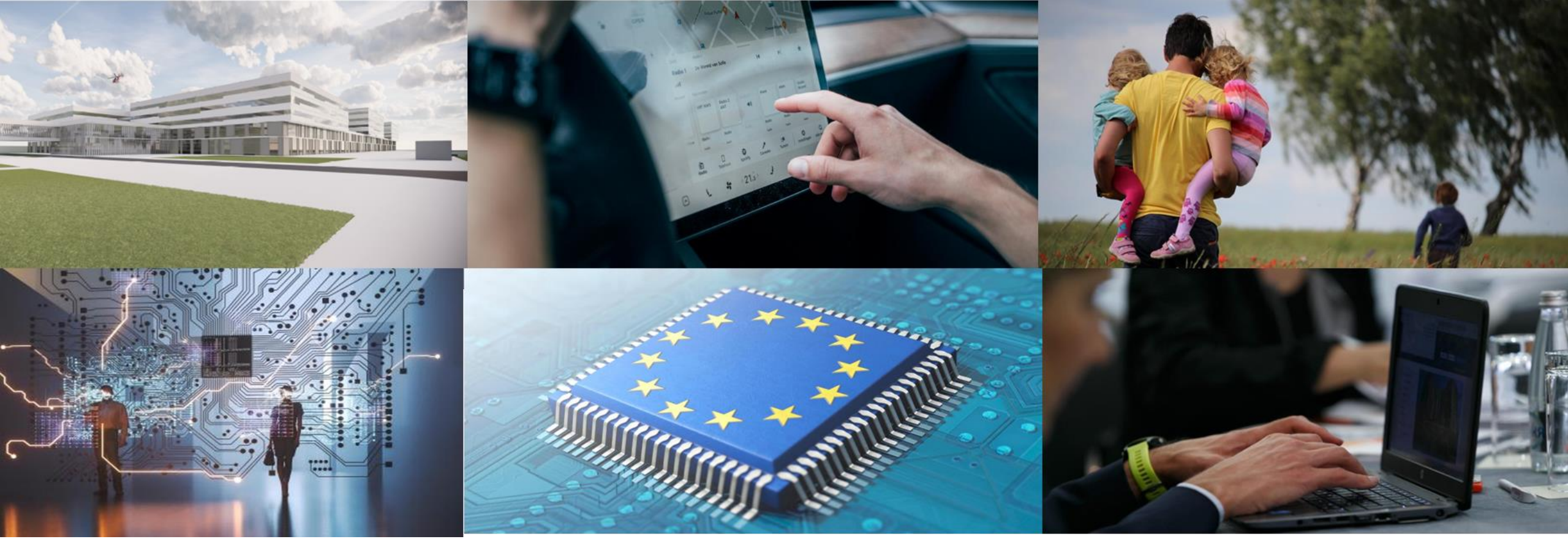

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Practical guidelines for the preparation of STEP funding applications

Kostas Voulgaris

Komotini, Greece - 14 July 2026

Agenda

- EIB Advisory – short introduction
- STEP requirements in (some) detail
- Lessons learnt

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JASPERS – key arm of EIB Advisory

- JASPERS - Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions
- Integral part of the EIB Advisory portfolio since 2025
- JASPERS – a partnership between EC and EIB, active since 2006
- Mandate co-financed from ESIF, JTF (REGIO), CEF (MOVE) + IPAIII/Ukraine (ENEST) + EIB contribution
- Advisory cover the full project preparation cycle - upstream support and strategy development, project preparation and support to implementation
- Includes capacity building and knowledge sharing - JASPERS Knowledge and Networking platform
- 100+ staff in 6 different locations (HQ in Luxembourg)

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EIB / JASPERS support to STEP

- High level capacity building in relation to STEP requirements based on JASPERS involvement in:
  - Preparation and screening of STEP-calls and health projects in Romania (Innovation)
  - Further STEP activities in Czech Republic, Poland and Italy,
  - Just Transition Fund Calls in the Czech Republic, including RDI and innovation
- In depth guidance for selected applications through one-to-one consultations
- Support the preparation of calls (selection criteria)
- Support the screening of selected applications (not evaluation)
- Provide capacity building for training STEP evaluators

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STEP
Scope

STEP OBJECTIVES

Supporting the **development or manufacturing** of critical technologies or safeguarding and strengthening their respective **value chains**

Addressing shortages of **labour and skills**

STEP CONDITIONS

Bring an **innovative**, cutting-edge element with significant economic potential to the Single Market

OR

Contribute to **reduce or prevent strategic dependencies** of the Union

STEP SECTORS

(indicative & non-exhaustive) EXAMPLES

CRMA

Digital and deep tech innovation → Artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, advanced connectivity

