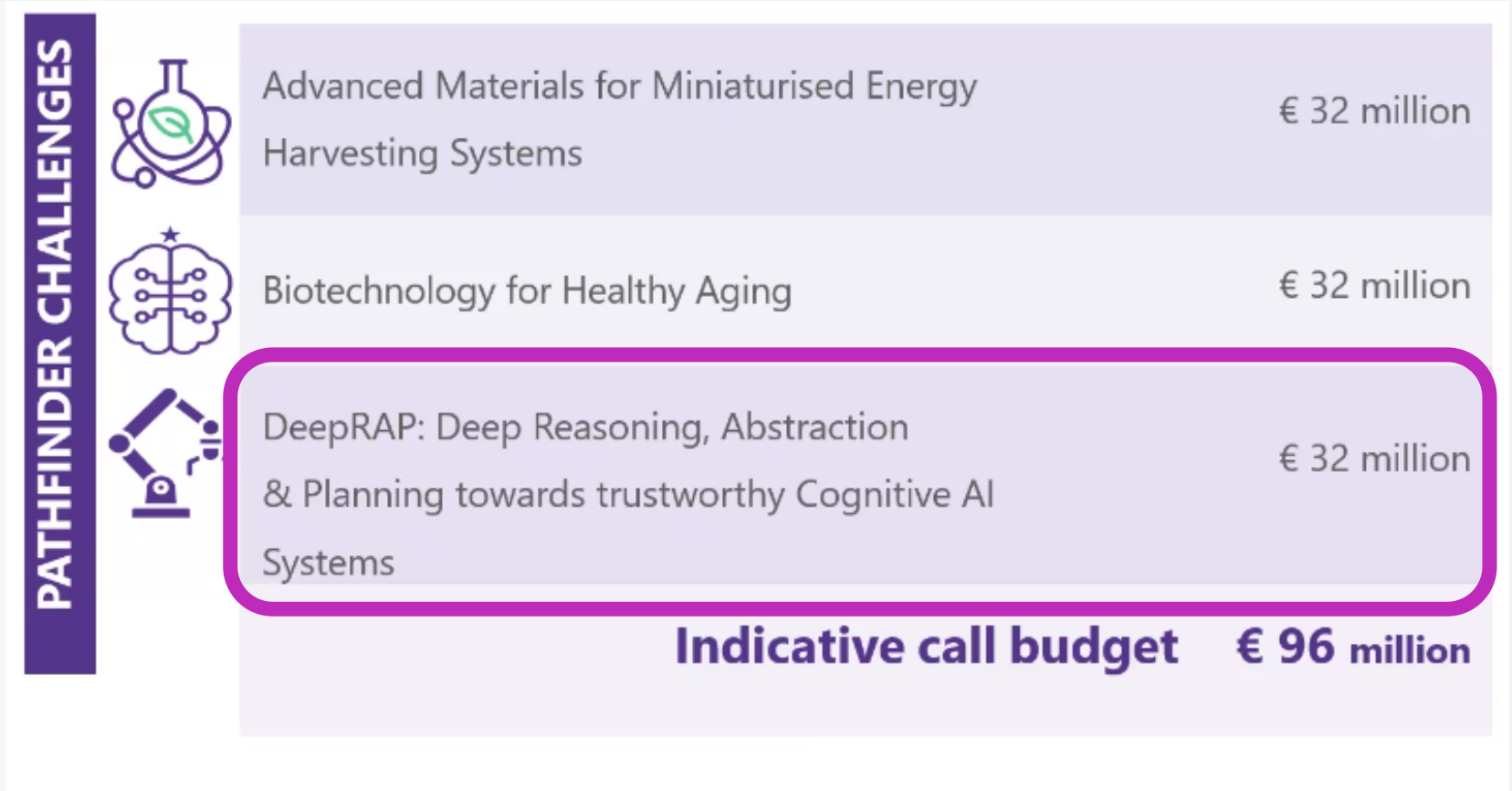
EIC Pathfinder Challenge DeepRAP: Deep Reasoning, Abstraction & planning towards trustworthy Cognitive AI Systems.

Claire Griffin
UK's NCP for EIC & EIE
11 December 2025

EIC Pathfinder Challenges 2026



Info day planned for Spring 2026

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Pillar 1
EXCELLENT SCIENCE

- European Research Council
- Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
- Research Infrastructures

Pillar 2
GLOBAL CHALLENGES & EUROPEAN INDUSTRIAL COMPETITIVENESS

Clusters

1. Health
2. Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society
3. Civil Security for Society
4. Digital, Industry and Space
5. Climate, Energy and Mobility
6. Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment

- Joint Research Centre

Pillar 3
INNOVATIVE EUROPE

- European Innovation Council
- European innovation ecosystems
- European Institute of Innovation and Technology

WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND STRENGTHENING THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA

- Widening participation and spreading excellence
- Reforming and Enhancing the European R&I system

Pillar 3 - Innovative Europe

Supporting & Connecting Innovators Across Europe

- Europe has solid research & industrial base
- Yet it ‘could do better’ at strengthening the use of scientific excellence & industrial prowess to accelerate innovation & turn innovative SMEs into Technology Giants.
- Focus on supporting the development of disruptive & market-creating innovations & on enhancing European Innovation Ecosystems

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Pillar III

INNOVATIVE EUROPE:

European Innovation Council

stimulating **market-creating breakthroughs** and **ecosystems** conducive to innovation

European Innovation Council

Support to innovations with breakthrough and market creating potential

European innovation ecosystems

Connecting with regional and national innovation actors

European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

Bringing key actors (research, education and business) together around a common goal for nurturing innovation

The budget: **€10.6 billion**, incl. up to **€527 million** for ecosystems (including NGEU – Recovery Fund parts dedicated to EIC).

circa **€3 billion**

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Six Strategic Goals for the EIC

- To be investor of choice for those with visionary ideas
- To crowd in €30-50 B investment into European **Deep-tech**
- To pull through high-risk technologies in critical areas for society & open strategic autonomy
- To increase the number of **European Unicorns** & Scale-Ups
- To catalyse innovation impacts from European public research & innovation
- To achieve operational excellence

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What is deep-tech?

