

EIT Regional Innovation Scheme

Implementation Framework 2022-2027

The EIT – Making Innovation Happen

European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

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1. Introduction

This Implementation Framework for the EIT's Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) provides guidance fully aligned with the European Institute of Innovation and Technology's (EIT) strategy and priorities for 2021 to 2027, as contained in its Strategic and Innovation Agenda and in coherence with the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

The EIT was established in 2008 in order to contribute to sustainable economic growth and competitiveness by reinforcing the innovation capacity of the Member States and the European Union. It pioneered the integration of higher education, research, and innovation (Knowledge Triangle (KT)) together with a strong emphasis on entrepreneurial talent, business creation and innovation skills.

Against the backdrop of persisting regional disparities in innovation performance in Europe, the EIT launched a Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) in 2014 to widen its regional outreach to modest and moderate innovator countries according to the [European Innovation Scoreboard](#) (EIS) (EIT RIS countries and regions). Through the EIT RIS, steered by the EIT and implemented by its KICs, the EIT has expanded its activities across Europe and offers opportunities for EIT RIS countries and regions to engage in EIT Community activities.

Based on the results of the EIT RIS achieved in its first seven years, including a significant improvement in the geographical spread of the EIT KICs' networks, during the period 2021-2027, the EIT will further increase its regional impact through enhanced openness towards potential partners and stakeholders and a better articulated regional strategy of KICs, including links to the relevant Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3).

During its first seven years, the EIT RIS had been run on a voluntary basis, however, from 2021 on, the EIT RIS shall become mandatory and an integral part of the EIT KICs' multi-annual strategy. EIT RIS activities shall continue to support the innovation capacity of countries, and regions in those countries, which are classed as modest and moderate innovation performers according to the EIS, as well as the Outermost Regions, to foster their integration into the KICs' communities.

2. Expected impact

The EIT RIS has been designed as a long-term initiative to strengthen the national and regional innovation eco-systems of countries and regions that are moderate and modest innovators.

The overarching objective of the EIT RIS is to contribute to the advancement of the innovation performance of these countries and their regions by strengthening the capacity of their innovation enablers and actors and linkages among them (such as business accelerators, incubators, start-ups, scale-ups, businesses including SMEs, agencies, educational and research institutions and their infrastructures, etc.) through the dissemination of the KTI approach, the cornerstone of the EIT intervention logic.

In the 2021-2027 period, EIT RIS activities shall deliver on increased regional impact, fully in line with the EIT SIA and the EIT Impact Framework, while being fully integrated into the EIT KICs' multi-annual strategies. In particular, EIT KIC activities supported through the EIT RIS shall aim to deliver on the following objectives:

- improve the innovation capacities of the local ecosystem, via capacity building activities and closer interactions between the local KT innovation actors (such as, clusters, networks, regional public authorities, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), research organisations, Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions, SMEs) and their activities;
- support the objective of attracting and facilitating the integration of potential new partners in the EIT KICs and link local innovation ecosystems to pan-European innovation ecosystems, including through the establishment of Co-Location Centres (CLCs) and RIS Hubs, as part of a “place-based” innovation approach;
- used as a bridge towards relevant RIS3s;
- leverage additional private and public funding, with particular attention to European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

The EIT will measure the EIT RIS' overall impact across all the areas: education, business creation and innovation. In practical terms, the impact of the EIT KIC activities supported through the EIT RIS will be measured by, among others, how many organisations from EIT RIS countries and regions have joined the EIT KICs' activities, how many universities from the EIT RIS countries and regions take part in EIT Label programmes, how many start-ups and SMEs from the EIT RIS countries and regions are supported in the KIC's mainstream accelerators, how many innovation, education and business creation projects have been implemented in EIT RIS countries and regions, and what their impact was. The list of EIT RIS-related core EIT KPIs, included in the EIT Impact Framework, is contained in Annex I of this document. The EIT Impact Framework, also includes four EIT RIS-specific indicators, namely:

1. Number of organisations from RIS countries that attracted funding from ESIF (in line with Smart Specialisation Strategies) with support from KICs, and the amount of funding attracted;
2. Number of new CLCs and RIS Hubs established in RIS countries and regions;
3. Number of new and established KIC Partners from RIS countries and regions;
4. Share of indicated innovation and business ecosystems that cover RIS countries and regions.

By 2027, the level of EIT KIC impact delivered in EIT RIS countries and regions, including the number of participating entities involved in EIT KICs' activities, should amount to a minimum total of 15% of the KICs' aggregated KPI targets. This will ensure that by 2027, the EIT RIS will have contributed to:

- boosting the innovation capacities of local ecosystems in all EIT RIS countries and regions, as measured by the EIS;
- attracting and facilitating the integration of new partners into the EIT KICs, while widening the EIT Community's pan-European coverage;
- establishing new CLCs and RIS Hubs, in EIT RIS countries and regions – by 2027, each KIC is expected to be operating an average of 10 RIS Hubs;
- the KICs leveraging private and public funding.

Through the implementation of the EIT RIS, the EIT KICs should support and promote the delivery of innovative solutions in different fields of action, in accordance with the priorities of the Union's recovery plan, the European Green Deal, the Union Industrial Strategy and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, thus contributing to the recovery of Europe's societies and economy and strengthen their sustainability and resilience.

3. Regional Approach

In the 2021-2027 period, the EIT RIS will help the EIT further increase its regional impact by allowing for a better targeted and place-based approach towards individual EIT RIS countries, regions, and target groups. The EIT KIC activities supported through the EIT RIS must recognise that the EIT RIS countries and regions do not form a single unified region, but a collection of countries and regions with different ecosystems and needs.

