TURKEY in
HORIZON 2020
COOPERATION, INNOVATION, COMPETITIVENESS

EIC Accelerator
Pilot Programme
USER GUIDE

**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY
AND TECHNOLOGY**

COMPETITIVE
SECTORS
PROGRAMME

TÜBİTAK

TURKEY AND THE EIC ACCELERATOR PILOT

The European Innovation Council (EIC) introduced the Accelerator Pilot under the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Instrument; a key element of the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme. It is likely that Accelerator will be incorporated into the next Framework Programme, Horizon Europe, due to start in 2021.

The "Turkey in Horizon 2020 Phase II Project" offers support for Turkish businesses to engage with Horizon 2020. This includes; training, proposal writing, IPR and legal issues, brokerage events, webinars and on-line tools. For more information, see; https://turkeyinh2020.eu/

The "Turkey in Horizon 2020 Phase II Project" is co-financed by the EU and the Republic of Turkey and managed by The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), within the framework of the Competitive Sectors Programme of the Ministry of Industry and Technology.

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A User Guide to the EIC Accelerator Pilot Programme

INTRODUCTION

The last decade saw the emergence of major new markets and a global platform economy. Today's successful, high-growth innovative enterprises often rely on new business models and technologies emerging at the intersection between different sectors and disciplines.

Despite early technology leads, the EU has supported the creation of few companies that shape and capture these new markets. While Europe compares relatively well internationally in terms of numbers of start-ups, too few of these succeed in scaling up and generating the new, high-skilled jobs on which Europe's future depends and which would strengthen Europe's position in the platform economy.

The EU needs to help improve the conditions that enable the emergence and rapid scale-up of highly innovative enterprises.

These needs are reflected in the new pilot programmes of the European Innovation Council (EIC). The Pilot provides support (including blended finance under the EIC Accelerator pilot – SME Instrument) to innovative firms and entrepreneurs with the potential to scale up rapidly at European and global levels.

The pilot actions are exclusively aimed at people and companies who have ideas that are radically different from existing products or services on the market or under development - not incremental improvements - are highly risky, and require significant investments to get to market. As such they complement the focus on a broader innovation dimension (e.g. sector-specific, incremental) in other parts of the work programme; such as Innovation in SMEs, Access to Risk Finance and Leadership in Industrial Technologies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE EIC
ACCELERATOR PILOT PROGRAMME

The main objectives of this programme are to strengthen breakthrough innovations and boost the number of high-growth companies. The EIC Accelerator Pilot has a total budget of more than €1.3 Billion for 2019-20.

The EIC Pilot tests two funding schemes: the EIC Pathfinder pilot
(see: https://ec.europa.eu/research/eic/index.cfm?pg=funding) which targets high-risk cutting-edge projects, and the **EIC Accelerator Pilot** (see same link) which aims to support SMEs through the difficult stages between a viable prototype and commercial success.

The EIC Accelerator Pilot (SME Instrument) promotes co-investment by initiating support where market response is absent and / or insufficient. It encompasses the SME Instrument and an optional blended finance component which combines grant and equity from both EC and private sector sources.

Accelerator focuses on SMEs with radically new ideas that are too risky to attract private investment, underpinned by their business plan for rolling out marketable innovation solutions and with a potential to scale up. Commercially viable projects and projects that are ready for - or are already in - the phase of scaling up for commercial launch will be redirected towards more appropriate sources of commercial finance.

A 'Special Purpose Vehicle' (SPV) - an EC controlled venture capital fund called the EIC Accelerator Fund - has responsibility for the management of EC and private sector equity under the EIC Accelerator Pilot. Efforts will be made to help those firms and others receiving grants to have access to other forms and sources of finance appropriate to their needs. These include; crowd funding, business angel investments, venture capital and loans through InnovFin and other EU 'Access to Finance' solutions under the Investment Plan for Europe, COSME or the European Structural and Investment Funds.

Market-creating innovations are seen as radically new, breakthrough products, services, processes or business models that open up new markets with the potential for rapid growth at European and global levels. Market-creating innovations take shape at the intersection between different technologies, industry sectors and scientific disciplines, linked to domains such as energy, health, ICT, space, transport and agriculture. The Accelerator Pilot programme has been developed to support market-creating innovation more effectively.

The performance of the EIC Accelerator Pilot will be measured by the number of new products, services and processes developed for new markets. The amount of private investment attracted during and after the project will also be monitored, as will increases in turnover and jobs among companies as a result of their participation.