NZIA

Clean and resource efficient tech → Carbon capture and storage technologies, heat pumps

Bio tech → Molecular biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, crop biotechnology

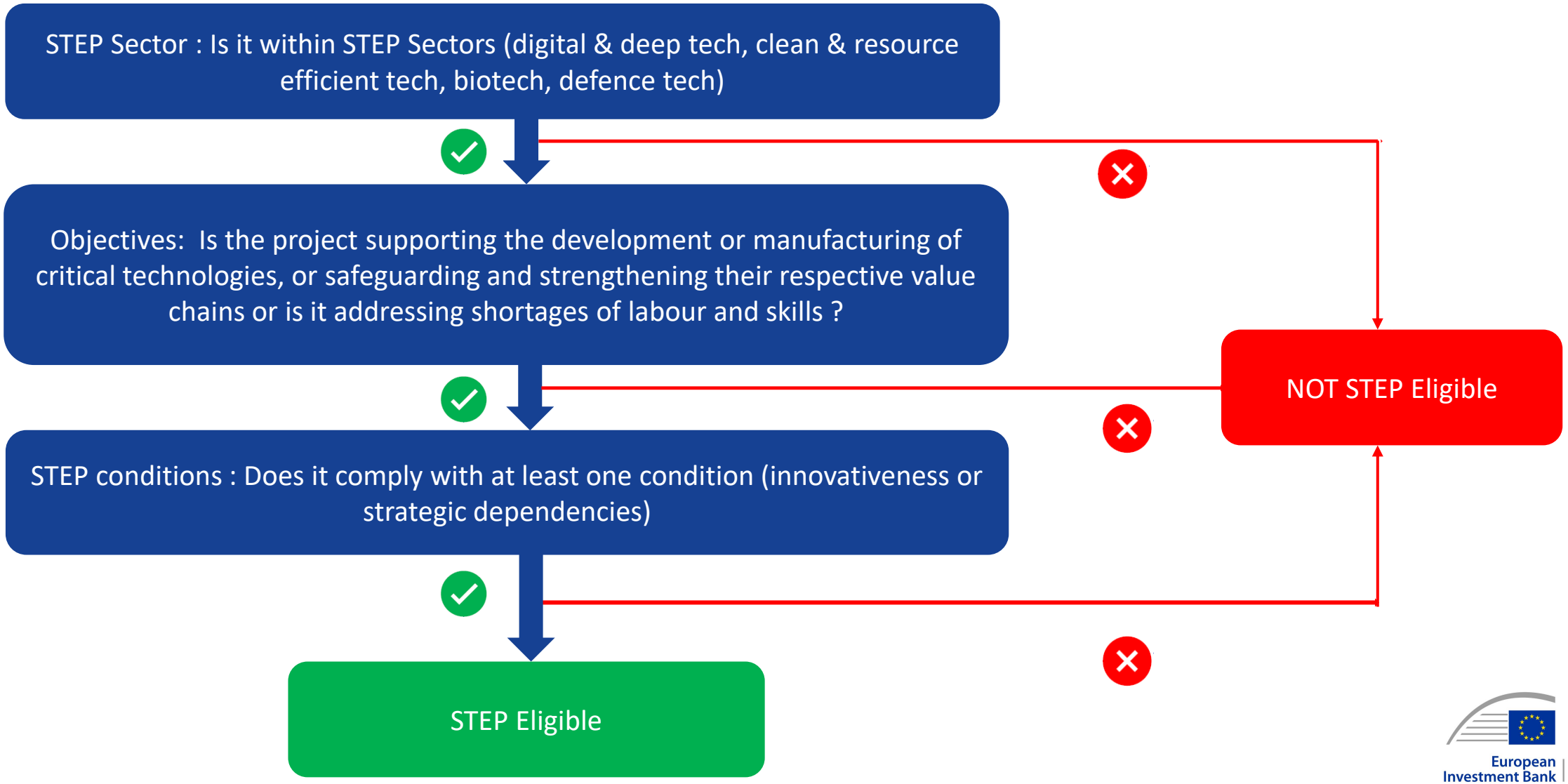
NEW

Defence → All defence technologies, including dual-use

***STEP Guidance notes published on 13 May 2024 and 23 December 2025**

NZIA: Net-Zero industry Act
CRMA: Critical Raw Materials Act

STEP eligibility Test



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STEP Sectors – Where to look for technologies ?