In this context, a place-based innovation approach will be integrated within the KICs' multi-annual strategies and business plans aimed to strengthen the relationship with national, regional, and local innovation actors, including policymakers and SMEs. Where relevant, the EIT KICs should demonstrate links with RIS3s and with the activities of thematic platforms and inter-regional initiatives, including with ESIF Managing Authorities. Utilising this place-based approach, through their CLCs and RIS Hubs, the EIT KICs should additionally contribute to strengthening local innovation ecosystems, inter alia by fostering closer interactions between the actors of the KT and by favouring better coordinated relations with financial and public institutions, as well as citizens.

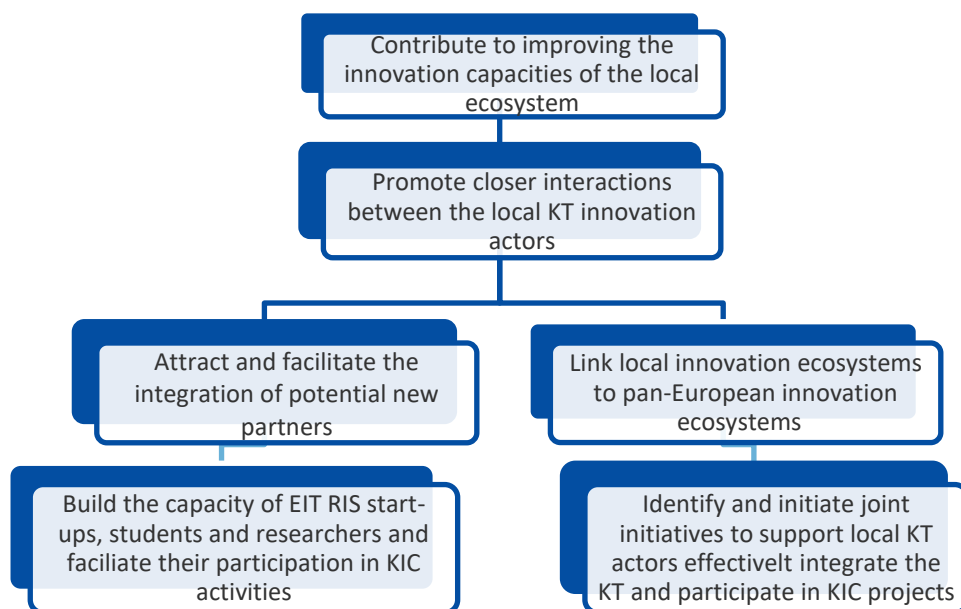
The EIT KICs must also further increase their regional impact, through an enhanced openness and inclusive approach towards a wide range of potential partners and stakeholders, a strengthened dissemination and exploitation of results and better articulated regional strategies. This approach will build on EIT KICs' CLCs and RIS hubs, thus leveraging on their role as a gateway for accessing the EIT Community and interacting with the co-located partners, as well as with other local innovation actors.

The intervention logic with a view to achieve these objectives, as well as measure their success, is described later in this document.

4. Implementation Framework

The KICs have a certain degree of flexibility in designing their own EIT RIS activities, provided the activities contribute towards achieving the EIT's overarching objectives as defined in Annexes I and Ia to the Regulation establishing Horizon Europe, as well as the specific objectives of the EIT for the period of 2021-2027 as outlined in the EIT SIA. Namely, the KICs are free to design the best-fitting approach in line with their multi-annual strategies and priorities to deliver the desired tangible deliverables and impact, especially in terms of widening participation in the EIT KICs.

The schematic below illustrates the intervention logic within which the KICs are expected to operate to create the desired impact, in line with the EIT RIS' objectives:



In order to ensure a balanced delivery of the EIT RIS KPIs across all KT elements, the EIT KICs should aim towards broad parity in terms their activities dedicated to the two strands of the EIT RIS.

4.1. Attract and facilitate the integration of potential new partners

From 2021, the EIT RIS is expected to become an integral part of all the EIT KICs' activities. In this context, the KICs are strongly expected to engage with local players from EIT RIS countries and their regions, most especially in those geographical areas where their engagement remains limited¹, with the aim of attracting and facilitating their participation in their activities. Below please find examples of activities in four main areas:

4.1.1. Capacity Building

The EIT RIS should support building up the capacity of the entities from the EIT RIS countries and regions, most especially those from geographical areas where the KICs' engagement remains limited, to participate in the KICs activities as successful and added value partners, with particular attention paid to those areas with the EIT RIS countries and regions which are particularly under-represented within the EIT Community.

In this context, the EIT KICs may wish to consider undertaking activities, such as:

- setting-up innovation support programmes for early-stage development, offering both soft and financial support for proof of concept by start-ups or educational/research institutions and demonstration projects;
- establishing programmes supporting development of innovation and entrepreneurial skills, in order to assist potential start-uppers, based in EIT RIS countries and regions, in proposal preparation for EIT Business Creation activities;
- supporting the networking and building of strategic partnerships between local KT actors, innovation ecosystems and between entities from EIT RIS countries and regions and from countries considered strong innovators;
- facilitating transfer of good practices demonstrating development and implementation of new innovation delivery mechanism and innovation ecosystems;
- offering compensation to KIC partners to provide mentoring and expertise to support Universities or other HEIs, research organisation, and businesses, including start-ups, from EIT RIS countries and regions towards joining the EIT Community as partners;
- supporting the access to scientific outcomes and strengthening technology transfer capacities in research organizations and universities so as to enable research results to lead to marketable innovative products and services.

