EIC ACCELERATOR DUAL USE

INFO Session

16.07.2026

European Innovation Council

European Innovation Council

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EIC WORK PROGRAMME 2026 AMENDMENT

Policy context

Defence Mini-Omnibus

European
Innovation
Council

Adopted

19 Dec 2025

Amends several EU funding programmes — including **Horizon Europe** — to incentivise **defence-related investment** under the **ReArm Europe Plan**.

Responds to heightened geopolitical threats — particularly Russia's war against Ukraine — by strengthening the **European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB)**.

Fosters innovation in **dual-use and defence technologies**.

Defence Mini-Omnibus

European Innovation Council

Where the omnibus opens the door — and one entry that concerns the EIC directly.

Programme	Full name	What changes
DEP	**Digital Europe Programme**	Expands dual-use digital projects and AI infrastructure.
HORIZON	**Horizon Europe (EIC)** ★ This is the EIC's slide	**Opens the EIC Accelerator to defence innovations and tightens eligibility for security-sensitive projects.**
EDF	**European Defence Fund**	Simplifies funding for disruptive technologies and associates Ukraine.
CEF	**Connecting Europe Facility**	Prioritises dual-use transport and digital infrastructure.
STEP	**Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform**	**Adds defence technologies as a fourth strategic sector.**

Main Novelties

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Three openings the EIC has never offered before.

1

Existing instrument · Expanded

EIC Accelerator

Opens to **dual-use technologies** — single companies with a credible case for civilian *and* defence markets.

2

Existing instrument · Expanded

EIC STEP Scale Up call

Also opens to **dual-use technologies** — co-investments up to **€30M** across the EIC's strategic sectors.

◆ New for 2026

3

Net-new instrument

STEP Scale Up Defence call

First-ever EIC instrument targeting **critical defence technologies** directly.

EIC Accelerator — broadening to dual-use

European Innovation Council

How the opening actually works — eligibility, evaluation, and why.

A Scope & definition · 2026 WP

Eligible calls

Dual-use innovations are now eligible under **EIC Accelerator Open** & **EIC STEP Scale-Up** calls.

Operational definition

"Technologies expected to have credible potential applications in ***both civilian and defence/security contexts****."*

B Application & evaluation process

01 Declaration

Applicants must **indicate** whether their technology has potential markets or applications in the defence or security domain.

→

02 Evaluation

Treated on an **equal basis** with civilian-only applications — same evaluation criteria. Dual-use cases tracked internally.

Strategic rationale

Why broaden to dual-use?

01 **Excellence-based · Modern reality**

Preserves core funding principles without diluted criteria — and reflects the inherent dual-nature of advanced deep tech.

02 **Simplicity · Competitiveness**

Avoids unnecessary administrative complexity for applicants — strengthens Europe's technological sovereignty and market position.

03 **Safeguards · Transparency**

Fully respects existing ethical, legal, and security frameworks — encourages clear declaration rather than ambiguity.

WP 2026: Budget overview

European Innovation Council

What's on the table for innovators in 2026.

Line 1 · Largest envelope

EIC Accelerator

€634 M

Accelerator open · €414 M · Accelerator challenges · €220 M

Line 2 · Strategic technologies

EIC STEP Scale Up

€300 M

Co-investments for dual-use scale-ups

◆ New 2026

EIC STEP Scale Up Defence

€100 M

First-ever EIC instrument dedicated to defence technologies

EIC WORK PROGRAMME 2026

EIC ACCELERATOR

Evaluation process and dual-use novelties

What are we looking for?

European Innovation Council

Start-ups and SMEs seeking to **scale-up** high impact innovations with the **potential to create new markets** or disrupt existing ones

Innovation building on **scientific discovery** or technological breakthroughs **(„deep tech")**

Innovations where **significant funding** is needed over a **long timeframe** and are **too risky** for private investors alone

What can companies apply for?

European Innovation Council

EIC Blended Finance

Equity

€1-10 million

Grant

Less than **€ 2.5 million**

Also

Grant only

With other finance

Equity only

No previous grant needed

EIC Accelerator– Blended Finance

European Innovation Council

Grant component

- maximum of less than **€ 2.5 million**
- eligible costs are reimbursed up to a maximum of **70%**
- small mid-caps are not eligible for a grant only

+

Investment component

- **€ 1 million** and maximum **€ 10 million**
- usually in the form of direct **equity** or quasi-equity
- **minority ownership** (typically 10-25% of the shares of the company)
- **“patient capital” principle** (7-10 years perspective on average, max 15 years)

EIC Accelerator – funding options

European Innovation Council

Grant only

If you can prove that you have sufficient financial means for deployment and scale-up (TRL 9)

Grant & Investment

If you need support for development (TRL 6 → 8), deployment and scale-up (TRL 9)

Investment Only

If you are looking to fill the funding gap for rapid scale-up of your high-risk innovation and you don't need a grant

EIC Accelerator – Who can apply?

