

# 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 Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) Implementation Framework aims to provide the European Institute of Innovation and Technology's (EIT) Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) with guidance fully aligned with the EIT's strategy and priorities for 2021 to 2027, as contained in its Strategic and Innovation Agenda<sup>1</sup> and in coherence with the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

This 2025 edition of the Implementation Framework focuses on the 2025-2027 period. In this context, it updates the EIT RIS Implementation Framework, adopted in 2021 and revised in 2022<sup>2</sup> covering the 2022-2027 period and also incorporates the elements formerly contained in the EIT RIS Hubs Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles<sup>3</sup>, adopted in 2022, and the File Note on Monitoring and Evaluating the EIT RIS<sup>4</sup>, adopted in 2023.

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 (EU). 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 the RIS in 2014 to widen its regional outreach to modest / emerging and moderate innovator countries according to the [European Innovation Scoreboard](#) (EIS) ("EIT RIS countries and regions"). Through the 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<sup>5</sup> activities, thereby boosting their capacity to innovate.

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 has it as a central objective to 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). In the 2021-2024 period, results showed that the EIT RIS had significantly contributed towards the goal of increasing the EIT's regional impact through enhanced openness towards potential partners and stakeholders. On this basis, in the 2025-2027 period, additional focus will be placed on the EIT RIS providing more in-depth support aimed at boosting the quality of impact delivered.

This Implementation Framework will remain applicable until the end of 2027. If appropriate, in 2028, the EIT may develop a new Implementation Framework, potentially building on this version, to help

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<sup>1</sup> In particular Chapter 3.2 thereof on "Increasing the regional impact of KICs".

<sup>2</sup> Ares(2023)155769

<sup>3</sup> Ares(2022)5163006

<sup>4</sup> Ares(2023)6260743

<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this document, "EIT Community" means the EIT and its KICs.

provide the EIT KICs with guidance on the implementation of the EIT RIS under the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

During its first seven years, the EIT RIS was run on a voluntary basis<sup>6</sup>, however, from 2021 on, the EIT RIS became mandatory and an integral part of the EIT KICs' multi-annual strategy. Until 2027, EIT RIS activities shall continue to support the innovation capacity of countries, and regions in those countries, which are classed as modest / emerging and moderate innovation performers according to the EIS, as well as the EU 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 their regions, which are classed as modest / emerging and moderate innovation performers according to the EIS, as well as the EU Outermost Regions.

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 KT integration 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 Strategic Innovation Agenda \(SIA\)](#) 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;

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<sup>6</sup> Whilst de jure, the EIT RIS was run on a voluntary basis in 2014-2020, de facto, implementation of the EIT RIS by all EIT KICs became mandatory based on EIT guidance from 2016.

- leverage additional private and public funding, with particular attention to [European Structural and Investment Funds \(ESIF\)](#).

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%<sup>7</sup> of the KICs' aggregated Key Performance Indicator (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 a strong on-the-ground EIT representation covering all EIT RIS countries and regions, closely integrated and coordinated under the umbrella of a network of EIT Community Hubs<sup>8</sup>, as well as the establishment of new CLCs<sup>9</sup> and when appropriate, in line with the provisions outlined in this document, new EIT KIC RIS Hubs.

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 [Political Guidelines for the European Commission \(2024-2029\)](#). Additionally, the EIT RIS should be implemented in full compliance with as well as strongly contribute to [EU enlargement and neighbourhood policies](#) as well as the [European Strategy for the Outermost Regions](#).

### 3. PLACE-BASED APPROACH TO INNOVATION SUPPORT

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, specificities and needs. In implementing their place-based approach to innovation support, the EIT KICs must pay special attention to those EIT RIS countries and regions identified for enhanced levels of support<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Whilst this remains the minimum target until 2027, given that participants (partners, students, ventures, and so on) from EIT RIS countries and regions accounted for over 60% of the total in 2021-2023, the EIT KICs are encouraged to aim for at least 50% of all the KICs' aggregated KPI targets in the 2025-2027 period.

<sup>8</sup> This document deals only with EIT Community Hubs based in EIT RIS countries and regions, formerly known as "EIT Community RIS Hubs", managed by the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster which are tasked with strongly supporting and contributing to the objectives of the EIT RIS. All other EIT Community Hubs based outside EIT RIS countries and regions and / or not managed by the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster, including CLCs which are also referred to as Hubs for external communication purposes, are not subject to this document.

