European Institute of
Innovation & Technology

A body of the European Union

EIT GENDER EQUALITY PLAN
2024 IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

December 2024, Budapest

CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Gender equality is a core value of the European Union (EU) and is enshrined in its legal and political framework. The EU's commitment to promoting gender equality in innovation and technology is part of the European Commission (EC) Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025, which sets out the Union's broader commitment to equality across all EU policies. In addition, the EU has a well-established regulatory framework on gender equality, including binding directives, which apply widely across the labour market including the innovation and technology sector.

Under the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, the commitment to gender equality in research and innovation is reaffirmed and significantly strengthened. The legal base sets gender equality as a crosscutting priority and introduces strengthened provisions. The activities developed under Horizon Europe should ensure the effective promotion of equal opportunities for all and the implementation of gender mainstreaming, including the integration of the gender dimension in R&I content. The 3 main gender equality dimensions outlined in the Horizon Europe's provisions are:

a) Gender Equality Plan: eligibility criterion for funding (applies to public bodies, research organisations and higher education institutions established in the EU Member State or Associated Country)
b) Integration of Gender Dimension in the R&I content: Mandatory by default, unless specified otherwise in topic description. Award Criterion under Excellence (methodology)
c) Gender balance in Research Teams: Ranking Criterion for ex aequo proposals

The Regulation establishing Horizon Europe specifically mentions for the EIT the need to ensure gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the programme activities of the EIT.

It is worth highlighting, that gender equality, including gender diversity in teams, and in decision making positions, is recognised by the EIT not only as a core value and principle of the European Union, but also as a key element to enhance innovation capacity[1], and to increase returns on investment.[2] Gender equality contributes to better decision-making and corporate governance. It supports attracting and retaining the best talent. Investing in gender equality benefits innovation and technology by improving its quality and relevance. Furthermore, a positive correlation between the innovation capacity of a country and the gender equality index in that country has been observed.

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[1] See among others Julia Schneider and Verena Eckl Study Julia Schneider and Verena Eckl Study
[2] See among others: S&P Global Analysis, McKinsey, EIT Digital, European Women in VC 2023 Report

2. THE EIT GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2022-2024 OBJECTIVES, KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Drawing upon the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, the gender equality requirements in Horizon Europe, and the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027, the EIT Gender Equality Plan (GEP), adopted in December 2022, sets out a roadmap to implement the EIT Gender Equality Policy for 2022-2024.

The EIT Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan aim to:
1. Strengthen the lead role of the EIT in the innovation landscape in promoting gender equality, women entrepreneurship, and leadership across Europe.
2. Ensure gender equality at the EIT, including gender balance representation in EIT Staff and Management.

To achieve this, the EIT GEP 2022-2024 outlines specific activities, KPIs, targets, and a set of organisational arrangements for implementation, for each of the overarching objectives.

2.1. STRENGTHEN THE LEAD ROLE OF THE EIT IN THE INNOVATION LANDSCAPE IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND LEADERSHIP ACROSS EUROPE

Throughout 2024, the EIT continued its contribution to the New European Innovation Agenda by offering targeted support to women-led ventures and entrepreneurs. This included supporting women leading deep-tech innovations and connecting the European Innovation Council's Women Leadership Programme to the EIT network.

2024 Horizon Europe Report highlights that the EIT has brought down barriers to women's participation in the European innovation ecosystem. Consequent gender mainstreaming actions[3], and women projects, brought increase in women's participation in all core areas of operations, across the EIT Community. **Participation targets[4] indicated in the EIT Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2022-2024, were met or exceeded** (2023 reporting[5]): 25.20% women CEO/Owners of start-ups created of/for innovation (GEP target:25%); 26.90% women CEO/Owners of supported start-ups and scale-ups (GEP

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[3] See Chapter 2.1.1. from projects-based approach to gender mainstreaming
[4] See EIT Gender Equality Action Plan, targets for Q4 2024
[5] All participation figures: 2023 KPIs validated

target:25%), 45.05% women among graduates from the EIT-labelled education programmes (GEP target: 40%), and more than 40% women in decision making positions across the EIT Community.

