EIT WATER INFO DAY QUESTIONS

Can we protect the competitiveness of the KICs?

In a nutshell, EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) provide a wide range of support services to start-ups, from the ideation stage onwards. They also educate and (re)skill talent and the workforce for industry and start-ups, while deploying innovative solutions to the market that help address societal challenges. As a result, the EIT has been recognised as Europe's top investor in Sifted's 2024 ranking.

Is a holding structure established between the KICs?

EIT KICs operate independently from one another but collaborate through dedicated EIT Community activities, projects, and programmes. Additionally, KICs have established various working groups on topics such as business creation, intellectual property, and shared services.

Can a non-EU citizen apply, specifically someone of Iranian nationality?

Individuals cannot apply to become members of consortia; the EIT Call for Proposals 2025 is open only to legal entities.

In accordance with the Horizon Europe Regulation (Article 22), entities, regardless of their place of establishment, are eligible to participate in the EIT Call for Proposals.

The EIT's Call will result in the designation of the winning consortium by the EIT Governing Board; however, no funding will be awarded at this stage.

Regarding eligibility for funding, the designated winning consortium will receive funding for the start-up phase of the KIC. As a general rule, entities from EU Member States and Horizon Europe-associated countries are eligible for funding (Article 23 of the Horizon Europe Regulation). Additionally, entities established in low- to middle-income countries automatically qualify for Horizon Europe funding.

Information on the status of Horizon Europe association procedures and the list of eligible countries can be found on the **Funding and Tenders Portal**, in the [Horizon Europe Online Manual](#).

What about when the business plan involves licensing for manufacturing?

EIT KICS engage in various forms of cooperation, both thematically and on cross-cutting topics such as business creation, intellectual property, and education. The EIT actively encourages cross-KIC collaboration and synergies among the KICs.

Would EIT Water receive extra points at the formation phase for its cross-KIC approach, e.g. raw materials or climate?

The consortium will be evaluated solely based on the evaluation criteria and respective scores detailed in the EIT Water Call text, sections 6.6 and 6.7. Additionally, please refer to section 2.2.10 on *Cross-KIC cooperation and sharing of experience* in the EIT Water Call text.

Some universities say they struggle to navigate the different governance structures of the KICs, which has reduced their appetite to participate. Do you have any advice or guidance on how to address this?

We encourage you to consult the EIT Community ecosystem map: https://eit.europa.eu/eit-ecosystem-map
The map includes all KICs and their Co-location Centres, main offices (headquarters), EIT RIS Hubs, and EIT Community hubs.

What has been the experience with the sustainability of previous KICs?

KICs undergo independent 7-year and final reviews to assess their relevance and performance. The reports are available on the EIT's website:

- o EIT Raw Materials 7-year review
- o EIT Health 7-year review
- o EIT Food 7-year review
- o EIT Digital final review
- o EIT Climate-KIC final review
- o EIT InnoEnergy final review

Will EIT Water take into account the EU Taxonomy-aligned environmental objective on the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources as a trigger for existing and future technology development?

The EIT Water KIC could support innovation, specifically focusing on corporate water stewardship investments in line with EU directives and frameworks such as the EU Taxonomy. For further details, please consult the EC Staff Working Document on the relevance of the new KIC.

In the FAQs, a question about the budget of the call states: "…following the start-up period, the EIT grant for the first Business Plan is between EUR 20-35 million per year." What is the EIT grant for the Business Plan?

This depends on the duration of the Business Plan. Currently, KIC Business Plans cover a three-year period.

Will there be a matchmaking event or an online platform to find partners or join the forming consortium?

A dedicated networking platform is available to help organisations connect with potential partners for the upcoming EIT Call for Proposals: https://networking-for-eit-water.b2match.io/.

Will the €5 million Start-up Grant be allocated only to the Coordinator, or will other entities also receive funding?

The Start-up Grant will be awarded to the Coordinator and consortia members directly involved in the KIC start-up phase. However, the Coordinator will be contractually responsible for managing the EIT Start-up Grant. Historically, the majority of the start-up grant has been allocated to the Coordinator. More details will be outlined in the Guidelines for the Start-up Grant.

Is the 7-year Partnership Agreement impacted by the upcoming FP10 and the uncertainty surrounding the future of the EIT?

In accordance with Article 20 of the Partnership Agreement (EIT PA_Jan 2021 updated version), the transition to a new framework programme does not terminate an ongoing Partnership Agreement. However, the new framework programme may necessitate amendments to ongoing Partnership Agreements to align with new strategic objectives and requirements.

Regarding the 7-year Partnership Agreement: Since Horizon Europe is ending in two years, is this new KIC expected to become financially sustainable within that time, or is the 7-year funding guaranteed?

According to the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027, the EIT funding rate throughout the KIC life cycle follows a gradual reduction, with an increasing share of financing expected from other sources. Full financial sustainability is anticipated between years 12 and 15 of the KIC life cycle.

	Start-up	Ramp-up	Maturity	Exit from EIT grant
Years	1 – 4	5 – 7	8 – 11	12 – 15
EIT funding rate	Up to 100 %	Up to 80 %	Up to 70 %	Up to 50 % at year 12, decreasing by 10 % per annum

Figure 1: EIT funding rates 2021-2027

Can you please define the maritime aspect in the context of the new KIC? Does it include maritime transport, i.e. shipping, ports, etc..?

Among other objectives, the EIT Water KIC will support the blue economy and enhance the global competitiveness of European marine and maritime sectors. More details about the scope of the challenges addressed can be found in the Commission Staff Working Document on the relevance of the new KIC.

Please note that consortia typically set their strategic direction based on identified challenges where the need and potential for innovation and commercialisation are most significant and where skills and entrepreneurship education are most necessary.

For the initial consortium, must a minimum number of partners from three countries be present? Is the presence of three different countries mandatory?

To form a KIC, at least three independent partner organisations must be involved. These must include at least one higher education institution (HEI), one research organisation, and one private company, all established in at least three different EU Member States. Additionally, at least two-thirds of the partner organisations forming a KIC must be based in EU Member States. More detailed criteria are outlined in the Invitation text of the Call for Proposals under the evaluation and selection criteria.

What is the most successful KIC, and what are its key success factors?

Please consult the Innovation Model paper on the EIT website, which includes a chapter titled "What makes a successful EIT Knowledge and Innovation Community?"

Additionally, KICs undergo independent 7-year and final reviews to assess their relevance and performance. The reports are available on the EIT website:

- o EIT Raw Materials 7-year review
- o EIT Health 7-year review
- o EIT Food 7-year review
- o EIT Digital final review
- o EIT Climate-KIC final review
- o EIT InnoEnergy final review

For a concise overview of each KIC, please refer to the KIC Factsheets.

Could you confirm the total EIT funding over the course of the project? I saw €5 million for 2026—will funding then come solely from investments and partner membership fees?

The designated consortium will receive a Start-up Grant of €5 million from the EIT for 2026 to establish the KIC from a legal and operational perspective. The new KIC is expected to sign a Partnership Agreement with the EIT at the end of 2026 or early 2027, which will enable it to receive additional EIT funding for KIC activities.

The funding allocated to the new KIC from 2027 onwards will be determined by the EIT Governing Board. The EIT financial contribution may cover up to 100% of total eligible costs for KIC-added value activities in the early stages of a KIC's life cycle. According to the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027, EIT funding decreases over time as financing from other sources gradually increases. Historical data suggests that after the start-up phase, the EIT grant for the first multi-annual Business Plan typically ranges between €20-35 million per year.

	Start-up	Ramp-up	Maturity	Exit from EIT grant
Years	1 – 4	5 – 7	8 – 11	12 – 15
EIT funding rate	Up to 100 %	Up to 80 %	Up to 70 %	Up to 50 % at year 12, decreasing by 10 % per annum

Figure 1: EIT funding rates 2021-2027

Does the EU collaborate with other continents on maritime issues?

To enhance competitiveness and strengthen the international appeal of the European economy and its innovation capacity, the EIT and its KICs play a key role in attracting partner organisations, researchers, and students from around the world. They cooperate with non-EU organisations and, in line with EU strategic priorities, promote international collaboration in innovation.

The EIT Community Global Outreach Programme supports these efforts. More information can be found in the Strategic Framework for EIT Community Global Outreach Activities.

Will EIT issue a #BlueBond?

No, the EIT does not issue bonds of any kind. As part of Horizon Europe, the EIT allocates grants to its KICs.

When is the newly established EIT Water KIC expected to launch its first project pipeline and open calls for funding?

Once the Partnership Agreement is signed (expected end of 2026/early 2027), the EIT Water KIC will receive EIT funding to implement its activities and projects.

During 2026, in the start-up phase, the new KIC will develop and submit its first Business Plan to the EIT. Once approved, the KIC will be able to launch specific calls.