European Innovation Council

- **Single company (i.e. no consortia, but subcontracting and affiliated entities are possible**

- SME according to EU definition:
  < 250 employees, < 50 million EUR turnover or < 43 million EUR total balance sheet, data from linked or partner enterprises might need to be taken into account*

- Small mid-caps (up to 499 employees) – for rapid scale up only

* More details and self-assessment tool

EIC Accelerator – Who can apply?

European Innovation Council

- Natural person(s) or legal entity
  - From Member State (MS) or Associated Country (AC) intending to establish an SME or small mid-cap in MS or AC by the time of signing the EIC Accelerator contract.
  - From a non-associated third country intending to establish an SME or to relocate an existing SME to a MS or AC (establishment prior to full proposal!)

* More details and self-assessment tool

Funding schemes

European Innovation Council

EIC Accelerator Open → to support projects in any field of science, technology or application without predefined thematic priorities ('bottom-up')

EIC Accelerator Challenges → to support projects within predefined thematic areas with the aim to achieve specific objectives for each Challenge

The selection process in a nutshell

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- The **Accelerator evaluation process** is composed of the **following phases**:

  - **Screening of short proposals:** performed by remote evaluators, which leads to a GO or NO-GO to the next evaluation stage,

  - **Evaluation of full proposals,** performed by a **technology expert** and assessed by an **evaluation committee**. Those with highest score will be invited to interview.

  - **Interviews with participation of Jury Members** which leads to establishing the list of GO (funded) and NO-GO (non-funded) proposals

Evaluation workflow and indicative timing

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Short proposal submitted anytime
(batches every month- reply within 4-6 weeks of batching date)

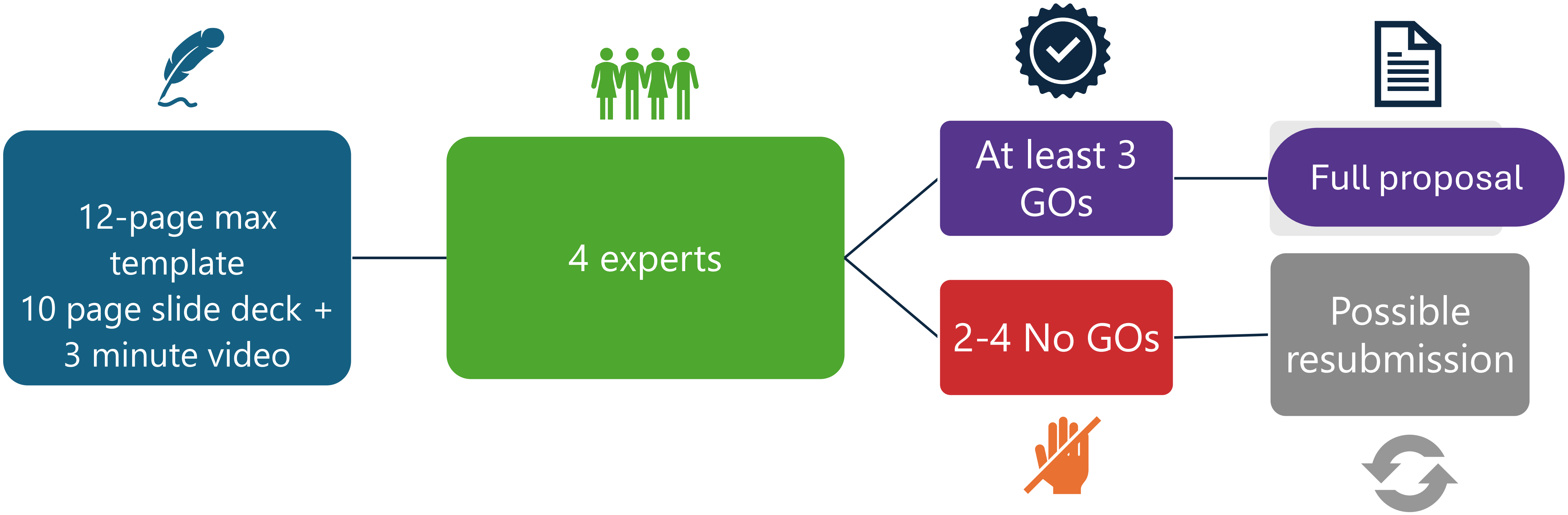
Full proposal submitted anytime
(batches every 2 months- reply within 8-9 weeks of batching date)