- Technology that is based on cutting edge scientific advances & discoveries
- Is characterised by the need to stay at the technological forefront by constant interaction with new ideas & results from the lab
- NOT – High-tech which refers to R&D intensity

- Unicorn – private company valued at over 1B€

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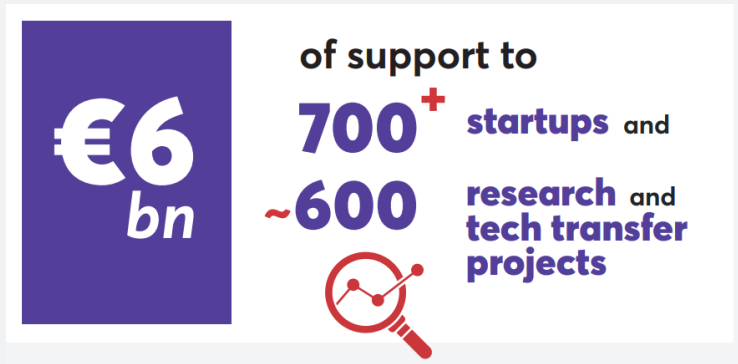
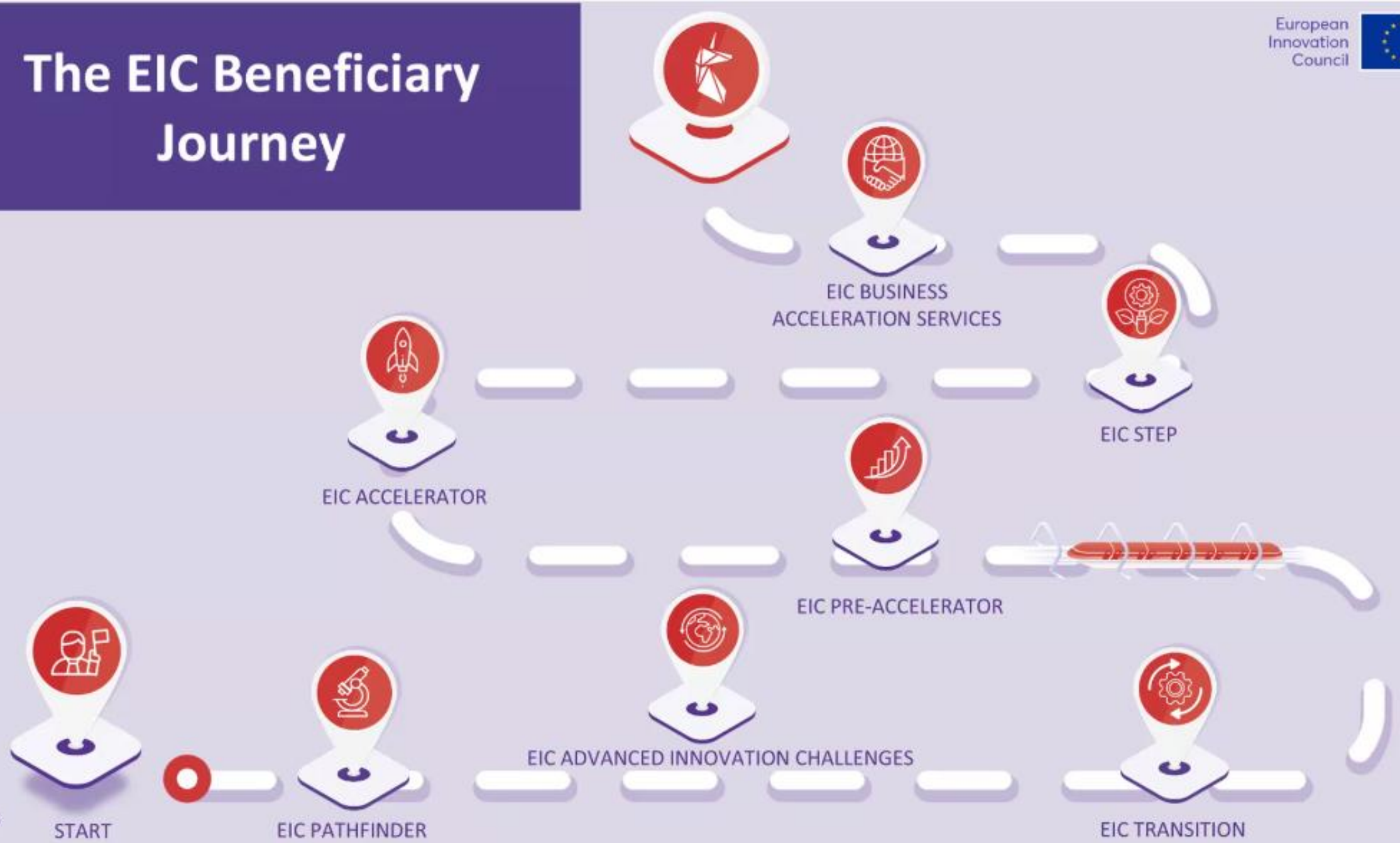
EIC Impact Report 2025

- EIC Impact Report 2025
- Generating new technologies from EU's research base
  - Translating research into market-ready innovations
- EIC Pathfinder & EIC Transition projects have spawned over 1300 innovations & had led to the creation of more than 100 spinout companies
- Includes ~100 projects that are commercialising results from ERC



The EIC Beneficiary Journey

European Innovation Council



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 & a market or create new opportunities
- Realises innovative technological solutions to identify, develop & scale-up breakthrough technologies & disruptive innovations in Europe