Performance improvements will be gauged from project reports, by links to external databases on company performance, and by assessments through outside experts. For the latter, the EIC pilot will make use of 'Innovation Radar', a tool which assesses the market potential of innovations and the market readiness of innovators. The Innovation Radar tool will also help to communicate the results to potential investors.

Applicants may also wish to look at other European support networks (such as the Enterprise Europe Network) as well as at facilities funded by the Horizon Programme aimed at supporting open innovation, in particular for testing and demonstrating technologies (e.g. open innovation testbeds, or digital innovation hubs), or at Thematic Smart Specialisation Platforms. The use of space data from the EU's space programmes is also encouraged.

THE EIC ACCELERATOR PILOT PROGRAMME

Who should apply to the EIC Accelerator Pilot Programme (SME Instrument) for support?

- Are you an innovative, high-flying small or medium-sized business with European and global ambitions?
- Do you have an idea for an innovation that targets new markets and could boost the growth of your company?
- Are you looking for substantial funding to help you commercialise the results of your innovation project?
- Could you make use of business development resources and coaching to take your company forward?

If your answer is YES to these questions, then Accelerator could be for you!

Accelerator supports high-risk, high-potential SMEs to develop and bring to market new products, services and business models that could drive economic growth. Accelerator is for innovators with ground-breaking concepts that could shape new markets or disrupt existing ones in Europe and worldwide.

Competition for support under Accelerator is tough and very selective. Only ground-breaking concepts at the last stages before scale-up are funded. The highest risk, most convincing and excellent proposals are funded after a thorough evaluation by multinational panels of technology, business and financial experts.

Selected companies receive business coaching and mentoring to further develop their innovative ideas. Participants are assisted in networking with Accelerator clients, with other companies of all sizes and with potential co-investors and follow-up investors across Europe. As an Accelerator client, you will gain visibility and boost your chances of success in European and international markets.

Europe needs more radical, market-creating innovations to improve productivity and international competitiveness, generate new jobs and higher standards of living. These innovations must meet user and customer needs and tackle societal, technological and business challenges in a sustainable way.

Have you got what it takes? Then apply now!

REGISTRATION WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Do I have to register my SME with the EC before I can apply?

YES, there is a simple registration process to verify that you are an SME and to qualify you for Accelerator support. Details of the process are shown below. Further information on the Participant Register, LEAR and other aspects mentioned in the text may be found in the Horizon online manual at

https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/index_en.htm

How do I register my organisation?

Before submitting a project proposal, all organisations must first be registered in the Funding & Tenders Portal **Participant Register** and have their 9-digit Participant Identification Code **(PIC)** number.

You can **check if your organisation is already registered** on the Participant Register page and, if needed, launch the registration process:

- If you are new to the Funding & Tenders Portal, you will first need to create a user account (EU Login), before you start the registration process.
- If you already have a user account (EU Login), you can log in and start entering information to register your organisation on the Participant Register page.

What information is needed for registration?

To register your organisation, you will need to provide basic administrative and legal data as well as some contact details. The **'IT How To'** of the Participant Register offers step-by-step guidance for this process. As the declared information may need to be verified against supporting documents later on, it is useful to have the relevant information at hand as you complete the registration to make sure you fill in the relevant fields correctly (profit, status, public/private, etc.).

As a general principle, an organisation should have a legally responsible person in order to be registered. If your organisation does not have a designated legal person, your representatives must prove that they have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on behalf of the organisation and the organisation has equivalent financial and operational capacity.

Completing your registration

You do not need to complete the registration process in a single session. You can enter some information, save it and continue later on. To resume your registration, go to the **'My Organisations'** page of the **'Manage my area'** section and click on **'Continue Registration'**. Incomplete draft registrations are automatically deleted after one year.

Your PIC Number

On completing registration, you will receive a 9-digit Participant Identification Code (PIC number) - to be quoted in your proposals and in any correspondence with the Commission.

Even though a newly created PIC will have a 'Declared'/'Non-valid' status, it can be used in proposal preparation. Nothing else is expected from you after the PIC has been generated; the validation of the PIC, when needed, will take place at a later stage. If so, you will be contacted by the EC Validation Services in due time to initiate the validation process.

Updating your information

The person who initially registered the organisation, the so-called 'self-registrant', can submit updates and corrections to the declared information using the 'My Organisations' page of the 'Manage my area' section.

Once the organisation is validated, the **LEAR** (Legal Entity Appointed Representative) will be the person in charge of notifying all changes to the legal data/status of the organisation and for providing the relevant supporting documents.