<sup>9</sup> This may also include CLC satellite offices, often referred to as "Branches" for ease of reference.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 4.3 for more information on the EIT RIS countries and regions identified for enhanced levels of support.

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 National authorities, in particular ESIF Managing Authorities. This place-based innovation approach will be spearheaded by a network of on-the-ground offices, aimed at aiding the understanding of local needs and gaps as well as boosting engagement with local innovation actors.

Utilising this place-based approach, through their CLCs and RIS Hubs, as well as the network of EIT Community 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.

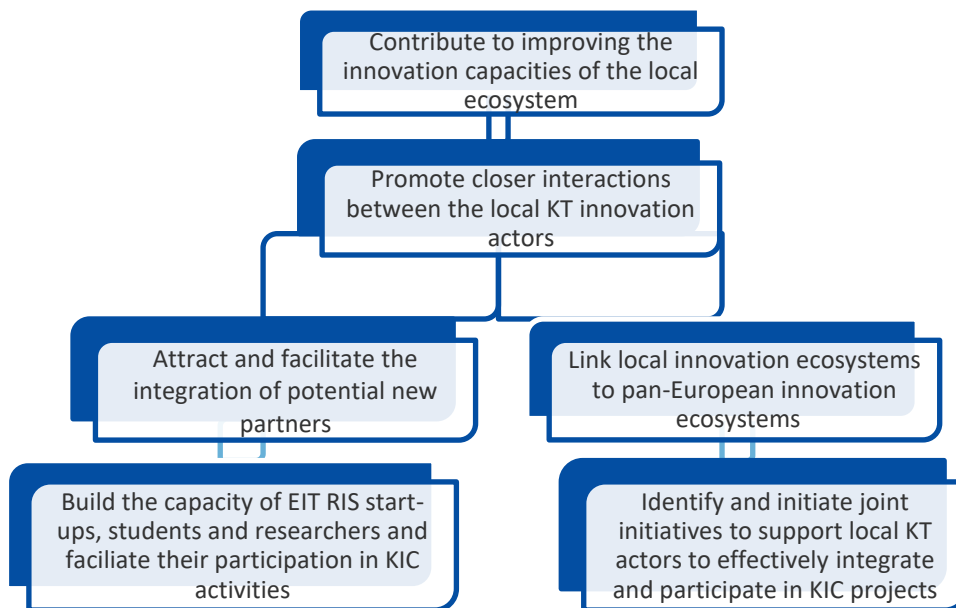
The EIT KICs must also further increase their regional impact, through an enhanced openness and inclusive approach towards a wide range of potential partners and stakeholders, a strengthened dissemination and exploitation of results and better articulated regional strategies. This approach will build on EIT KICs' CLCs and RIS hubs, as well as the EIT Community 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 II 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 EIT 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 EIT 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 became 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 limited<sup>11</sup>, 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. Ecosystem Capacity Building

The EIT RIS should support building up the capacity of the entities from local ecosystems in 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 should consider undertaking activities, such as:

- setting-up innovation support programmes for early-stage development of EIT RIS-based ventures, offering both in-kind and financial support for proof of concept by start-ups or educational/research institutions and demonstration projects;

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 4.3 for further details on boosting geographical spread and balance.

- 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;
- organising innovation challenges that require cross-border collaboration and interregional innovation projects between EIT RIS countries and regions and more advanced innovation ecosystems;
- offering compensation to EIT 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 organisations and universities so as to enable research results to lead to marketable innovative products and services;
- supporting innovation through strengthening experimentation capacities like innovation / living labs and testbeds where local start-ups, researchers, and businesses can experiment with new technologies and solutions in a controlled environment;
- assisting in the development or enhancement of infrastructure necessary for innovation, such as incubators, accelerators, or research facilities.

The EIT RIS' capacity building activities should also ensure complementarity with the EIT initiative to support the entrepreneurial and innovation capacity in higher education, launched in 2021, and which targets mainly HEIs that are not EIT KIC partners in innovation value chains and ecosystems across the Union. Universities and HEIs participating in HEI initiative actions are selected through the open calls and institutions based in RIS countries and regions are encouraged to team up with 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, the EIT 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 proper 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:

- 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 to all including in RIS counties and regions;
- considering complementing EIT RIS business creation services with training in marketing and sales skills for international / cross-border sales as well as regulatory requirements, intellectual property issues;
- developing a structured and complete feedback information mechanism 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 investors-ready through dedicated Access to Finance (A2F) activities modelled after / integrated with those A2F activities already running successfully in other regions of Business Creation activities for the EIT KICs;
- develop mechanisms to integrate those who benefited from business creation activities into the KICs' respective Business Alumni communities;
- facilitating the integration of start-ups into existing EIT KIC networks and communities, including providing access to international partners, experts and resources.
- ensure that start-ups having benefited from RIS activities are also integrated and visible via the online [EIT Dealroom](#) platform.