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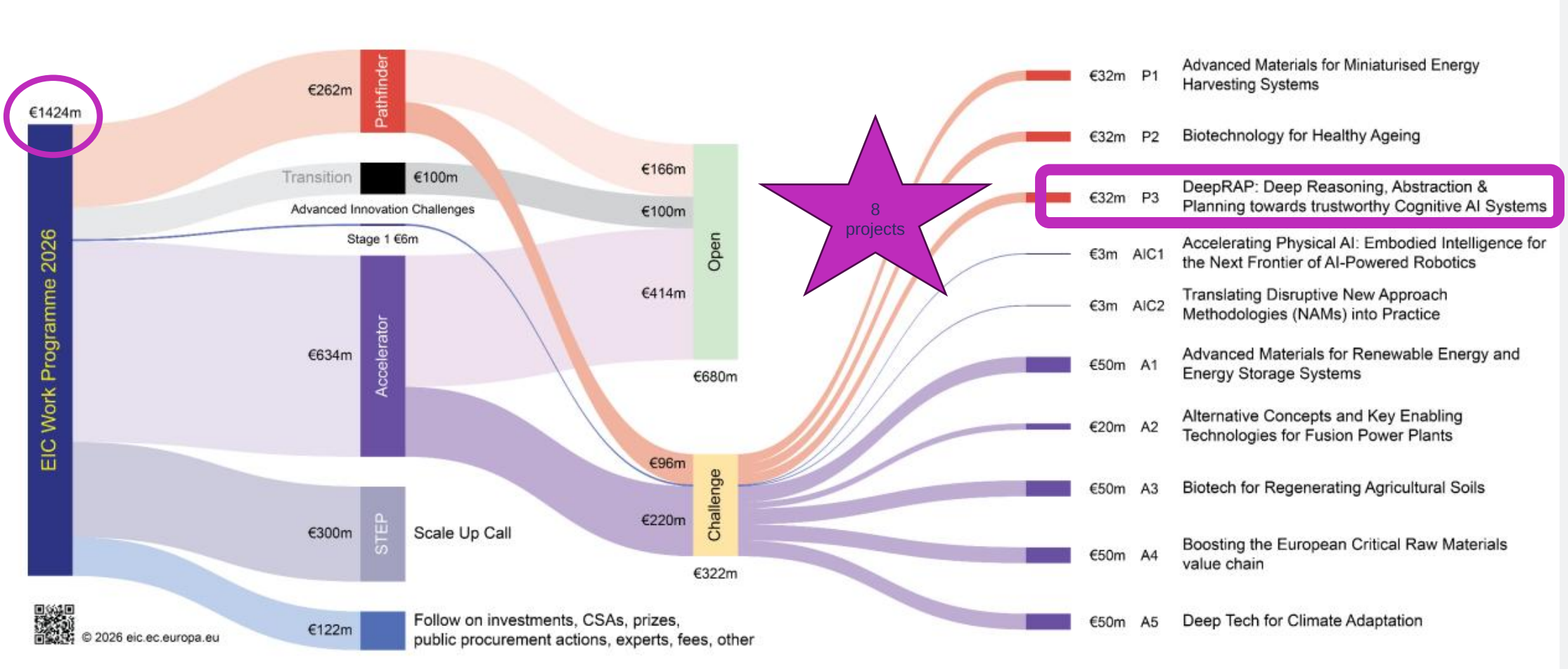
EIC Work Programme Budget 2026



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EIC Pathfinder Open vs Challenge

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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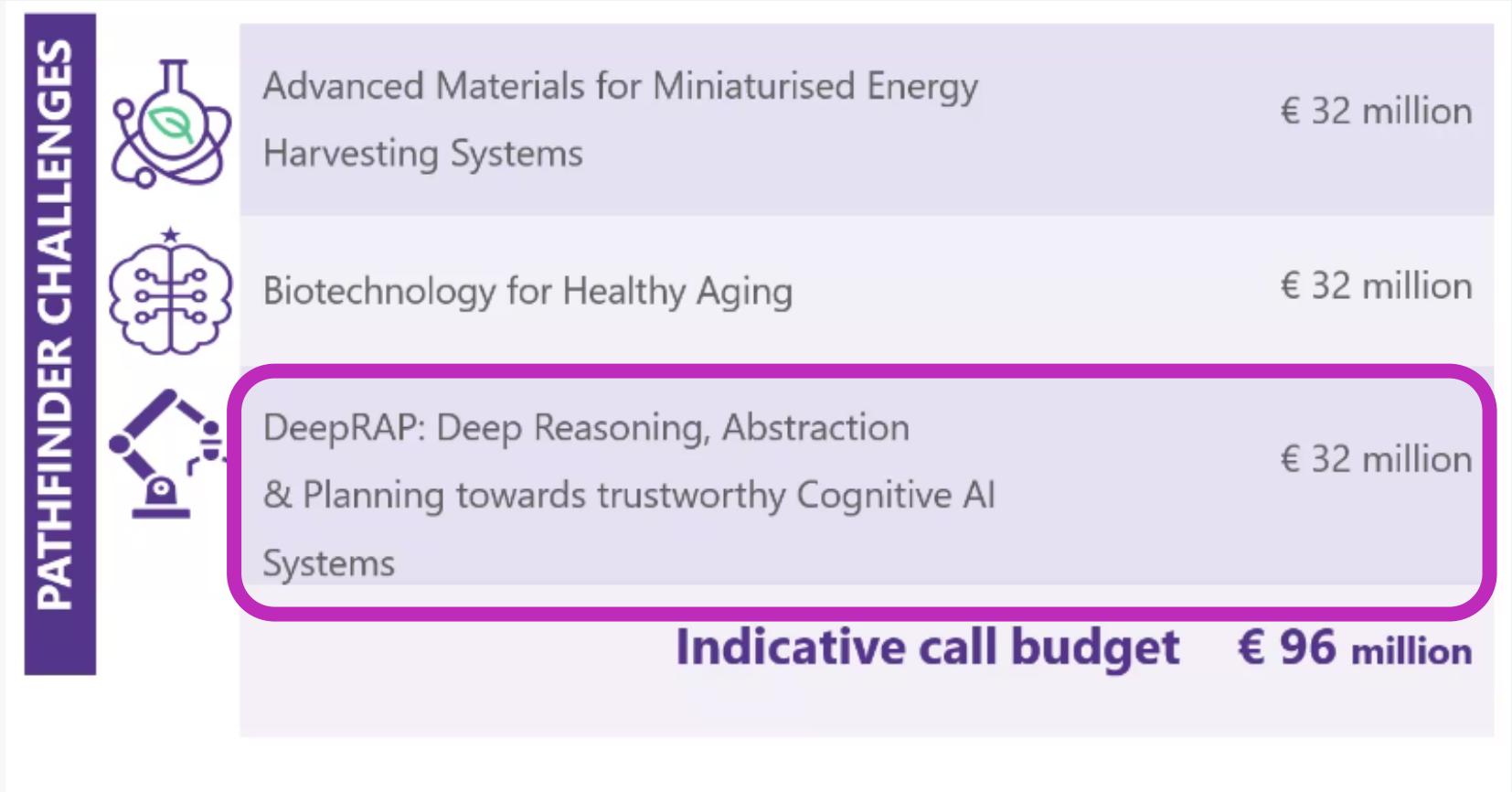
EIC Pathfinder Challenges 2026



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EIC Pathfinder Challenges - Intro

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

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Why Apply

- Realise an ambitious vision for radically new technology, with potential to create new markets &/or to address global challenges
- Early-stage development of future technologies – Low TRLs
- Based on high-risk/ high-gain science-towards-technology breakthrough research (including deep-tech)
- Research must provide the foundations of the technology you are envisioning