Assessment by **technology expert** and **interview** with company

Evaluation panel assessment and **ranking list**

Interview with EIC Jury
(3 sessions per year- reply within 2-3 weeks of interview)

Short Proposal process



Submission anytime- evaluation results in approx. 4-6 weeks

Full Proposal- technology assessment

(expert assesses proposal, verifies claims by applicant in interview and provides technical input for the evaluation panel)

20 page Proposal

Pitch Deck (no limit on number of slides - 10 min max pitch)

3 Minute Video

Lump sum, Financial and

Implementation plan

Technology Expert Individual Assessment

+

Interview with Applicant, Tech Expert & EISMEA Moderator

Report

+

Preliminary score

Submission anytime – 6 batches per year

Technology expert interviews

Applicant

Can have max 3 participants, not consultants allowed

May show prototypes/demo

Tech expert

Fact-checks, verifies claims cross checking with third party sources and assesses feasibility of technology as support to evaluation panel

Timing

Set interview weeks for each batch – all at the same time

1 hour interview online in Webex in SEP

EISMEA

Moderator to ensure fair and balanced process, equal treatment and ensure quality control

Follow-up

Tech expert can do follow up research after the interview

Evaluation Panel

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A Panel of at least 3 experts assesses a set of proposals taking into account the tech expert assessment. Evaluation panel will take the **final decision**, score and draft report

RANKING LIST

2.5x grant budget invitation to interview- applicants informed

Rejected- ESR sent to applicants

(proposals above overall threshold of 13/15 receive SoE/STEP seal)

Information to applicants approx. 8-9 weeks after batching

Ranking + invitation to interview
(indicative timing dual use batches)

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Ranking list
(batch 5 – September 2)

Invitation to interview
(beginning of November)

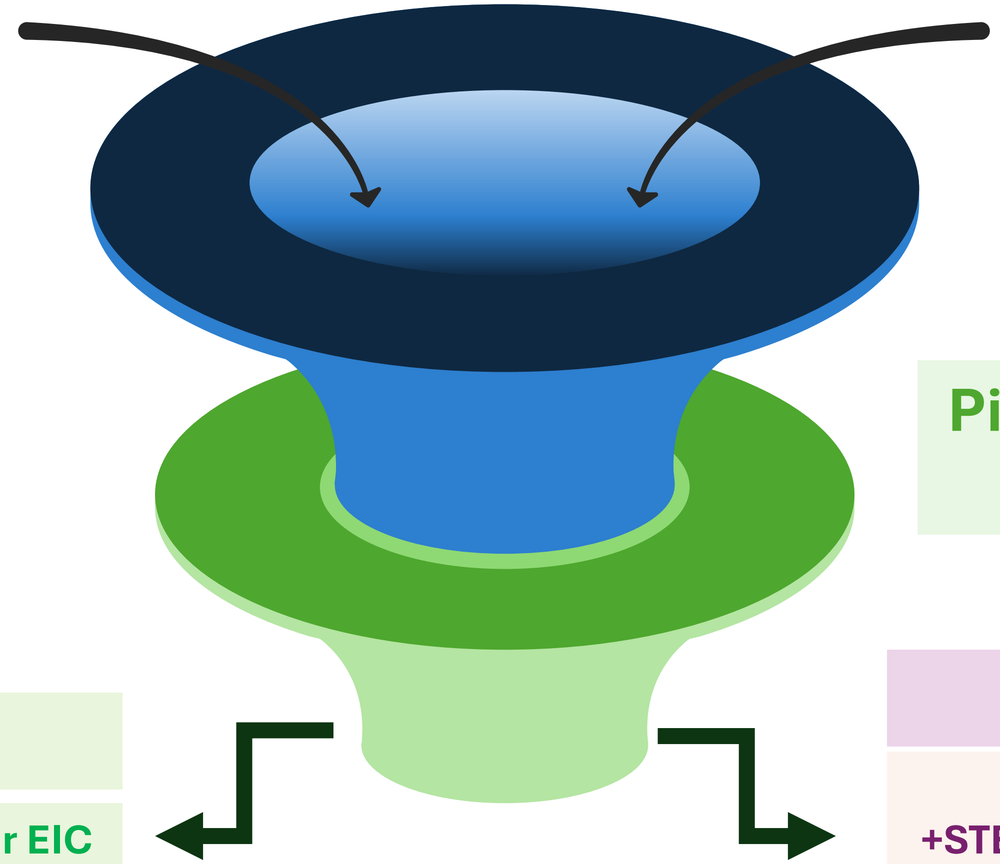
Ranking list
(batch 6- November 4)

