EIC Work Programme 2026
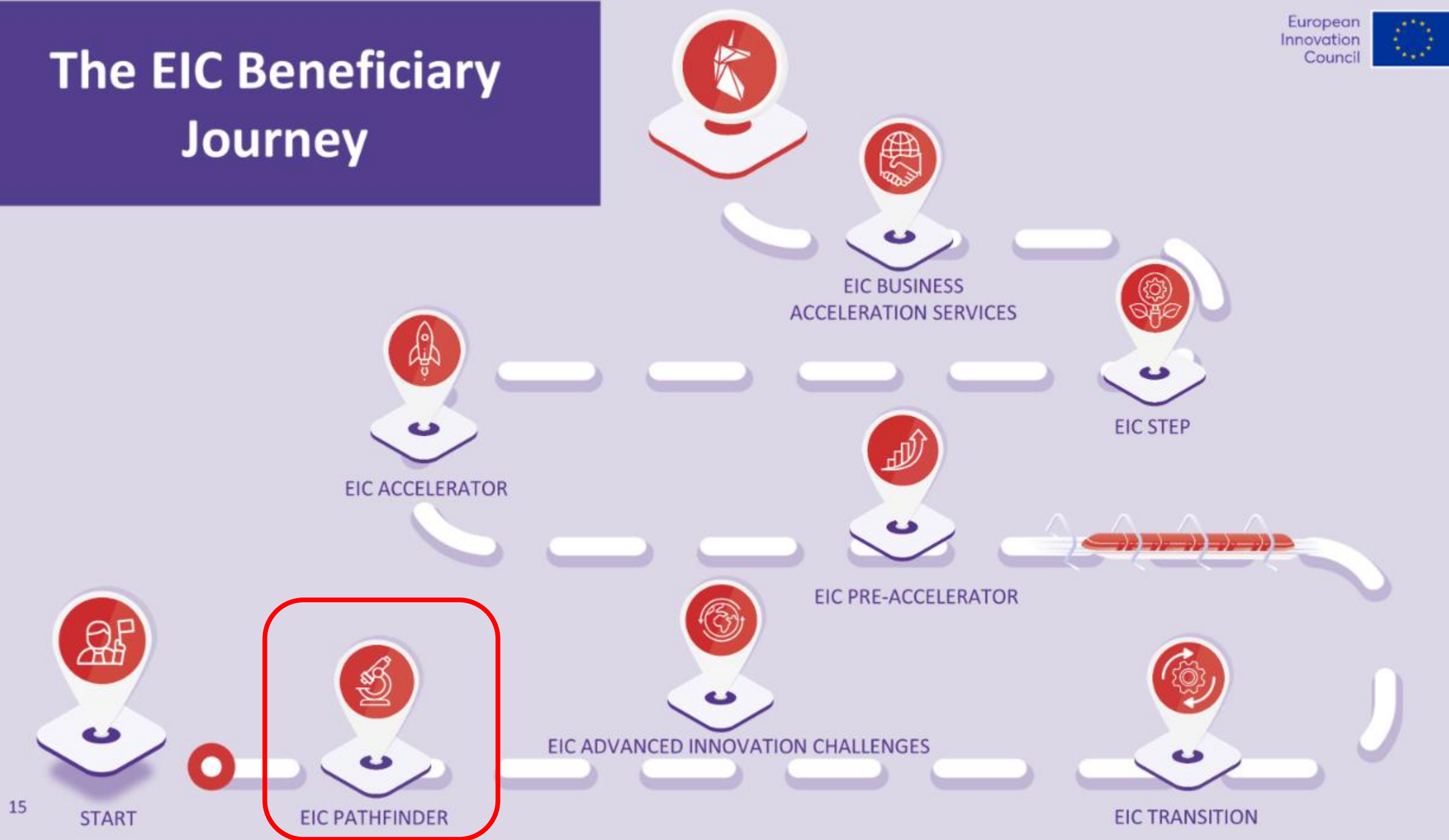
•EIC PATHFINDER
  o **EIC Pathfinder Overview**
  o **Novelties and calls in 2026**

The EIC Beneficiary Journey

European Innovation Council

EIC BUSINESS ACCELERATION SERVICES

EIC STEP

EIC ACCELERATOR

EIC PRE-ACCELERATOR

START

EIC PATHFINDER

EIC ADVANCED INNOVATION CHALLENGES

EIC TRANSITION

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Pathfinder calls 2026 – Summary table

European Innovation Council

	Pathfinder Open	Pathfinder Challenges
Total budget	€166 million	€96 million
Proposals (indicative)	Up to €4 million or more if justified	
Funding rate	100% of eligible costs, lump sums	
Opening	05 February 2026	28 July 2026
Deadline	12 May 2026 at 17.00 CEST	28 October 2026 at 17.00 CET
Length of proposal	22-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: • 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