Duplicate PICs

If your organisation has already a validated PIC and a new one is created by mistake, your LEAR or Account Administrator should contact the EC Validation Services via the Participant Register ('My Organisations' page of the 'My Area' section) so that they transfer any information related to this duplicate PIC to the correct PIC.

SME self-assessment

The Participant Register includes a Self-Assessment questionnaire that allows you to determine whether your organisation is an SME within the EC definition. The SME status is an eligibility criterion under the SME Instrument. If there is no recent (not older than 2 years) relevant information on this for the PIC of your organisation, the proposal submission system will prompt you to fill in the SME Self-Assessment. You will need to enter the financial figures of the last approved accounting period of your organisation and of any other organisation that might be directly or indirectly related to it (in accordance with the EU Recommendation 2003/361/EC). See: https://eur-lex. europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32003H0361. If the result confirms your SME status you will be able to proceed with the proposal application.

Please note that if your enterprise has not been validated as an SME during the last 2 years, the submission system will not allow you to proceed with your application to the Accelerator Pilot before you have filled in the SME questionnaire in the Participant Register and the result shows that your enterprise is officially classed as an SME.

USING THE EIC ACCELERATOR PILOT

What is the application process for Accelerator?

Once you have formally registered your SME, there are 3 steps to obtaining Accelerator funding, as follows:

STEP 1
APPLICATION

Accelerator is open for ideas in any field and you can apply at any time of the year, although there are 4 cut-off dates for proposal processing each year. Guidance on proposal content and structure is provided on page 17.
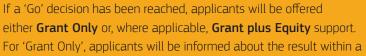
STEP 2
EVALUATION

Your application will be dealt with by the EIC one-stop-shop, which brings together **support for innovation across EU agencies** and a **dedicated investment vehicle** for those applications requiring equity. All applications are assessed by independent international evaluators from across the EU, all of them with a tailored mix of research, technical and business experience. **Their assessment will be based on the application's future social and/or economic impact or market creation, the high-risk/high potential nature of the innovation and the strength of the supporting business plan.**

The applicants with the highest overall assessments will be invited to pitch to a panel of experienced investors and entrepreneurs who will take a 'Go'/'No Go' decision.

STEP 3
DECISION

If a 'Go' decision has been reached, applicants will be offered either **Grant Only** or, where applicable, **Grant plus Equity** support. For 'Grant Only', applicants will be informed about the result within a maximum of 4 months and receive their grants within a maximum of 6 months. 'Grant plus Equity' recipients will be informed about the results within a maximum of 4 months and receive the grant component within a maximum of 6 months. For the equity component, additional due diligence will be undertaken before applicants receive the investment.

'No Go' decisions will be issued within a maximum of 4 months and applicants will be able to re-submit their proposals after improvement.

Who can apply?

For-profit SMEs - including young companies and start-ups - from any sector may apply. You must be established in an EU Member State or an Associated Country such as Turkey.

When are the Calls for Proposals?

There are no set calls for proposals; SMEs can apply any time. Cut off dates for processing applications – approximately every 3 months - are published on the EC web sites shown on page 17.

What topics are covered?

There are no set topics. However, topics which could cause negative impacts on climate and the environment should be avoided. They must also be civilian projects with no military applications.

How does Accelerator work?

Accelerator provides full-cycle business innovation support. The support is provided in the form of grant only or blended finance (combining grant and equity). Accelerator also includes coaching and mentoring.

Accelerator is a single-beneficiary scheme. This approach has been taken to pave the way towards a fully-fledged EIC Accelerator under the next Framework Programme, Horizon Europe, where it is proposed to target individual entrepreneurs. Consortia are not eligible.

With a success rate for applications of around 5 %, Accelerator is very competitive and normally takes 12 to 24 months for project completion.

How can an SME use Accelerator?

Accelerator helps you develop your business concept into a market-ready product, service or process, aligned with your company's growth strategy. Intended for a primarily technological innovation, a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of at least TRL 6 (see the following table) is required, or the equivalent for non-technological innovation.

TECHNOLOGY READINESS LEVELS

TRL 0: IDEA – unproven concept, no testing has been performed.

TRL 1: BASIC RESEARCH – principles postulated and observed but no experimental proof available.

TRL 2: TECHNOLOGY FORMULATION – concept and application have been formulated.

TRL 3: APPLIED RESEARCH – first laboratory tests completed; proof of concept.

