

Q&A from the EIC Accelerator Green Deal webinar 2 April 2020*

***Please note that this is some of the questions asked during the webinar. Questions related to a particular project or company have been removed.**

Q: Can two companies apply for a joint project?

A: No, the SME must apply alone in the EIC Accelerator

Q: Can R&D institutes apply, or is it just companies?

A: Only SMEs and start-ups can apply for the EIC Accelerator

Q: What is the EU definition of an SME?

A: The EU definition of an SME is a head count under 250, under 50 million euros in turnover and less than 43 million euros in balance sheets.

Company category	Staff headcount	Turnover	or	Balance sheet total
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ € 50 m		≤ € 43 m
Small	< 50	≤ € 10 m		≤ € 10 m
Micro	< 10	≤ € 2 m		≤ € 2 m

Please see https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en for more information on the SME definition.

If you don't qualify as an SME according to the [SME self-test](#), you could consider Fast Track to Innovation or other funding opportunities within Horizon 2020

Q: Can Norwegian companies participate at the same level as EU companies?

A: Yes

Q: Can the proposal address more than one of the eight goals set out in The European Green Deal?

A: The project can address more than one of the eight goals.

Q: Do you have to meet all the EIC Accelerator requirements to apply for the Green Deal call?

A: The competition is so strong that if you don't, your chances for succeeding are very limited.

Q: What is blended finance?

A: The EIC Accelerator offers blended finance in the form of an optional investment in equity in addition to the grant, to single for-profit SMEs. Grants will finance activities from TRL 6-8. Activities above TRL 8 will be financed only through blended finance.

Q: What does TRL 5-6 mean?

A: Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) is a type of measurement system used to assess the maturity level of a technology. Each technology project is evaluated against the parameters for each technology level and is then assigned a TRL rating based on the project's progress. There are nine technology readiness levels:



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 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.

This system may not be relevant for all types of innovations and/or sectors, but applicants are still expected to demonstrate and document that the innovation is at the appropriate development stage for the EIC Accelerator.

Q: Can one only apply for blended finance for activities at TRL 9?

A: No, it is possible to apply for blended finance for activities under TRL 6-8, but the project must show a realistic plan for how it will reach TRL 9. Activities above TRL 8 can only be financed through blended finance.

Q: This call is under Horizon 2020- will the length of the project be affected by the launch of Horizon Europe in 2021?

A: No, the project will run as usual and will not be affected by the introduction of Horizon Europe.

Q: Can we have access to the template?

A: We always recommend downloading the template from the EU funding tenders portal to be sure that you have the latest version: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

Q: I found a distinction between phase 1 and phase 2 in EIC Application material. Is this relevant for the application?

A: No, this is just “leftovers” from the previous funding schemes called the Horizon 2020 SME Instrument. Phase 1 of the SME Instrument was discontinued in 2019.

Q: Does innovation Norway offer co-financing for the project?

A: No.

Q: How does the 70% funding relate to the state aid rules (statsstøtteregeverket)?

A: Horizon 2020 is exempt from the state aid rules

Q: Will Innovation Norway match/supplement a grant from the EU?

A: No

Q: Is the EIC Accelerator not suitable for companies in the early or idea development stage?

A: The EIC Accelerator Pilot is aimed at funding innovations in the last phase before full commercial rollout. The project must be at TRL 6 or higher to be eligible.

Q: Can you apply several times?

A: Yes

Q: If I get blended funding, do I have the Commission in my board of directors?

A: No, the commission will not take an active role as board members. Depending on the setup of your company and equity agreement, you may get external VCs as board members, but not without a previous agreement between all parties involved.

Q: Will a company with a great green idea, but only two employees be considered?

A: It will be considered, but the chances for success are limited for such a small company, and as a rule of thumb we recommend growing your business a little more before applying.

Q: Other Horizon2020 calls are extended due to COVID-19, what do you think about this deadline?

A: The European Commission has confirmed that the timeline/deadline for this call will remain as planned.

Q: With the COVID-19 situation, how will the interviews be held this year?

A: It is not decided yet for this cut-off, but chances are that it will be held via video call.

Q: Is the 19th of May deadline the only deadline for EIC Accelerator in 2020?

A: No, there is one additional cut-off in 2020. 7th of October. Please note that this cut-off is not dedicated to Green Deal but is thematically open.

Q: Will the scheme continue in Horizon Europe?

A: Yes

Q: Where is the official page for this call?

A: <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/sme-instrument/eic-accelerator-sme-instrument-funding-opportunities>

Q: Is it possible to be a part of a Horizon2020 research action, in addition to EIC Accelerator?

A: Yes, if you do not receive funding from two different schemes for the same activities.

Q: If we don't get the application finished to this date, is there any other open calls in the future?

A: The next EIC Accelerator cut-off after May is 7th of October. The call is completely bottom-up, meaning that the companies with projects compatible with the "Green Deal" requirements in the May cut-off also can apply for the deadline in October. It is also an important message that there are opportunities for companies in many parts of the Horizon 2020 programme. Innovation Norway and The Research Council of Norway can advise.

Q: Where does the equity funding come from? Does the EU source from VCs, or do we need to find them yourself?

A: You do not need to find the VCs yourself. If you are selected for blended finance, there will be a process afterwards matching your company with relevant VCs or financing bodies.

Q: Will we receive maximum 2.5 MEUR or do we get 70% as a grant?

A: In the EIC Accelerator you can get a grant of max 2,5 MEUR. It is also possible to apply for a combination of grant (2,5 MEUR) in combination of an equity component of up to 15 MEUR.

Q: Would it be better to wait for Horizon Europe than to reapply in Horizon 2020 with a new project? We have received and completed one project in Horizon2020. Our next project has a different application, but much of the built-up IP in the previous project can be transferred to the new one.

A: That depends on your project and if it fits with the aim of the EIC Accelerator call, and if you have enough time and resources to develop a proposal before the deadline 19th of May (or the next deadline 7th of October). Innovation Norway's EU advisors can help you with assessing your project idea and if it fits within the scope of the EIC Accelerator. If it does, there is no need to wait for the start of Horizon Europe in 2021.

Q: Can you elaborate on the quotations of companies with female leadership?

A: For the cut-off in May 2020 as well as the cut-off in October, 25 % of the budget is earmarked companies with a female CEO or equivalent. For the purposes of the EIC Enhanced Pilot Work Programme 2020, women-led SMEs (including start-ups) comprise companies whose CEO, or the equivalent position, is held by a woman at the time of application, interview and award of the EU Financial support. In case the SME does not have a CEO position, the equivalent position is understood as the highest decision making position in the company. In case the SME has a co-CEO (or equivalent) position, this will be considered as a woman-led SME as long as a woman holding the CEO (or equivalent) position has at least 50% of the decision making responsibility.

Q: A European direct competitor of ours has received funding from the EU. Will the evaluators look at this positively, that another player got funding and the industry is vibrant, or will they be less interested in supporting multiple companies in the same industry?

A: The solution you develop should be innovative and have the potential to create new markets. As such, it will be a disadvantage if the solution you are developing already exists.

Q: We have integrated SW development teams consisting of personnel in multiple countries, also non-EU countries. Are the resources outside EU disqualified from participation?

A: The EIC Accelerator Pilot supports SMEs based in EU member states and associated countries, and one of the main goals for the programme is to support European growth. If all other requirements are fulfilled, you may also use resources outside EU within the project, but keep in mind that there should be a balance to the team that serves to underscore the intention of the work programme.

Q: In EIC Accelerator, I will need to compete with the best professional proposal writers and experts in Europe, how can Innovation Norway help me with this?

A: Innovation Norway offers advising and will read through your proposal and advise on how to improve it.

Q: If your company meets the criteria for uniqueness, has great impact for the society and has collaborators to implement quickly, would you advise applying or restricting yourself to national funding first? It seems from the talk that nationally founded companies are favoured.

A: Innovation Norway's EU advisors can help you in assessing your project and advise on which scheme would be more appropriate, national or EU.

Q: Does Innovation Norway have proposal competence, what is your help there

A: Innovation Norway has the official role as national contact point for the European Innovation Council. We offer advising and support in proposal writing. We do not write the proposals, but we have extensive experience with reading and advising in the proposal writing process.