



HORIZON 2020 Work Programme for Research & Innovation 2018-2020

#InvestEUresearch

European Innovation Council (EIC) Pilot

Why do we need a European Innovation Council (EIC) Pilot?

Carlos **Moedas**, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, announced his early vision in a speech in Brussels on 22 June 2015, where he argued: *“Europe does not yet have a world class scheme to support the very best innovations in the way the European Research Council is the global reference for supporting excellent science. So I would like us to take stock of the various schemes to support innovation and SMEs under Horizon 2020, to look at best practice internationally, and to design a new European Innovation Council.”*

Europe excels in science but needs to do much better in terms of market-creating innovation. This Commission has been working to improve conditions from better access to venture capital to second chance/insolvency law and of course ensuring that the world’s biggest funding programme (Horizon 2020) achieves greater impact by supporting innovations that create new markets.

The Commission will now make changes for the remaining period of Horizon 2020 to provide bottom-up support targeted at breakthrough innovation projects with the potential of scaling up. These changes represent first concrete steps towards **a European Innovation Council** that the Commission is considering for the successor programme to Horizon 2020.

The Commission has also appointed a **High Level Group of Innovators**, which brings together leading experts in business innovation from across Europe, including entrepreneurs, CEOs, investors and other major players in the innovation ecosystem. The group will form a sounding board for the EIC to help to evaluate measures as part of the pilot phase and act as ambassadors for the EIC in the innovation ecosystem. Furthermore, it will provide advice and recommendations for a fully-fledged EIC as part of the next framework programme.

What is the European Innovation Council pilot?

The EIC pilot aims to support top-class innovators, entrepreneurs, small companies and researchers with bright ideas and the ambition to scale-up internationally.

The pilot phase offers in a single place:

- ▶ €2.7 billion in funding for the period 2018-2020 (financed through existing budgets)
- ▶ Opportunities for networking, mentoring and coaching
- ▶ Strategic advice to upgrade the innovation ecosystem in Europe

Who is the EIC pilot aimed at?

The EIC pilot focuses competitive funding for innovators, start-ups and companies with ideas and innovations which:

- ▶ are radically different from existing products, services or business models
- ▶ are of a 'high risk – high gain'-nature for investors
- ▶ have the potential to scale up internationally

The EIC pilot is able to support ideas from any area of technology or business sector, including novel combinations of technologies and business models. Support is available from feasibility stage (e.g. proof of concept or development of business plans) to development to scale up stages.

What are the changes that will be introduced in the EIC pilot?

A number of important changes have been introduced which follow a "call for ideas" in 2016 and advice from the high level group of innovators.

The pilot will bring together four different support schemes into a single place and make them easier to understand and access for innovators. The schemes are the SME instrument, the [Fast Track to Innovation](#), parts of [Future and Emerging Technologies](#), and a set of six "crack the challenge" prizes, to be known as [EIC Horizon Prizes](#).

For the first time the [Horizon 2020 SME Instrument](#) will be fully "bottom up" so innovative proposals can be submitted in any area of technology or business sector. This contrasts with previous work programmes where topics for the SME instrument were predefined.

The Commission will also introduce for the first time face to face interviews as part of the independent expert evaluation of proposals. As such, funding decisions will be will not only be based on an assessment of the paper proposals, but also on the qualities and motivations of the SME.

The overall budget to be allocated to these actions amounts to approximately €2.7 billion for 2018-20. In addition, the Commission will support closer links between these actions and other relevant initiatives, including the [European Institute of Innovation and Technology \(EIT\)](#), the [Eurostars](#) initiative for R&D intensive SMEs, and the “[InnovFin – EU Finance for innovators](#)” set of financial instruments.

The EIC Horizon Prizes are new to the Horizon 2020 Work Programme. Tell us more about them

The European Innovation Council (EIC) aims at developing and supporting breakthrough innovations with the potential to create new markets and boost jobs, growth and prosperity in Europe. As to trigger such innovation, a set of six EIC Horizon Prizes have been included in the EIC Work Programme 2018-2020.

EIC Horizon Prizes are particularly ambitious with regards to the societal challenges to be addressed – the decarbonisation of Europe, solar fuel development, epidemic preparedness, the optimisation of block chains for social good, and technology for low-cost space launches.

The contests are built on simple, clear, comprehensive and objective targets that must be reached – the winners will have to demonstrate that their innovation solves the set challenge. The contests are open to any innovator, academic, start-up, entrepreneur or business, across all sectors and disciplines.

How can you apply?

To prepare for applying to an EIC pilot call, please go to the [‘EIC pilot Web Page’](#), which will direct you to the most appropriate funding scheme for your needs.

The ‘EIC pilot Web Page’ will channel you through to the Horizon 2020 participant portal, which contains all the practical information you need to participate. You may also find the details of a National Contact Point, who can give you support in your own language.

What comes after the EIC pilot phase 2018-2020?

By the end of 2017, the High Level Group of innovators has been requested to present their recommendations for a European Innovation Council. In early 2018, the European Commission will consult all stakeholders on their views on the next framework programme for research and innovation that will start in 2021 (‘FP9’). Taking account of the views of stakeholders, the Commission will present its legislative proposals for the next EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme to the European Parliament and the Member States by summer 2018.