First EC Guidance Note (Also provided in the CALL ANNEX)

- Digital technologies and deep tech innovation
- Clean and resource-efficient technologies **(*)**
- Biotechnologies — including medicinal products on the Union List of Critical Medicines

Second EC Guidance Note

- Defence technologies

(*) Net-Zero Industry Act (Annex) is the primary reference for clean and resource-efficient technologies

- Enacted after STEP and specifically designed for this sector
- Provides a definitive and more detailed technology list

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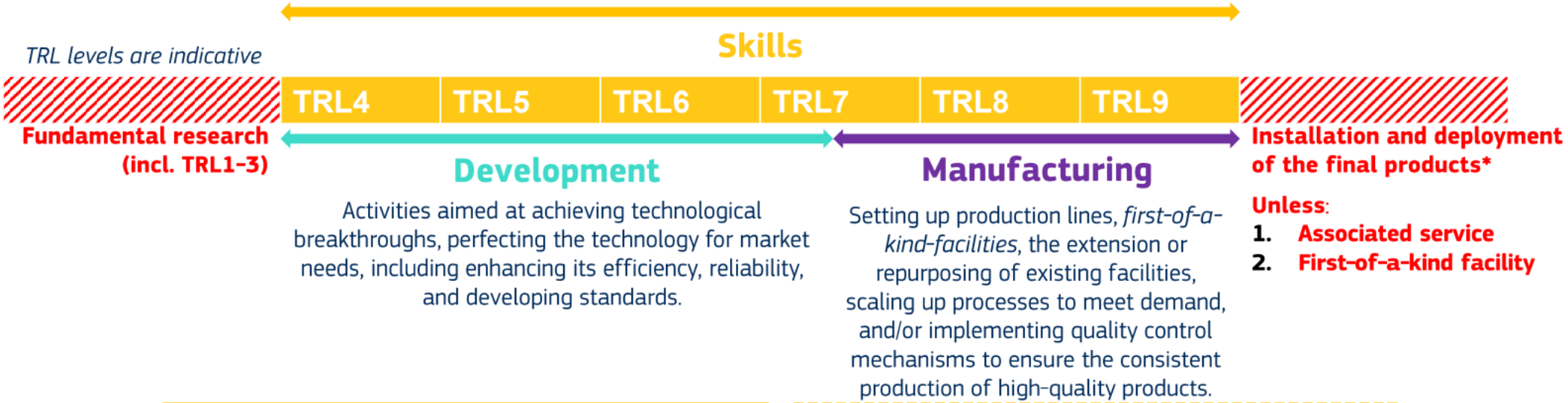
STEP Objectives
Development and manufacturing in the EU

1. Skills that are relevant to the development and manufacturing of critical technologies.
2. *Broader and transferable skills* may only be supported via STEP if they are combined with STEP-specific skills (these skills on their own do not qualify as a STEP project). Fund-specific rules apply.



Activities aimed at achieving technological breakthroughs, perfecting the technology for market needs, including enhancing its efficiency, reliability, and developing standards.

Setting up production lines, *first-of-a-kind-facilities*, the extension or repurposing of existing facilities, scaling up processes to meet demand, and/or implementing quality control mechanisms to ensure the consistent production of high-quality products.

Associated services are specialised services *critical and specific to* the development and manufacturing of final products in STEP sectors.

Ancillary services may only be supported via STEP if they are an inherent part of the investment cost of a STEP project (no standalone project). Fund-specific rules apply.

***Final products** = completed technological solutions that emerge from the entire process of development and manufacturing

STEP Objectives - Value Chains

Final products	Completed technological solutions that emerge from the entire process of development and manufacturing
Specific components and machinery	Parts and equipment primarily used in developing and manufacturing critical technologies, enhancing innovation and production efficiency
CRMA	Essential for producing critical technologies and ensuring the EU's green transition and industrial competitiveness.
NZIA	Technologies under NZIA include innovative solutions essential for achieving net-zero emissions
Associated services*	Specialised services critical and specific to the development and manufacturing of final products in STEP sectors

***Ancillary services** may only be supported via STEP if they are an inherent part of the investment cost of a STEP project (no standalone project). Fund-specific rules apply.