#### 4.1.3. Entrepreneurship Education and Skills

In the 2025-2027 period, the EIT KICs must significantly step up their EIT RIS activities supporting Entrepreneurship Education and Skills.

Working in complementarity with the EIT HEI Initiative, 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 EIT RIS countries and regions should be encouraged to develop action plans, 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 EIT HEI initiative, however any supplementary and support activities should receive complimentary support via the EIT RIS 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 EIT RIS countries and regions into 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 consider taking measures to remove any barriers to student recruitment and joint programming in EIT RIS countries and their regions, including barrier posed by high participation fees. In this context, the EIT KICs may wish to consider, individually or jointly, regularly assessing the fee structures of their EIT Label Programmes to improve the affordability and access for students from EIT RIS countries and their regions. This assessment can involve a discussion on introducing a flexible pricing model, which may include scholarships and tuition fee exemptions tailored to the specific economic conditions of the EIT RIS countries and their regions.

The EIT KICs should also aim to contribute to tackling brain-drain via the EIT RIS, including, if and when appropriate, by considering awarding return incentives to students from EIT RIS countries and regions studying outside the EIT RIS area, for example. The establishment of close partnerships between Universities from EIT RIS countries and regions and those outside the EIT RIS area should also be encouraged, including facilitating the launch of additional EIT Label Programmes in EIT RIS countries and regions, especially those identified for enhanced levels of support.

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, including, to the greatest extent possible, by enhancing the appeal of the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) education at earlier stages of education as well as in VET through embedding KT Integration and entrepreneurship in teaching and learning.

Additionally, the EIT KICs are encouraged to further enhance the educational and support frameworks for young entrepreneurs and innovators in EIT RIS countries and their regions, recognising the need for more robust preparation for larger-scale investment opportunities and a more accurate assessment of industry positioning. To bridge the gap between early-stage funding and significant investment stages, the EIT KICs may wish to consider expanding their EIT RIS Educational offerings specifically designed for this transition. This expansion could include the development of practical workshops, enhanced mentorship opportunities, and tailored incubation services that address the unique challenges faced by start-ups in these regions. Furthermore, the EIT KIC may consider the extension of EIT RIS Entrepreneurship Education and Skills offerings at the high school level. This expansion would aim to promote innovation and entrepreneurship from an early age, cultivating foundational skills and interests amongst youth that prepare a robust pipeline of knowledgeable and motivated future entrepreneurs and innovators.

Furthermore, close synergies and cross-fertilization should be sought with the EIT Deep Tech Talent Initiative (DTTI) as well as with the European Skills Academies being implemented by the EIT KICs.

#### **4.1.4. Innovation Driven Research**

It is recommended that the EIT KICs' emphasis should be on supporting innovation projects with leads and participants from entities based in EIT RIS countries and their regions, including, start-ups. The end result should be more commercialising partners from the EIT RIS area participate in the EIT Community. In order to increase commercialisation, a support framework could be developed, namely by providing specific training programs for start-ups, researchers and innovators; offer support via EIT RIS Hubs on market analysis, business development, and Intellectual Property (IP) guidance; and facilitate access to venture capital and investor networks across Europe, targeting innovations emerging from EIT RIS countries and their regions.

Also, the EIT RIS should support start-ups and innovators from EIT RIS countries and their regions to effectively scale-up and elevate the outputs and outcomes of their innovation activities on the pan-European level. This could be done by providing ventures with access to wider European / Global markets, including through partnerships and networks, tailored acceleration programmes and financial mechanisms to fund the scaling process (including grants, loans, and risk capital).

The EIT KICs may wish to consider initiating innovation challenges and competitions with significant prizes and long-term benefits, including mentorship, inclusion in EIT KICs acceleration programmes and/or access to venture capital, centred around specific themes or industry sectors that are pertinent to EIT RIS countries and their regions aligned with the local RIS3s. EIT KICs should ensure that these challenges/competitions are well-publicised within the regions to maximise participation and consider involving local governments and institutions for broader impact. This approach could encourage the rapid development of innovative solutions for urgent issues, draw attention to EIT RIS-based start-ups, and foster opportunities for additional growth and commercialisation.

The EIT KICs may also wish to involve local start-ups in technology and know-how transfer, 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 EIT RIS countries and their regions in EIT KIC innovation projects. This could be achieved, for example, through innovation fellowships for students and researchers that are tied to specific start-up or innovation projects, collaborative research initiatives between universities and start-ups where students can earn academic credits through hands-on innovation work, and mentorship programmes linking students and researchers to established entrepreneurs and industry experts.

The EIT RIS could also support transfer of knowledge and good practices in developing or facilitating growth of innovation ecosystems in EIT RIS countries and their regions and transferring or co-creating new innovation delivery mechanisms. In this context, RIS Hubs, and especially EIT Community Hubs, can contribute decisively to strengthen innovation ecosystems in EIT RIS countries and their regions. Moreover, the following measures could be implemented: offer regular knowledge-sharing events such as innovation forums, workshops, or masterclasses to foster collaboration between stakeholders; and facilitate public-private partnerships to ensure sustainable development of these ecosystems.

Closer cross-KIC collaborations are particularly encouraged between the EIT RIS and different KICs to leverage their expertise. For example, this could include joint projects between different KICs focusing on RIS area-specific challenges; and knowledge exchange programmes where entities based in EIT RIS countries and their regions can learn from successful projects implemented by the KICs.

The EIT RIS could additionally be used to support researchers and innovators from EIT RIS countries and their 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, EIT Community Hubs and RIS Hubs, the EIT KICs should foster closer interactions between the actors of the Knowledge Triangle. Additionally, existing and future CLCs, EIT Community Hubs and RIS Hubs should engage in dialogue with the relevant National and Managing Authorities from Member States to spur the implementation of RIS3 over the period 2021-2027, since the EIT KT integration 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, potentially undertaken by the EIT Community Hubs, could also help the EIT KICs conclude targeted collaboration agreements covering activities such as advice to policy implementation, use of ESIF and [Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance](#) (IPA III) funded infrastructure, trainings, transfer of know-how, assistance to business, awareness raising events etc. Linked to this, 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 consider have dedicated sections for ESIF and IPA III 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.

To support the fostering of linkages, the EIT, with the support of all the EIT KICs and the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster<sup>12</sup>, will maintain an updated list of all EIT on-the-ground offices in EIT RIS countries and regions, which will be reflected in [EIT Ecosystem Map](#) accessible on the EIT's website.

Relevant information on EIT and EIT RIS opportunities for RIS beneficiaries should be shared by the EIT Community Officers with the locals EIT National Contact Points.

### 4.3 Contributing to geographical spread and balance

The list of countries and territories eligible for the EIT RIS is set by the EIT Legislative Framework, a subject which is addressed under Chapter 5 of this document. However, in implementing EIT RIS activities, the EIT KICs should always be mindful that the Scheme is intended as a tool aimed at significantly boosting the geographical spread of EIT activities and, to the greatest extent possible, also contribute to a more balanced geographical spread of these activities.

In this context, each EIT KIC is expected to annually undertake an assessment of the countries and territories eligible for the EIT RIS drawing on:

- the latest EIS;
- the latest [European Regional Innovation Scoreboard](#) (ERIS);

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<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 16 for more information on Cross-KIC RIS activities.

- the level of performance of the countries and territories eligible for the EIT RIS in the KIC's activities.

Based on this, the EIT KICs are expected to provide enhanced levels support to the countries and territories identified as having a particularly low innovation capacity and / or where engagement remains limited in terms of participation in their KICs' activities and / or on-the-ground representation. This enhanced level of support can include more tailored or even dedicated support initiatives, more preferential levels of co-funding for participants based in the identified countries and territories and advantageous KIC partner membership fees and fees for EIT-labelled education programmes.

Irrespective of the outcome of their assessment, in reflection of the EU's strategic priorities, the EIT KICs, as well as the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster, are encouraged to offer higher levels of support to participants based:

- countries and regions identified as having the lowest levels of innovation capacity within the European Innovation Scoreboard and / or the European Regional Innovation Scoreboard;
- the EU Outermost Regions in line with the [EIT Strategy to Boost Engagement with the EU Outermost Regions](#);
- Mediterranean Island States (Malta and Cyprus);
- EU Accession Countries, namely Türkiye, Ukraine and the EIT RIS-eligible, Western Balkan economies;
- Rural regions in all EIT RIS eligible countries.

During the first EIT RIS Panel<sup>13</sup> meeting of the year, each EIT KIC will be expected to outline the outcome of its assessment and present the enhanced levels of support it will take towards the targeted countries and territories.

Whilst not covered by these provisions, the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster, are invited to consider also undertaking a similar assessment with a view to ensure that its activities also target those countries in most need of support.

## 5. 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 / emerging innovator in at least one of the three EIS annual reports issued in 2018, 2019 and 2020 for the period 2021-2024 and those identified as either moderate or modest / emerging 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 the EU Outermost Regions as defined in Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU).

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<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 13.1 for more information on the EIT RIS Panel.

A list of EU Member States that will be eligible for the EIT RIS in the period 2025-2027, is contained in Annex I. The list of EU Outermost Regions as defined in Article 349 TFEU is contained in Annex II.

The EIT RIS will also be open to those eligible third countries, associated to Horizon Europe, listed in the EIS. The list of third countries associated to Horizon Europe, which will be eligible for the EIT RIS in the period 2025-2027, is contained in Annex III.

It is pertinent to note that apart from the EU Outermost Regions, eligibility for the EIT RIS is set at country-level<sup>14</sup>. 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, and to the greatest extent geographical balance of their networks, whilst remaining fully compliant with all Horizon Europe regulations.

## 6. FUNDING

Linkages of the EIT RIS with the EIT 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 up to a maximum 15% of the overall EIT funding for existing and new KICs. Based on the level of funding dedicated to the EIT RIS in 2021-2024, in the 2025-2027 period, the EIT recommends that the EIT KICs, on average, each annually dedicate at least 13% of their total budgets to EIT RIS activities.

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 their regions. In this context, the EIT RIS should also be mainstreamed within the KICs' activities (that is, participation in innovation, business creation and education actions) and used to reduce or 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. In doing so, 100% co-funding should be used only exceptionally. By way of guidance, on average, the EIT expects at least 70% of EIT RIS-funded activities to request some degree of co-funding.

As described under Chapter 4.3 of this document, the EIT KICs should annually assess both the Country-by-Country participation in their activities as well as the performance of EIT RIS countries in the annual EIS, in order to have a system which responds to evolving circumstances and offers the highest levels

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<sup>14</sup> The EIS assesses innovation performance at country-level only. The European Regional Innovation Scoreboard which assesses the innovation performance of European regions is not part of the EIT RIS eligibility criteria.

of support, including significantly reduced, or exceptionally, full exceptions from co-funding rates to participants from those countries which require this the most.

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 should 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.

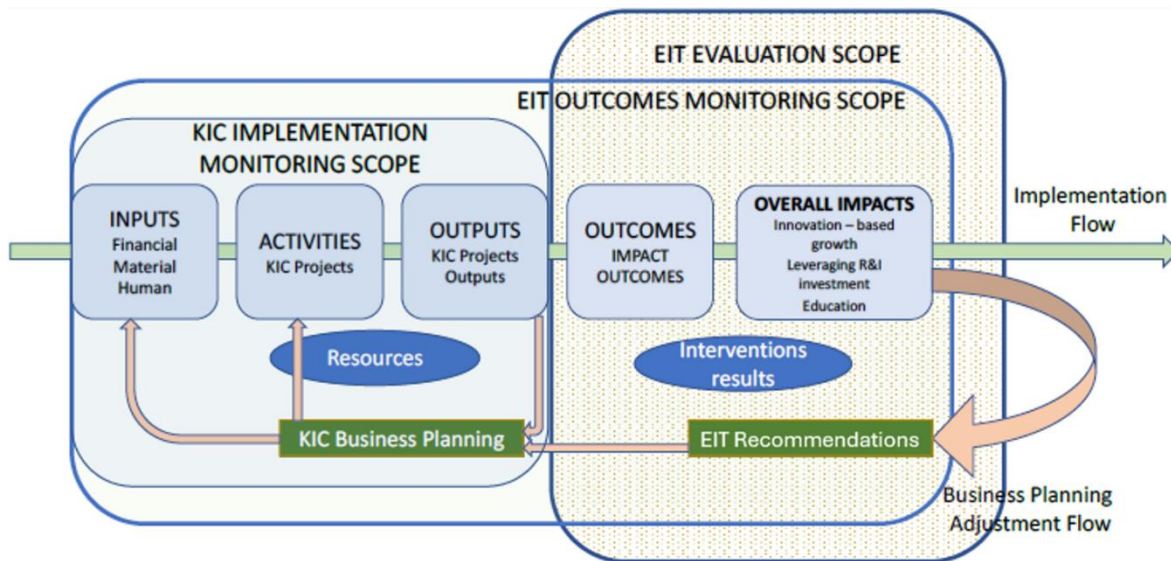
## 7. MONITORING THE IMPACT OF THE EIT RIS