TRL 4: SMALL SCALE PROTOTYPE – built in a laboratory viable environment ("ugly" prototype).

TRL 5: LARGE SCALE PROTOTYPE – tested in intended environment.

TRL 6: PROTOTYPE SYSTEM – tested in intended environment close to expected performance.

TRL 7: DEMONSTRATION SYSTEM – operating in operational environment at pre-commercial scale.

TRL 8: FIRST OF A KIND COMMERCIAL SYSTEM – manufacturing issues solved.

TRL 9: FULL COMMERCIAL APPLICATION – technology available for consumers.

Accelerator offers grant-only support to SMEs in need of "one last push" before the commercial scaling-up phase. It offers blended finance (combining grant and equity funding) to SMEs looking to further develop their innovative ideas.

Beneficiaries of Accelerator have access to Business Acceleration Services as described later in this Guide.

Your proposal must be based on a strategic business plan that was either developed under the former SMEI Phase 1 or by other means – your proposal submission is not dependent on the use of Phase 1. Your proposal must specify the expected outcome of the project and your criteria for success, as well as the expected impacts on your company in both qualitative and quantitative terms (e.g. on turnover, employment, market size, IP management, sales, return on investment, profitability and particularly on the level of risk or de-risking factor associated with support under Accelerator).

You must pay particular attention to IP protection and ownership, present convincing evidence or measures to ensure the possibility of commercial exploitation (often known as 'freedom to operate'). You should also address any regulatory and standardisation issues. Grant only funding of between €0.5 million and €2.5 million is provided up to a maximum project funding rate of 70%. In addition, there is a 25% allowance for overheads. Overall, this equates to a funding figure of around 87.5% of budget.

Under the blended finance option, the grant component is limited to €2.5 million, combined with a commercial equity component of up to €15 million. You can request a higher or lower amount within these limits, duly justified, when applying.

Proposals with activities from TRL6 to TRL 8 will be funded by grants or a blended finance option. Close to market activities at TRL 9 which may be included in a proposal, will only be financed by equity participation as long as the proposal remains 'non-bankable' (not fully attractive to commercial finance due to perceived risks) and you have given consent to possible equity participation in your application.

Your project should normally take 12 to 24 months to complete, but could be longer in exceptional and well-justified cases.

BUSINESS ACCELERATION SERVICES

The Business Acceleration Services (SME Instrument Phase 3) help you take advantage of additional EU support, through a range of business support services offered on the EIC Community Platform. This is open to researchers and innovators benefiting from the different EIC calls for proposals. Support can take the form of coaching, training, links to investors, partnering and networking with other EIC beneficiaries. The Business Acceleration Services provide specific support to EIC clients that are SMEs, mainly to help them access new markets or customers and to link with investors. These Services do not provide direct funding.

All Business Acceleration Services are accessible through a single, dedicated entry point, which serves as an information portal and networking space. See: https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/eic-sme-instrument/business-acceleration-support-and-coaching-services

Coaching

If you are benefiting from funding from the EIC Accelerator you will receive business coaching to help your business scale up and grow. Up to 12 coaching days are available.

Coaching covers business development, organisational development, cooperation, and access to finance.

The impact driven coaching service, supported by the European Commission, is facilitated by the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN). Coaching is delivered by one or more qualified, experienced business coaches who are recruited from a database managed by the European Commission. All coaches meet stringent criteria regarding business experience and coaching skills. If you have any specific coach you want to work with, you can ask the EC to add their name to the pool, although this may take time to process.

Throughout your project, the EEN will complement the coaching support. EEN offers a service package covering assessment of your firm's innovation management capacities and the identification of a suitable coach or consulting package to address any gaps. EEN also provides access to its innovation and internationalisation services.

Mentoring

If you are benefiting from funding from the EIC Accelerator, individual founders, CEOs and business leaders will be offered mentoring. Mentoring aims to develop leadership skills such as resilience, tenacity and strategic insight.

The mentoring scheme will involve one-to-one meetings with an experienced entrepreneur, who will share expertise and provide impartial guidance and support.

Mentors will be CEOs of firms that have moved beyond the start-up stage. To begin with, mentors will be drawn from a pool of SME Instrument Phase 2 current and former clients who are willing to act as mentors on a pro bono basis.
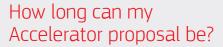
Mentors and mentees will be matched up via the EIC Community Platform and during EIC and other suitable events.

ACCELERATOR – GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS PREPARING PROPOSALS

What are the requirements for an Accelerator proposal to be admissible?