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STEP Condition - Innovativeness

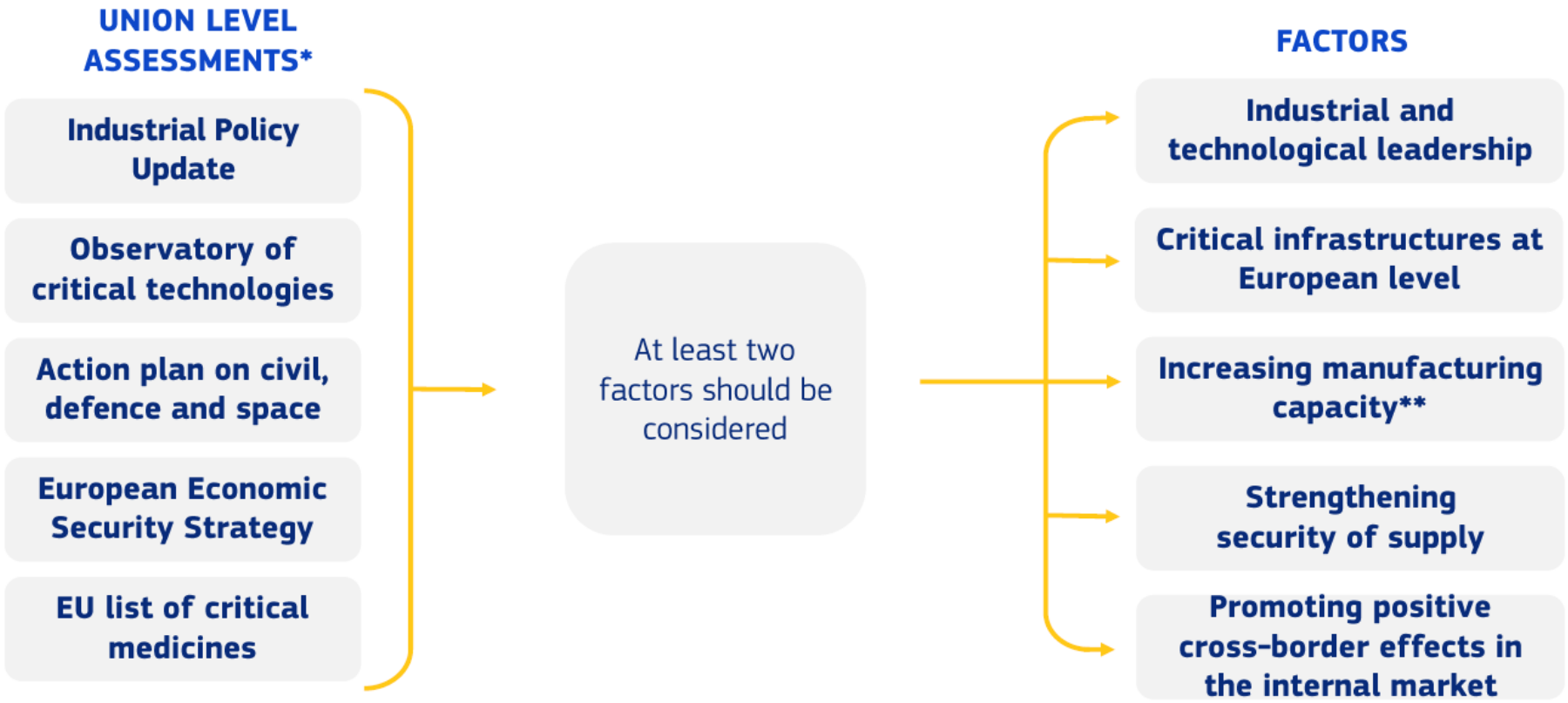
“…… they bring to the internal market an innovative, emerging, and cutting-edge element with significant economic potential; “

What is strategic dependency

1. The EU **lacks capacity** to produce essential goods, services, technologies, data, infrastructures, or skills that are considered important for the Union's security, economy, or societal well-being.

2. The EU **depends heavily AND depends on a limited** number of external actors (suppliers or innovators) from outside the EU for critical goods, services, or technologies.

STEP Condition – Strategic Dependency



*a strategic dependency may also be deemed to exist where the European Union relies significantly on third-countries sources of supply for a technology under a STEP sector
**where there is a risk of strategic dependency in the Union