The EIT RIS' capacity building activities should also ensure complementarity with the new EIT initiative to support the entrepreneurial and innovation capacity in higher education, which will be implemented through pilot actions by the KICs, starting in 2021, and which will target mainly HEIs that are not EIT KIC partners in innovation value chains and ecosystems across the Union. Universities

¹ This, in particular, includes those countries and regions which do not host a EIT KIC CLC.

and HEIs to participate in the new HEI initiative action will be selected through the open calls and institutions from RIS will be encouraged to team up with the non-RIS counterparts to have balanced consortia. HEIs will design their individual Innovation Vision Action plan (IVAP) and activities from this plan will be supported through the EIT HEI Capacity Building Initiative (in projects covering the first 2 years). However, KICs and their RIS partner HEIs are encouraged to develop supplementary and support activities through the RIS segment, for anything that goes beyond IVAP core actions (after year 2) to further amplify desired results and impact.

4.1.2. Business Creation

In order to fully integrate the EIT RIS within their Business Creation activities, the EIT KICs should consider developing a tailored fund-raising programme to ensure access to finance for start-ups from the EIT RIS countries and regions. In doing this, the EIT KICs may wish to pay special attention to:

- ensuring that start-up prizes and funding is not absorbed by the mandatory travelling expenses;
- ascertaining that their fees for services allow for the widest possible degree of accessibility to start-ups from the EIT RIS countries and regions and do not constitute a barrier to participation;
- developing lean and transparent business creation activities and ensure that the communication about the start-up support programmes is clear and accessible;
- considering complementing EIT RIS business creation services with training in marketing and sales skills for international sales;
- developing a structured and complete feedback information for entities which succeed in winning competitions and a programme to follow up with the companies that did not success.
- developing structured and sustained access to local and National investors such as business angels and VCs and prepare participating start-ups / scaleups in the EIT RIS Business Creation activities to be be-investors ready through dedicated Access to Finance (A2F) activities modelled after / integrated with those A2F activities already running successfully in other regions of BC activities for the EIT KICs.
- Develop mechanisms to integrate those who benefited from business creation activities into the KICs' respective Alumni communities.

4.1.3. Education

From 2021, the EIT KICs must significantly step up their EIT RIS education activities.

Working in complementarity with the pilot initiative to support the development of innovation and entrepreneurial capacity in higher education, the EIT RIS should contribute to increase the entrepreneurial and innovation capacity of the higher education sector in EIT RIS countries and regions. Universities and HEIs from RIS countries will join consortia and together with KIC partners will work on the action plan, designing the pathway how to increase their entrepreneurial and

innovation capacity in short, medium and long term, benefiting from the EIT know-how. Core elements of the action plan will be supported through the new EIT initiative on HEIs capacity building, however any supplementary and support activities are encouraged through the RIS segment to further amplify desired results and impact, either individually by institutions from RIS countries, or jointly with other KIC partners. It is expected that this will attract and facilitate the inclusion of a significantly higher number of Universities from the EIT RIS countries and regions into the EIT Label Programmes.

The EIT KICs should establish mechanisms enabling graduates from EIT Label Programmes to join their respective Alumni communities and, as a result, enable them to become part of their interdisciplinary and multicultural network bringing together professionals from different countries and sectors.

Amongst other things, the EIT KICs should also consider taking measures to remove any barriers to student recruitment and joint programming the EIT RIS countries and their regions. The EIT KICs should also aim to tackle brain-drain, including by awarding return incentives to students from EIT RIS countries and regions studying outside the EIT RIS area. The established of close partnerships between Universities from EIT RIS countries and regions and those outside the EIT RIS area should also be encouraged.

The EIT KICs could also utilise the EIT RIS to focus on preparing the pipeline to higher education and high value jobs and start-ups, by enhancing the appeal of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education at earlier stages of education as well as in VET through embedding KTI and entrepreneurship in teaching and learning.

4.1.4. Research and Innovation

It is recommended that emphasis should be on supporting innovation projects with lead and participation of the entities from EIT RIS countries and regions, including, start-ups. The end result should be more commercialising partners from the EIT RIS countries and regions participate in the EIT Community.

Also, the EIT RIS scheme should support start-ups and innovators from the EIT RIS countries to effectively scale-up and elevate the outputs and outcomes of their innovation activities on the pan-European level.

The EIT KICs may also wish to involve local start-ups in technology and know-how transfer, fully engage students benefiting from the EIT RIS (such as, by specific scholarships) in innovation projects and run pilots and tests of the outcomes of EIT KIC innovation projects and integrate researchers from the EIT RIS countries in EIT KIC innovation projects.

The EIT RIS scheme could also support transfer of knowledge and good practices in developing or facilitating growth of innovation ecosystems in the EIT RIS regions and countries and transferring or co-creating new innovation delivery mechanisms.

The EIT RIS could additionally be used to support researchers and innovators from the EIT RIS countries and regions to develop innovative and sustainable products, processes, technologies services and non-technological solutions that address a specific business opportunity or social objective.

4.2. Link local innovation ecosystems to pan-European innovation ecosystems

Through the establishment of CLCs and RIS Hubs, the EIT KICs should foster closer interactions between the actors of the KT. Additionally, the existing and future RIS Hubs and CLCs should engage in dialogue with the Managing Authorities from Member States to spur the implementation of RIS3 over the period 2021-2027, since the EIT KTI's approach and the RIS3's [Entrepreneurial Discovery Process](#) both focus on bringing together innovation stakeholders.

Cross-regional cooperation could be further enhanced by exploiting the connection with the [Thematic Smart Specializations Platforms](#) which connect RIS3s in over 30 inter-regional partnerships in three thematic areas (Agri-Food, Energy and Industrial Modernisation). Further connections could also be exploited via the [INTERREG Europe Policy Learning Platform](#).

A mapping of the main actors of RIS3 and their priorities, could also help the EIT KICs conclude targeted collaboration agreements covering activities such as advice to policy implementation, use of ESIF funded infrastructure, trainings, transfer of know-how, assistance to business, awareness raising events etc. In this respect the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) can provide tools for better assessing the RIS3 priorities and provide information on public innovative investment priorities across Europe's regions ([Eye@RIS3](#)), aiming to match with the three thematic domains. Likewise, the KICs could have dedicated section for ESIF beneficiaries in their calls, for instance on innovation projects or for entrepreneurship support opportunities.

In addition to directly involving local players in KIC activities, the EIT KICs should work with local KT stakeholders at national level, including financial and public institutions, as well as citizens, to better coordinate their relations and raise awareness and share best practise from the KTI model. By exhibiting a portfolio of good practices and success stories, the KICs can demonstrate local authorities that they can capitalize on their expertise, network, market access and funding opportunities in the field of education, business, and innovation. In this context, the KICs should identify and initiate joint projects and pilots with local KT stakeholders based on KT Integration approach.

5. Financial Sustainability

The requirement to ensure proper and efficient investment of scarce resources and to leverage other sources of funding aimed at financial sustainability, must not be barriers to work with EIT RIS countries and regions. Instead, the EIT KICs must counterbalance the pressing requirements for financial sustainability by targeted capacity building and support for effectiveness, efficiency, and value for money.

Towards this goal, the EIT KICs should consider introducing a clear separation between activities that are to contribute to the financial sustainability of the EIT KICs, such as innovations and business creation activities, and activities that are related to the ecosystem development and capacity building, and thereby are not required to contribute to the financial sustainability of the EIT KICs. EIT RIS funding could provide a financial incentive, such as by paying part of the financing required or membership fees (see more details on the EIT RIS funding model under Chapter 15). In line with the adopted EIT KICs Financial Sustainability principles, the EIT Governing Board will set specific and lower Financial Sustainability targets requirements, and co-funding requirements for the EIT RIS activities.

The EIT KICs should also aim towards efficiency gains, including through, collaborative procurement, cross-KIC and cross-RIS Hub collaboration, streamlined data collection and reporting systems.

6. EIT RIS Hubs

The establishment of RIS Hubs will be a central element of the EIT RIS' "place-based" innovation approach and a crucial tool in supporting the objective of attracting and facilitating the integration of potential new partners in the EIT KICs, address the local ecosystem needs in the EIT RIS countries and regions, as well as, to bridge the innovation gaps within Europe. RIS Hubs can have a single country-focus, a regional-focus or a multi-country focus.

RIS Hubs are physical hub, established by and integral to a KIC, in a Member State or in an associated country targeted by the RIS and that serves as focal point for the KIC's activities and for the mobilisation and involvement of local knowledge triangle actors in the activities of the KIC.

RIS Hubs should be established following a thorough needs analysis and must be subject to an open call. The decision to establish RIS Hubs must be taken in consultation with the EIT and, where appropriate, other stakeholders, including the relevant authorities in the EIT RIS countries and regions. The open call, including the relevant selection criteria, time limitation/ renewal policy, as well as the measurable KPIs in terms of the expected results (including progress towards achieving Financial Sustainability) shall be made publicly available, communicated in advance of publication, and reported to the EIT National Contact Points (NCPs) and to the EIT Member States' Representatives Group, via the EIT. The calls should ensure that process for selecting hubs should be transparent, inclusive, and impartial, giving applicants enough time for developing good quality proposals. The call must also appear the European Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal, under Horizon Europe. Each EIT KIC should aim to have, on average, 10 RIS Hubs established by 2027, with the aim of ensuring better geographical spread.

RIS Hubs must be part of the structure of the EIT KIC and will serve as focal point for the EIT KIC's activities. It will aim at mobilising and involving local KT actors in the KIC's activities, establishing synergies at local level, identifying funding and collaboration opportunities, and promoting their active integration in ecosystems. Close collaboration with and support to the EIT NCPs, in terms of information provision for upcoming opportunities for local stakeholders and results of KIC calls, will be within the Hubs' responsibilities. The RIS Hubs could also take a strong role in planning out the

KICs' country specific approach. Towards the attainment of these requirements, the EIT KICs should consider implementing performance-based funding to mobilise their RIS Hubs and ensure that they deliver. A phase-gate process could also be considered.

In accordance with the EIT KICs' expansion strategy, RIS Hubs could pave the way to the establishment of a CLC in the targeted region.

In terms of efficiency gains, complementarities, and synergies, the KICs should consider selecting subject matter experts to be partners in RIS Hubs (such as an accelerator to be the RIS Hub partner for acceleration) to add expertise and efficiency to the process and to ensure the balance between the RIS Hub and core activities. Cross-KIC collaboration should also be considered in terms of establishing close linkages between the different RIS Hubs covering the same EIT RIS countries and regions. This is especially essential to collecting and synthesising fundamental information related to the KICs' activities and opportunities in a respective country or region with a view towards timely and streamlined communication to the network of EIT NCPs and other relevant KT stakeholders. The EIT may support through the provision of a placed-based Coordination Service.

Where possible, the consolidation of different RIS Hubs covering the same EIT RIS countries and regions in a single Cross-KIC RIS Hub should be considered as a way to create a single point of contact and entry to local stakeholders with regard to the EIT Community activities, allow for the consolidation of EIT Community activities, as well as a means of achieving significant efficiency gains. Single Cross-KIC RIS Hub could also be used to cover countries and regions where the EIT Community has limited activities and would, therefore, not justify the investment by a single EIT KIC to establish a Hub. The Cross-KIC RIS should undertake a thorough analysis of RIS Hub consolidation, possibly with support from the RIS Information Service. The implementation of this consolidation, wherever identified, could be financed through the Cross-KIC RIS.

7. Openness and Transparency

Increasing the openness and transparency of the KICs is a critical EIT requirement for 2021-2027. As the EIT's main tool to attract and facilitate integration of potential new partners that add value to the KICs, thus extending the EIT's pan-European coverage and balanced geographical spread, the EIT RIS must, therefore, fully embody this requirement.

In this context, the EIT KICs are encouraged to undertake a review of their internal regulations and agreements, including those governing memberships and fees, to check for their unintended impacts on EIT RIS Hubs and the EIT RIS country ecosystems. Better aligning fees to countries' purchasing power and salaries could possibly be considered in this regard. The EIT KICs may wish to consider introducing more flexibility in partnership fees to widen access to partners from the EIT RIS countries and to implement more joint projects. Mitigating the fees for SMEs, notably start-ups, by providing higher rates of pre-financing to help SMEs to participate in activities should also be considered.

Additionally, appropriate measures should be integrated in the KICs' EIT RIS implementation procedures and practices, as well as in the partnership growth strategies and respective procedures to allow for maximum openness and transparency.

The EIT KICs must be both timely and highly pro-active in communicating opportunities as widely as possible. These opportunities should be made publicly available in the dedicated KIC websites, in the form of comprehensive information and guidance on how interested organisations can join the KIC partnership (including information on membership schemes, objective and inclusive entry and exit criteria, application and assessment process – including an appeal procedure). Communication and dissemination coordination between KICs operating in the same EIT RIS country or region is highly recommended (see Chapter 10 for further details).

In addition, the EIT KICs should ensure wide promotion and visibility of their calls for education, innovation or business support/ acceleration programmes and activities. The calls text should provide clear guidance of how interested individuals and organisations from the EIT RIS countries and regions can participate in these activities. EIT KICs will be responsible for the timely communication of their calls to the EIT National Contact Points through the EIT. The call must also be published in the European Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal.

Local external participants in the EIT RIS should be selected in a transparent manner via publicly available and broadly communicated announcements (open calls). Furthermore, the selection criteria should be clearly spelled out in the call, and an adequate candidate assessment should take place at KIC level. All applicants should be informed about the evaluation outcomes bilaterally in writing. If relevant the list of selected candidates should be published.

8. Gender balance

One of the EIT's objectives is to promote entrepreneurship among women. In past years, EIT developed and implemented a series of activities:

- Set-up a KICs Gender Equality Work Group - with representatives from each KIC;
- Launched the "EIT Woman Awards" – since 2018,
- Runs entrepreneurship and digital workshops for young women aged 12-18 or supporting the creation of the EIT Alumni Network Women@EIT.

Since 2017, the EIT has collected data on countries where the KICs' supported start-ups are registered, as well as the gender of the CEOs. It shows that 16% of all the CEOs of the supported start-ups from the EIT RIS countries are women, whereas in the Western and Nordic countries the ratio is 17%. These low shares show a significant untapped potential for women-led entrepreneurship throughout Europe.

In order to further adhere to the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and implement its own Gender Mainstreaming Policy, in the 2021-2027, the EIT will work on a more balanced gender representation among the beneficiaries of the EIT programmes, not least to attract women to areas where they are still under represented such as ICT, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, as well as, closing the entrepreneurial gender gap.

In 2021, the EIT will launch an initiative on Women Leadership, with planned actions for female led start-ups and women investors with consequent implementation in 2022 and onwards. Furthermore, EIT will consolidate synergies with the European Innovation Council (EIC) on aligning and promoting the gender equality and inclusiveness.

In this regard, as part of their EIT RIS activities, the EIT KICs should implement gender-sensitive approaches and step up their efforts to ensure that more women can benefit from the EIT entrepreneurial education, business creation and acceleration services, and investment funds. These should be reflected in their strategic documents² and promoted across the EIT KICs and their partners. Furthermore, it is highly recommended that the EIT KICs should inform all stakeholders involved in their activities, including EIT RIS activities, of such initiatives as Women@EIT, the EIT Women Awards, and so on.

9. Synergies

Efforts should be made to establish synergies between the EIT KICs, and relevant initiatives, programmes, and instruments at EU, national, regional, and local levels. In this context, the EIT KICs should, in coordination with the EIT, strive to increase the use of existing EU information networks (e.g., NCPs, EEN) and provide coordination to their activities to ensure better advice and guidance to potential partners. As part of the EIT RIS, the EIT KICs should, therefore, include support to the national and regional authorities in identifying the necessary synergies with their multi-annual strategies.

In particular, the EIT RIS should be used as a pathway to strengthen links with RIS3 and leverage ESIF. To achieve this, the KICs should approach relevant authorities in EIT RIS countries and regions, in coordination with the EIT, to avoid overlap and duplication, and where appropriate using the knowledge present in their RIS Hubs, with a view to strengthen links with RIS3, better use the RIS to leverage ESIF and establish possible synergies with national or regional initiatives, where appropriate, in possible cooperation with the Joint Research Centre. A Cross-KIC approach is also highly recommended in this regard. The EIT will facilitate the process through its contact with the European Commission at institutional level, as well as, through direct contacts with relevant national authorities to serve as a “door-opener” for the EIT KICs. Potential areas of synergies with ESIF, could include:

² EIT KIC Strategic Agenda and EIT KIC Gender Equality Strategy.

- Providing access to KIC expertise in the relevant areas for national / regional line Ministries, Managing Authorities and National Institutions in roles such as, co-creating, project evaluation and selection, as well as in policy design and alignment (such as RIS3);
- Providing support to higher education institutions in internationalisation, raising their innovation and entrepreneurial education capacity, and supporting the technology transfer and university-business partnerships;
- Commercialising research results: co-investing in the strategically important innovations and fast-tracking their introduction on the market;
- Facilitating access to investment: the EIT KICs have broad networks of investors and business angels that can be mobilised to facilitate growth of start-ups and spin-offs;
- Providing companies with access to Global Value Chains through the EIT KIC partners and available equipment / infrastructure.

Within this context, the EIT KICs should consider also empowering EIT Hubs to facilitate and broker implementation of innovation projects to maturity in alignment with other schemes, including ESIF, thereby helping to develop a project pipeline. The ESIF could also be used to facilitate the widening of participation from EIT RIS countries and regions, by funding the KIC partnership fees, as well as, other costs, for added value local KIC participants, in line with RIS3 priorities.

Additionally, opportunities for synergies should be also explored between the Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area part of Horizon Europe, including the teaming and twinning activities and the EIT RIS. In particular, target entities of the Horizon Europe Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area part should be able to leverage on EIT expertise and support as well as for EIT RIS activities.

Both Cross-KIC activities should, as much as possible, take into consideration the policy priorities, including RIS3 priorities, of the EIT RIS countries and regions, to ensure maximum synergies.

Maximum synergies, also in terms of the EIT RIS, should additionally be explored with the EIC and the InvestEU instruments. The EIC may help start-ups supported by the EIT KICs, including those from EIT RIS countries and regions, with a high growth potential to rapidly scale-up. In particular, the most innovative KICs'-backed ventures may benefit from a simplified and thereby faster access to EIC actions, in particular, to the support offered by the EIC Accelerator and/or by the financial support offered by InvestEU instruments. In turn, the EIT KICs should facilitate the access of EIC beneficiaries, including those based in EIT RIS countries and regions, to KICs' innovation ecosystems and relevant actors of the knowledge triangle. In this way EIC beneficiaries can become actively involved in KICs' activities and benefit from KICs' services, including the EIT RIS.

Furthermore, within the context of the EIT-European Investment Fund (EIF) Memorandum of Understanding (to be signed in 2021), the EIT KICs should develop synergies with EIF programmes aimed at the EIT RIS eligible countries, to provide additional capacity building, access to finance to

supported start-ups / scaleups and entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems development and support.

Finally, with human capital limitations being particularly felt in EIT RIS countries and regions, the EIT KIC should also consider investigating potential synergies with of the relevant Union Programmes and instruments, including ERASMUS+ and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA).

10. EIT Community building and cooperation

Inclusive dialogue, shared learning and ongoing collaboration are keys for commitment and trust among the EIT KICs and their RIS Hubs, should become an integral part of policy design and implementation of the EIT RIS. The EIT KICs should consider undertaking an inclusive process of dialogue between and among themselves and their RIS Hubs to enhance collaboration among EIT RIS entities and KIC partners and networks, including the KICs' CLCs, aimed at addressing a lack of knowledge of the activities and policies, and stimulate development of joint projects and programmes. It is also recommended that the KICs promote cross-border collaboration through study visits and capitalising on Teaming and Twinning-type of activities. Cross-KIC projects and events which could cover both EIT RIS countries and regions as well as countries considered strong innovators.

Enhance the EIT and the KICs' visibility and brand awareness should also be an integral part of the EIT RIS. In this context, the EIT KICs should step up communication and branding efforts to give the EIT Community more strength, increase awareness and enhance credibility.

11. Communication

To ensure wide participation in the EIT RIS, it is essential to increase its visibility and raise awareness and interest among relevant stakeholders. In particular, the EIT Community should increase the visibility of the EIT RIS among higher education institutions, research institutions and enterprises in regions not yet working directly with the EIT Community, as well as to other relevant stakeholders such as local, national, and regional authorities.

Timely and targeted information sharing related EIT RIS activities, calls, and events, as well as broad dissemination of results and good practice is important for potential EIT RIS participants, who should have access to all relevant information in a structured and coherent manner. KICs should ensure that information on the implementation of the EIT RIS is widely shared and easily accessible on each KIC website.

Taking the importance of the EIT RIS into account, the EIT will continue to actively support KICs and amplify visibility and diffusion efforts to ensure consistent promotion of the EIT RIS among all stakeholders, notably via a dedicated EIT RIS gateway on the EIT website and, when appropriate and relevant, via the EIT Stakeholder Forum and the Member State Representatives Group.

To achieve the objectives set out above, the following action points should be implemented by all members of the EIT Community:

- A dedicated section for the EIT RIS on EIT KICs' websites, providing comprehensive information on the EIT RIS in general (e.g., objectives, eligible countries) as well as specific KIC EIT RIS activities and contact points.
- All EIT RIS calls, events, and opportunities to be made available under each EIT KIC's central opportunities page of own websites. Each EIT RIS opportunity to also be promoted on central EIT KIC social media accounts.
- Calls related to EIT RIS activities should be sent to the designated EIT contact point prior to launch, to be published on the EIT website and relevant social media, as well as to timely inform the concerned stakeholders, including the network of EIT National Contact Points. For the same purpose, Call results and statistics should be timely communicated to the EIT as soon as they are available by the KIC.
- Development of information material such as brochures (per KIC or jointly) and broad diffusion in relevant events.
- EIT RIS activities must use be fully aligned with the EIT Community Brand Book and use each EIT KIC logo and the EU emblem and all visual guidelines, in particular, on EIT KICs' websites and EIT RIS publications to clearly highlight that activities are conducted in the framework of the EIT RIS. In case of joint activities and/or cross-KIC, EIT approval must be sought for the use of new logos.
- Participate in joint awareness days in interested EIT RIS countries and regions as part of cross-KIC EIT RIS activities, in cooperation with the EIT and the EIT NCPs.
- Participate in workshops, conferences, events, etc. organised by other EU programmes and organisations, to raise awareness of the EIT RIS. Coordination with EIT Headquarters is essential.
- Regular identification and communication of results and achievements under the EIT RIS, including testimonials of beneficiaries.

12. Dissemination of results and good practices

The EIT RIS could also serve a specific mechanism for the dissemination of results and good practices from EIT Community activities. Targeted events such as workshops, trainings and learning exercises provide dedicated opportunities in EIT RIS countries to actively learn about results and how they could further use/exploit them, as well as about good practices and lessons learnt. This could be highly beneficial in terms of better knowledge / technology transfer to moderate and modest innovators and for enhancing cultural changes in scientific, academic, industry and policy-making fora.

13. Cross-KIC EIT RIS activities

A dedicated cross-KIC EIT RIS will continue implementation from 2021. The cross-KIC EIT RIS will contribute to the goals of the EIT RIS and must be fully compliant with this implementation framework. Additionally, the cross-KIC EIT RIS should function as a platform for KIC interaction and coordination of EIT RIS activities to ensure efficiency and avoid fragmentation of efforts among KIC activities. The cross-KIC EIT RIS should always be designed to facilitate the individual KIC EIT RIS activities and ensure greater and more coherent visibility of the EIT RIS and its achievements. Consequently, the cross-KIC activity should also serve as a KTI best practise, knowledge, and tools repository.

The EIT may cooperate with the cross-KIC EIT RIS on communication and visibility matters; the cross-KIC EIT RIS will also serve as a single KIC contact point vis-à-vis the EIT in horizontal EIT RIS implementation matters. Furthermore, the Cross-KIC EIT RIS activity should facilitate the process of reaching out to EIT RIS stakeholders in a joint and coordinated manner, based on the common KTI approach, and thereby ensure the coherent representation of the EIT Community in EIT RIS eligible countries and regions.

The Cross-KIC EIT RIS should also take the lead on the assessment of prospects and scenarios further evolution of the EIT Hubs, including RIS Hub consolidation. The implementation of RIS Hub consolidation could be financed through the Cross-KIC EIT RIS. The Cross-KIC EIT RIS should also facilitate an enhanced exchange among KICs in terms of good practice related to RIS Hubs implementation models.

The KICs, through the cross-KIC EIT RIS, are encouraged to reflect the EIT RIS agenda or address the EIT RIS countries and regions also in other cross-KIC activities. For example, KICs are encouraged to address operational aspects by the shared services activities to increase operational efficiency and effectiveness on the EIT RIS related operations (to be financed for example by the EIT Shared Services cross-KIC activity, which might be financed up to 100% - as opposed to a maximum of 70% for the stand-alone RIS Hubs). Given their joint focus on EIT RIS countries and regions, the Cross-KIC EIT RIS activity should also ensure close cooperation and complementarity with the Cross-KIC Western Balkans activity.

14. Coordination with the EIT

While implementing the EIT RIS, the EIT KICs must maintain close contact with the EIT and keep the EIT informed of upcoming events and their achievements. Furthermore, the EIT will play an active role in facilitating EIT KIC relations and synergies with the local public, regional or national authorities, other relevant EU programmes or any other initiatives. This will be implemented through the EIT's existing contacts or through an approach at institutional level and, of course, in line with the EIT KICs' interests and approved EIT RIS strategy.

This EIT RIS Implementation Framework is designed to allow for flexible, results driven EIT RIS implementation. To make this possible, it is of the utmost importance that the EIT KICs liaise with the EIT and communicate their activities and achievements regularly. The appropriate coordination and communication among the EIT Community within the framework of the EIT RIS will contribute to a more effective implementation and consequently to better delivery of the desired effect.

The EIT will set-up an EIT RIS Expert Group whose primary role will be to take stock of the implementation of the EIT RIS, including its budgetary uptake, results, and impact, especially geographical spread, on the basis of the data and results emerging from the EIT's regular monitoring and reviews. Based on this stock-taking, the EIT RIS Expert Group will provide concrete recommendations to the EIT Governing Board, via the EIT Management, which in turn will provide steering advice to the EIT KIC to guide the development of their annual plans. To this end, the REG will prepare regular reports on the implementation of the EIT RIS, linked to the EIT grant-cycle, for consideration by the EIT Governing Board. The aim will be to ensure that the EIT RIS fully delivers on its objectives and, in turn, contributes to the EIT's own core objectives.

15. Funding

Linkages of the EIT RIS with the KICs' grant cycle are embedded in the Partnership Agreement text (Article 7.5 on EIT RIS Activities of the Partnership Agreement).

The EIT budget devoted to implementing EIT RIS activities, in the 2021-2027 period, will be at least 10% and maximum 15% of the overall EIT funding for existing and new KICs (approximately €292 million - €438 million).

The EIT KICs may choose to use their annual EIT RIS dedicated budget allocation to finance EIT RIS activities, as described in this Implementation Framework, co-funded up to 100%, as they consider it most appropriate, in line with their strategy and priorities to deliver tangible deliverables including widening participation in the KICs from EIT RIS countries and regions. In this context, the EIT RIS should also be mainstreamed within the KICs' core activities (that is participation in innovation, business creation and education actions) and used to exempt EIT RIS participants from co-funding rates and membership fees, thereby facilitating and attracting a high-level of participation to the EIT Community and boosting its pan-European spread. The KICs need to pre-fix the co-funding rate already at the call stage.

It is pertinent to note that beyond the 15% maximum budget dedicated to the EIT RIS, entities and partners from EIT RIS countries and regions still be fully involved in all activities in line with the co-funding rates delineated in the EIT SIA. Yet, the up to 100% co-funded activities is limited to the EIT RIS allocations which will be capped at a maximum 15% of the overall EIT funding for existing and new KICs. The EIT Governing Board will regularly monitor and evaluate the EIT RIS funding and may issue strategic guidance as appropriate.

Following the termination of a KIC's Partnership Agreement, the EIT may continue to support some EIT RIS-related activities. The specific activities that can be supported will be defined in the individual Memoranda of Co-operation.

16. EIT RIS eligible countries and regions

The eligibility for the EIT RIS is outlined in Article 2 of EIT Regulation and the EIT SIA. Countries and regions eligible for EIT RIS activities are those countries and their regions identified as either “moderate” or “modest” innovator in at least one of the three European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS) annual reports issued in 2018, 2019 and 2020 for the period 2021-2024 and those identified as either “moderate” or “modest” innovator in at least one of the three EIS annual reports issued in 2021, 2022 and 2023 for the period 2025-2027, as well as Outermost Regions as defined in Article 349 TFEU.

A list of EU Member States that will be eligible for the EIT RIS in the period 2021-2024, is contained in Annex II. Annex II may need to be revised for the 2025-2027.

The list of Outermost Regions as defined in Article 349 TFEU is contained in Annex III.

The EIT RIS will also be open to those eligible third countries listed in the European Innovation Scoreboard³, which may associate to Horizon Europe. The list of third countries, associated to Horizon Europe, which will be eligible for the EIT RIS in the period 2021-2024, is contained in Annex IV.

It is pertinent to note that apart from the Outermost Regions, eligibility for the EIT RIS is set at country-level⁴. As a result, an entity from a RIS eligible country can participate in EIT RIS activities, irrespective of which region that entity is based in. However, in line with the objectives and expected impacts of the EIT RIS, the EIT KICs should make every effort to ensure a better geographical spread of their networks.

17. Activity update

Every six months (annually, in June and December), the EIT KICs should submit an EIT RIS activity update consisting of the following elements:

³ The following moderate and modest innovator countries which are likely to associate to Horizon Europe are included within the European Innovation Scoreboard: Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.

⁴ The European Innovation Scoreboard assesses innovation performance at country-level only. The European Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS) which assess the innovation performance of European regions is not part of the EIT RIS eligibility criteria.

- Information on the main activities, including capacity building activities, and events undertaken, with a focus on outcomes;
- Information on the entities taking part in these activities;
- Financial data (EIT KICs expenditures) related to the respective activities;
- Details of collaborations implemented with national and regional stakeholders and entities representing the knowledge triangle;
- Main planned events in the next six months;
- Upcoming opportunities/ Calls in the next six months;
- Success stories, particularly, in terms of innovation, education, entrepreneurship, synergies, including testimonials by beneficiaries and any relevant media coverage at regional or EU level.

Additionally, on an annual basis, the EIT KICs should submit a report outlining the work of their individual RIS Hubs, covering the same requirements as the bi-annual RIS activity update. A table with details of all the EIT KICs RIS Hubs will be maintained by the EIT and should be kept constantly updated by the EIT KICs.

Reporting templates will be provided by the EIT. These updates and reports may be published on the EIT website as well as on the websites of the EIT KICs.

18. Evaluation and revision of the Implementation Framework

By 2024, this Implementation Framework shall be subject to an evaluation by the EIT, based on the regular assessments related to its implementation. If necessary, this evaluation will be conducted with the assistance of independent experts. Where appropriate, changes will be made to the Implementation Framework for 2025-2027.

Annex I – List of EIT RIS-related core EIT KPIs

Code	KPIs
EITHE01.3 EITRIS	EIT RIS Designed/Tested Innovations
EITHE01.4 EITRIS	#EIT RIS Countries – Designed/Tested Innovations
EITHE02.2 EITRIS	EIT RIS Marketed Innovations
EITHE02.3 EITRIS	#EIT RIS Countries – Marketed Innovations
EITHE03.2 EITRIS	EIT RIS Start-ups/Scale-ups Supported
EITHE03.3 EITRIS	#EIT RIS Countries – KIC supported Start-ups/Scale-ups
EITHE04.2 EITRIS	#EIT RIS Start-ups created of/for innovation
EITHE04.3 EITRIS	#EIT RIS Countries – Start-ups created of/for innovation
EITHE05.2 EITRIS	#EIT RIS Start-ups created of EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes
EITHE05.3 EITRIS	#EIT RIS Countries – Start-ups created of EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes
EITHE06.2 EITRIS	Investment attracted by KIC supported EIT RIS Start-ups/Scale-ups
EITHE06.3 EITRIS	# EIT RIS Countries – Investment attracted by KIC supported EIT RIS Start-ups/Scale-ups
EITHE07.2 EITRIS	# EIT RIS Graduates from EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes
EITHE08.2 EITRIS	# EIT RIS Participants with (non-degree) education and training
EITHE09.2 EITRIS	# EIT RIS EIT labelled MSc/PhD students and graduates who joined Start-ups
EITHE10.2 EITRIS	# EIT RIS Active KIC Partners
EITHE10.3 EITRIS	# EIT RIS Countries – Active KIC Partners
EITHE13.2 EITRIS	# EIT RIS Success stories
EITHE13.3 EITRIS	# EIT RIS Countries – Success stories
EITHE 16.2	# RIS HEIs involved in EIT and KIC activities
EITHE 16.4	# RIS HEIs involved in EIT and KIC activities

Annex II - List of EU Member States eligible for the EIT RIS in 2021-2024

1. Bulgaria
2. Croatia
3. Cyprus
4. Czechia
5. Estonia
6. Greece
7. Hungary
8. Italy
9. Latvia
10. Lithuania
11. Malta
12. Poland
13. Portugal
14. Romania
15. Slovakia
16. Slovenia
17. Spain

Annex III – List of Outermost Regions as defined in Article 349 TFEU

1. Guadeloupe (France)
2. French Guiana (France)
3. Martinique (France)
4. Mayotte (France)
5. Réunion (France)
6. Saint Martin (France)
7. the Canary Islands (Spain)
8. the Azores (Portugal)
9. Madeira (Portugal)

Annex IV - List of third countries, associated to Horizon Europe, eligible for the EIT RIS in the period 2021-2024

1. Montenegro
2. North Macedonia
3. Serbia
4. Turkey
5. Ukraine