A proposal will be considered admissible if the following conditions are met:
- it was submitted in the EC electronic submission system before the final cut-off deadline;
- it is written in English and is readable, accessible and printable;
- it is complete and includes the requested administrative data, the proposal description (including detailed information about the TRL level - or equivalent for non-technological innovation) and the obligatory supporting documents specified below;
- it includes a mandatory first commercialisation plan.

How long can my Accelerator proposal be?

The maximum length of a proposal (proposal description, sections 1 to 3) is 30 pages.

The page limits, the sections subject to the limits and the formatting applicable are shown in the 'proposal templates' in the Funding & Tender Portal electronic submission system mentioned earlier.

If your proposal exceeds the page limits, you will receive an automatic warning and be advised to resubmit a version that conforms to the limits.

After the cut-off deadline, excess pages will automatically be made invisible and will not be taken into consideration by the experts evaluating your proposal.

Evaluation rules for Accelerator

The following selection criteria apply:
- **Financial capacity:** Applicants for single SME beneficiary grants are not subject to an automatic financial viability check. If the equity option is involved there will be a range of financial checks
- **Operational capacity:** During the evaluation of the award criterion 'Quality and efficiency of Implementation', experts will judge whether each individual participant has - or will have in due time - sufficient operational capacity to successfully carry out their tasks in the proposed work-plan. This assessment will be based on the competence and experience of the applicant, including their operational resources (human, technical, other). If applicable, and on an exceptional basis, the measures proposed to secure these resources by the time of the implementation of the tasks may also be taken into consideration. The operational capacity of each applicant is determined on the basis of the following supporting documents, which are required when submitting a proposal:
  o A CV or description of the profile of the persons who will be primarily responsible for carrying out the proposed activities
  o A brief description of relevant products, services (including widely used datasets or software) or other achievements which may also include previous projects or activities connected to the subject of the proposal
  o A description of any significant infrastructure and/or any major items of technical equipment relevant to the proposed work
  o A description of any third parties that are not represented as project partners but who will nonetheless be contributing towards the work, for example by providing facilities or computing resources.

Award Criteria

Grant only and blended finance proposals are evaluated by experts on the basis of three award criteria: **'Impact'**, **'Excellence'**, and 'quality and efficiency of **Implementation**'. Each account for one-third weighting of scores. The aspects examined under each criterion are described in the following tables.

IMPACT

A convincing specification of the potential to create new markets or create market disruption together with a convincing specification of the **substantial demand** (including willingness to pay) for the innovation. The total **market size** envisaged.

A convincing description of **targeted users or customers** of the innovation, how their needs have been addressed, why the users or customers identified will want to use or buy the product, service or business model, including comparison with what is currently available - if anything at all.

Realistic and relevant analyses of **market conditions** and **growth-rate**, competitors and competitive offerings, key stakeholders, clear identification of opportunities for market introduction, market creation or disruption (e.g. via new value-chains).

A realistic and relevant description of how the innovation has the **potential to scale-up the applicant company.** This should be underpinned by a convincing business plan with a clear timeline and complemented, where possible, by a track-record that includes financial data.

The 'potential to scale-up' aspect and associated financial needs are closely examined in Step 2 of the proposal evaluation.

Alignment of proposal with overall strategy of applicant SME and commitment of the team behind them. Demonstration of need for commercial and management experience, including understanding of the financial and organisational requirements for **commercial exploitation** as well as any key third party involvement needed.

A realistic and relevant **strategic plan for commercialisation,** including approximate time-to-market or deployment. Details of activities to be undertaken after the project.

The **'commercial strategy' aspect is closely examined in Step 2 of the proposal evaluation.**

The **European/global dimension** of innovation with respect to both commercialisation and assessment of competitors and competitive offerings.

Evidence of, or realistic measures to ensure, **'freedom to operate'** (i.e., possibility of commercial exploitation), convincing **knowledge-protection strategy,** including current IPR filing status, IPR ownership and licensing issues. **Regulatory and/or standards requirements** addressed.

Taken as whole, to what extent the above elements are **coherent and plausible.**

EXCELLENCE

High-risk/high-potential innovation ideas with something that nobody else has. It should be **better and/or significantly different** to any alternative. Game-changing ideas or breakthrough innovations are particularly sought after. **The high degree of novelty** comes with a high chance of either success or failure.

