



EIC TRANSITION

The evaluation process: the testimonial of a successful proposer

2022





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The EIC Transition and the evaluation process: the testimonial from an successful proposer

The EIC Transition was launched in 2021 as one of the major novelties under the European Innovation Council and implemented in its first year of the implementation of the fully-fledged EIC in acting as a bridge instrument between Pathfinder and Accelerator programmes. The EIC Transition aims at developing disruptive innovations based on breakthrough technologies and embraces technological development, business model development to accelerate the time-to-market of such disruptive innovations. It has the potential to generate spin-offs, technology transfer activities or even licensing agreements.

The EIC Transition envisages an evaluation process based on two different steps: i.) the independent evaluation from three different experts taking approximately two months and half for evaluation; ii) and the EIC Jury interview, where a team composed of five members of the consortium are invited to present their innovative idea, the business model behind it and the technological advancements to be improved to reach its objectives.

APRE, as coordinator of the Access2EIC network, interviewed Professor Alessandra Balduini of the University of Pavia, who won a Transition Grant in 2021 for the SilkPlatelet project. The project aims at “Closing the European gap towards a large scale ex vivo platelet production built upon a silk-based scaffold bioreactor”; with a duration of 36 months and will receive a European contribution of around 2,473 M €. We asked Prof. Balduini to tell us about its proposal preparation and the last evaluation step: the EIC Jury interview.

Access2EIC: The EIC Jury interview evaluates the pitch of the proposed idea at the core of its success. In your experience, which are the key aspects to be highlighted?

Prof. Balduini - SilkPlatelet project coordinator: The business plan is a necessary element to be developed. The proposer needs to have a precise idea of how he/she wants to develop the business over the three years of the project. In the case the proposer would like to launch a start-up, it might be possible that the EIC Jury will ask about where the headquarters will be, the people who will participate, who is going to be the CEO. It is also necessary to have an idea of the market, its competitors and the IP strategy. The scientific and technological component must also be prepared in detail. It is necessary to be able to answer precise questions on the technical development of the product, on possible risks and relevant pitfalls in its development, and to be prepared about the risk mitigation strategy.

Access2EIC: How robust and detailed must the description of the business case / model and the analysis of the reference market be in the Transition interview? In particular, is it useful to discuss it taking into account the expected progress in the TRL?

Prof. Balduini - SilkPlatelet project coordinator: It is not necessary to go into details, but you should give an idea of what market you want to reach, how and where. We had prepared a slide to explain our plan for moving from TRL3 to TRL6. In the graph we put the TRL we arrived at with the previous Pathfinder, the forecast for the Transition and then the future steps for the Accelerator.

Access2EIC: How important is it to have a clear intellectual property strategy?

Prof. Balduini - SilkPlatelet project coordinator: I would say that it is a key element, since all the evaluators had asked about it.



Access2EIC: Based on your experience, can you give us some practical suggestions on how to prepare the EIC Jury interview? Did you engage the team members, small and medium enterprises or other consortium members in its preparation?

Prof. Balduini - SilkPlatelet project coordinator: There are some elements that define key features of the success of the proposal during the EIC Jury interview: it is essential to show that you are a team. Therefore, you have to work together for a long time to prepare the pitch and the answers to the questions. You need to be concise and effective, therefore preparing and training yourself and optimizing exposure is essential. To be prepared for the SilkPlatelet's interview, we made many meetings to think about possible questions and we divided the interventions so that everyone could participate. The EIC promotes the participation and wider engagement of small and medium-sized enterprises. My experience with SMEs is positive because I was already collaborating with them before writing the project: this has been clearly stated and identified during our interview. Finally, concerning the IP strategy, it is essential to show that you have a common and agreed vision within the consortium.

Access2EIC: The SilkPlatelet project is the successor of an EIC Pathfinder grant. Which in your opinion are the most relevant ingredients for winning the European funding?

Prof. Balduini - SilkPlatelet project coordinator: I personally believe that the most important element to be highlight is the innovation compared to the international context, and not only across Europe. The EIC would like to foster the disruptive innovation across Europe, to be competitive at an international scale. It is therefore essential to reach an international market for our business, in order to be effective. Obviously, it also matters that there are no competitors in Europe or to develop a technological breakthrough that brings to an innovative product that has clear advantages over what already exists. In my experience, it has been essential to create a team built upon the experience of the outstanding experts in the specific domain in Europe.

Access2EIC: The European Innovation Council is fostering a gender-balanced approach in research content and consortia creation. It has been envisaged as well major effort to support female entrepreneurship, selecting a percentage of female CEOs in the EIC Jury interviews. Which is your opinion on this?

Prof. Balduini - SilkPlatelet project coordinator: The EIC was keen to emphasize that my project won for its breakthrough innovation based on high-risk high-gain scientific approach, and not because it was coordinated by a female coordinator. This is an important message: ideas and innovation are factors of success. Having said that, I believe that now is a very favorable time for women "entrepreneurs". The numbers of women at top companies or universities is very low throughout Europe, and even lower are the numbers of women CEOs of start-ups financed by venture capitalists. This must change not only for a matter of gender balance, but also, and above all, for a diversification of ideas and approach to business, the management of companies and research centers. EIC is working to change the situation with very well articulated and interesting programs. One of these is the "EIC Women Leadership Program" which selects innovative women for very intense training in business development, leadership, and technology transfer. This initiative, together with the others, is essential to train new "entrepreneurial" women and to raise awareness of the importance of the variety of ideas and approaches, and to transfer such innovations into the industrial field. In all the meetings it emerged that these initiatives are very useful and appreciated. The EIC is embracing a model in which the researcher, the venture capitalist or the entrepreneur refers to it to foster synergies and cross-fertilization.



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National Contact Points for Innovation

SilkPlatelet project is one of the **first 42 projects** that have been selected in the 2021 EIC Transition Calls for Proposals. Successful proposals, selected among 292 submitted, will receive altogether €99 million of EU funding. The evaluation results and the EIC Transition selected projects are available here: https://eic.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-selects-first-eic-transition-projects-take-breakthrough-technologies-lab-real-world-2022-01-17_en

On September 2021, the Access2EIC NCP Network published its **factsheet to support EIC Transition** applicants for 2021 Call for Proposals. Nevertheless, the Tips and Tricks on How to write a winning proposal seems to be relevant for the 2022 Open Calls. The Access2EIC Transition Factsheet is available at: https://access2eic.eu/download/a2eic_eic-transition-factsheet/

Access2EIC

ACCESS2EIC is a 24-months coordination and support action aimed to empower and facilitate transnational cooperation within the network of National Contact Points - NCPs focused on the Horizon 2020 European Innovation Council - EIC Pilot and the specific objective Access to Risk Finance - ARF. It involves a consortium made of formally appointed NCPs under 'Future and Emerging Technologies - FET', 'Innovation in SMEs - SME' and 'Access to Risk Finance - ARF' areas of Horizon 2020.

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