

European
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EIC Pathfinder 2026

INFORMATION

27.1.2026

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What is the EIC Pathfinder?

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What is 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 & 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



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

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Statistics from 2021-2025 Pathfinder calls





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	677 in evaluation	<i>est. 30</i>	<i>indicative 120 M€</i>	<i>est 4.4%</i>
Total	1605	169	617.4M€	10,5%

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2026 EIC Pathfinder **Open** call & its main novelties



**What's
new?**

Why 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 from 1 to 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 criteria:

- **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 in their teams **key actors** that have the potential to **become future leaders** in their field such as excellent early-career researchers or promising high-tech SMEs, including start-ups
- Project are also encouraged to **empower female researchers** and to achieve gender balance among the work package leaders



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.



Support Upon Proposal Funding



- 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 4 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 (lump sum)
- The total indicative budget for this call is EUR **166 million**.
- Successful applicants will receive tailor-made access to a wide range of **Business Acceleration Services** and interactions with **EIC Programme Managers**

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 **12 May 2026 at 17.00 CEST**.

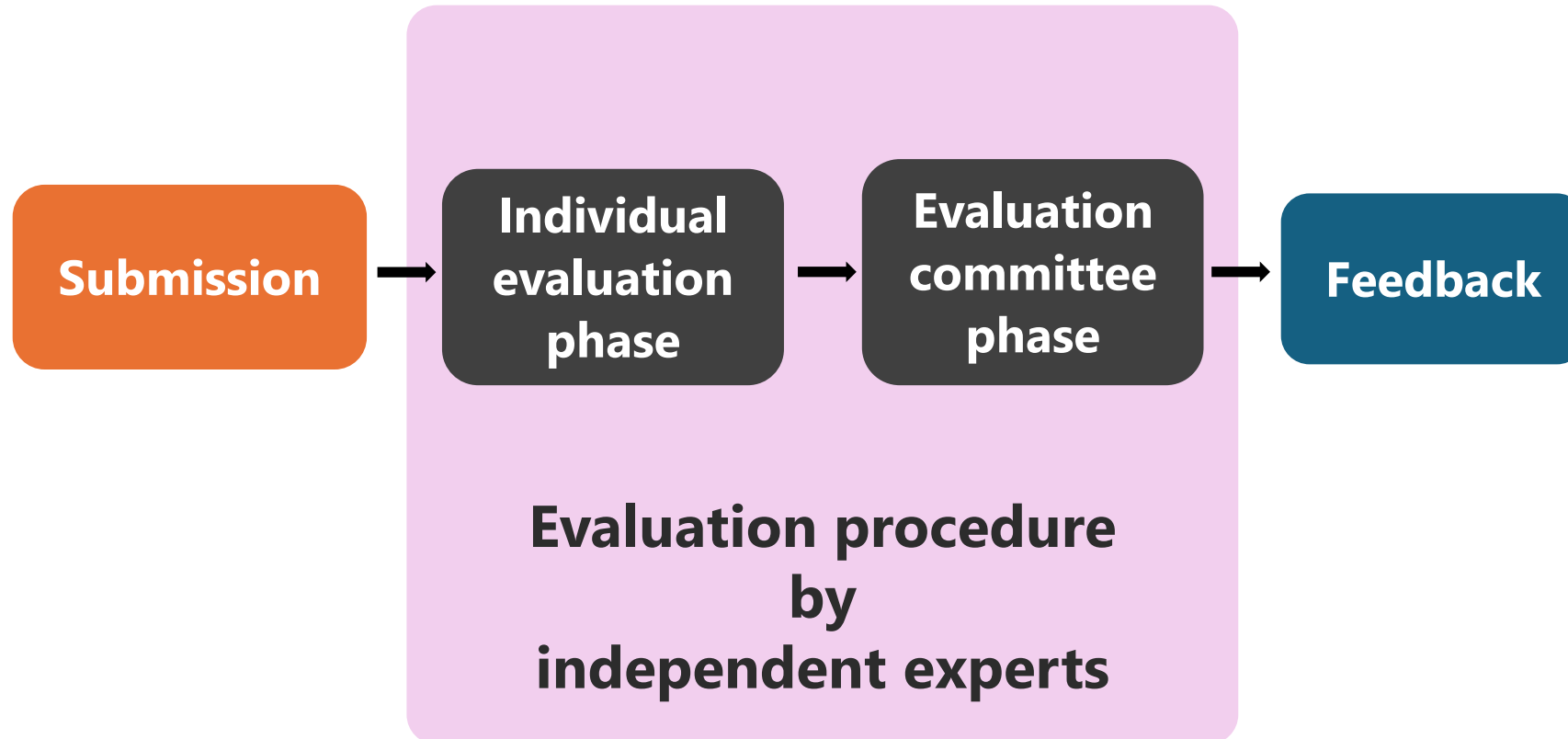
Proposal Application Form



- **Part A**
 - to be filled in online (no page limit), contains: administrative details, the summarised budget and call specific questions
- The **estimated budget** must be described in a **detailed budget table**. This will be used as a basis for justifying and/or fixing the **lump sum amount**.
- **Part B:**
 - to be uploaded as a single document (page limit: max. **22** A4 pages - Section 1 to 3)
 - contains: the technical description of the project.

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

How is proposal funding determined?





- At least three EIC expert evaluators evaluate and score the proposals individually based on the **award criteria**:
 - ❖ **Excellence**
 - ❖ **Impact**
 - ❖ **Quality and efficiency of the implementation**
- The **score** for each evaluation criterion will be the **average of the evaluators' scores** per criterion.