Key EIT Community women entrepreneurship and leadership projects, successfully continued and expended in the course of 2024, included: EIT SUPERNOVAS – increasing women's presence in entrepreneurship and investment, through among others, Women Investor Network (cooperation of EIT Food, EIT Urban Mobility and EIT Manufacturing); EIT Food EWA – empowering women in agrifood; EIT Manufacturing STRADA – women leadership programme with a focus on manufacturing, EIT Health Women Entrepreneurship Bootcamp, EIT Red Kalyna (EIT Jampstarter), and EIT Girls Go Circular which has to date equipped more than 47000 girls age 14-19 in digital, entrepreneurship and leadership skills, around the topic of circular economy (cooperation of EIT Raw Materials, EIT Climate-KIC, EIT Manufacturing, EIT Digital, EIT Health, EIT Urban Mobility, and EIT Food).

To further promote women role models, and recognition of women's contribution to European innovation, this year, for the 2nd time, the EIT joined forces with the European Innovation Council to organize the European Prize for Women Innovators (Award Ceremony in 2025) – with the EIT Women Leadership Award being one of the three Award categories.

As the 2024 Presidency Agency in the European Union Agency Network (EUAN), the EIT has also hosted the EUAN 2024 Diversity & Inclusion Award and continued its participation in the work of the EUAN Diversity & Inclusion group.

In the course of 2024, the EIT has formed **new strategic partnerships for gender equality**, included with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), and the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST).
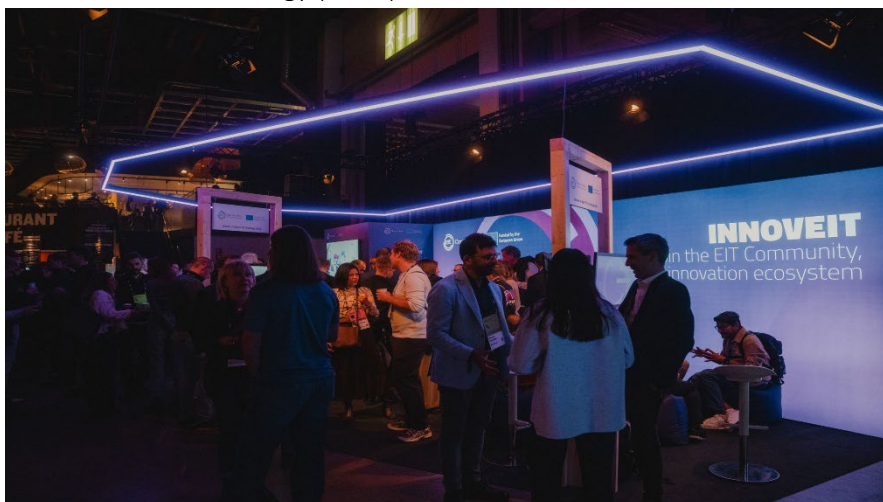
The EIT Community achievements in strengthening women's presence in the European innovation and entrepreneurship, were showcased during the EIT flagship event series INNOVEIT, in November 2024. Organised as a side event to SLUSH, INNOVEIT gathered a high number of start-up founders, investors, researchers and gender equality experts (278 in total registered in person, and 142 online). The impactful community-based LinkedIn campaign around the event has further contributed to raising awareness of the EIT achievements in this area. Developed in 2024 EIT Gender Equality Factsheet, was a useful tool in the social media communication.

2.1.1. STRENGHTENING GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Gender mainstreaming has been embraced internationally as a key strategy towards achieving gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies, regulatory measures, and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men and combating discrimination.

Embracing this approach, through the course of 2024, the EIT took further measures to strengthen the incorporation of gender dimension into strategies and planning documents[6], and in parallel, farther enhanced the embodiment of gender aspect into the EIT reporting and monitoring system.