Do co-location centres need to submit an application, or should they be integrated into the KIC application?

Consortia are not required to establish Co-location Centres, a KIC legal entity (headquarters), or any other legal forms at the application stage. These elements will be set up in 2026 as part of the start-up phase, for which a €5 million EIT grant will be allocated.

Why is the budget for this KIC lower than previous ones during the SUGA phase (€5M vs €6M)?

The start-up phase for this KIC is planned to be shorter, leveraging the existing knowledge, lessons learned, and support available from the EIT and the EIT Community, leading to a more cost-effective and efficient process. Furthermore, the proposal template and evaluation criteria are more closely aligned with the KIC Strategic Agenda logic, enabling a more efficient drafting process for the first KIC Strategic Agend.

As a newcomer, where should we start our EIT journey?

Please refer to the EIT Call for Proposals 2025 webpage, where all relevant information about the scope and conditions of the call is available.

How many KICs can be created under the EIT Water umbrella?

Only one KIC will be established under the Water, Marine, and Maritime Sectors and Ecosystems theme following the designation of the winning consortium.

I thought an element of impact on societies outside the EU was a requirement. Has this criterion been removed?

Please refer to evaluation criterion 3.1 Impact, outlined in the EIT Water Call Invitation text. The criteria aligns with the EIT Impact Framework, which follows Horizon Europe's key impact pathway.

Could you elaborate on the integration of Régions Ultrapériphériques/Outermost Regions, within the RIS strategy? What is the difference between RIS Hubs and EIT Community Hubs.

The EU Outermost Regions are fully eligible for all EIT activities, including the EIT RIS, and must therefore be well covered as part of the EIT KICs' RIS Strategies. The EIT's vision for the EU Outermost Regions is outlined in a dedicated Strategy published in 2024, which is subsequently reflected across the EIT RIS Implementation Framework. Under this framework, the EU Outermost Regions benefit from the highest levels of support and the most preferential participation conditions.

EIT RIS Hubs and EIT Community Hubs are on-the-ground offices within the EIT RIS area, governed by Chapter 9 of the EIT RIS Implementation Framework. Both follow the definition under Article 2(4) of the EIT Regulation and are central to the EIT RIS's "place-based" innovation approach. They serve as crucial tools for attracting and integrating potential new partners into the EIT KICs,

addressing the needs of local ecosystems in EIT RIS countries and regions, and bridging the innovation gap within Europe.

While EIT RIS Hubs represent a single EIT KIC and perform a set of minimum functions outlined in the EIT RIS Implementation Framework, EIT Community Hubs act as one-stop shops for the entire EIT Community. In principle, EIT RIS Hubs are established by new EIT KICs within their first five years of operation. Within a maximum of six years from their establishment, EIT RIS Hubs must be fully integrated as members of their local EIT Community Hub, ensuring enhanced cooperation with other members operating under the same hub, including through the implementation of joint activities.

Could you clarify the difference between Co-location Centres (CLCs) and EIT RIS Hubs?

Please consult the EIT Innovation Model Paper, which explains these differences in the "An Integrated Network" sub-chapter.

What type of synergies are foreseen?

Please refer to section 2.2.9 Synergies in the Call invitation text, as well as the European Commission Staff Working Document for further details.

Scaling down is as important as scaling up. What are the chances the EIT will support localised best practices?

EIT KICs are Europe-wide networks; hence, the partnership should span across Europe. However, the KIC model also integrates a place-based approach through the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme, EIT Community Hubs, and EIT RIS Hubs, as well as through the Co-location Centres. Read more: EIT Innovation model.

What percentage of SMEs is recommended to be part of the consortium?

Please consult the EIT Water Call eligibility criteria, Section 6.2 of the Call Invitation Text. The consortium should be composed of at least one higher education institution (HEI), one research organisation, and one private company, established in at least three different Member States. The consortium is free to determine the number of SMEs participating in line with its strategy; however, the partnership should be balanced to encompass all aspects of the Knowledge Triangle.

Are pre-revenue startups eligible to join a consortium?

Please consult the EIT Water Call eligibility criteria, Section 6.2 of the Call Invitation Text; there are no additional limitations.

What are the expected synergies between EIT Water and the upcoming Circular Economy Act?

Please note that one of the key challenges EIT Water will address is the 'circular and sustainable blue economy'. Synergies with relevant policies, initiatives, and programmes are of utmost importance. Please consult Section 2.2.9 Synergies in the Call invitation text, as well as the respective technical evaluation criteria.