- The **overall score from this individual evaluation phase** will be the **weighted sum** of the three median scores from the three award criteria.



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.

4 2026 EIC
Pathfinder
Challenges call

A wooden clothespin is positioned vertically on a wooden surface, holding a light green sticky note. The sticky note has the text "What's new?" written on it in a bold, brown, sans-serif font. The background is a dark, blurred surface.

**What's
new?**



- Build on **new, cutting-edge directions in science and technology;**
- Disrupt a market or create new opportunities **by realising innovative technological solutions** grounded in high-risk/high-gain research and development;
- Establish **a portfolio of projects** for each Challenge that explore different perspectives, competing approaches or complementary aspects;
- Proactively steered by **EIC Programme Managers**

Expected project outcomes



- Expected outcomes defined in the respective Challenge
- Project results should include **top-level scientific publications** as well as an **adequate formal protection of the generated Intellectual Property as well as an assessment of relevant aspects related to regulation, certification, and standardization;**
- Projects are encouraged to involve and empower within their teams **key actors** that have the potential to **become future leaders** in their fields such as excellent early-career researchers or promising high-tech SMEs, including start-ups;
- Project particularly encouraged to **empower female researchers** and achieve **gender balance** among the work package leaders.



- **Challenge Guides** will provide more information about:
 - **Objectives** of the Challenges
 - **Technical information** underpinning the objectives
 - **Portfolio considerations** used for the final selection of proposals to be funded
- Challenge Guides are already published on the [EIC Pathfinder Challenges page](#)

EIC Pathfinder challenges 2026

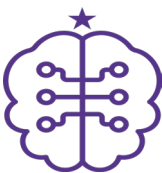


PATHFINDER CHALLENGES



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 on 30 March 2026 (tbc)



- **Nr of connected sensors and internet of things is rising and** affecting strongly energy consumption and CO2 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



- **Specific Objectives (all should be addressed)**

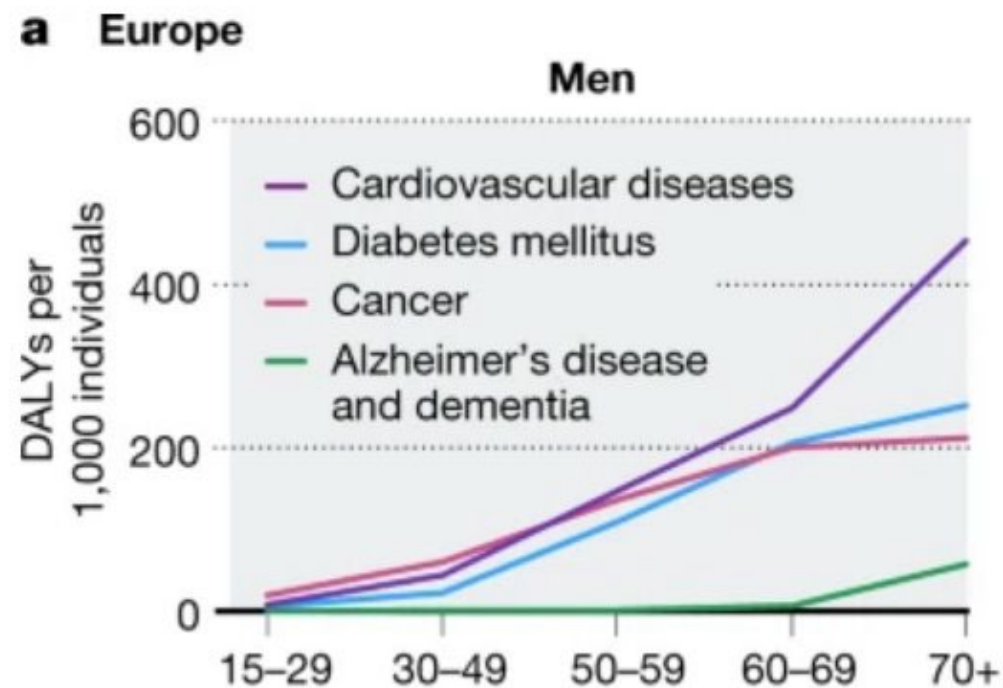
- The development of innovative advanced materials for energy harvesting, harnessing new physical/ chemical phenomena, leading to a radical shift in application range and performance while reducing the reliance on Critical Raw Materials (CRMs)
- The implementation of the advanced materials in a miniaturised 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: 70.5 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.

Can you apply? (1)



- **Single legal entities** established in a Member State or an Associated Country (mid-caps and larger companies will not be permitted)
- **Consortia of two entities** must be two independent legal entities from two different Member States or Associated Countries
- **Consortia of three or more entities** must include 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.

Can you apply? (2)



- **Important: associated partners** are not considered for eligibility rules!
- Examples of **ineligible** consortia:
 - 2 organisations from FR & 1 organisation from DE
 - 2 organisations from PL & 2 organisations from IT
 - 2 organisations from FR, 1 organisation from DE & 1 organisation from Canada
- Examples of **eligible** consortia:
 - 1 organisation from MT & 1 organisation from CZ
 - 1 organisation from ES & 1 organisation from Australia
 - 1 organisation from EL, 1 organisation from SE & 1 organisation from the United States

What support will you receive if your proposal is funded? (1)



- A **grant** for a **Research and Innovation Action** to cover eligible costs
- EIC considers proposals with an EU contribution of **up to € 4 million** as appropriate (larger amounts possible, if duly justified)
- Total indicative budget for this call: **€ 96 million** (expected to be allocated in approximately equal shares across the Challenges)
- Successful applicants will receive tailor-made access to a wide range of **Business Acceleration Services** and interactions with **EIC Programme Managers** and other actions in the portfolio of projects selected

What support will you receive if your proposal is funded? (2)



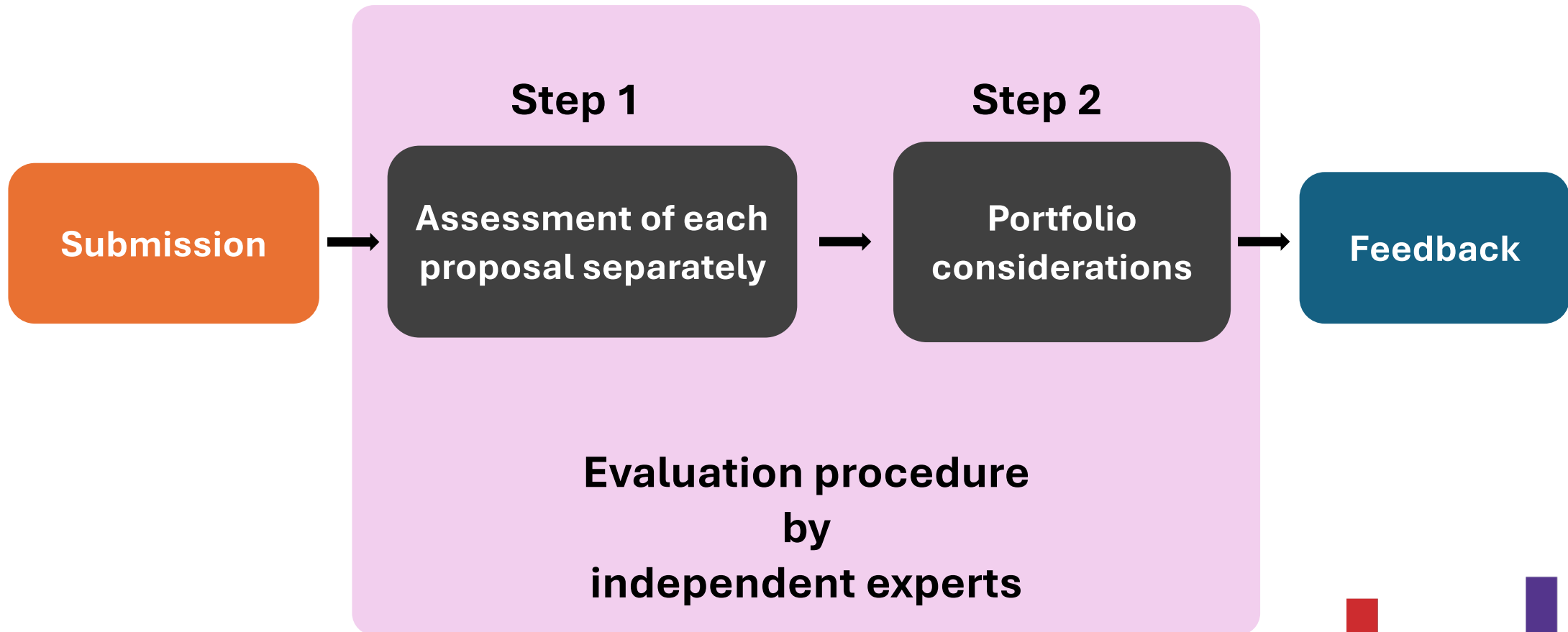
- Funding rate **100% of the eligible costs**
- Eligible costs will take the form of a **lump sum** and **the amount will be determined during the evaluation process.**
- Applicants must **propose the amount of the lump sum** based on their estimated project costs
- It is advised to include a **work package** dedicated to **portfolio activities** and allocate at least 10 person-month to it

