European Innovation Council

Info Day in Nicosia, Cyprus

18 February 2026

RESEARCH & INNOVATION FOUNDATION

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Information on the breakout rooms

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14:00 – 15:00	**SIGNATURE : Plenary session**
15:00 – 15:15	**Break**
15:15 – 17:00	**DIONYSOS: Parallel Session 1**: EIC for deep tech startups and scale-ups – Accelerator/STEP/EIC Fund
	AMATHUSIA: Parallel Session 2: EIC for deep tech researchers – Pathfinder/Transition
17:00 – 18:00	**Dionysos lobby area**: Networking cocktail reception

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Welcome Remarks

Theodoros Loukaidis

Director General of the Cyprus Research & Innovation Foundation (RIF)

Stavriana Kofteros

EIC Ambassador, EIC jury Member, Founder & Partner @W11 Ventures, Cofounder & Chair @Startup Cyprus

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A walk though the European Innovation Council (EIC) journey

Overview of programmes, funding opportunities, criteria and timelines

Angelo Wille

Deputy Head of EIC Unit, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission

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BACKING *VISIONARY* ENTREPRENEURS

What's holding back EUROPEAN INNOVATION?

PERFORMANCE

- Strong research performance *not translated into innovation*
- *Lack of breakthrough / disruptive innovations* that create new markets

FUNDING & INVESTMENT

- Financing gaps
- 2 "valleys of death"
  - In Transition from lab to enterprise
  - Scaling up for high-risk innovative start-ups

ECOSYSTEM

- Many national & local ecosystems, but fragmented at European level
- Need to include all regions and all talent (especially female)

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"You never run as fast as when you have other people to catch up and pass."

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Who will lead the next
STRATEGIC INNOVATIONS?

PAST

EU & US LEAD

Electricity, Car, Synthetic, Chemicals,Barcode, Telecoms, Airplane, Antibiotics, Sea Container, Semi-conductors, PC

PRESENT

US & ASIA LEAD

GPS, Smart phone, Internet, Social media Artificial Intelligence, 3D Printing, Digital Platforms, The Cloud, Blockchain, Internet of Things

FUTURE

Next Leaders ?

Advanced Semiconductors
Artificial Intelligence
Quantum
Biotechnologies
Advanced Connectivity, Navigation & Digital
Advanced Sensing
Space & propulsion
Energy
Robotics & Autonomous Systems
Advanced Materials, Manufacturing & Recycling