Call statistics EIC Pathfinder 2021-2025

Open	eligible proposals	funded proposals	EU contribution	success rate
2021	868	60	183.1 M€	6,9%
2022	858	66	206.5 M€	7,7%
2023	783	62	186.9 M€	7,9%
2024	1110	45	137.3 M €	4,1%
2025	2069	44	140.7 M €	2,1%
Total	**5688**	**277**	**854,5 M €**	**4,9%**

Challenges	eligible proposals	funded proposals	EU contribution	success rate
2021	403	42	146.9 M€	10,4%
2022	436	49	182.7 M€	11,2%
2023	365	46	168.2M€	12,3%
2024	401	32	119,6 M€	8,0%
2025	in evaluation		indicative 120 M€	
Total	**1605**	**169**	**617.4M€**	**10,5%**

European Innovation Council

1 2026 EIC Pathfinder Open – main changes

Changes – Pathfinder Open

- Indicative funding increased to €4 million per project to enable progress to proof-of-concept stage (instead of €3 million previously)

- Introduction of a lump sum for eligible costs
- 22 pages for a proposal (part B) (increased from 20 pages previously)

- AWARD CRITERIA
  Reduced excellence from 60% to 50%
  Increased impact from 20% to 30%
  Implementation – no changes (20%)

- Reduced number of individual evaluators from 4 to 3

- Scoring method (individual phase): from median of evaluators' scores per criterion to average of evaluators' scores per criterion (as discussed below)

Consortium composition | Open projects

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.

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.

2026 EIC Pathfinder Challenges – main changes

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Changes – Pathfinder Challenges

- Three new topics with indicative budget 96 M Euro

- Challenge guide will be available once Work Programme 2026 is published

- Teaser videos will be available soon

- Evaluation: AWARD CRITERIA COMPARISON
  Reduced excellence from 60% to 50%
  Increased impact from 20% to 30%
  Implementation – no changes (20%)

EIC Pathfinder challenges 2026

European
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PATHFINDER CHALLENGES

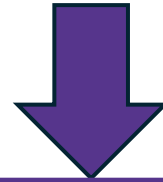|		
	Advanced Materials for Miniaturised Energy Harvesting Systems	€ 32 million
	Biotechnology for Healthy Aging	€ 32 million
	DeepRAP: Deep Reasoning, Abstraction & Planning towards trustworthy Cognitive AI Systems	€ 32 million
	Indicative call budget	**€ 96 million**

Info day on
Pathfinder Challenges
with
Programme Managers
in March 2026

- **No. of connected sensors and internet of things is rising and** affecting strongly energy consumption and CO_2 emissions

- **Strong impact on sustainability:** if we use batteries, we need to change each day around **80 millions of batteries (10 trillions by 2027)**

We need to find solutions to reduce energy consumption and develop sensors that are energetically autonomous and sustainable

To do that we need a new generation of advanced materials to implement highly efficient miniaturized energy harvesting systems with performances higher than the existing ones

Advanced Materials for miniaturised Energy Harvesting Systems

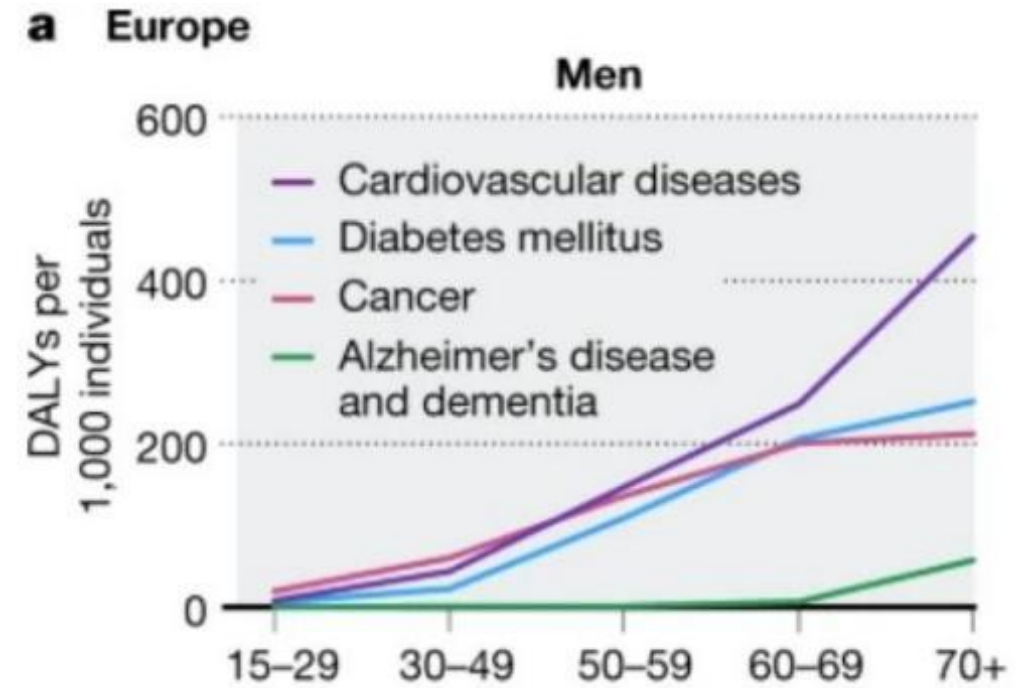- **Specific Objectives (all should be addressed)**
  - The development of innovative advanced materials for energy harvesting, harnessing new physical/ chemical phenomena, leading to a radical shift in application range and performance while reducing the reliance on Critical Raw Materials (CRMs)
  - The implementation of the advanced materials in a miniaturised energy harvesting module, e.g., miniaturised solar cells, thermoelectric generators, ...
  - Integration of the miniaturised energy harvesting modules in energetically autonomous systems (e.g. wireless integrated sensors)
  - Benchmarking the harvesting modules in a representative use case in a laboratory environment (TRL 4)

