



Accompagnamento  
per la valorizzazione della ricerca

**Publication date:**

3 February 2025

**First Deadline** 26

March 2025

**Second Deadline**

30 September

2025



Fondazione  
Compagnia  
di San Paolo

Fondazione  
**CARIPLO**



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vEIColo

## 1. Introduction

The vEIColo call for proposals is promoted jointly by Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, through its *Enhancing Research* Mission, by Fondazione Cariplo, as part of its Mandate 4: “*Creating the enabling conditions to strengthen communities*” and by Fondazione CDP, within the “Scientific Support and Research” sector.

## 2. Context and specific objectives of the Call for Proposals

European Union countries struggle to translate high intensity of knowledge into productive output and market value, demonstrating a systemic difficulty in capitalising on the results of the excellent research that is strongly promoted by the Union. Holding back the transition “from the laboratory to the market” is a scarcity of resources invested in venture capital, particularly compared with global players like the United States. The European Commission's European Innovation Scoreboard 2024 shows that innovation performance is on the rise, with a 10% increase since 2017 and 0.5% growth between 2023 and 2024. Thanks in part to EU policy initiatives, the gap between Europe and the global innovation leaders continues to close year after year<sup>1</sup>.

In the European context, Italy is a Moderate innovator. In fact, while national innovation performance is still below the European average, it is improving at a faster rate than the rest of the EU (+10%)<sup>2</sup>.

European investment in the context of the seven-year Horizon Europe framework programme, which was first implemented in 2021 and is due to run until 2027, certainly contributes to improving Europe's positioning. The innovation introduced by Horizon Europe within its “third pillar” is the European Innovation Council (EIC), which promotes cooperation between research and industry by supporting the development of breakthrough technological innovations capable of creating new internal and international markets. The EIC aims to support the transition of technologies from their early development stages to a level where they can be industrially applied, all while helping to reduce technological risk. The EIC's system is intended to support the “journey from laboratory to market” along the entire spectrum of the TRL (Technology Readiness Level) through three different financing programmes: EIC Pathfinder, which provides support in the initial stages of the development of innovative technological solutions (up to TRL 4); EIC Transition, which supports the maturation of the technology and its market validation (from TRL 4 to TRL 6); EIC Accelerator, which supports SMEs and start-ups with scaling up innovations that have the potential to establish themselves in the market (from TRL 6 to TRL 8 and, potentially, TRL 9).

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission data from the European Innovation Scoreboard 2024 report.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission data from the European Innovation Scoreboard 2024 report.

Focusing in particular on Italian performance in the three EIC funding programmes, the overall national success rate of 8.6% is still below the European average (9%), with Italian performance decreasing as the potential for industrial exploitation of technologies increases.

It is important to highlight that these estimates are largely driven by a small number of national entities. Examining the territorial breakdown of the indices, it becomes clear that southern Italian regions have a low participation rate, with their success rate falling to around 6.5%<sup>3</sup>. The European contribution they receive corresponds to just 5% of the funding from which Italy benefits under the EIC's Pathfinder, Transition and Accelerator programmes<sup>4</sup>. The data from the European Commission also highlight the need to encourage the leadership skills of Italian research institutions and, in particular, of Southern Italy; in fact, of all the partnerships led by an Italian Host Institution, just 4% are based in Southern Italy<sup>5</sup>.

Based on these data, it appears increasingly necessary to make the culture of innovation and entrepreneurship more pervasive in universities and research institutions, a process which requires the training of skills - and culture - to support the monetisation of the results of research. It therefore seems crucial to offer research personnel training and support opportunities related to the funding opportunities linked to EIC programmes.

The vEIColo call for proposals intends to encourage the participation of Italian research teams in the funding opportunities of the EIC's Pathfinder and Transition programmes. It covers the whole country, thanks to the collaboration between Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation, Fondazione Cariplo and Fondazione CDP.

Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo is a private philanthropic foundation of banking origin whose actions are aligned with and inspired by United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It works for the common good with a humanistic perspective that places the person at the centre. It helps to develop research aimed at furthering scientific knowledge for social well-being, in line with European planning. It fosters excellence in training and enhances the knowledge acquired by participating in these programmes, so that the best ideas generate a positive economic, social and environmental impact.

Fondazione Cariplo is a banking foundation that operates in Lombardy and in the Provinces of Novara and Verbano Cusio Ossola. It is committed to supporting and promoting social utility projects in the environment, art and culture, personal services and scientific research sectors. In the

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<sup>3</sup> European Commission data; analysis units: EIC Pathfinder, EIC Transition, EIC Accelerator; period: 2021-2022.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission data; analysis units: EIC Pathfinder period 2021-2022, EIC Transition period 2021-2022, EIC Accelerator period 2021-2023.