European Commission

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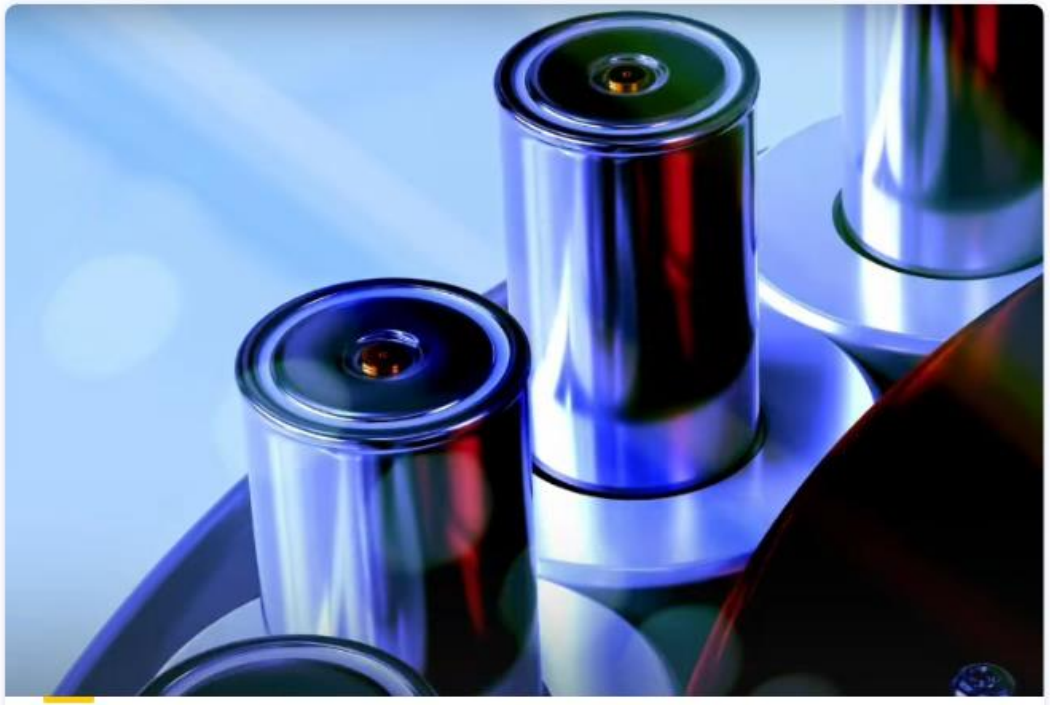
STEP Example

46inEU - The next-generation cylindrical battery for electric vehicles



© LG Energy Solution

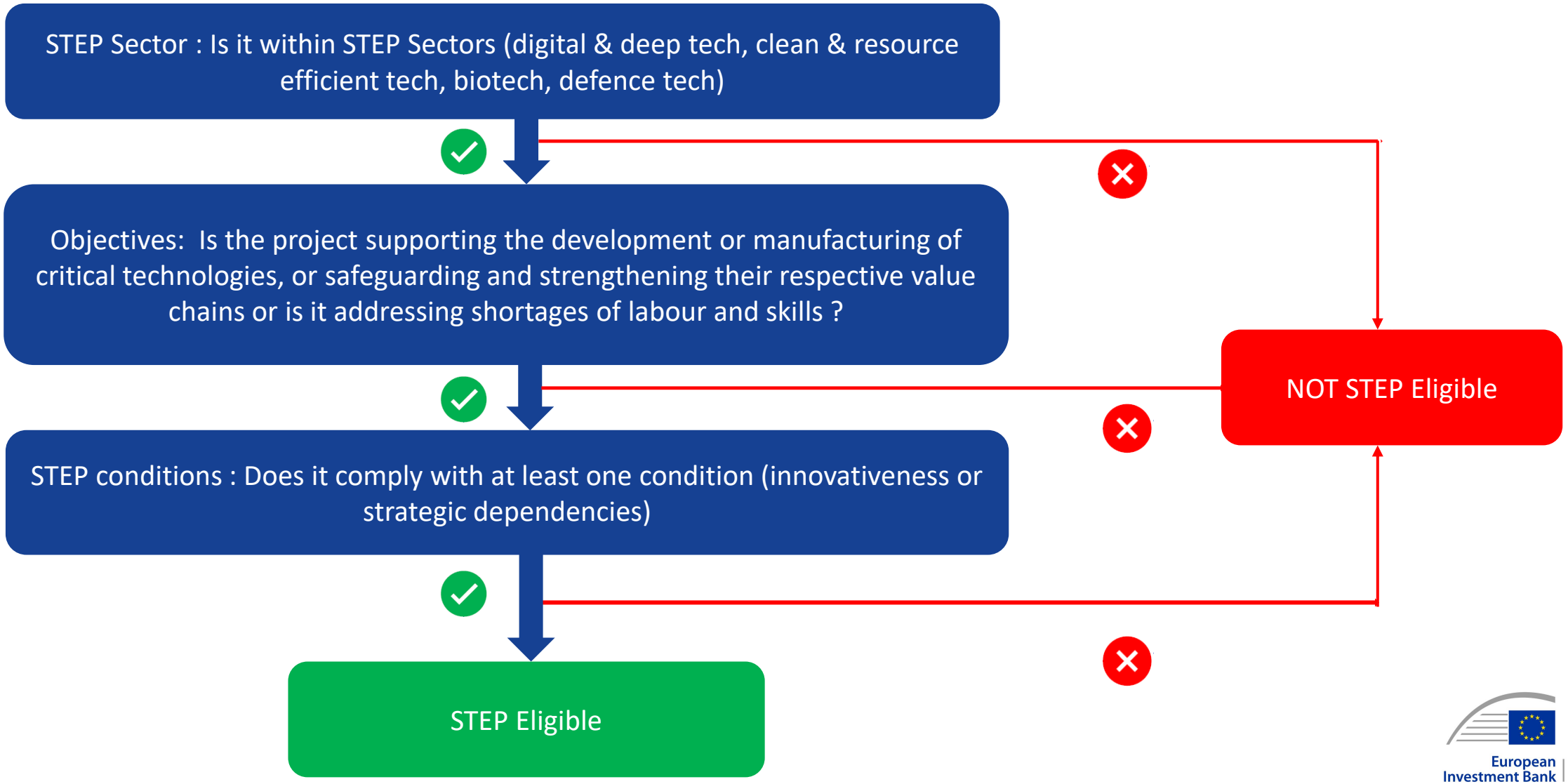
46inEU is a project by LG Energy Solution aimed at expanding its battery production facility in Wrocław, Poland. The project focuses on building a new production line for the next-generation cylindrical battery known as the 46 series, designed specifically for powering electric vehicles (EVs) and is expected to start operating in the third quarter of 2028.