Invitation to interview
(beginning of January)

Interview Session 3
February 2027

Three interview sessions organized per year-
one interview session after each 2 batches of proposals

Interview with EIC Jury



Interviews 1 week in person in Brussels – 3 sessions per year

Full Proposal criteria

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- Perfect alignment between submission questions and evaluation sub-criteria in three main areas:

1. **The technology – Excellence**
2. **The market – Impact**
3. **The implementation plan and need for Union support**

- Same evaluation criteria as short proposals with additional questions on Business model, Broader Impact, Step and EIC Challenges, Team incentivisation, Risk Management.

Technology – Excellence

(questions in red for full proposal only)

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Topic	Submission question	Evaluation sub-criteria
Innovation Assessment – 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.*	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 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.*	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)?
IP	Does your innovation have adequate IP protection? What is your intellectual property strategy to enter the market to be addressed? *Please describe it in terms of patents (granted or pending) and FTO status*	Does the innovation have adequate IP protection and a sound IP strategy to enter the market to be addressed?

Market – Impact 1/2
(questions in red for full proposal only)

European Innovation Council

Topic	Submission question	Evaluation sub-criteria
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.*	What and how big is the total market addressed? What is the realistic expectation of the share of the total market?
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*	Are the detailed business model and revenue strategy sound? Are the financial projections realistic?
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*	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?

Market – Impact 2/2
(questions in red for full proposal only)

European Innovation Council

Topic	Submission question	Evaluation sub-criteria
Challenge Alignment (ONLY FOR CHALLENGES)	How will your innovation contribute to achieve the objectives of the Challenge to which you are applying?	Does the innovation contribute to the expected Challenge outcomes?
STEP Impact (ONLY FOR CHALLENGES WITHIN 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?*	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

Implementation and Need for Union support 1/2 (questions in red for full proposal only)

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Topic	Submission question	Evaluation sub-criteria
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 you 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.*	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 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: 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: Can you demonstrate access to the resources needed to commercialise and scale-up the innovation? Can you company 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	Has the company demonstrated early traction with investors? Is the financing requirement significantly higher than the amount that market actors can finance alone? FOR BLENDED FINANCE AND EQUITY ONLY: 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: Can the applicant demonstrate access to the resources needed to commercialise and scale-up the innovation? Can the company demonstrate the need for EIC grant support?

Implementation and Need for Union support 2/2 (questions in red for full proposal only)

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Topic	Submission question	Evaluation sub-criteria
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.*	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 PROPOSALS ONLY *Please fill in:* *- Template with description of work packages and deliverables, including milestones, resources and timings.*	FOR GRANT ONLY AND BLENDED FINANCE PROPOSALS ONLY 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? LUMP-SUM: Are the estimated costs in the work packages reasonable and non-excessive?

Conflict of interest

- Names of experts will be on the EIC website.
- Applicants will be able to name 3 experts that they do not want to assess their proposal.
- Expert should signal any COI when allocated proposal.
- EISMEA carries out usual COI checks.

Novelties in the WP 2026 amendment

Dual-use concept

Definition: Dual-use innovation in the context of EIC calls means an innovation that demonstrates a credible business case addressing demand from both civilian markets and the defence market (including, in particular, procurement by defence market buyers).

No preferential treatment: applications for dual-use innovation will be assessed against the same set of criteria and do not receive preferential treatment compared to purely civilian innovations.

Novelties in the WP 2026 amendment

European Innovation Council

- **Main novelty in the award criteria in short and full proposals:**
- **IMPACT : Market Opportunity**
- What and how big is the total market addressed? What is therealistic expectation of the share of the total market?
- <u>Where relevant, this includes addressable demand across civilianand defence end-users where a credible business case exists in both.</u>

Full proposal evaluation form novelties

European Innovation Council

Main novelty in exclusive focus on civil applications:

- Do the activities proposed have an exclusive focus on civil applications except if applying to a call where military applications are explicitly permitted in the call conditions (activities intended to be used in military application or aiming to serve military purposes cannot be funded, unless explicitly mentioned in the call documents)?