How to 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 call will open on 28 July 2026.
- The deadline to submit the proposal is **28 October 2026 at 17.00 CET**.

How is proposal funding determined?



Step 1: Assessment of each proposal separately



- At least three EIC expert evaluators evaluate and score **each proposal individually** with respect to the award criteria
- After the individual evaluation, these evaluators will get together in a **consensus group** to agree on a common position on comments and scores.
- The **evaluation committee** (composed of EIC expert evaluators and EIC Programme Managers) will check consistency across the evaluation of each individual proposal and **finalise the scores and comments** for all proposals

Step 2: Portfolio considerations



- All proposals that meet the thresholds defined in the award criteria will be considered in step 2
- **Mapping of proposals in categories** stemming from overall goal and specific objectives of the Challenge (e.g., building blocks or subsystems, technical areas and/or competing technologies, platforms, applications areas, risk level and stage of technology readiness level, size)
- A **suitable portfolio of proposals** to be selected by evaluation committee by applying **portfolio considerations** in order to propose for funding a coherent set of projects that will achieve expected outcomes and impacts of the Challenge and maximise their impact.
- Further information and details about categories and portfolio considerations to be detailed in **EIC Pathfinder Challenge Guides**, which will be topic and domain specific
- Evaluation committee may also **propose some minor adjustments** to the proposals



- Applicants will receive an **Evaluation Summary Report** that will comprise of:
 - the **final score**;
 - **comments endorsed** by the evaluation committee;
 - **additional comments**.
- Applicants will also be informed about the **underlying portfolio considerations** in case their proposal was either retained for funding or not retained for funding while it received a score that was higher than other proposals retained for funding under the same Challenge.
- Comments on the detailed lump sum budget table will be provided in the Evaluation Summary Report only for proposals invited to grant agreement preparation (or placed in the reserve list) and ones rejected (in part) due to significant overestimation or underestimation of costs.

What happens after a proposal is evaluated and retained for funding?



- Successful applicants will be contacted and supported by **Project Officer** and relevant **EIC Programme Manager** during grant preparation
- Planning of **portfolio activities** - all projects in the Challenge Portfolio are expected to collaborate with each other
- Start of preparation of **Challenge roadmap**, which will define collective deliverables, activities and objectives of the portfolio of projects
- During the execution of the project: **continuous interaction** with Project Officer assigned to your project and the EIC Programme Manager assigned to the Challenge Portfolio of your project, who will oversee all the portfolio projects



Additional Opportunities for Pathfinder Selected Projects:



Projects funded through EIC Pathfinder are eligible to:

- receive **EIC Booster grants** (up to 3 per project or more if duly justified) of a fixed amount not exceeding EUR 50 000 to undertake complementary activities:
 - to explore potential pathways to commercialisation
 - for portfolio activities
- submit an **EIC Transition** proposal
- submit an **EIC Accelerator** proposal via the **Fast Track** scheme
- participate in '**Next Generation Innovation Talents**' scheme (personnel costs of participating researchers are eligible under Pathfinder grants)

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Pathfinder Summary table



Pathfinder calls 2026 – Summary table



	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	12 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	<p>Consortia: min. 3 partners from 3 different Member States /Associated Countries of which at least 1 partner in a Member State</p>	<p>Consortia:</p> <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 <p>Single legal entities in a MS/AC</p>

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Thank you

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