Over a decade, this initiative could help reduce greenhouse gas emissions by about 20.6 million tons of CO_2 when compared to traditional vehicles. The project brings innovative advancements in battery chemistry, materials, design, and production processes to ensure exceptional performance. The 46-series battery cells will offer top-of-the-line performances, fast charging capability, and high safety standards.

The new production line will manufacture about ~90m million battery cells (equivalent to 11.5 GWh) annually, meeting the growing demand for high-performance batteries across Europe. By increasing local production, LG Energy Solution's 46inEU project will help reduce Europe's dependency on foreign suppliers and boost its industrial competitiveness. This investment is also projected to create 750 direct jobs and help expand the EV battery industry in the Dolnośląskie region of Poland.

LG Energy Solution - www.elektrowow.pl

STEP eligibility Test



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STEP Sector (from NZIA Annex)

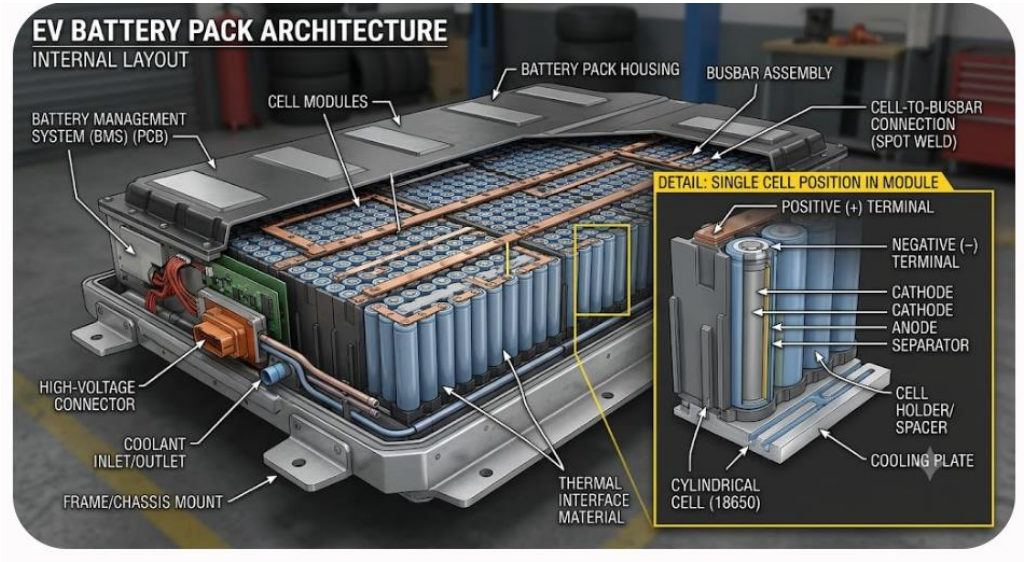
Battery and energy storage technologies	Battery technologies	— Batteries (2)	— Battery packs — Battery modules — Battery cells — Cathode active materials — Anode active materials — Electrolytes — Separators — Binders — Current collectors (including thin copper, aluminium, nickel and carbon foils) — Battery management systems (BMS) — Battery thermal management systems (BTMS)

Batteries are explicitly listed in the NZIA Annex under battery and energy storage technologies. The 46-series cylindrical battery cell is a battery technology component primarily used for batteries within the clean and resource-efficient technologies sector

STEP Objectives

The project establishes a new production line for battery cells..