NB: dual use proposals must not contain EU classified information!

Grant Agreement novelties

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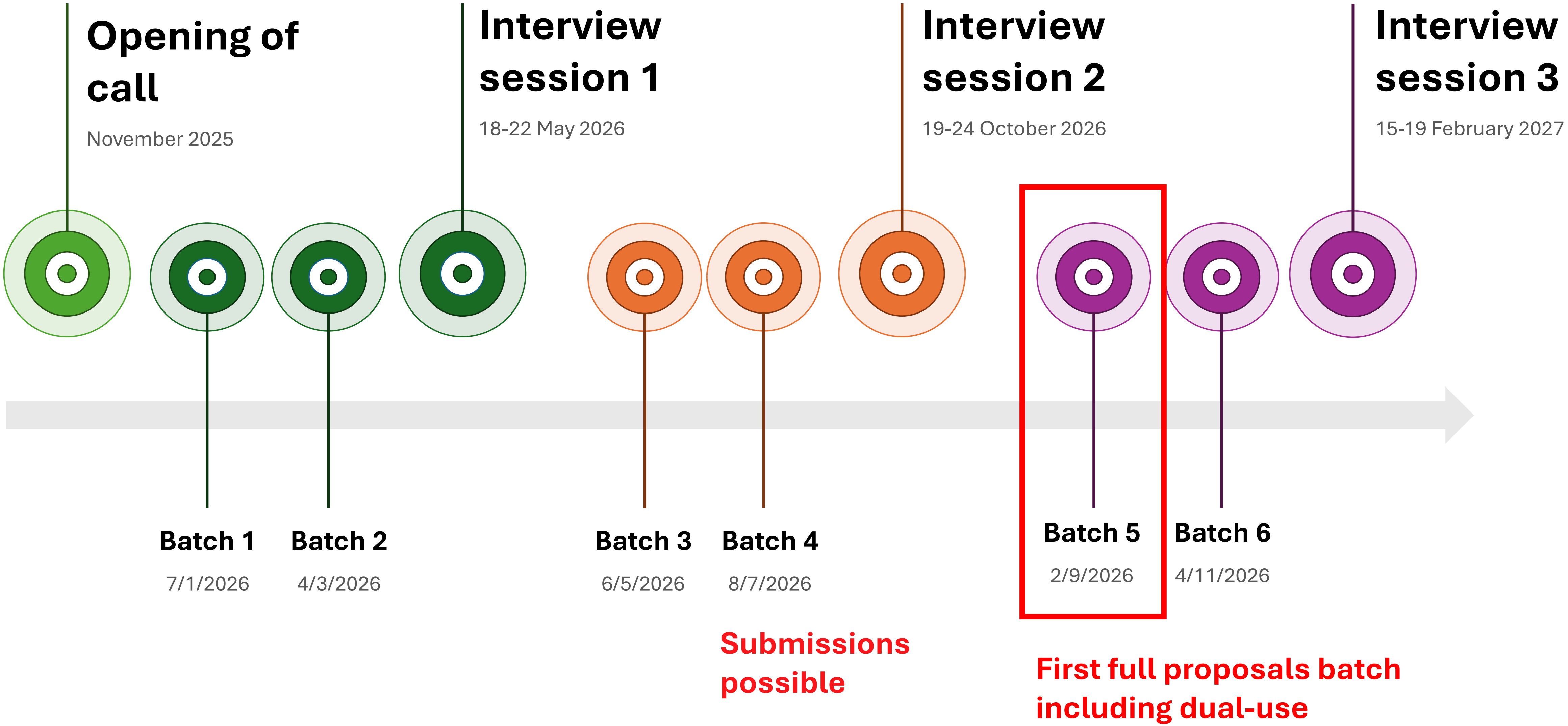
Right to object:

- For support to innovation activities that have dual-use applications, the Agency may object to the non-exclusive licensing of results under the same conditions as those set in the grant agreement for transfer of ownership or exclusive licensing.