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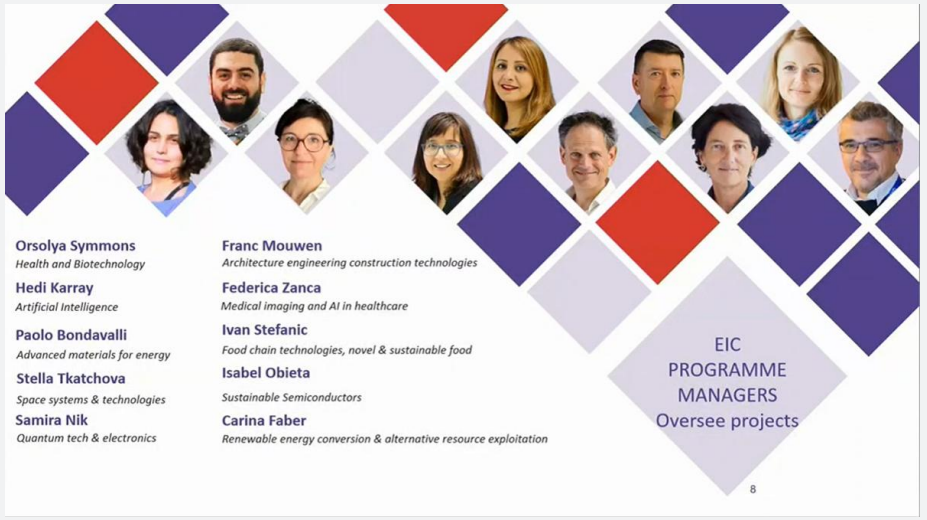
EIC Programme Manager

- Follow on LinkedIn & listen to their ‘Tech Talks’
- Establishes a common roadmap
- Proactively steers the portfolio towards the goal of each challenge
- Projects are expected to:
  - Interact & exchange
  - Remain flexible & reactive
  - Progress together toward goals



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[EIC Programme Managers - European Commission (europa.eu)](https://europa.eu)

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Call statistics EIC Pathfinder 2021-2025

European Innovation Council

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	~30 @ 4M but 667 submitted	indicative 120 M€	~4.5%
Total	**1605**	**169**	**617.4M€**	**10,5%**

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EIC Pathfinder Challenges 2026

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EIC Pathfinder - Expected outcomes

- As defined in the respective challenge
- Top-level scientific publications
- Adequate formal protection of the generated IP, as well as an assessment of relevant aspects related to regulations, certification & standardisation
- Projects are encouraged to involve & empower key actors that have potential to become future leaders
- Empower female researchers & achieve gender balance among work package leaders

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Who can apply?

- Single legal entity
  - From MS or AC
  - Unless otherwise specified in specific Challenge
- Consortia of two entities
  - Independent legal entities from two different MS or AC
- Consortia of three or more entities
  - At least three legal entities, independent from each other & each established in a different countries
    - At least one legal entity established in a MS
    - At least two other independent legal entities, each established in different MS or AC
- What is a Legal entity - universities, research organisations, SMEs, startups, natural persons. In single beneficiary projects, mid-caps & larger companies will not be permitted.

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Need to know

- Deadline – 28 October 2026
- Application form will be available before call opens
  - ~28 July 2026
  - 30 page proposal Part B
  - Use the correct version!
- Up to 4M€ per proposal
  - Does not preclude you to request larger amounts if duly justified
  - Or if stated in the specific Challenge
- Funding rate 100% of eligible costs
- Eligible costs will take form of Lump Sum
  - EU Funding & Tenders Portal

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EIC Pathfinder 2026 Challenges Guide

Will provide more info about:

- Objectives of the Challenge
- Technical information underpinning the objectives
- Portfolio Considerations used for the final selection of proposals to be funded.
- Strategic plan for challenge & Common roadmap
- Read in conjunction with EIC 2026 Work Programme!
- EIC Pathfinder Challenges 2026 - European Innovation Council

EIC Programme Manager

- Hedi Harray EIC Programme Managers - European Commission (europa.eu)
- Follow on LinkedIn & listen to their 'Tech Talks'
- Read the relevant Challenge Guides!!!!
- Establishes a common roadmap
- Proactively steers the portfolio towards the goal of each challenge
- Projects are expected to:
  - Interact & exchange
  - Remain flexible & reactive
  - Progress together toward goals

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Background to DeepRAP

Building AI capabilities for trusted and responsible autonomy

From prompting to intuitive interactions

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DeepRAP: Goal

Inspired by the human brain's ability to process information at multiple levels

- The goal of this Challenge is to move beyond the current state-of-the-art in traditional AI approaches, whether symbolic (e.g., rules, decision trees, symbolic regression, etc.) or connectionist, neural (e.g., deep learning, large language models, reinforcement learning).
- Significantly improve the Reasoning, Abstraction & Planning (RAP) capabilities of AI Systems
- Overcome - limitations of current deep learning models, which despite their strengths, have limitations in critical cognitive functions for abstraction, contextualisation, causality, explainability, & intelligible reasoning
  - competencies that are fundamental to move towards human-like intelligence.

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DeepRAP: 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 & reinforcement learning paradigms for one or more of the following cognitive capabilities:
  - Deep Reasoning
  - Deep Abstraction
  - Deep Planning
- Could be inspired by developments in diverse fields such as neuroscience, biology, physics, philosophy etc.

DeepRAP: Deep Reasoning

- Moving beyond statistical pattern matching to support causal inference, logical reasoning, & context-aware or commonsense decision-making in complex, unstructured environments.
- Requires shifting from purely data-driven correlations to AI systems capable of understanding why patterns emerge, identifying underlying causes, & drawing valid conclusions through both deductive & inductive processes.
- Neuro-symbolic approaches, which combine the learning power of neural networks with the structured inference of symbolic reasoning are particularly encouraged to advance these capabilities. Integrating contextual & commonsense knowledge enables AI to interpret information more holistically, adapt decisions dynamically, & handle ambiguity & uncertainty.
- Deep reasoning systems should be able to reconcile multiple sources of information, provide transparent & explainable rationales for their outputs, & align with human values & expectations, ensuring trustworthy & accountable operations in demanding real-world scenarios.

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Deep abstraction

- Enabling AI systems to generalise insights from limited data by forming, manipulating, & refining high-level concepts, analogies, & representations that can be transferred across diverse application domains
- Includes the development of internal world models to support abstraction, foster commonsense understanding, & integrate semantic & contextual awareness
- Approaches that combine symbolic reasoning, analogical mapping, & representation learning are particularly encouraged, as they empower AI to interpret meaning, intent, & relationships within complex environments.
- Progress in deep abstraction is essential for achieving cognitive flexibility, robust transfer learning, & adaptive reasoning in dynamic, data-scarce, or rapidly evolving settings

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Deep Planning

- Developing robust, adaptive, & scalable planning algorithms/models capable of operating in open-world, agentic, or uncertain real-time environments
  - leveraging advanced deep learning techniques such as deep reinforcement learning & architectures tailored for planning tasks to enable AI systems to autonomously devise, optimise, & adjust complex strategies in dynamic settings
- Neuro-symbolic approaches integrating neural networks with symbolic reasoning are particularly encouraged to address uncertainty, provide formal guarantees, & enable explainable, dependable decision-making. Emphasis is placed on long-term, flexible planning that incorporates cognitive timing & predictive modelling, enabling systems to anticipate & adapt within dynamic contexts.
- Approaches should explore hierarchical planning across multiple temporal levels, contingency planning for effective fallback strategies, & continual re-planning to dynamically update plans as environments evolve.
- These advancements will underpin resilient, coordinated, & trustworthy AI planning in complex, unpredictable scenarios.