A realistic description of the **current stage of development;** at least TRL 6, or something analogous for non-technological innovations and a clear outline of **steps planned to take this innovation to market.**

A highly innovative solution that goes beyond the state of the art in comparison with existing or competing solutions, including; on the basis of costs, ease of use and other relevant features as well as issues related to climate change or the environment, the gender dimension and any other benefits for society.

A **very good understanding of both risks and opportunities** related to successful market introduction of the innovation from both technical and commercial points of view. Documentation on the **technological, practical and economic feasibility of the innovation.**

The 'feasibility' aspect is closely examined in Step 2 of the proposal evaluation.

Evidence that the **objectives for the innovation proposal as well as the approach and activities** to be developed are **consistent with the expected impact** (i.e. commercialisation or deployment resulting in company growth). Appropriate definition must be provided of specifications for the outcome of the project and criteria for success.

Taken as whole, to what extent the above elements are **coherent and plausible.**

Quality and Efficiency of **IMPLEMENTATION**

Evidence that the applicant company **cannot leverage sufficient investments** from the market, particularly for applicant companies requesting blended finance support. Evidence that the applicant company is **deemed 'non- bankable'** by the market, in view of the activities to be developed.

The 'leveraging of investments' and 'bankability' aspects are closely examined in Step 2 of the proposal evaluation.

Technical/business experience of the team, including management capacity to lead a growing team. If relevant, the proposal includes a plan to acquire missing competences, namely through partnerships and/ or subcontracting* and explains why and how they are selected.

The team aspect is closely examined in Step 2 of the proposal evaluation.

Availability of resources required (personnel, facilities, networks, etc.) to develop project activities in the most suitable conditions. Where relevant, realistic description of how key stakeholders / partners / subcontractors* could be involved. Where relevant, the estimated budget and the procedure planned for selecting the subcontractors* are appropriate.

A realistic timeframe and comprehensive description of implementation (work-packages, major deliverables and milestones, risk management) taking the company's or applicant's innovation ambitions and objectives into account.

NOTE ON SUBCONTRACTING
*Subcontracting is acceptable to the extent required for the implementation of the proposed activities. Subcontracting may be an essential part of the implementation of the project, but should not be a disproportionate part of the total estimated eligible costs. **Subcontractors must be selected using 'best value-for-money' principles and their role must be well justified.***

Taken as whole, to what extent the above elements are **coherent and plausible.**

PROPOSAL STRUCTURE

In order to prepare your EIC Accelerator proposal, you are strongly advised to follow the structure and provide the information detailed in the templates available on the Funding and Tenders (F&T) Portal; see https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/news and https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/call_ptef/pt/2018-2020/h2020-call-pt-eic-sme-2-2018-20_en.pdf.

The proposal structure consists of two main parts, **A and B.**

Part A includes structured data and contains general information, administrative data for the applicant organisation, the proposed budget for the proposal, responses to ethical issues and Accelerator-specific questions. In the general information section of Part A, you are requested to select associated keywords from a predefined list. It is of the utmost importance that you select the most relevant keywords that correspond to your proposal with a maximum of three main keywords and three sub-keywords. By selecting the most appropriate keywords, you ensure that your proposal will be allocated to expert evaluators who have the most relevant technical and commercial knowledge to properly evaluate it.

In the section dedicated to call-specific questions, you may provide names of up to three persons that should not act as expert evaluators for potential technical or competitive reasons.

Other call specific questions relate to the type of funding for which you are applying. Applicants must indicate if they are applying for blended finance (a combination of a grant with an investment in equity) and if applicable, the amount requested for equity. Please note that the budget table in section 3 of Part A refers only to the grant part of the proposal (i.e. no equity funding should be in this table).

If you apply for grant only and the evaluation of your proposal later concludes that you are requesting a grant for activities above Technology Readiness Level TRL 8, the European Commission can provide the funding in the form of blended finance, provided that you give your consent in the call specific question. In the absence of consent, applicants will not be considered for blended finance.

If grant applicants cannot demonstrate that they have the ability to secure resources for the activities above TRL 8, the proposal will be rejected. If the ability is satisfactorily demonstrated you can be awarded the grant requested, reduced by the budget of the Work Package(s) containing activities above TRL 8. Where applicants have given consent to blended finance, selected proposals will receive a blended finance offer. The grant part will be the requested amount in the proposal, reduced by the budget of the Work Package(s) containing activities above TRL 8. The equity part covers the budget sum for the Work Package(s) containing activities above TRL8.

