



HIGH LEVEL GROUP OF INNOVATORS

What is the role of the High Level Group; will this lead to the creation of a European Innovation Council?

The High-Level Group is composed of 15 leading entrepreneurs, investors and ecosystem builders in Europe. Building on their experience, the group will advise the Commission on how best to support innovation that creates new markets. The Group will advise the Commission on changes it intends to make for the remaining period of Horizon 2020, as set out in the [Start-up and Scale-up Initiative](#), to provide bottom-up support targeting breakthrough innovation projects with the potential for scaling up. The Group will also advise on how this approach could be reinforced in future through a European Innovation Council¹ within the Commission's proposals for the successor programme to Horizon 2020.

The Group will also feed into the [Lamy Group](#) that is due to provide recommendations for the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020.

How were the members of the High Level Group selected?

The European Commission selected the members of the group through a public call for expression of interest. The call closed on 27 October with 469 applications.

The members were chosen on the basis of criteria contained in the call, including their track record in the start-up and/or scale-up of innovative firm(s), their commitment and passion for innovation, major contributions to the development of the broader innovation ecosystem at EU/national/regional level, recognition of authority and/or achievements, and taking account of need to strike a balance in terms of skills, experience, geographical diversity, gender, and age.

What is the origin of the idea for a European Innovation Council?

Carlos Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, announced his early vision in a speech in Brussels on 22 June 2015, where he said: *"Europe does not yet have a world class scheme to support the very best innovations in the way the European Research Council is the global reference for supporting excellent science. So I would like us to take stock of the various schemes to support innovation and SMEs under Horizon 2020, to look at best practice internationally, and to design a new European Innovation Council."*

¹ Working title

In spring 2016, the European Commission ran a Call for ideas for a possible [European Innovation Council](#) (EIC). The more than one thousand responses strongly supported the idea of an EIC to focus on market creating innovation, simplify and fill gaps in existing innovation support in particular for scaling up, and to include non-financial support such as mentoring.

The Commission's [Start-up and Scale-up Initiative](#), launched in November 2016, indicated that the Commission would consider creating a **European Innovation Council** as one of the key actions to improve the environment and support for innovative start-ups and scale-ups in Europe.

Why is a new approach to innovation support needed?

Europe is a world leader in science and has many industrial and technological strengths, but we lag behind other leading regions of the world in achieving breakthrough, market-creating innovation. The last few decades have seen the emergence of major new markets based on ICT, biotech, consumer internet, and the collaborative economy. While Europe has been the home to a significant number of start-ups in these new markets, few have scaled up into global leaders.

The EU has already boosted support for innovation through the [Horizon 2020](#) EU funding programme. However, this support focuses mainly on research and innovation in existing technological and industrial sectors, and has not been successful at attracting start-ups and companies innovating in new markets or at the intersection between technologies and sectors (for example between digital and physical technologies).

Improving innovation support goes hand in hand with other Commission efforts to help innovators stay and grow in Europe, such as [facilitating access to venture capital funding](#), [reforming insolvency law](#) to make it easier to have a second chance and [VAT simplification](#).

What changes will be introduced in Horizon 2020, how much money are we talking about and how does this relate to the EIT?

As set out in the Start-up and Scale-up Initiative, *the Commission intends to make changes for the remaining period of Horizon 2020 to provide bottom-up support targeting breakthrough innovation projects with the potential for scaling up, using existing budgets, and will consider reinforcing this approach in future through a European Innovation Council*. These changes include a new "bottom up" approach for the [Horizon 2020 SME Instrument](#) so that it can support innovations in any area as opposed to predefining topics. The Commission also plans to change the proposal evaluation system to include face to face interviews (and not just paper proposals). And it will bring together different instruments so they are simpler to access (the SME instrument, the [Fast Track to Innovation](#), [Horizon Prizes](#) and parts of [Future and Emerging Technologies](#)).

The precise budget will be determined in the context of the standard budgetary cycle process but an initial estimate of the overall budget to be allocated to these actions amounts to approximately €2.5 billion for 2018-20. In addition, the Commission will support closer interaction between these actions and other relevant initiatives, including the [European Institute of Innovation and Technology](#) (EIT), the [Eurostars](#) initiative for R&D intensive SMEs, and the "[InnovFin – EU Finance for innovators](#)" set of financial instruments.