The EIC Beneficiary Journey

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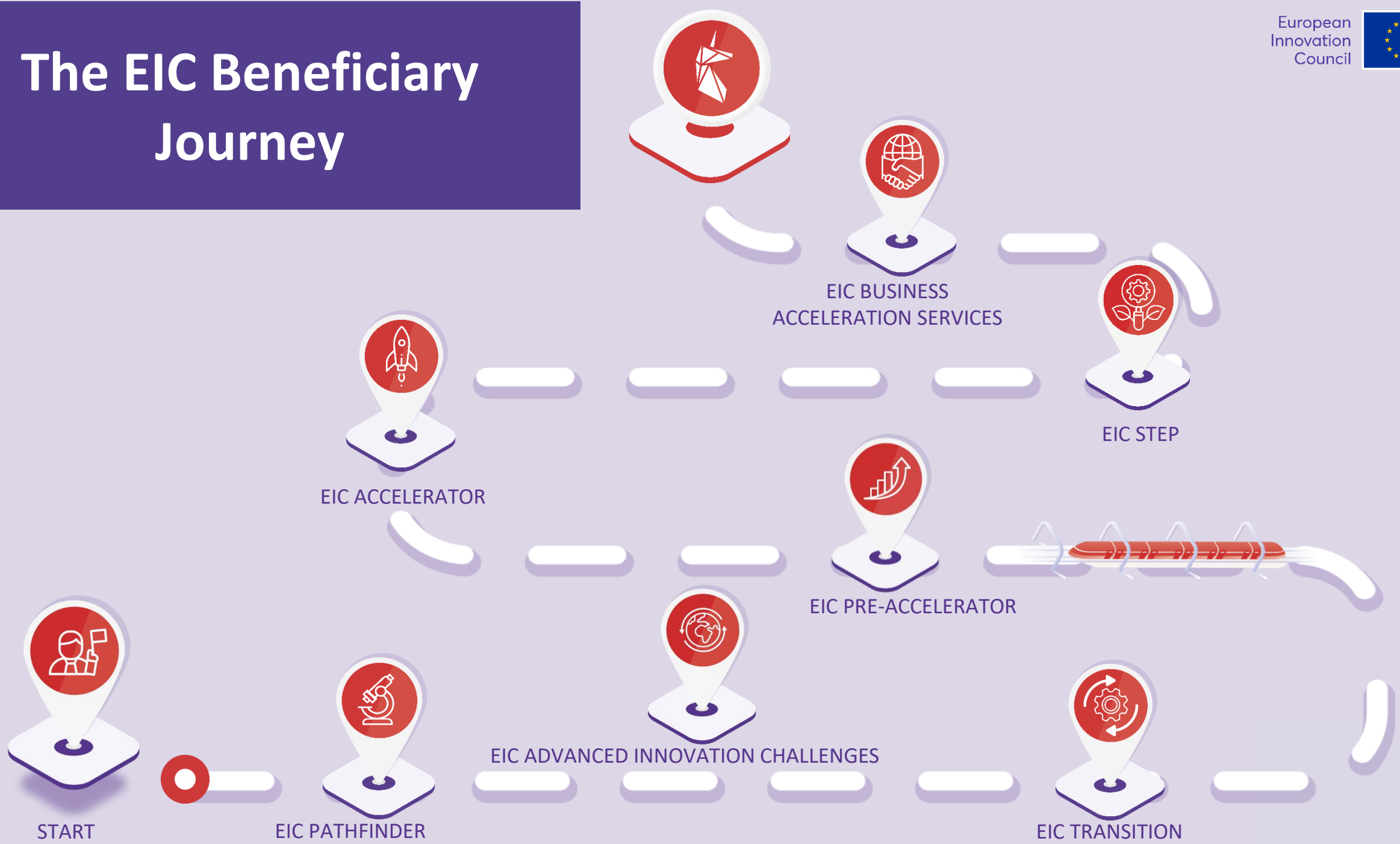


Cyprus stats in EIC programmes

EIC Funding Scheme	Distinct Count of Project Number	Sum of Participant Grant Amount	Sum of Investment Requested
Accelerator	1	1548268.75	7500000
Pathfinder	18	9632842.36	
Transition	2	949687.5	
Grand Total	21	12130798.61	7500000

6 projects coordinated, 17 unique beneficiaries across all schemes

What makes EIC UNIQUE?

01. A European DARPA

- Focus on disruptive high risk breakthrough technologies
- Innovator friendly: flexibility to apply at any time with a short pitch (video pitch, slide deck, 5-page form)
- EIC Programme Managers to develop visions, proactively manage projects, steer portfolios (based on experience of DARPA, ARPA-E, BARDA, etc.)

02. EU Unicorn Factory

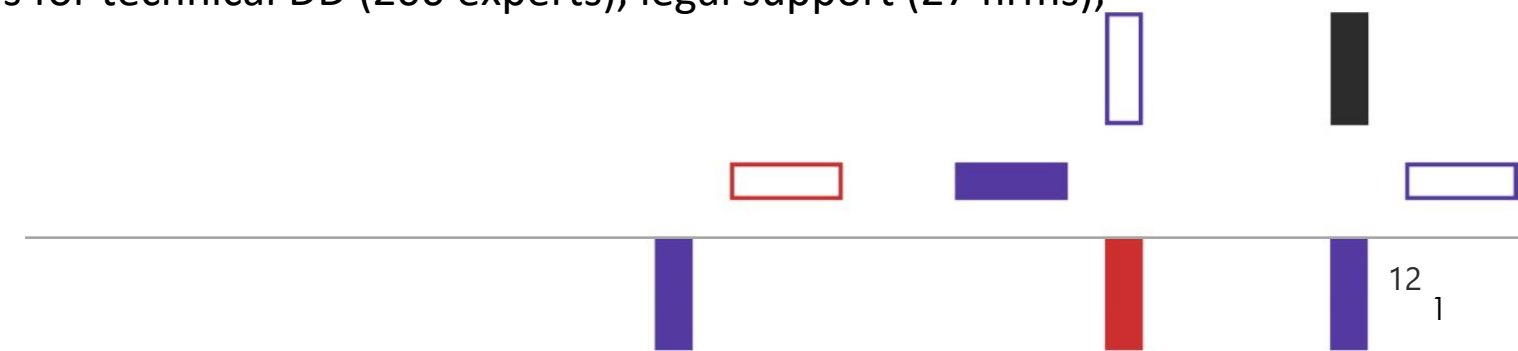
- Focus on high risk, disruptive startups & SMEs with scale up potential.
- EIC Fund set to become largest early stage VC investor in Europe, crowding in other investors.
- Flexible follow up funding ("Transition") to create business opportunities out of research results.