- **Expected Outcomes**
  - A new generation of advanced materials for miniaturised energy harvesting modules, and
  - Energetically autonomous systems at TRL 4.

- By 2050 share of age 85+ in EU expected to more than double

- Extended life expectancy is not matched with longer healthy life
  - EU lifespan: 81.1 yrs
  - EU healthspan: 63 yrs

- Many diseases are age-related

- Multimorbidities increase with age

References:
EU 2024 Ageing Report: Economic & Budgetary Projections for the EU Member States (2022-2070). Institutional Paper 279, ISBN 978-92-68-13780-2
Pinkus, D. and N. Ruer (2025) 'The demographic divide: inequalities in ageing across the European Union', Policy Brief 13/2025, Bruegel
Garmany & Terzic (2024) Global Healthspan-Lifespan Gaps Among 183 WHO Member States, JAMA Network Open. 2024;7(12):e2450241
Statistics from International Longevity Centre UK, Healthy Ageing & Prevention Index Wave 2022
Partidge, Deelen & Slagboom (2018) Facing up to the global challenges of ageing, Nature 561, p. 45–56

Specific Objectives

A proof of concept in one of the following 3 areas

1. **An innovative preventative or therapeutic biotechnology-based or pharmaceutical intervention** that prevents, delays or reverts the onset of a specific age-related disease
2. **A biomarker based tool** to enable the responsible deployment of ageing-related interventions
3. **A New Approach Methodology (NAM)** that goes beyond the current state-of-the art to enable the future development of interventions for healthy ageing.

Expected Outcomes

- Proof-of-concepts (TRL3 completed) of biotechnology-based or pharmaceutical interventions that prevents or delays the onset of, or reverts, an age-related disease in a vertebrate model system, based on the hallmarks of ageing, taking into consideration practical challenges of implementing such an intervention

- Tools to facilitate development or adoption of the interventions above, such as proof-of-concept validation of biomarker signatures or suitable pre-clinical models, and

- Approaches to address the shared regulatory hurdles and societal challenges linked to ageing-related interventions, thereby facilitating their adoption.

Building AI capabilities for trusted and responsible autonomy

From prompting to intuitive interactions

Specific Objectives

Explore novel approaches, including combinations of existing techniques (i.e. neuro-symbolic AI), or the creation of entirely new frameworks that go beyond current, traditional, deep learning and reinforcement learning paradigms for one or more of the following capabilities:

- Deep Reasoning
- Deep Abstraction
- Deep Planning

Expected Outcomes

- Models and/or architectures that handle multimodal data and knowledge, uncertainty, and can be trained and deployed with constrained computational resources

- Provable trustworthiness mechanisms ensuring explainability, transparency, fairness, risk evaluation, security and alignment with ethical and legal standards

- The developed capabilities integrated in a cognitive AI system (reaching TRL4) performing complex real-world tasks (e.g., scientific discovery, decision support, problem solving) as well as simulations at a scale.

Useful links:

- **Call: EIC 2026 Pathfinder Open** (HORIZON-EIC-2026-PATHFINDEROPEN)
https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/HORIZON-EIC-2026-PATHFINDEROPEN?order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=50&sortBy=startDate&isExactMatch=true&status=31094501,31094502&programmePart=43121666&programmePeriod=2021%20-%202027&frameworkProgramme=43108390

- **EIC Work Programme 2026**
https://www.ncp.uefiscdi.ro/_files/ugd/9d4366_a6db3a0267d24c578176d72e5ff7b506.pdf

- **Key Novelties & Updates in EIC 2026 (RO)**
https://www.ncp.uefiscdi.ro/_files/ugd/9d4366_ea0b9f24f3974e1f91b4eafd89ea8c47.pdf

- **EIC Work Programme 2026 – Info Day**
  - **Full PPT** *– https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/circabc-ewpp/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/afdd64f4-d241-4bc5-b006-3be28e5f8968/download* (slides 24 - 76)
  - **Video** *– https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGLz6vJ3AQI* (39:20 – 1:45:13)

Source: EISMEA (2025). EIC Work Programme 2026 - Info Day [PowerPoint Slides]. SlideShare.
https://eic.ec.europa.eu/events/online-info-day-eic-work-programme-2026-2025-11-13_en