<sup>5</sup> European Commission data; analysis units: EIC Pathfinder, EIC Transition; period: 2021-2022.

latter sector in particular, it contributes to creating an environment favourable to scientific research, technological transfer and monetisation of the results of applied research, by providing support for research projects, the development of human capital, actions that promote the creation of networks and partnerships - including international ones - as well as support for the communication and dissemination of scientific research results.

Fondazione CDP is a non-profit organisation dedicated to serving the public good, with a focus on social and cultural objectives, particularly in southern Italy. One of Fondazione CDP's areas of operation is "Scientific Support and Research", which encompasses initiatives to support scientific research and the development of innovative technologies.

The three Foundations work together to promote and strengthen their commitment to scientific research and innovation in areas of crucial importance for the future of Italy.

### 3. Eligible initiatives and specific contents of the initiative

The general aim of the vEIColo call is to enhance Italian participation in the European calls promoted by the European Innovation Council (EIC) as part of the EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition programmes and to increase the ability of Italian universities and public and private research bodies to attract funds.

This Call for Proposals establishes two distinct lines of intervention:

#### 3.1 Target 1 – Enhancing opportunities

This intervention Target provides for a contribution to research projects that have obtained an above-threshold assessment based on each of the following three criteria - Excellence, Impact, Quality and efficiency of the implementation - following application to one of the EIC funding programmes: Pathfinder (Excellence 4.0/5.0, Impact 3.5/5.0, Quality and efficiency of the implementation 3.0/5.0) or EIC Transition (Excellence 4.0/5.0, Impact 4.0/5.0, Quality and efficiency of the implementation 3.0/5.0), in the two types of Open or Challenges calls, but which were not financed due to insufficient funds being available. Applications will only be accepted for projects that have been submitted to EIC calls in the years 2023 and 2024 and in which the proposing entity has acted as Coordinator.

The allocated funds may be used by the proposing bodies for actions to consolidate research activity (e.g. advancement of the starting TRL level of the technology covered by the project) and to strengthen the partnership and the scientific and cross-cutting skills of the research staff to enable a subsequent application for the EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition funding programmes.

In order to offer concrete support to the Italian research system, the teams of researchers from the universities and research institutions that are successful in Target 1 will also benefit from a coaching and support programme of up to a maximum of 50 hours, provided by international consultants selected by the Foundations who are experts in innovation and technology transfer, intended to prepare the proposal to be presented for a call by the EIC. The winners will be guided in their analysis of the European Evaluation Report (ESR) and review of the application for a subsequent call promoted within the EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition funding programmes.

The winners will be able to use the consultancy hours provided to them by 30 June 2026 and will have to re-submit their project proposal to the European call by 31 December 2026.

### 3.2 Target 2 - New opportunities

This Target is intended to stimulate applications for an EIC Pathfinder, Open or Challenges, and EIC Transition call for research projects with high potential for technology transfer. The eligible projects must include the proposing entity as Coordinator of the partnership.

The teams of researchers from the universities and research institutions that are successful at Target 2 will benefit from training to prepare their submission for an EIC call in webinar mode, with modules dedicated to writing proposals, and from coaching and support for up to a maximum of 75 hours, to draw up the proposal to be presented in an upcoming EIC call with international consultants selected by the Foundations who are experts in innovation and technology transfer.

The winners will be able to use the consultancy hours available to them by 30 June 2026 and will have to submit their project proposal to the European call by 30 June 2027.

Innovayt is the company selected by the Foundations for training, coaching and support activities. Innovayt is a consultancy company that has operated in Europe since 2006 and specialises in preparing financing applications and business plans to access financing for innovation. This company will also be involved in the evaluation of the applications received for the two Targets.

## 4. Eligible entities

The following types of entities with registered office in Italy are eligible to participate in the Call for Proposals:

- Universities; and
- public and private non-profit entities that carry out research activities;



All beneficiaries of the grant must fulfil the subjective eligibility requirements, from the moment they submit their application, pursuant to the Articles of Association, the Regulations for Institutional Activities and the Application Guidelines of the Regulations for Institutional Activities of Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, shared with Fondazione Cariplo and Fondazione CDP.

Each organisation may apply for multiple projects and multiple projects from the same organisation may be selected.

Applications cannot be submitted as research projects which have already been financed by the Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo TRAPEZIO - Paving the way to research excellence and talent attraction call for proposals.