Clearly supports the objective : supporting the development or manufacturing of critical technologies throughout the Union, or safeguarding and strengthening their respective value chains



STEP Criticality Condition

Union Level Assessment

Source — European Commission Communication C(2025) 8950, December 2025

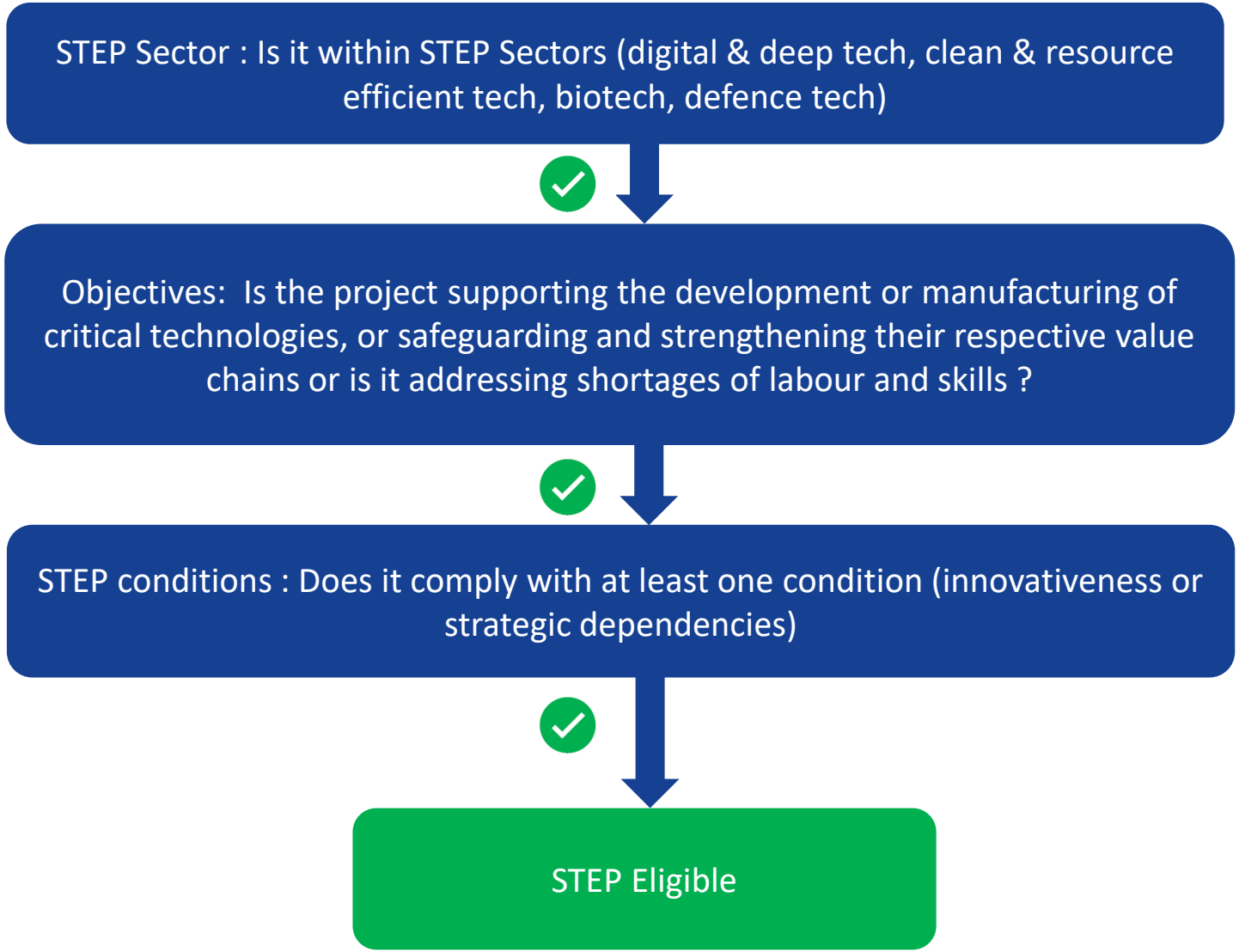
This is the most recent Commission communication on battery manufacturing dependencies, a direct Commission Industrial Policy Update. China has a systemic dominance on the whole battery value chain, creating critical dependencies and supply-chain bottlenecks on critical upstream components and technologies. This enables China to inflate input costs, which could further erode the competitiveness of EU manufacturers, and to set export restrictions, as it has done for its advance battery technologies. The risk is that dependence on foreign battery technologies not only impairs the EU's industrial competitiveness but also results in the EU lagging behind in critical defence and energy security.