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DeepRAP: Expected outcomes (1)

- Models &/or architectures that handle multimodal data & knowledge, uncertainty, & can be trained & deployed with constrained computational resources
- Provable trustworthiness mechanisms ensuring explainability, transparency, fairness, risk evaluation, security & alignment with ethical & legal standards
- Demonstrate 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

DeepRAP: Expected outcomes (2)

- Propose new methods & metrics for evaluating & certifying reasoning & trustworthiness in AI as well as the use of the computational resources
- Follow the FAIR principles ensuring all data, models, & results are Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, & Reusable to maximise transparency, reproducibility, & impact, &Develop synergies with EU initiatives such as:
  - TEFs (AI Testing & Experimentation Facilities, eBrains, Resource for AI Science in Europe (RAISE), AI-on-demand Platform (AIoD) & the Quantum Flagship

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Portfolio approach

- The composition of the portfolio of projects to be funded under the DeepRAP Challenge will ensure comprehensive coverage across the following categories with a view to ensuring breadth & enabling synergies between the projects:
  - **Category 1** – Cognitive Function Capability: Reasoning, abstraction, & planning should be covered by the selected portfolio
  - **Category 2** – Technological Approach: The selected projects are expected to use a variety of technological approaches, including but not limited to, neuro-symbolic AI, deep learning, reinforcement learning, & novel frameworks inspired by interdisciplinary fields
  - **Category 3** – Use Case & Application Domain: The selected projects will cover a variety of real-world domains, such as industry, mobility, civil security, scientific discovery, health, cybersecurity, justice & human-robot interaction.

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Selected projects assigned to lead &/or engage on following Priorities

- **Interoperability:** Establishing common standards & protocols to ensure seamless alignment between projects
- **Benchmark Development:** Co-creating a DeepRAP benchmark with shared tasks & an open evaluation platform for transparent assessment
- **Common Pilots:** Delivering joint pilot demonstrations addressing complex real-world problems to showcase DeepRAP capabilities
- **Multiagent Integration:** where feasible, combining project outcomes into modular, multiagent AI systems demonstrating collective reasoning & planning through structured interactions among multiple agents
- **Application Shaping:** Defining impactful use cases & engaging stakeholders to guide the development & adoption of innovative cognitive AI systems
- **Ethical & Societal Alignment:** Proactively addressing ethical, legal, & societal considerations, including fundamental rights, transparency, privacy, safety, & fairness of cognitive AI systems.

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Expect Impact

- The resulting portfolio will not only advance the scientific state-of-the-art but also build a robust, interoperable, & application-driven community, positioning Europe at the forefront of trustworthy cognitive AI.
- Also lay the foundations for future European leadership in safe, human-centric cognitive AI, supporting sovereignty & competitiveness in key sectors.
- It will support the ambitions of the AI Act & the European approach to Artificial Intelligence

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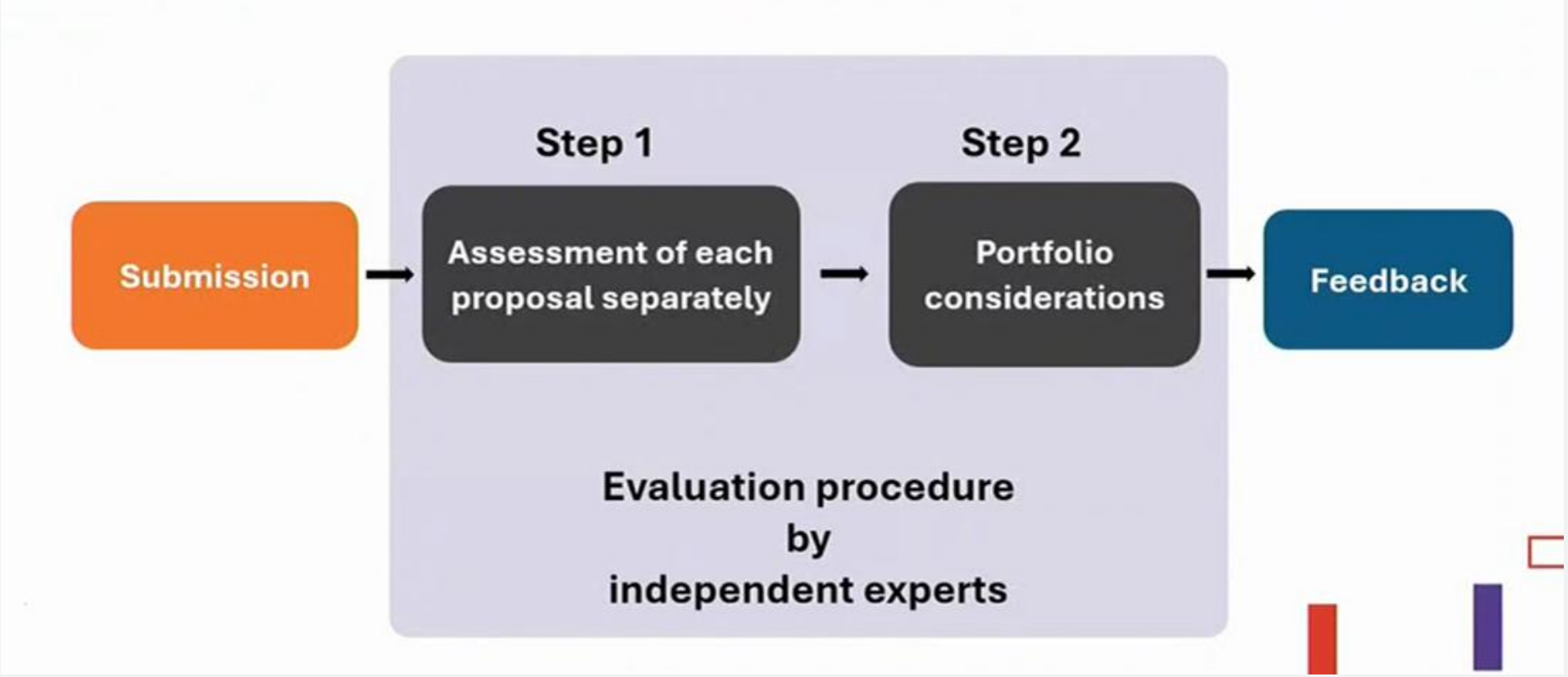
How is proposal funding determined