In 2024, for the first time, the EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) reported on their gender mainstreaming efforts, with a special focus on innovation, education, and business creation & acceleration programmes.[7]. The new Reporting provided strong basis for shaping recommendations, and the new EIT Gender Equality Action Plan, for the 2025-2027 period.

To achieve high impact, focus was brought to monitoring gender equality aspect in the EIT KICs Calls for Proposals[8]. The EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) were requested to incorporate in their Calls for Proposals a chapter on gender equality/ diversity and inclusion, where they share their value statement, and invite the applicants to: address gender dimension in the design of activities, and to share their gender equality measures during the contract performance.

To build awareness and understanding of the EIT gender mainstreaming priorities, and to share the EIT Community experiences and good practices in this area, through the course of 2024, the EIT continued regular cooperation and information exchange platform between the EIT KIC's: in a form of bi-monthly meetings of the EIT KICs Gender Equality Working Group, steered by the EIT.

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[6] This included strengthening the gender equality aspect in the Annotation to the EIT Specific Provisions of HE MGA Annex 5, EIT KICs Strategic Agendas Revision, as well as incorporation of gender mainstreaming aspect into the Invitation to the 2025 BP Amendment.

[7] "Gender Mainstreaming Report on strategies and actions/measures implemented to ensure gender balance and incorporation of gender dimension in the EIT KICs innovation, business creation, education programmes, and the Cross-KIC programmes, and results of these actions." – new Reporting Deliverable introduced as part of the 2024 Business Plan Amendment.

[8] As of March 2024, the EIT KICs Monitoring Checklist includes the gender equality aspect: *The call text includes a chapter on gender equality/diversity which includes the KIC gender equality/diversity value statement, invites the applicants to address gender dimension in the design of activities, and to share their gender equality measures during the contract performance.* Introduction of the new requirement was followed by information to the KICs and info session for Experts monitoring the Calls.

2.1.2. INNOVATION

In the course of 2024, the EIT efforts were focused on increasing participation of women in innovation. The 2023 reporting figures **slightly exceeded the EIT GEP 2024 target of 25% women CEOs/Owners of start-ups created of/for innovation, reaching 25.20%**.
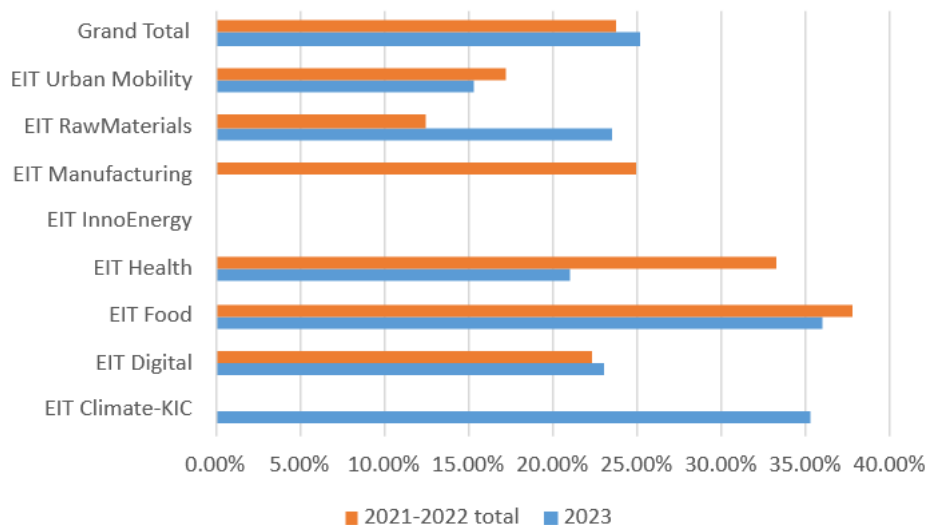

Figure 1 Start-ups created of/for innovation. KPI EITHE 04.1 – Gender
EIT GEP target 25% women
Status: 25.20% (2023 Reporting)

Another aspect of growing focus is integration of gender dimension into the innovation content - mandatory by default for all Horizon Europe projects for all research, education and public organisations, unless specified otherwise in topic description.