03. An upgraded Innovation Community

- EIC Community a box full of exciting business acceleration services and an extensive innovation ecosystem is waiting for EIC beneficiary
- EIC Forum bringing together innovation ecosystem actors from across Europe
- Horizon Europe "innovation ecosystems" program to support networking and joint initiatives between ecosystem actors
- Partnerships with European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT), European Research Council (ERC) and others.

EIC Accelerator Fund Overview

- EIC Fund is the vehicle set up to deploy and manage the equity investments under the EIC Accelerator programme.
- Following its restructuring, EICF was set up as a private fund structure mirroring standard market practices:
  - Specialised team at the European Investment Bank (EIB) acting as investment advisor
  - AlterDomus acting as the alternative investment fund manager (AIFM) and the administrative agent
  - Investment committee and advisory committee including VC experts (6) set up at the AIFM
  - EICF BoD set up for strategic guidance
  - Large network of service providers for technical DD (200 experts), legal support (27 firms), KYC assessment etc.



EIC Proactive Management

- Strategic assessment and clustering of projects
- Building of portfolios based on strategic intelligence
- Portfolio management (scientific and business advice)
- IP management advice (in collaboration with the technology transfer offices)

EIC PROGRAMME MANAGERS

Orsolya Symmons
Health and Biotechnology

Hedi Karray
Artificial Intelligence

Stella Tkatchova
Space systems & technologies

Samira Nik
Quantum tech & electronics

Franc Mouwen
Architecture engineering construction technologies

Federica Zanca
Medical imaging and AI in healthcare

Ivan Stefanic
Food chain technologies, novel & sustainable food

Isabel Obieta
Responsible electronics

Carina Faber
Renewable energy conversion & alternative resource exploitation

Paolo Bondavalli
Advanced materials for energy

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EIC GOVERNANCE

EIC Board & President

- To advice on strategy & implementation

European Commission

- To define strategy, adopt the Work Programme & appoint the EIC board

EISMEA

- Implementation of EIC, hosting EIC Programme Managers

EIB & AIFM

- To manage EIC Fund equity investments

EIC *Board*

ROLE TO ADVISE:

- EIC strategy

DIVERSE EXPERTISE:

- Entrepreneurs, investors, researchers, innovation ecosystem
- Gender balance (parity), geographic balance (17 nationalities)

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EIC

WHO CAN APPLY & WHAT FOR?

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PATHFINDER

Consortia of at least 3 different independent legal entities established in at least 3 different eligible countries.
Additionally, single applicants or small consortia (2 partners) for EIC Pathfinder Challenges only.

Grants of up €4 million, or more if duly justified, *to achieve the proof of principle and validate the scientific basis of breakthrough technology (Technology Readiness Levels 1-4)*

EIC ADVANCED INNOVATION CHALLENGES

To support high-risk, demand-driven deep tech innovation with transformative potential especially in areas where there is extensive research but lack of commercial uptake.

Stage 1: €300,000

Stage 2: Up to €2.5 million

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TRANSITION

Single applicants (SMEs, spin-offs, start-ups, research organisations, universities) or small consortia (2 partners) or consortia of 3 to 5 different independent legal entities established in at least 3 different eligible countries. *Proposals must build on eligible EU-funded project results.*

Grants of up to €2.5 million *to validate and demonstrate technology in application-relevant environment (Technology Readiness Levels 4 to 5/6) and develop market readiness.*

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EIC ACCELERATOR

Single start-ups and SMEs (including spin-outs), individuals (intending to launch a start-up/SME) and in exceptional cases small mid-caps (fewer than 499 employees)

Grants for up to €2.5 million for developing your innovation (TRL 6 to 8).
Investments of €0.5 up to €10 million in the form of direct equity or convertible loans for scaling up your innovation and attracting co-investors.

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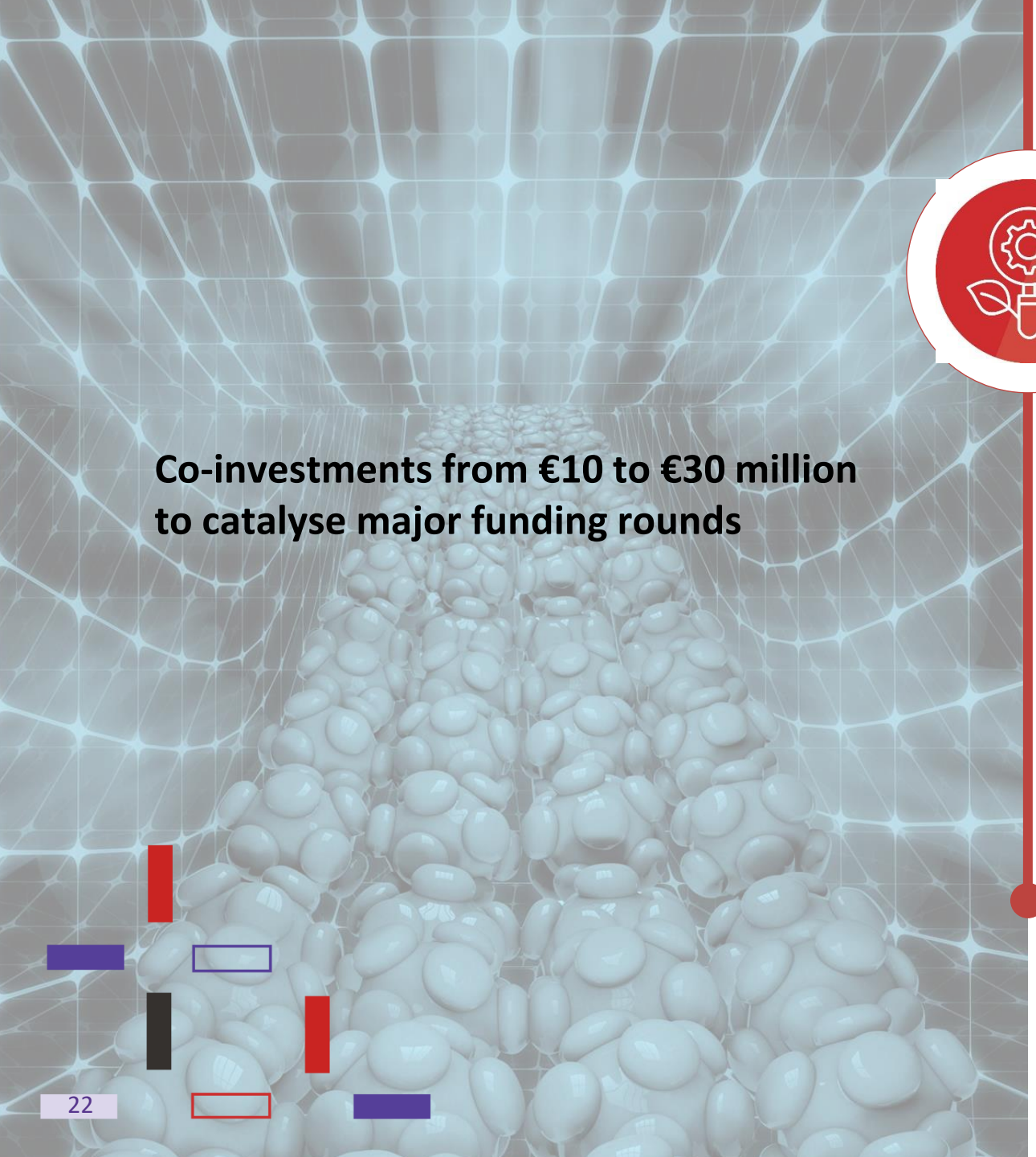

Co-investments from €10 to €30 million to catalyse major funding rounds

EIC STEP

EIC Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform

For scale up companies (SMEs and small mid-caps) with game-changing innovations in Europe's critical technology areas.

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WIDERA 2026-2027 Work Programme – EIC Pre-Accelerator

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Boost the innovation potential of early-stage deep-tech startups in Widening countries by enhancing their business, investor, and technology readiness to secure funding from the EIC Accelerator or other sources (.

Increased business, investor, and technology readiness towards commercialisation and deployment (at least all aspects of TRL 5 completed) **of high potential deep-tech startups** in Widening countries to a level where they will:

- be successful in applying and attracting **the EIC Accelerator** funding and/or;
- manage to secure other **private investment** and/or;
- attract successfully **national or regional funding** as alternative funding sources (e.g. through Seal of Excellence programmes).

EIC Pre-Accelerator - European Innovation Council - European Commission

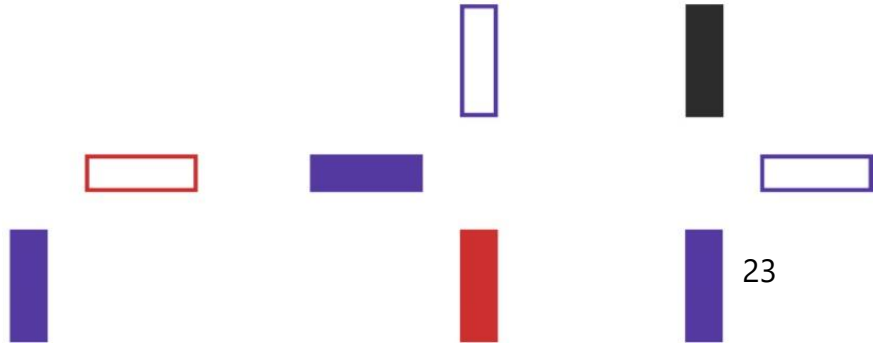
Call opening / closing:
5 May 2027 / 18 November 2027

Type of action: CSA

Budget: EUR 40 million

Indicative number of projects: 60

2025 call: 27 proposals from Cyprus



EIC IMPACTS (2025)

CROWDING IN OTHER INVESTMENTS

- **€ 12 billion** follow **on** investments to EIC supported companies
- Leverage effect: **4.3** times private co-investment on EIC Fund investments
- **70 centaurs** - value €100 million+

ADDRESSING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- Main thematic in:
  - ✓ **Health**
  - ✓ **Digital, industry and space**
  - ✓ **Clean tech**

GROWING SUPPORT TO START-UPS & SMEs

- **Nearly €70 billion portfolio value**
- EIC companies averaging **35%** employment growth and **68%** revenue growth

A PIPELINE OF BREAKTHROUGH TECHNOLOGIES

- **600** research projects
- **1350** unique innovations generated from EIC research projects

EIC *OPEN & CHALLENGES* OVERVIEW 2026

	EIC PATHFINDER	EIC TRANSITION	EIC ACCELERATOR	EIC STEP
OPEN				
DEADLINES	◦ 12 May 2026	◦ 16 September 2026	◦ Short Applications: continuous ◦ Batches 7.01.2026 | 4.03.2026 | 6.05.2026 |8.07.2026 | 2.09.2026 | 4.11.2026	◦ Submit application anytime
INDICATIVE BUDGET	◦ **€ 166 MILLION**	◦ **€ 100 MILLION**	◦ **€ 414 MILLION**	◦ **€ 300 MILLION**
CHALLENGES				
DEADLINES/CUT-OFFS	◦ 289 October 2026		◦ Short Applications: continuous ◦ Batches 7.01.2026 | 4.03.2026 | 6.05.2026 |8.07.2026 | 2.09.2026 | 4.11.2026	
INDICATIVE BUDGET	◦ **€ 96 MILLION**		◦ **€ 250 MILLION**	
CHALLENGES	◦ Biotech for climate resilient crops and plant-based biomanufacturing ◦ Generative-AI based agents to revolutionise medical diagnosis and treatment of cancer ◦ Towards autonomous robot collectives delivering collaborative tasks in dynamic unstructured construction environments ◦ Waste-to-value devices: circular production of renewable fuels, chemicals and materials		◦ Acceleration of advanced materials development and upscaling along the value chain ◦ Biotechnology driven low emission food and feed production systems ◦ Creating European Champions in Generative AI ◦ Innovative in-space servicing, operations, robotics and technologies for resilient EU space infrastructure ◦ Breakthrough innovations for future mobility	

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Q&A Session

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Coffee Break

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