STEP Criticality Condition

Factor	Key EU source
1 — Increasing manufacturing capacity	NZIA sets a 550 GWh/yr target; LG will contribute ca. 2%
2 — Strengthening security of supply	Without this facility, EU automotive manufacturers sourcing 46-series cylindrical cells have essentially one option, non-EU suppliers, primarily Asian.
3 — Cross-border effects	EU automotive supply chain across multiple member states

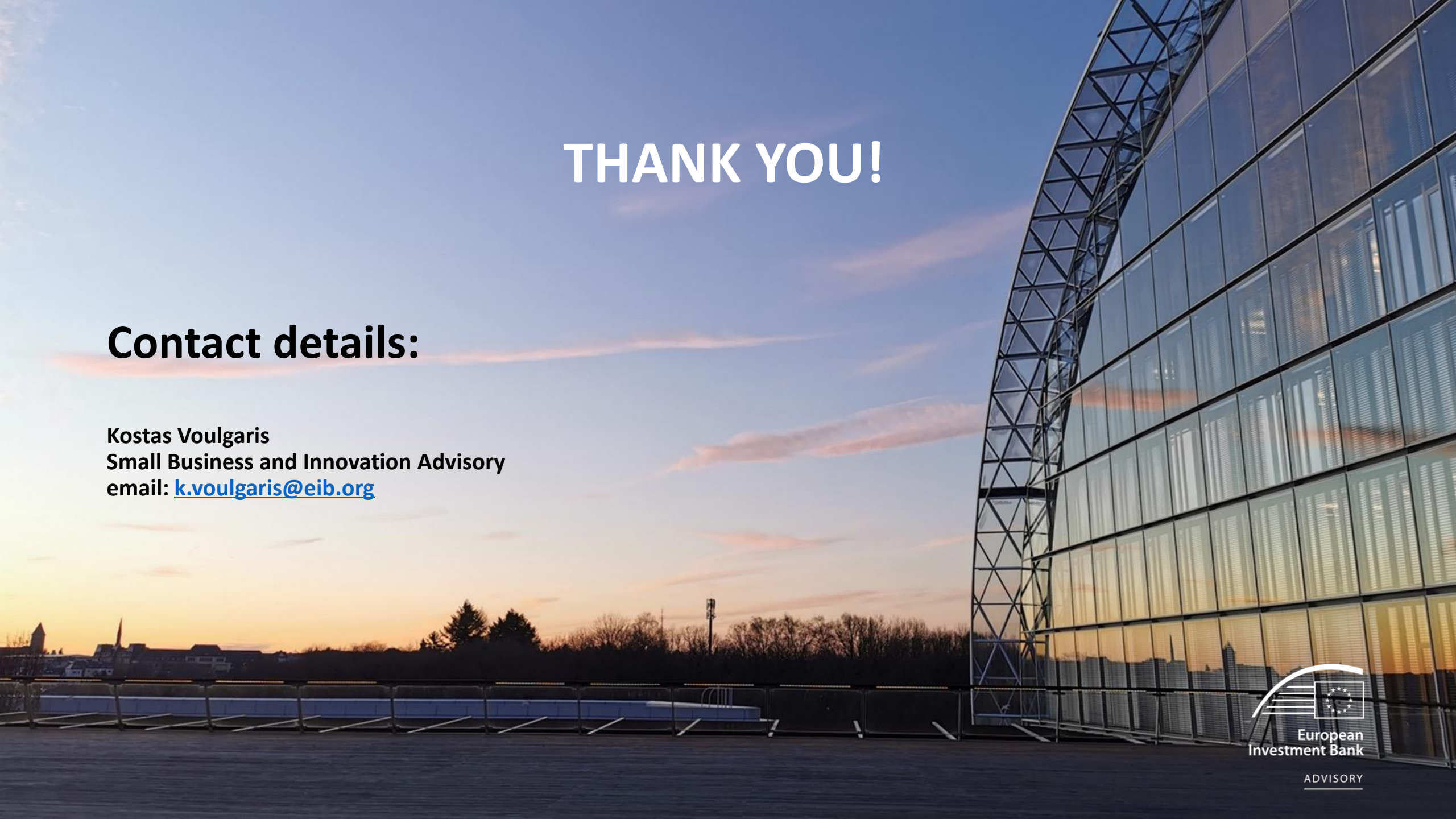
Three out of five factors satisfied , so test passes

STEP eligibility Test



Lessons Learnt

- Deploying a critical technology is not developing or manufacturing it.
- Automation is not (always) innovation.
- A value-chain claim requires genuine specificity, not a customer relationship.
- The eligible project scope must match the innovation claim.
- Avoiding a dependency is not the same as reducing one.



THANK YOU!

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ADVISORY