There were several **promising practices** identified across the EIT Community. Examples[9] include:

> **EIT Health**: EIT Health Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Action Plan – holistic approach, bringing relevant focus on gendered innovation. Outlined activities include: Active outreach to and recruitment of women innovators through specific communication channels and dissemination opportunities; Measurement of participation of women in both applications and selected proposals in EIT Health innovation call(s) for proposals; Scope integration into relevant iterations of the EIT Health calls for proposals (e.g. Flagships Call with two-stage application processes), Guiding innovation consortia through key considerations in incorporating gender dimension into their full proposals for submission at stage two.

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[9] EIT KICs "Gender Mainstreaming Report on strategies and actions/measures implemented to ensure gender balance and incorporation of gender dimension in the EIT KICs innovation, business creation, education programmes, and the Cross-KIC programmes, and results of these actions."

Co-funding collaborative project consortia with a focus on women's health, or clinical conditions disproportionately impacting women.
SUOG- 'Smart Ultrasound in Obstetrics and Gynaecology' (artificial intelligence (AI) to provide image recognition and intelligent guidance.
ADVANCE – 'Advancing and evaluating a breakthrough diagnostic intervention for acute urinary tract infection' (test to detect UTI in 30 mins)
BRIGHT- 'Be RIGHT with breast cancer risk management' (genetics-based test for breast cancer risk, to identify those who would benefit from targeted breast cancer treatment)

EIT Urban Mobility:
Inclusion of the gender criteria in the Innovation Call evaluation. The main innovation call launched in 2023 included gender and diversity as one of the evaluation criteria (5/100 points). In 2024 this was expanded to all innovation calls. This has resulted in projects that take gender and diversity into consideration obtain a better score and have a better chance to be selected.

Several funded projects addressing gender-related issues: Taxi driver licensing in Istanbul, Children's road safety in Prague, School mobility in Cascais, Elderly Mobility, IMPACTS (public transport's perceived security and safety).

2.1.3. BUSINESS CREATION & ACCELERATION

The EIT has a long tradition of projects and initiatives on women entrepreneurship and leadership. The first edition of the EIT Women Leadership Award took place in 2018. One of the key objectives of the EIT GEP is to increase participation of women among start-up founders.

Most EIT KICs have implemented strategies and measures and showcase promising practices in this area.
The EIT GEP target of 25% women CEOs/ Owners among EIT KICs-supported start-ups and scale-ups has been exceeded, with the 2023 Reporting figures showing 26.90% women among EIT supported start-ups and scale-ups.
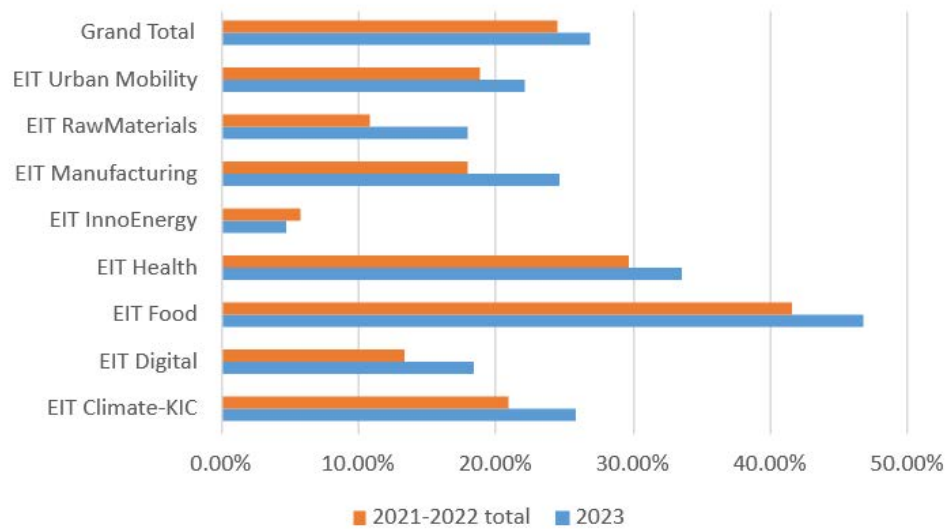
Figure 2 Start-ups and scale-ups supported. KPI EITHE03.1 – Gender