## 5. Procedure for submitting applications

Applications must be submitted using the “ROL - online application system” accessible via the Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo website homepage, making sure that the specific form for the call is selected in the “List of calls and requests” section.

Entities submitted multiple applications must complete an ROL for each research project.

## 6. Documents required and eligible expenses

### 6.1 Target 1 – Enhancing opportunities

In order to submit an application, the following mandatory documents must be sent using, where applicable, the format made available by the Foundations. All required documentation must be produced in English.

- Copy of the Evaluation Summary Report of the European project;
- Full proposal previously submitted to the EIC;
- Application form (ORL- Online application system) containing:
  1. project title;
  2. project abstract;
  3. technology sector;
  4. description of the partnership and composition of the project team;
- curriculum vitae of each member of the project team (max. 2 pages per CV);

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<sup>6</sup> Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo: [Articles of Association](#); [Regulations for Institutional Activities](#); [Application guidelines of the Regulations for Institutional Activities](#).

- resource use plan according to the format supplied (Annex 1). Note that the maximum contribution that can be made per individual project is 40,000 euros. Co-funding is not mandatory for this Call. The amount assigned will depend on the evaluation of the Evaluation Commission, which will verify the effective connection of the spending plan with the project needs. In the event of a lower contribution than requested being assigned, the beneficiary organisation may request a remodulation of the activities or objectives based on the contribution assigned. The plan for use of the resources may extend for a maximum of 6 months.

The contribution will cover the following types of costs:

1. equipment expenses, including software licences;
2. expenses for the purchase of consumables;
3. expenses for the purchase of third party services;
4. mission expenses intended to consolidate the partnership;
5. other management expenses (e.g. publications, participation in conferences, any overheads).

If procedures for filing a patent or registered software have been started following the favourable opinion expressed by the competent body, attach the latter's opinion with the relevant approved documentation.

If a patent has been filed, attach:

1. status of the patent or software and ownership;
2. list of countries where the patent has been extended;
3. declaration of consent to participate in the tender on the headed paper of the proposing organisation signed by the legal representative and the head of the Technology Transfer Office (Annex A);
4. any consent to participate in this Call for Proposals by the non-profit or private body(ies) that is(are) the co-owner(s) of the patent or software that is the subject of the application and respective acceptance of the rules of the Call for Proposals (Annex B).

## 6.2 Target 2 - New opportunities

Applications must include the documents listed below using, where applicable, the format made available by the Foundations. All required documentation must be produced in English.

- Project document (Annex 2);
- application form (ROL - online application system) containing:

1. project title;
  2. project abstract;
  3. technology sector;
  4. composition of the project team;
  5. description of the proposed partnership;
- curriculum vitae of each member of the project team (max. 2 pages per CV);
  - undertaking to apply for an EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition call by 30 June 2027 signed by the Project Manager and the Legal Representative of the proposing entity.

If you intend to take part in the preparation of an EIC Transition application:

- copy of the project financed under the EIC Pathfinder, ERC PoC, European Defence Fund programmes or financed under Horizon 2020 Societal challenges and Leadership in Industrial Technologies and in the second pillar of Horizon Europe, in compliance with the eligibility criteria stated in the EIC Work Programme 2025, which are a necessary requirement for the presentation of an EIC Transition project.

If procedures for filing a patent or registered software have been started following the favourable opinion expressed by the competent body, attach the latter's opinion with the relevant approved documentation.

If a patent has been filed, attach:

1. status of the patent or software and ownership;
2. list of countries where the patent has been extended;
3. declaration of consent to participate in the tender on the headed paper of the proposing organisation signed by the legal representative and the head of the Technology Transfer Office (Annex A);
4. any consent to participate in this Call for Proposals by the non-profit or private body(ies) that is(are) the co-owner(s) of the patent or software that is the subject of the application and respective acceptance of the rules of the Call for Proposals (Annex B).

Incomplete applications will be excluded from the selection process.

## 7. Deadline for submitting applications

*Applications must be submitted using the “ROL - online application system” procedure accessible via the Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo website homepage, making sure that the specific form for the call is selected in the “List of Calls and requests” section, by the following deadlines:*

- **by 1.00 p.m. on 26 March 2025 at the latest**, for projects intending to apply to the EIC Pathfinder Challenges and EIC Transition 2025 calls, whether belonging to Target 1 – Enhancing opportunities, or Target 2 – New opportunities;
- **by 1.00 p.m. on 30 September 2025 at the latest**, for projects intending to apply to the Pathfinder Open 2026<sup>7</sup> call, whether belonging to Target 1 – Enhancing opportunities, or Target 2 – New opportunities;

## 8. Evaluation of applications

Once the fulfilment of the eligibility requirements has been verified, the evaluation will be carried out by international consultants appointed by the Foundations.

