successful marketing).
- If there are skills that the SME lacks, you should have a solution prepared, recruit the right person and ensure that this is solved to ensure smooth commercialization.

THE JURY



- The jury members have different professional backgrounds, mostly business or investment oriented, but are not necessarily experts in the field of the company. You can find the list of all jury members here.
- The mandate of the jury is to find the closest match between the most innovative companies and the next unicorns in Europe.
- The jury will want to verify the enthusiasm and motivation of the team - i.e. your “skin in the game”: that you have invested a lot of time and money in your project, and that you are also taking a risk with it because you believe in it, that you are in control of the company.
- They will also seek to invest the public money in areas in which there are market failures or a changing sector.
- They will want to know about the risks and how the company is going to deal with them. But remember that they are looking for a fundable company (yet one that is, for now; they want to see if there is a solid business model, a financial plan and a clear commercialisation strategy. Know your market and your customers (“customer intimacy”).
- Since the jury does not have pre-defined questions, they can choose to ask for more details about any aspect of your project that seems unclear to them or on any issue of the written proposal that is hard to assess. Be ready for hard questions - “the devil is in the details”.



EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS USED IN MOCK EIC ACCELERATOR INTERVIEWS

A collection of questions gathered over the years by the EIC NCPs during mock interviews. These questions are not official or exhaustive, but should be considered solely as examples to support preparation.

Team

- How many FTE do you have currently? What is the team growth expected?
- Who is in the team and what are the growth projections?
- Why is this the right team to develop the project?
- What competencies are still missing? How do you plan to hire these?
- How are you planning to scale your team to reach the proposed markets?
- What is the structure of your sales force?
- What unique skills and talents does each team member contribute?
- You are a first-time CEO. What is your biggest challenge?
- X% of the shares are in the hands of now inactive team members, will that change?

IPR

- What is your IPR strategy?
- Do you have your technology protected?
- Who is the owner of the IP you are using? What is the royalty percentage?
- Which countries are you filing and why these countries?
- What are the protected elements (if any)?
- How valid is the patent in the X industry?
- What is the status of the patent?
- Your FTO seems limited to EU, why?
- Your patent lapses soon - what is your plan?
- How many patents will you file coming x years?
- How is the data protection organised? How is trade secret protection organised?
- How do you deal with privacy of data? What is the security process?

Stakeholders

- What is your relation with the manufacturers, suppliers, system integrators, etc?
- What is the role of X in your value chain?
- Are there agreements in place with manufacturers/suppliers, etc?
- In which countries are your suppliers/manufacturers located?
- Which party/parties play a crucial role? How do you mitigate the risks involved?



Financial

How many customers do you need to reach break-even?

What is your margin?

What is your turn over? Burn rate?

What is the revenue growth opportunity for the company?

How much working capital do you need next three years?

Is your proposed growth realistic? Based on what?

Give us insight in your capitalization?

What are the investment needs after your project?

Do you have CLA's, what are converting conditions?

Need for EU/EIC Accelerator support

Why do you need the Accelerator support?

What is the EC grant going to be spent on?

Why do you need the grant if you are already making money?

What happens if you don't get the grant? What is your plan B? How much equity will you need for plan B?

What will Europe gain when supporting this development/company?

Investment round

What experience do you have with raising finance?

How are your current shareholders supporting this round?

On which terms have they invested in your company?

Which VCs are you talking to? Are they willing to match the X and the valuation you are aiming for?

How much is your pre-money valuation?

What was the valuation in the last round?

How are you determining current valuation?

What is the next milestone this money will take you to?

When do you expect you will be conducting a follow up round of fundraising?

How else do you hope an investor will help beyond money?

Do you have LOI's from any investors for the next investment round?

Are there any significant milestones to be reached to attract investors?

Product/Service

How far (TRL) are you with your product? Do you have real data, is it validated?

Do you plan to evolve your product?

How do you plan to maintain the competitive advantage over the time?

Are you considering other applications?

How do you ensure the quality of the product/service?

Which certifications are required? When will you get them?

What is the advantage compared to competitor X?

Is your breakthrough related to the performance of your solution or a new application?

How are machine learning and bigdata integrated in the process?

How do you ensure the quality of the input (data, materials, etc)?



Cost

How much does your solution cost extra or less compared to the current situation?

What are your COGS?

How are these divided over suppliers/manufacturers incl. countries?

How volatile is the pricing of the main cost components?

Customers

Is there willingness to pay? How was that validated?

Who are your current/new/first customers?

How do you plan to reach (new) customers?

What makes customers buy your solution?

With how many customers did you talk?

How do you approach the reluctance to use/buy your product, because of new way of working/higher costs, etc?

Do you have agreements with customers in place?

What is the cost benefit for customers / business case of customer?

Who will be the first customer you sell to?

What is the CAC?

Competitors

Is there anyone else providing a solution at the moment?

Who are the competitors? How do you plan to overcome this competition?

How are your product development timelines compared to the top-3 competitors?

Is pricing a competitiveness issue?

What prevents others to offer your solution?

Is there any US company able to enter the EU market?

Which entry barrier do you generate for competitors?

What is your current positioning in the targeted market?

How do you protect your solution against the big players?

Are newcomers to be expected? What strategy do you follow if one enters your market?

Which USP is most important in winning from competitors?

Business model

Is your business model in line with the market standard?

What is the business model of your solution (services/equipment/etc) and why?

What is your pricing strategy? Margin?

How did you determine the price of your product?

How was your business model validated?

Manufacturing

Do you produce (manufacture) the solution?



What is your manufacturing capacity?
What is your experience in manufacturing?
Where is the manufacturing done?
What did you do to make the production scalable?
Why do you outsource the manufacturing?
How do you ensure enough availability of the raw material?

Market

How did you determine your SAM? How is it calculated?
What is your (final) market?
How did you calculate your penetration rates?
What is the market size? What is the demand for your product/service?
How do you calculate your market share expectations?
What is the CAGR of the market you are targeting?
Are there any regulatory issue to be considered?
Why are you focussing on the European (or another) market now?

International commercialization

What is the timescale for reaching the customers?
Do you have any partner(s) for commercialization/distribution?
Are distributors willing to sell your technology and how did you check this?
Why do you start earlier in the USA?
How do you foresee the commercialization of your solution?
Why are you focussing on the European (or another) market now?
Are there specific regulations for targeted countries?
Why country X to launch the product?
What is common in your market regarding sales channels to reach international markets?
Do you have pilots in different countries?
What is your internationalization strategy?

Risk

What is the key risk of scaling up?
What is your main financial/regulatory/customer/technology/organizational risk?
What is your plan B if this occurs?
Which problems are keeping you awake at night?

Clinical study

What will be the endpoints?
How do you ensure that patients will join the study?
Do you have the clinical sites aligned?
How many patients do you need?



Access2EIC

National Contact Points for Innovation

Access2EIC

ACCESS2EIC is a 84-months coordination and support action aimed to empower and facilitate transnational cooperation within the network of National Contact Points - NCPs focused on the Horizon Europe European Innovation Council - EIC and the European Innovation Ecosystems - EIE. It involves a consortium made of formally appointed NCPs.

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4. INSTYTUT PODSTAWOWYCH PROBLEMOW TECHNIKI POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK (IPPT PAN), Poland
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