Part B is dedicated to the project proposal, where applicants should detail all elements related to the innovation for which they are requesting funding. It is composed of four different documents covering the following elements:

- **Document 1** – Proposal (provided in .pdf)
  - o   Introduction
  - o   Section 1 – Excellence
  - o   Section 2 – Impact
  - o   Section 3 – Implementation
- **Document 2** – Annexes 1 to 3 (provided in a single .pdf)
  - o   Annex 1 - Ethics and Security
  - o   Annex 2 - CVs
  - o   Annex 3 - Other supporting documents
- **Document 3** - Annex 4
  - o   Financial and corporate information - Excel file (provided as .pdf and .xls)
- **Document 4** - Annex 5 - Pitch-deck (provided in .pdf) presentation.

The templates reflect the modifications in the new Work Programme and the introduction of blended finance under the EIC Accelerator Pilot (SME Instrument Phase-2). There is an increased focus on the scale-up potential and associated financing needs. For applicants requesting blended finance there are also specific questions related to the equity element.

Content of Documents in Part B

The EC Proposal Template provides full information on the required content and structure; see
https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/call_ptef/pt/2018-2020/h2020-call-pt-eic-sme-2-2018-20_en.pdf

Document 1, Sections 1 – 3, is limited to 30 pages in total. In this document (see link), the applicant should describe their innovation and how it meets the criteria detailed in the Work Programme.
(https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/reference-documents).
Applicants should focus on Excellence, Impact and Implementation, together with the associated sub-criteria.

In Document 2, applicants should provide the information requested for ethical and security issues, along with CVs for team members (see link). Applicants may also use this document to provide additional details on the selection of sub-contractors (if relevant) and the application of 'best-value-for money' principles.

Under the new template **Document 3**, applicants are also asked to provide financial and corporate information in a spreadsheet, following a specific template (see link). The information provided in the table will contribute to the assessment of the financing needs and the role of EIC support. Applicants are invited to complete the form with as much information as possible, bearing in mind that some information might not be available (i.e. depending on legal and incorporation status).

For more information on the principles of 'best value for money' and their role in the evaluation, see Section 13 of the document at:
https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/guides_for_applicants/h2020-guide-eic-smeinst-18-20_en.pdf

Finally, in **Document 4**, applicants are requested to provide a pitch-deck presentation for expert evaluators that provides a high-level overview of the various aspects of the proposal. This will also be used for the jury interview if the proposal goes through to the second step of the evaluation process. Only the pitch-deck provided during the submission may be used during the interview; updates are not allowed see:
https://ec.europa.eu/easme/sites/easme-site/files/eic-pilot-sme-instrument-pitch-deck-templates.pdf

There is no page limit for the **Annexes.**

If a proposal exceeds the page limit for Document 1, the applicant will receive an automatic warning and will be advised to replace it with a version that conforms. After the cut-off date, excess pages will be automatically made invisible and will not be considered during the evaluation of the proposal.

The proposal is a self-contained document. Expert evaluators will be instructed to ignore hyperlinks to information that is specifically designed to expand the proposal, thus circumventing the page limit. Similarly, expert-evaluators will be instructed to ignore any information that is manifestly irrelevant to the section in which it is placed.

Once applicants have prepared the various parts and selected the cut-off date that corresponds best to their company's needs, the proposal must be submitted via the F&T Portal.

Directly after submission, the proposal reception date and time are recorded and a confirmation e-mail is sent to applicants. If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail the proposal has not been successfully submitted. While you may submit a proposal at any time, proposals are only collected and processed by the EIC Task Force after each of the 4 annual cut-off dates.

Changes or additions are not possible after the cut-off date, unless the EC team asks you to clarify any obvious clerical errors on your part.

If you think that the submission of your proposal was not entirely successful due to a technical error on the side of the Commission, the proposal coordinator may lodge a complaint through the 'IT Helpdesk' on the 'F&T Portal'. For the complaint to be admissible, it must be filed within four calendar days following the cut-off date.