In particular, applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

### Target 1:

- Excellence in terms of breakthrough and innovation of the proposed solution as well as appropriateness of the proposed work plan to overcome the weaknesses highlighted in the Evaluation Summary Report (weighting 50%);
- Impact of the project in social, economic and environmental terms (weighting 30%);
- adequacy of the proposing entities and the partnership (20%).

### Target 2:

- Excellence in terms of breakthrough and innovation of the proposed solution as well as appropriateness of the proposed work plan compared to the proof of principle (weighting 50%);
- expected impact of the project in social, economic and environmental terms (weighting 30%);
- adequacy of the proposing entities and the partnership (20%).

Participation in the Call implies acceptance of the final decision on the selection of projects and the subsequent allocation of contributions.

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<sup>7</sup> Note that the EIC Pathfinder Open 2025 call was already addressed in the previous edition of this Call.

During the evaluation, Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, Fondazione Cariplo and Fondazione CDP reserve the right to request additional documentation to the information provided and to carry out checks and in-depth meetings with the proposers to obtain clarifications on the request. After consulting with the Foundations, the consultants may also reach out to the proposers directly to gather information that may assist with the evaluation.

## 9. Outcomes and financial provisions

The budget available for this Call amounts to 1,500,000 euros and will be assigned by granting contributions of up to 880,000 euros, as well as training, coaching and support services.

At the end of the evaluation process, specific merit rankings will be defined for each of the two Intervention Targets and for the different EIC calls to which the applicants intend to apply. In the event of a tie, preference will be given to the project submitted by the youngest Principal Investigator.

The organisations selected for Target 1 will receive a contribution of up to a maximum of 40,000 euros and will benefit from a coaching and support service, up to a maximum of 50 hours, based on an activity plan agreed with Innovayt. The organisations selected for Target 2 will benefit from a coaching and support service, up to a maximum of 75 hours, based on an activity plan agreed with Innovayt.

If the winning projects were also presented at the EIC Pathfinder Open call in May 2025, in order to start the activities under this Call they will be required to communicate the outcome of the European evaluation. Being a winner at European level entails renouncing the benefits offered by this Call.

If the contribution is refused, the Foundations reserve the right to scroll down the ranking.

The Foundations are entitled not to allocate all or part of the expected budget.

The selected applications will be published on the website of Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation, Fondazione Cariplo and Fondazione CDP. The results will subsequently be formalised in written communications addressed to the selected organisations. If no mention of a project is made on the website, this should be understood as a communication from the Foundations of a negative outcome.

## 10. Reporting methods

Reporting of the contribution for Target 1 winners and of activities for both Targets must be sent via the Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo online platform as stated in the contribution allocation decision letter and in its attachments<sup>8</sup>.

Target 1 winners will receive 50% of the contribution assigned to them at the start of the research project and the balance based on the financial reporting sent and following communication to the Foundations of the presentation of their project for a EIC call, within the times stated in paragraph 3.1 of this Notice.

If substantial changes to the project idea originally submitted and selected under this Call for Proposals should take place during the preparation of the EIC call, Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, Fondazione Cariplo and Fondazione CDP - having obtained the opinion of Innovayt - reserve the right to discontinue the training, support and coaching services. In the event that 50% of the grant has already been disbursed to the Target 1 winners, procedures for repayment of the grant may also be considered.

No extensions will be permitted except in exceptional cases previously authorised by the Foundations.

## 11. Contact details

For further information regarding the Call for Proposals, contact the Foundations by writing to: [missionericerca@compagniadisanpaolo.it](mailto:missionericerca@compagniadisanpaolo.it) with "vEIColo" Call for Proposals in the subject line.

For information and technical clarifications regarding the form completion procedure, please contact: [assistentzarol@compagniadisanpaolo.it](mailto:assistentzarol@compagniadisanpaolo.it).

For assistance with registering on the "ROL - online application system" platform, please contact: [amministrazioneattivitaistituzionali@compagniadisanpaolo.it](mailto:amministrazioneattivitaistituzionali@compagniadisanpaolo.it).

Any further communications relating to the procedures for submitting projects or clarifications regarding issues of general interest may be added to the "**Frequently Asked Questions**" section of the vEIColo Call for Proposals on the FCSP website, and will supplement the existing text of this Call for Proposals.

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<sup>8</sup> [Guidelines for the Management, Reporting and Communication of activities.](#)

This call for proposals contributes to the achievement of the following SDGs:

