PILOT CALL: EIC Advanced Innovation Challenges 2026

Objective of the AIC call: Support to *high-risk*, *demand-driven deep tech* innovation & *acceleration* to the market

Key features:

- *Demand side integration*: commercial users/end-users/other major stakeholders to be involved
- *Proactive portfolio management*: a Programme Manager will guide and support projects throughout Stage 1; foster synergies and the potential formation of consortia; play a leading role in the selection process for Stage 2

STAGED FUNDING:

Stage 1 (2026)

- € 300 K for 9 months
- 10 projects to be selected
- Open to single applicants only (any legal entity except large companies)
- **Project activities**: prepare and benchmark breakthrough solutions and explore their feasibility and viability

Stage 2 (2027)

- Up to € 2.5 M for up to 30 months
- 5 projects to be selected (call restricted to beneficiaries from stage 1)
- Open to single applicants or small consortia of 2–3 partners
- **Project activities**: further develop the most promising solutions and test them in real world environments and with the involvement of users

Challenge 1-2026: Accelerating Physical AI: Embodied Intelligence for the Next Frontier of AI-Powered Robotics

Stage 1 **call opening 3.12. 2025/deadline 26.2. 2026 (17:00)**

Objective: to accelerate the development towards integration, deployment and commercialisation of breakthrough Physical AI solutions

Proposals must focus on developing disruptive Physical AI innovations that demonstrate **at least two** of the following characteristics:

- *Intelligent Perception and Cognition*
- *Adaptive Learning and Optimisation*
- *Autonomous Decision-Making and Collective Intelligence*
- *Human-AI Collaboration and Interaction*
- *Physical Integration and Innovation*

The solutions must also focus on addressing needs in **at least one** of the following application areas:

- *Disaster response and civil security physical agents*
- *Autonomous labs for Scientific Discovery*
- *Personal or professional robot assistants*

Entry requirements:

- An initial physical AI system **prototype tested in the lab** (**TRL 4**)
- Access to an **appropriate infrastructure** for data collection and testing
- A challenging use case formulated by a potential end-user, supported by a **letter of intent**

Please, read full details in the EIC Work programme 2026:

https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-funding-opportunities/advanced-innovation-challenges-pilot_en

You can watch a recording of an AIC infoday: https://eic.ec.europa.eu/events/online-info-day-eic-work-programme-2026-advanced-innovation-challenges-2025-11-17_en

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