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Step 1: Assessment of each proposal separately

- At least 3 EIC expert evaluators evaluate & score each proposal individually wrt award criteria
- After individual evaluation – consensus group to agree common position on comments & scores (introduced in 2024)
- Evaluation Committee will check consistency across the evaluation of each individual proposal & finalise the scores & comments for all proposals.
  - EIC expert evaluators & EIC Programme Managers

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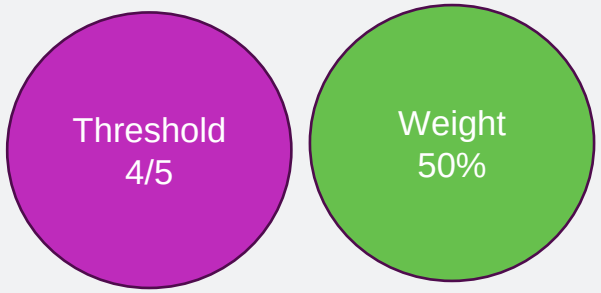
Award Criterion - Excellence



- Objectives & relevance to the challenge
  - Are they clear
  - Contribution to overall goal & specific objectives of the Challenge
- Novelty
  - To what extent is ambitious & goes beyond the state-of-the-art?
- Plausibility of the methodology
  - Sound?
  - Underlying concepts, models, assumptions, appropriate consideration of the gender dimension in research content, & the quality of open science practices

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Award Criterion - Impact

Threshold 3.5/5

Weight 30%

- Potential impact
  - Credible pathways to achieve expected outcomes & impacts of the Challenge
  - Would successful completion of the project contribute to this
- Innovation potential
  - How realistic is proof of principle for demonstrating impact of technology of the Challenge
  - Adequate protection of results & other exploitation measures
  - Societal, economic or environmental impact
  - Empowering key actors with potential to lead translating research into innovations
- Communication & dissemination
  - Suitable proposed measures to maximise expected outcomes & Impacts
  - Addressing global challenges & establishing new markets

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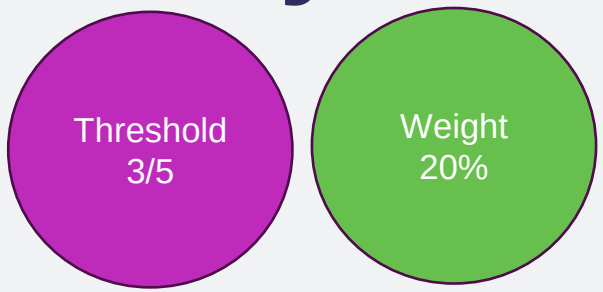
Award Criterion – Quality & efficiency of the implementation



- Work plan
  - Coherent & effective to achieve project objectives
    - work plan – work packages, deliverables, milestones, timelines etc)
    - Risk mitigation
- Allocation of resources
  - Appropriate & effective (person months & other cost items)
  - To work packages & consortium members
- Quality of the applicant/consortium
  - To what extend does the applicant / do all consortium members have the necessary capacity & high quality expertise for performing the project tasks

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Step 2: Portfolio Considerations

- See Challenge Guide
- All proposals that meet threshold defined in award criteria will be considered in Step 2
- Mapping of proposals in categories based on objectives & goal of the Challenge
  - Building blocks or subsystems, technical areas &/or competing technologies, platforms, applications areas, risk level, size & TRL
- Suitable portfolio of projects – portfolio considerations
  - Selected by evaluation committee
  - Coherent with the scope & specific objectives, to the development of a variety of advanced materials applied to a range of miniaturised energy harvesting modules & final integrated systems
  - Include 10 person months
- Evaluation committee may also propose minor adjustments

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Portfolio Categories

All proposal that pass threshold in Step 1 will be mapped to following categories:

1. Cognitive function capability coverage
2. Technology approach & integration
3. Application Domain & Use Case
4. Synergy aspects

Category 1: Cognitive Function Capability Coverage

This category assesses which of the three core cognitive capabilities your proposal addresses:

- **Deep Reasoning Projects (DR):** Proposals focusing on causal inference, logical reasoning & probabilistic reasoning , context-aware decision-making, commonsense reasoning, end-to end differentiable reasoning, dynamic & parallel & multi-modal reasoning (including Visual, Spatial, Temporal), as well as explainable AI frameworks
- **Deep Abstraction Projects (DA):** Proposals emphasizing generalization from limited data, concept formation, analogical reasoning, abstract world model building, Semantic Understanding & Context recognition, & transfer learning
- **Deep Planning Projects (DP):** Proposals concentrating on adaptive planning algorithms, real-time decision making, & hierarchical long term planning systems that reason at multiple levels of temporal abstraction, contingency planning, & continual re-planning techniques
- **Multi-Capability Projects (MC):** Proposals addressing capabilities with clear integration mechanisms & comprehensive architectures that incorporate models with like for example Reasoning & Planning, Abstraction & Reasoning, etc

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Category 2: Technological Approach & integration

Projects will be categorized based on their technological approach. One project may address various technical approaches:

- **Neuro-symbolic AI (NeSy):** Hybrid approaches combining neural networks with symbolic reasoning
- **Advanced Deep Learning (ADL):** Novel neural architectures, transformer variants, attention mechanisms or other deep learning innovations
- **Reinforcement Learning (RL):** Advanced RL approaches, multi-agent RL, or hierarchical RL
- **Cognitive Architectures (CA):** BDI-based systems, cognitive modelling approaches, or biologically inspired architectures
- **Novel Interdisciplinary Frameworks (NIF):** Approaches inspired by neuroscience, biology, physics, philosophy, or other fields
- **Formal Methods Integration (FMI):** Approaches incorporating formal verification, logic programming, or mathematical guarantees
- **Multimodal Integration (MMI):** Systems handling multiple data types & modalities (text, vision, audio, sensors)
- **Trustworthiness mechanisms Integration (TM):** explainability & interpretability, Fairness, safety verification, real world robustness.

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Category 3: Application Domain & Use Case

Projects will be mapped according to their primary application focus.

- **Scientific Discovery (SD):** AI systems for hypothesis generation, experiment design, or knowledge discovery (chemistry, materials, biology, climate etc.)
- **Decision Support Systems (DSS):** Applications in healthcare, finance, policy-making, or strategic planning, …
- **Autonomous Systems (AS):** Robotics, autonomous vehicles, or other embodied AI applications
- **Human-AI Collaboration (HAIC):** Systems designed for human-AI teaming or augmented intelligence
- **Cybersecurity (CS):** AI systems for threat detection, response planning, or security analysis
- **Industrial Applications (Ind):** Manufacturing optimization, supply chain management, or process control
- **Social & Societal Applications (SSA):** AI systems addressing social challenges or public services

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Category 4 Synergy aspects

- Project's capacity & strategy to engage in portfolio-wide collaboration & collective value creation, as required by the DeepRAP Challenge.

Proposals will be categorised on specific dimensions of synergy, including:

- **Benchmark Development (Ben):** Proposals contributing to the portfolio-wide creation of shared benchmarks for reasoning, abstraction, & planning, including data, shared tasks, & open evaluation protocols.
- **Interoperability (Int):** Projects developing or adopting standards, protocols, & APIs to facilitate technical integration & compatibility among different systems & components across the DeepRAP portfolio.
- **Joint Pilots & Demonstrations: (JPD)** Proposals engaging in multi-partner pilots that combine results, tools, or models from different projects to jointly address real-world or complex scenarios, especially through multiagent or modular system integration.

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Portfolio Considerations

- All three cognitive function capabilities (reasoning, abstraction, planning) should be represented in the portfolio
- The selected projects in the portfolio should cover a variety of different technological approaches.
- The selected projects should cover a variety of different approaches for trustworthiness. Explainability & formal guarantees will be preferred.
- The portfolio should cover diverse application domains to demonstrate broad applicability & potential impact
- The selected projects can significantly contribute to shared portfolio activities (interoperability, benchmarking, common pilots)

Summary of Portfolio Building approach

Category	Focus	Key Consideration
1. Cognitive Function	☐ DR ☐ DA ☐ DP ☐ MC	Ensure all three capabilities are covered; prioritize projects addressing multiple capabilities
2. Technological Approach	☐NeSy ☐ADL ☐RL ☐CA ☐NIF ☐FMI ☐MMI ☐TM	Encourage diversity while prioritizing hybrid approaches. For trustworthiness, diversity of approaches is looked for, with a preference for explainability and formal guarantees
3. Application Domain	☐SD ☐DSS ☐AS ☐HAIC ☐CS ☐Ind ☐SSA	Ensure broad applicability and real-world relevance of the use cases
4. Synergies	☐Ben ☐Int ☐JPD	Ensure all activities are covered and could be orchestrated smoothly among the projects.

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Additionally, describe

Projects potential for:

- Technical synergies
- Resource sharing
- Collaborative Innovation

- N.B. Implies that if the evaluation committee considers that a highly ranked proposal does not have a commonality with other proposals, it will not be selected for the portfolio.

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Portfolio Activities - PLAN

- Programme Manager will work together with the consortia of the selected projects to develop a common strategy plan/roadmap for the Challenge.
- Plan will integrate the activities & milestones of the individual projects into a shared set of specific objectives & activities across & beyond the projects.
- Updated on a yearly basis in light of emerging results or issues during the implementation.
- Objectives can be revised, for instance based on projects' unexpected achievements, new technology trends, external inputs (other projects, new calls…).
- In particular, the Challenge strategic plan will include activities on the transition to innovation & commercialisation, & to stimulate business opportunities & to raise the awareness on the topic related to the portfolio.

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Governance thro' Working Groups

- WG 1 – Technology Integration, Validation & Demonstration
- WG 2 – Transition of Technology to Innovation
- WG 3 – Regulation, Ethics & Trustworthiness
- WG 4 – Communication & Dissemination

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WG 1 – Technology Integration, Validation & Demonstration

- DeepRAP Benchmark Development:
  - Collaborative creation of standardized benchmarks for reasoning, abstraction, & planning capabilities
- Interoperability Standards:
  - Development of common APIs & protocols for cognitive AI system integration
- Cross-project Validation
  - Projects validating their approaches using datasets & scenarios from other portfolio projects •
- Hybrid System Development
  - Integration of complementary technologies from different projects into unified cognitive architectures
- Demonstration
  - Joint pilot projects demonstrating integrated cognitive AI capabilities
- Validation
  - Cross-domain validation of reasoning, abstraction, & planning technologies

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WG 2 – Transition of Technology to Innovation

- Portfolio activities developing techno-economic views on the future implementation, adoption, & scaling potential of cognitive AI technologies in realistic real-world conditions
- Market analysis: Map the targeted players in cognitive AI markets & exchange market research analysis results with other portfolio projects to identify specific players with which the entire portfolio can establish partnership(s)
- Discussions on IP, licensing & business models for cognitive AI systems & commercialisation strategy
- Discussions with early stage private & corporate investors focused on cognitive AI & related fields
- Providing access to new markets through multipliers like Enterprise Europe Network

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WG 3 – Regulation, Ethics & Trustworthiness

- Discussing the relevant Challenge ethics issues, especially when within the portfolio there are projects that are subject to ethics reviews
- Perform activities that support, inform, & participate in discussions around the process of putting forward relevant ethical principles for cognitive AI & discussing appropriate approaches for compliance
- Development of shared frameworks for AI explainability & trustworthiness assessment
- Engagement with civil society organizations & public stakeholders on cognitive AI applications

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WG 4 – Communication & Dissemination

- Effective communication of key outcomes of the research work of the portfolio members collectively &/or individually to early stage private & corporate investors focused on cognitive AI
- Communication might also be addressed to the general public to increase social acceptance for cognitive AI solutions, or to other researchers & stakeholders through common dissemination activities at scientific conferences or trade fairs
- Organizing joint conferences, workshops, summer schools, etc. on cognitive AI topics
- Development of shared educational materials & training programs

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WG operations

- Each project will nominate a representative for each WG. A chair will be nominated from among them.
- The chair will be responsible to prepare meeting agendas, links to the meeting & minutes of the meetings.
- WG Meetings are expected to be online & to be scheduled approximately every 3 months.
- One annual portfolio meeting in person, where all WG will meet & present progress.
- The exchange of information for the purpose of EIC portfolio activities will fall under the conditions & non-disclosure obligations as specified in the EIC Work Programme 2026 (Annex 6, section 2).

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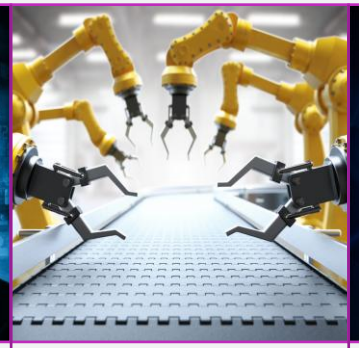
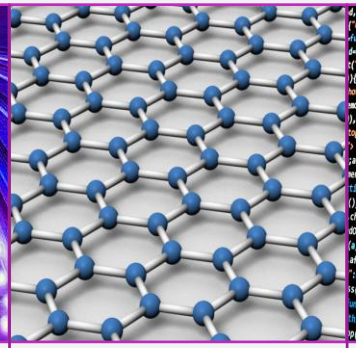
Opportunities in Pillar 2

Eleni Bohacek
UK National Contact Point
– Horizon Europe (Digital)

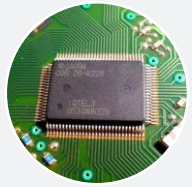
Pillar II

Cluster 4: Digital Topic Areas

						
AI, Data & Computing	Robotics	Photonics & Electronics	Smart Networks & Connectivity	Quantum	Graphene/2D materials	Digital Economy, standards, NGI, XR, Human factors

Plus Separate Joint Undertaking Calls in:

6G Smart Networks and Services



Chips – electronic systems, components, semiconductors (UK joined March 2024)

EuroHPC

Pillar II

Partnerships types in Cluster 4 Digital topics

The aim of European Partnerships with EU and associated countries, the private sector, foundations and other stakeholders is to deliver on global challenges and modernise industry.

The following are key partnerships in the area of Digital (roadmaps, networking):

Co-programmed:

- Artificial Intelligence, Data and Robotics – https://adr-association.eu
- Photonics - https://www.photonics21.org
- Virtual Worlds (new) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_3718

The AI Data Robotics Association

PHOTONICS21

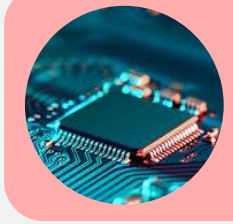
Pillar II

Global Challenges European Industrial Competitiveness Cluster 4 2026 Work Programme

Divided into six 'Destinations' (research themes), each containing a list of call 'Topics' (funding opportunities)

D1: Climate neutral, circular and digitised production

Budget	Topics	Projects
€260m	12	~77



D2: Increased autonomy in key strategic value chains for resilient industry

Budget	Topics	Projects
€94m	5	~14

D3: World leading data and computing technologies

Budget	Topics	Projects
€76m	3	~5

D4: Digital and emerging technologies for competitiveness and fit for the Green Deal

Budget	Topics	Projects
€167m	13	~24

D5: Open strategic autonomy in developing, deploying and using global space-based infrastructures, services, applications and data

Budget	Topics	Projects
€92m	6	~19

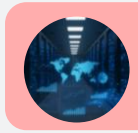
D6: A human-centred and ethical development of digital and industrial technologies

Budget	Topics	Projects
€48m	2	~10

From 2026 Draft Work Programme (dated 14 July 2025), excluding Partnerships

Pillar II

Global Challenges European Industrial Competitiveness Cluster 4: Digital 2026-2027 Work Programme



D3: Achieving open strategic autonomy in digital and emerging enabling technologies. Selected topics

Budget €142m | **Topics** 5 | **Projects** 7

HORIZON-CL4-…	Topic Title	Type of Action	Overall Budget (EUR million)	Expected EU contribution per Project (EUR million)	Expected no. of Projects funded
2026-05-DIGITAL-EMERGING-02	Next-Generation AI Agents for Real-World Applications in the Apply AI sectors	RIA	38	19	2
2027-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-11	EU Frontier AI Initiative: Developing frontier AI solutions that are safe and computationally efficient within Apply AI	RIA	44	44	1
2026-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-01	Apply AI: Pilot of the 'Science for AI' Pillar of RAISE ("Resource for AI science in Europe")	RIA	17	17	1
2026-05-DIGITAL-EMERGING-03	Apply AI: Next-Generation Agile and Intelligent Robotics Platforms for Industrial and Service Applications	RIA	25	12-13	2
2027-04-DIGITAL-EMERGING-05	Apply AI: AI-Driven Robotics for Industry: Enabling System Integration and Adoption	IA	18	18	1

And much more, access the Cluster 4 (Digital Industry and Space) 2026-2027 Work Programme here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2026-2027/wp-7-digital-industry-and-space_horizon-2026-2027_en.pdf

Deadlines: Opening: 15 Jan 2026 Deadline: 15 Apr 2026 Opening: 17 Nov 2026 Deadline: 18 Mar 2027

Bid Writers & Consultants

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EIC Board Observations on the use of Consultants

- EIC Board observations on the use of consultants for the EIC applications - European Innovation Council
- Applicants are free to seek consultancy services
- **BUT** success is possible without them
- Highlights the main support options, such as National Contact Points (NCPs), University TTOs, insights from previous applicants, BAS & Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)/ IUK Business Growth
- Code of Conduct - ethical standards – verify adherence
- Read the small print

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Working with Consultants/ bid writers

- Read the small print
- Contract considerations – be cautious of exclusivity clauses, IP rights & the nature of consultancy contracts
- Assess their capabilities, compare multiple offers, consider sector specific expertise & ensure compliance with Code of Conduct.
- Be aware of success rates
- Applicants must remain engaged & responsible for applications

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Business Acceleration Services (BAS)

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BAS Aims for EIC

- View is - Financial Support is beginning of journey
- Mechanisms to help bring innovations to the market & grow your business

- Some are compulsory e.g. Coaching in EIC Transition
- All are worth considering

- BAS - European Innovation Council - European Commission

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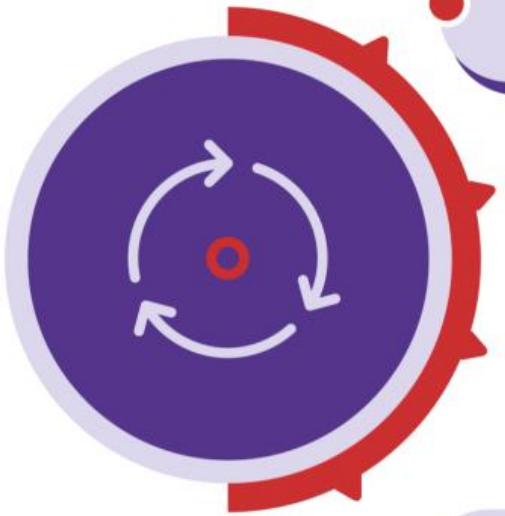
Additional opportunities for EIC Awardees

Projects

or their beneficiaries funded through

EIC Pathfinder & EIC Transition are eligible to apply for



- **EIC Booster grants** of up to €50,000 to undertake complementary activities
- **EIC Transition** to transform their research results into innovation on the market
- EIC Accelerator support via the **Fast Track** scheme
- a wide range of **Business Acceleration Services**, including coaching and networking

Coaching for Transition projects becomes mandatory!!!

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Thank you!

Pillar 3 – Innovative Europe

Claire Griffin
UK's NCP for EIC & EIE

11 December 2025

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UKRI Innovate UK

UK Research and Innovation

Questions?

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