Timeline of EIC Accelerator batches and tentative dates for interviews



How to apply – useful links

[EIC Accelerator]

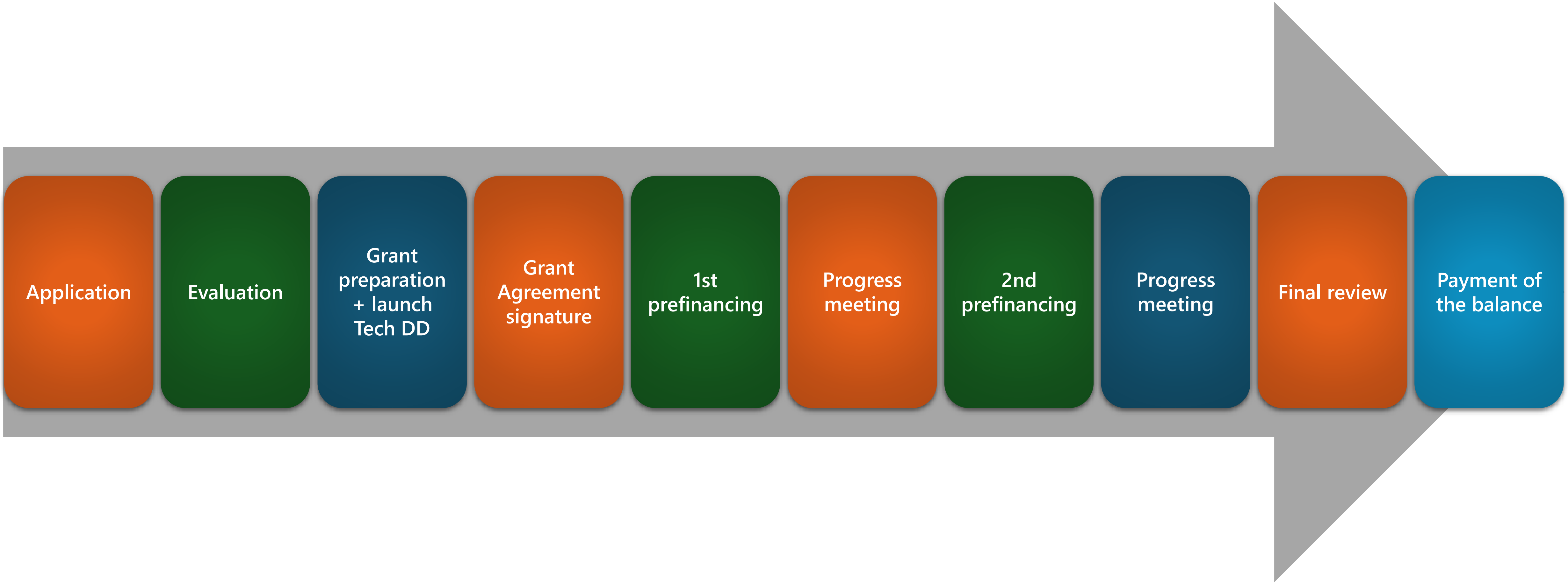
EIC Work Programme 2026 amendment

[Support for applicants (FAQs, guidelines, contacts)]

[Funding & tenders opportunities Portal (legal & supporting documents)]

If you are selected for funding…

Overview of project management and project lifecycle



Implementation of EIC Investment – the equity component of the EIC Blended Finance

The EIC Fund

European Innovation Council

- **Venture capital fund** established in June 2020 by the European Commission.
- **Manages equity** investments in startups & SMEs selected by EIC Accelerator and EIC STEP Scale Up.
- An **external fund manager** appointed as part of the **EIC Fund restructuring** (since October 2022), to make it sustainable for the number and amounts of investments expected in 2021-27, drawing on the lessons learned from the pilot phase and considering the legal base. This has **no impact on funding** offered by the EIC **or on the selection process**.

The investment process after selection (EIC Investment Guidelines)

European Innovation Council

1. **Initial assessment** (EIB) –*Including "delay track" if company not ready for equity*
2. **Due diligence** (EIB) + KYC-compliance checks (EIC Fund)
3. **Investment proposal** (EIB)
4. **Investment decision** (external EIC Fund Manager)
5. **Investment agreement and disbursement** (EIC Fund Manager & EIB)
6. **Portfolio monitoring and management** (EIC Fund Manager & EIB)

Summary Implementation Timeline

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Call	Implementation
EIC Accelerator Short proposal	Call open to dual use from the amendment publication (17 June)
EIC Accelerator Full proposal	Call open to dual use from 09/07/2026
EIC STEP Scale up call	Call open to dual use from the amendment publication (17 June)
EIC STEP Scale up Defence call	Call opening on 30 June, deadline October 28, 2026

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Thank you !