

European Innovation Council: position of EIROforum

The European Intergovernmental Research Organisations (EIROs), members of EIROforum, provide world-class research infrastructures and facilities to users from various scientific communities. In order to stay at the forefront of their research fields, the EIROs continuously develop and implement novel cutting-edge technologies, many of which have industrial, healthcare and other applications linked to grand societal challenges. The EIROs and other European research infrastructures are often part of the innovation chain and can be a critical enabler of innovation processes. They contribute to the competitiveness of Europe in the R&D&I domain, act as catalysers of innovation activities, and train future scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs.

With this short paper the EIROs outline their views regarding the creation of a new European Innovation Council (EIC) and propose some ideas and basic principles for its implementation.

The EIROs welcome and support the initiative of the European Commission for creating a European Innovation Council. The main mission of the EIC should be to strengthen the European R&D&I sector by promoting disruptive, research-driven and market-oriented innovation, in line with the principles of Open Science and Open Innovation.

The EIC should empower innovation communities to manage their own pilot programmes. Each pilot programme might consist of a series of EIC grants open to all innovation stakeholders, such as SMEs, large companies, technology universities and institutes, research and technology organisations, as well as research infrastructures. The EIC pilots must result in the creation of jobs in Europe, and in particular should support the development of innovative start-up companies. In this regard, EIC should be used as a focus to reduce and simplify the diverse funding instruments that already support innovation. In addition, the EIC should carry out joint activities with the ERC, EIT and possibly other already existing programmes.

Each EIC pilot could provide, for example, a series of the following types of grants according to the TRL that needs to be achieved¹:

- Feasibility Study: market, technology and user assessment (50-100 KEUR, TRL 2-5)
- Proof of Concept Grant (300-500 KEUR, TRL 2-3)
- Technology Validation Grant (2-4 MEUR, TRL 4-5)
- Technology Demonstration Grant (5-7 MEUR, TRL 6-7)
- Young Innovator and Start-up Grant (1-2 MEUR)

Proposals for EIC grants should be mainly assessed on the basis of their innovation potential (degree of novelty, breakthrough potential, and opportunities for new applications, markets or services) as well as for their implementation feasibility (also from technology and user perspective).

For the success of the EIC and the competitiveness of Europe in the short-, medium- and long term, it will be essential to fund high-risk / high-reward projects along the innovation chain, where failure to reach all (ambitious) objectives and deliverables is accepted.

All EIC pilots should address key R&D&I fields and the grants should be fully bottom-up, without any restrictions of the S&T domains of the proposals.

Each EIC pilot should be governed by a Board of experts from industry, leading entrepreneurs, investors, business economists, and senior representatives of research infrastructures, academic organisations and technology institutes. The implementation of each of the EIC pilots should be based

¹ [Technology Readiness Levels](#)

on flexible and simplified funding rules, fast procedures for selection and grant awards, trust-driven approach, management autonomy and transparent expert evaluation, including a simple interim review to check the progress of the projects and stop the ones which have not advanced sufficiently well. When feasible, funding should be given up-front to encourage small enterprises without a large budget for innovation to apply. Efficient mechanisms should be also incorporated for early access of private capital, as well as for education, training and mentoring of young researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs.

The EIC pilots should integrate the usage of high impact technologies, facilities, capabilities and expertise originated in leading European research infrastructures (RIs). This inclusiveness is key to actively encourage cooperation of RIs in fostering innovation with the commercial world. The ESFRI 2016 Roadmap calls for RIs to actively work with industry as a full partner. The EIC can encourage this by including specific support categories in the pilots for innovation projects, start-ups and SMEs to exploit the huge pool of know-how, facilities and expertise held by RIs.

The EIROforum organisations are ready to share their expertise and experience regarding innovation as well as managing successfully large R&D&I programmes, and are willing to contribute to further consultations as well as to the creation and the implementation of the EIC.