EVALUATION PROCEDURE

Process

- Applicants are required to provide detailed information about the TRL level (or its equivalent for non-technological innovations). In that context, applicants should be aware that activities above TRL 8 can only be funded as equity through the blended finance option, as described earlier.
- The process of evaluation can recommend three outcomes: 'Go' decision, 'No Go' decision or 'change into blended finance' decision. Applicants that apply for the grant only option will have the opportunity at the time of submission to give the European Commission consent to provide the requested amount of funding in the form of blended finance, should the evaluation conclude there are activities above TRL 8.
- Only the proposals with activities at TRL 9 will be subject to such a possibility. The blended finance could replace the initial grant requested at the time of submission. Applicants that do not express such consent will not be considered for blended finance and will be rejected.
- In the case of proposals with 'Go' decisions for grant only, the EC will initiate the grant agreement preparation process with applicants.
- For blended finance proposals, evaluation for the grant component will follow the same steps described as the evaluation of proposals for grant only.
- In the case of proposals for blended finance (with a 'Go' decision or a 'change into blended finance' decision) the Commission will initiate the grant agreement preparation process with SMEs for the grant component. The grant agreement will then be signed between the Commission and the company. These companies will be referred to the SPV team for a due diligence process for the equity component. The SPV team will check whether the company is suitable for receiving this equity component.
- In the case of applicants to whom the Commission proposed funding as blended finance, the grant amount initially requested for the activities of TRL 9 will be directly transferred to the equity amount.
- In the case of negative outcome of the due diligence, the proposal may not be funded, neither as grant nor as equity. If the due diligence is positive, the equity contract will be signed between the SPV and the company.
- Proposals with 'No Go' decision will be rejected. However, proposals rejected on the basis of the bankability assessment, but assessed as viable for other types of EU financing, will be invited to consider other European Union financial instruments.

Applications are evaluated in two steps;

Step 1: Remote Evaluation
- A proposal is evaluated remotely by a number of international evaluators with a mixture of technology, industry sector, business and finance expertise.
- Each evaluator scores each of the three award criteria shown in the previous tables from 0 to 5. Scores with a resolution of one decimal place may be given.
- The quality threshold of each criterion is 4 out of 5. The overall quality threshold, applying to the weighted sum of the three individual scores, is 13 out of a possible 15.
- The consensus score of a proposal at the level of the three evaluation criteria is the median of the scores given by each evaluator. The overall consensus score is the weighted sum of these scores.
- Proposals that pass all quality thresholds will be considered for Step 2.

Step 2: Face-to-Face Interview

- Starting with the highest-scoring proposal and in descending sequential order, proposals are passed to Step 2 until, as a batch, either the total amount of EU funding requested is as close as possible to twice the grant budget available, or all proposals eligible for funding have been accounted for. The actual threshold to pass to Step 2 is therefore dynamic and will depend on the volume of proposals received that pass all quality thresholds.
- Each applicant whose proposal has passed to Step 2 is invited to a face-to-face interview in Brussels. In exceptional cases, interviews may be organised via a videoconference.
- Only the staff of applicants can represent them at the interview. Representation by third parties is forbidden.
- The interview is conducted by a jury of evaluators with a mixture of technology, industry sector, business and finance expertise.
- During the interview, the applicant will be asked questions designed to clarify aspects of the proposal evaluated in Step 1, in particular those described under 'award criteria'.
- In Step 2, proposals will receive, in addition to the score in Step 1, an 'A' mark or a 'B' mark from the final jury panel review.
- Only proposals that have passed all quality thresholds and receive an 'A' mark are proposed for funding, including blended finance when applicable.

NOTE: During the electronic proposal submission process, you can provide up to three names of persons that should not act as an evaluator of your proposal, for commercial or other reasons. The persons identified may be excluded from the evaluation of the proposal, as long as it remains possible to have the proposal fully evaluated.

Communication to applicants after the evaluation procedure

Each applicant invited to an interview in Step 2 receives an invitation at the end of Step 1.
For each proposal, applicants receive an evaluation summary report with the scores obtained and a qualitative assessment with respect to each of the aspects considered under each of the three award criteria (Step 1 of the evaluation). For proposals that have passed to Step 2, the report will contain an A or B mark and an additional qualitative assessment including a possible recommendation on resubmission. Successful applicants will be informed.

Applicants meeting all quality thresholds but not receiving funding will receive a 'Seal of Excellence' from the EC.

FURTHER INFORMATION

There are numerous online sources of official and private sector guidance on the Horizon programme, on the Accelerator Pilot and on how to develop proposals and associated presentations. The following are some of the key sources:

TÜBİTAK support for Horizon 2020:
https://ufuk2020.org.tr/en

The 'Turkey in Horizon 2020 Phase II Project:
https://turkeyinh2020.eu/

EC information on Horizon 2020:
https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en

Information on the forthcoming 'Horizon Europe' programme:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe-next-research-and-innovation-framework-programme_en

The EIC Accelerator Pilot:
https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/eic-accelerator-pilot