EIT GEP target 25% women. Status: 26.90% (2022 Reporting)

Promising practice example, EIT Urban Mobility gender-smart approach to investment:
At scouting phase EIT Urban Mobility actively looks for gender-balanced startups.
Their investment committee is always gender balanced to mitigate the proven impact of male norms dominating investment decisions. During the selection, they have applied a rule by which single-gender start-up teams cannot receive more than three out of five points on the "team" criterion, compared to gender-diverse teams that can receive the maximum score. This criterion is based on the evidence that more diverse teams have higher innovation capacity and bring better return on investment. Finally, throughout this process, gender-data is collected to ensure tracking.

In the course of 2024, the EIT KICs continued several successful **women entrepreneurship and leadership programmes. Examples include**:

EIT SUPERNOVAS (EIT Food, EIT Urban Mobility, EIT Manufacturing) – increasing participation of women in entrepreneurship and investment – through, among others, Women2Invest and Women Investor Network. The EIT SUPERNOVAS Women Investor Network (WIN) builds a community of women investors to invest in women-led startups. To date, the Network brought together **more than 160 women**. The Women2Invest training and access programme, bringing women with STEM background to investment ecosystem, has trained almost 150 women from 27 countries. The EIT SUPERNOVAS Rocket Up programme supports women-founded start-ups in entering new European markets with a solid strategy and local product and service validation. The EIT SUPERNOVAS Rocket Up has supported **32 women-founded start-ups** across Europe. Collectively, the participating startups have attracted more than **€22.6M** [10] in investments, following the EIT SUPERNOVAS support.

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[10] Known investment attracted by the Supernovas Rocket Up participating startups as of November 2024.

[EIT Health Women Entrepreneurship Bootcamp](#) (WEB) connecting early-stage, women-led or co-led healthcare start-ups to a network of mentors to support rapid growth. Since its inception, the Women Entrepreneurship Bootcamp **has trained over 120 women founders**, the **program alumni have collectively raised €37 million in funding since 2021**. WEB success stories examples include [Maria Postigo](#), COO of [SpotLab](#) - AI for clinical research and diagnostics. Maria credits the EIT Health Women Entrepreneurship Bootcamp with honing her entrepreneurial skills and connecting her with a global network. SpotLab, with international partnerships like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, exemplifies the global reach and innovation that the EIT Health Women Entrepreneurship Bootcamp nurtures.

[EIT Food Empowering Women in Agrifood (EWA)](#) providing 360-degree support for women entrepreneurs in agrifood sector, to build and scale sustainable businesses. The programme has reached out to 18 countries from the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme, offering mentoring, training on business development, pitching and market access, as well as networking opportunities. The support structure offered by the programme includes financial awards and customised learning pathways, including online options for rural participants and support in local languages. Thanks to programme implementation, over **110 female entrepreneurs** are being supported annually across Europe, €800,000 in financial awards have been granted to top-performing participants, and more than 750 women and mentors have been connected through an online platform for continuous resources and training. Up to 2024, thanks to EWA programme, **40+ agrifood startups expanded** their client base, workforce or turnover; **20 women-led businesses** registered during or after the programme; **15 innovations were successfully launched**, generating financial returns. Programme Participants collectively secured over **€13.5M in funding.**

EIT Manufacturing [STRADA](#) - leadership development programme for emerging women leaders. STRADA's vision is to: Empower all women across manufacturing through training, mentoring and networking, and Become Europe's leading leadership development programme and network for women in manufacturing. The programme includes training, mentorship, and networking opportunities. To date STRADA has empowered more than **210** women across Europe, involving in the programme more than 100 companies/ universities.

In 2024, **EIT Climate-KIC** and the Department of Foreign Affairs of Ireland (Irish Aid) concluded its second **Gender Mainstreaming for Entrepreneurship Programme**. The Programme included tailored capacity development, and financial support. The Programme supported seven Entrepreneurship Support Organisations (ESOs) from across Africa and Latin America, enabling them to better understand and implement gender mainstreaming into their programmes, and in turn, enhance support for women and other gender minorities in their networks. One of this year highlights was launch of the 2nd edition of the EIT Climate-KIC [WeClim Equally Gender Smart Handbook](#), this time for start-ups (French and Spanish translations included).

EIT [Red Kalyna](#) (EIT Jumpstarter) was launched in 2023 and is committed to showcasing the exceptional contributions of Ukrainian women innovators in business, science, research, and leadership, celebrating their successes on a global scale. By bringing their achievements to the forefront, the initiative fosters a culture of resilience, collaboration, and innovation, amplifying the impact and visibility of women leaders worldwide.

In 2024, the Call was expanded and included organizations that support women innovators, with a special focus on those working with Ukrainians both locally and internationally. Number of applications to the Programmed doubled this year, reaching 71 in total. The initiative has attracted 21 partners for 2024, including Emerging Europe, EEN Ukraine, COST, EUIPO, Tech Ukraine, and others. A key feature of the project is the annual online event, "Her Idea, Our Future: Empowering Resilience," which brings together nominators, nominees, partners, and EIT KIC representatives. These gathering fosters connections and the exchange of insights. The 2024 finalists were announced at the EIT Red Kalyna Award Ceremony, held this year in Budapest during the conference celebrating 10 years of the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme: Next Decade of Innovations for the Future of Europe conference.

2.1.4. EDUCATION

The EIT Community education activities strongly contribute to the New European Innovation Agenda and goals set in Action 13 of the European Digital Education Plan 2021-2027 – encourage women's participation in STEM.

Educational gender bias, horizontal segregation, with a significant underrepresentation of women in STEM, carry on to the job market, with underrepresentation of women in the workforce and decision making in critical areas, hampering European economy and sustainable growth. In response to this situation, the EIT GEP sets as one of the objectives increasing participation of women in the EIT Community education programmes. In the course of 2024, **the EIT GEP 2024 target of 40% graduates from the EIT-labelled education programmes was exceeded, reaching 45% women graduates from the EIT labelled education programmes**.
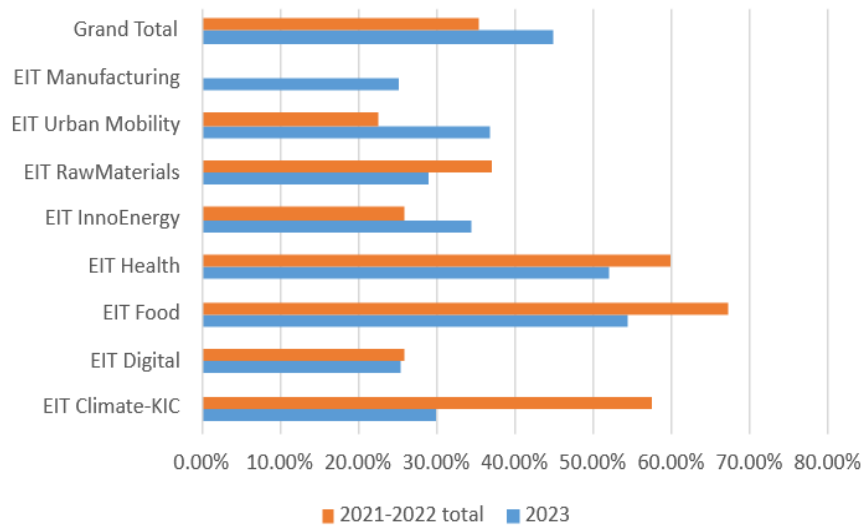
Figure 3 Graduates from the EIT-labelled education programmes. KPI EITHE07.4 – Gender

EIT GEP target 40% (by the end of 2024). Status: 45%

Throughout 2024, the EIT KICs continued several initiatives to increase participation of women in the EIT education programmes, including the **EIT Raw Materials EIT-labelled master's programmes uniformly adopting strategies and measures within their marketing** and recruitment efforts to increase gender diversity in STER; and **EIT Digital MSL adds specifically targeting women and girls** to attract them to EIT Digital educational programmes. Another example is the EIT InnoEnergy Diversity & Inclusion Scholarship, fostering inclusivity and equity in EIT InnoEnergy's Master's programs. The scholarship takes into consideration various diversity dimensions, including nationality, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

The above measures aim at increasing gender diversity among students. Another equally important aspect is incorporation of gender dimension into the education content. A very good example in this area is the EIT Urban Mobility course INSIGHTS INTO GENDER DIFFERENCES IN URBAN TRANSPORT, exploring gender differences in travel behaviour and their impact on urban transport plans and decision-making process. The course is recommended both for wider innovation ecosystem, and for staff, project leaders, and partners of the EIT Urban Mobility.

EIT Girls Go Circular

Education programme which deserves particular attention is the EIT Girls Go Circular, addressing the gender gap in digital and STEM fields, by equipping young women, age 14-19 with digital and entrepreneurship skills, around the topic of circular economy. While directly contributing to Action 13 of the European Digital Action Plan, the projects is aligned with several additional European policy objectives, including the European Gender Equality Strategy, and the new European Innovation Agenda. The programme is also a part of the EIT Ukraine Support Actions and contributes towards the EIT Deep Tech Talent Initiative. The programme is a joint initiative of: EIT RawMaterials, EIT Food, EIT Digital, EIT Health, EIT Manufacturing, EIT Urban Mobility, and EIT Climate

KIC.

Over the past four years, the EIT Girls Go Circular has trained over **47 000 girls**, reaching over 32 European countries, and 1 000 schools across Europe. It has created the Circular Learning Space platform, hosting 18 courses in over 24 languages. In a show of solidarity with students affected by the war in Ukraine, the programme has also translated all its educational materials into Ukrainian, actively supporting the country's education system during this time of crisis.

Every year, the EIT Girls Go Circular holds an annual Women and Girls in STEM Forum, to identify key actions to bridge the gender gap in STEM and ICT, and dismantle gender stereotypes. In 2024, the Forum highlighted AI's transformative power in closing the gender gap in STEM. This year event was attended by 180 on-site participants and 1,700 online viewers. Ahead of the Forum a Student Challenge was organised, in which girls were invited to develop ideas for AI solutions to reduce gender inequalities in the field of their choice (education, sports, employment, health, culture, etc.). A total of 234 girls participated in the Student Challenge in 22 European countries. The Winning team "On Her Care" from Finland and Italy developed an AI concept to fight gender bias in healthcare.

The BBC 2024 video shares Kelly's journey from doing the Girls Go Circular programme, to studying Electrical and Computer engineering at Thessaloniki University.

2.2. ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY AT THE EIT, INCLUDING GENDER BALANCED REPRESENTATION IN EIT STAFF AND MANAGEMENT

The EIT second overarching objective outlines eight activities on: recruitment and promotion; retaining women talents; awareness raising and capacity building; and institutional set-up for the implementation of the EIT GEP; with clear KPIs and targets, to ensure strengthening gender equality, including increasing gender balance, at the EIT.

During 2024, the EIT efforts were focused on the area of recruitment and promotion, with the aim to ensure minimum 40% of the underrepresented gender in the EIT management by the end of 2024. To achieve this objective, the EIT took actions to increase the number of women candidates on short lists. Gender was treated as a ranking criterion for candidates with equal scoring.

In 2024 the participation of women in the EIT Management has increased **from 38% (5 men, 3 women) to 50% (4 men, 4 women), achieving full gender balance, and exceeding the EIT GEP target for 2024 (40%).**
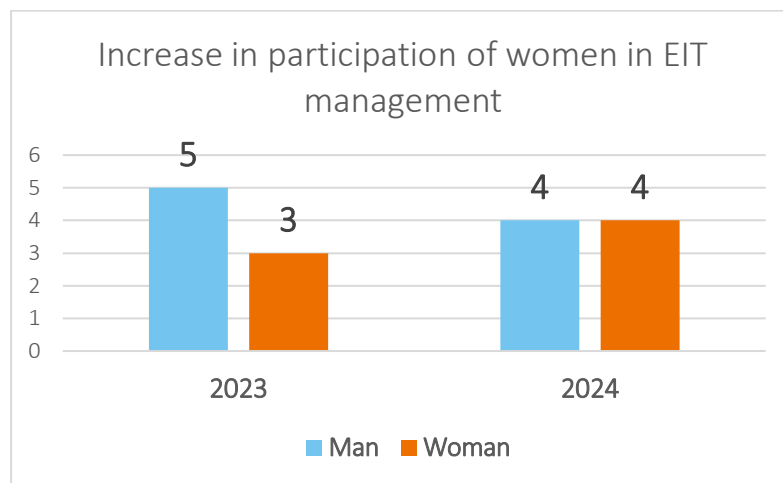

Figure 4 Women in the EIT Management
EIT GEP target 40% (by the end of 2024). Status: 50%

The EIT Social Policies, including: the EIT Director Decision on schooling and kindergarten; Working time and hybrid working rules, support parents, in majority of cases women, to combine caring roles and professional work.

In the area of awareness raising and capacity building – the EIT HR organised a gender equality/diversity & inclusion training for all Staff on 25 June 2024.

Acknowledging the importance of gender balance in decision making positions, in 2024 the EIT has maintained the gender equality KPI, linked to finance allocation, for the EIT KICs governance and management. This strong incentive brought the increase in women's participation in the EIT KICs decision making from 33% (2022 data) to 40% (2023 validated figures), reaching the 2024 EIT GEP target.
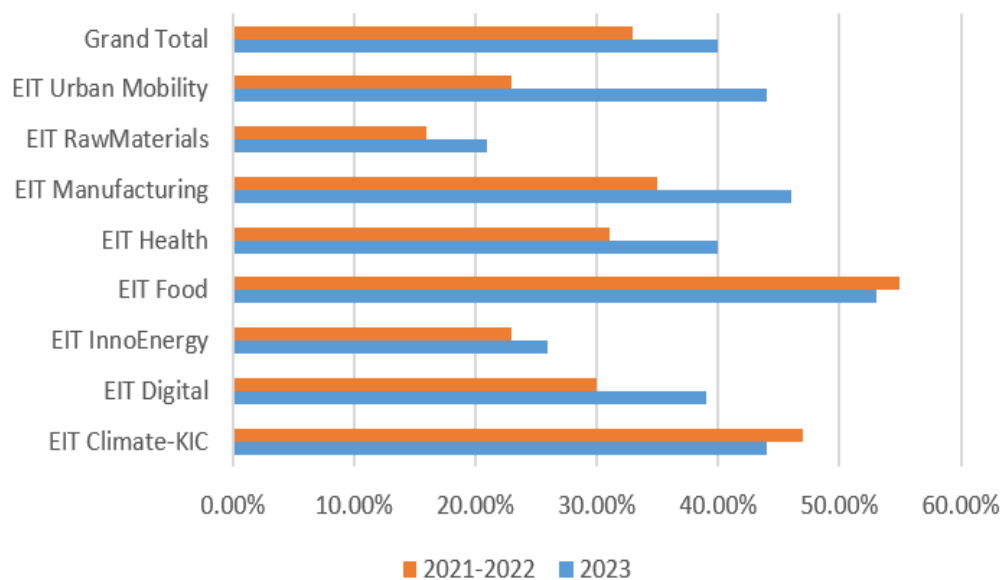

Figure 5 Women in the EIT KICs decision making
EIT GEP target 40% (by the end of 2024). Status: 40% (2023 reporting)