This Implementation Framework provides the EIT KICs with comprehensive guidance covering the diverse aspects of the EIT RIS, however, in reflecting the EIT's unique innovation model, it allows the EIT KICs a certain degree of operational flexibility in designing their own EIT RIS activities, provided that these activities contribute towards achieving the EIT's overarching and specific objectives for the 2021-2027 period. In this context, the successful implementation of the EIT RIS will depend on a strong system of continuous monitoring and evaluation of EIT KIC RIS activities, in line with the EIT Impact Framework, as well as the provision of regular, informed strategic orientation to the EIT KICs, primarily by the EIT Governing Board.

### 7.1 EIT RIS Monitoring Framework

The EIT RIS Monitoring Framework outlined within this Chapter will be fully in line with the [EIT Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy](#) (EIT M&ES), will close follow the decisions on "[Principles for financing, monitoring and evaluating KIC activities](#)" and will also be outlined within the EIT's Monitoring and Evaluation Planning for the period until 2027.

As appropriate for monitoring strategic interventions, it will specifically target outcomes-based monitoring, with the targeted outcomes following the [EIT Impact Framework](#), in itself aligned with the [Horizon Europe Impact Framework](#). The implementation monitoring is within the remit of the KICs themselves but specific KIC priority areas, horizontal and cross-cutting aspects, and others, including reinforced monitoring, are part of the EIT Monitoring and Evaluation planning until 2027. The process chain view of the combined EIT outcomes-based monitoring and KIC-specific implementation monitoring is illustrated below:



Specifically, and in compliance with the EIT M&ES, EIT RIS monitoring activities will aim at providing timely indication to the EIT of the need to adjust its strategic guidance to the EIT KICs. The EIT will utilise the outcomes of these monitoring activities to provide strategic recommendations and guidance to the KICs with a view to steer the KICs themselves to adjust their internal business and consequently implementation planning, so as to ensure that impact targets (outcomes) and strategic objectives are met.

In practice, monitoring activities focused on RIS aspects will be articulated around the KPIs contained in the EIT Impact Framework. Focus will be on monitoring results and impact delivered in EIT RIS countries and regions from both EIT RIS funded activities and non-EIT RIS funded activities. Monitoring aspects will build upon the periodic reporting elements provided by the KICs, including the annual EIT RIS Activity Reports and the annual EIT RIS Hubs Activity Reports, based on templates provided by the EIT. This will be complemented, as appropriate, by additional elements collected from the KICs, in the context of the continuous monitoring activities, in line with the EIT M&ES and the EIT RIS Implementation Framework. Every effort will be made to keep KIC reporting requirements to a minimum administrative burden.

Given that since 2021, the EIT RIS has become an integral part of all EIT KIC activities, 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 KICs' activities, supported through the EIT RIS, will be measured by, among others, how many organisations from EIT RIS countries and their 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 EIT RIS countries and their 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 their regions, and what their impact was. In this context, the EIT RIS Monitoring Framework will focus on results and impact delivered in EIT RIS



countries and their regions, irrespective of whether these are delivered via EIT RIS activities<sup>15</sup> or otherwise.

As appropriate, the EIT will also assess the status of implementation of EIT RIS activities against other benchmark data, including the EIT 2020 baseline results, comparative non-EIT RIS results and the corresponding Horizon Europe results, accessible via the [European Commission Funding and Tenders Portal Horizon Europe Dashboard](#).

The outcomes of all monitored aspects of the implementation of the EIT RIS will be fed into annual EIT RIS Monitoring Report, which will include recommendations for consideration by the EIT Governing Board, via the EIT Management, which in turn will provide steering advice to the EIT KICs to guide the development of their annual plans.

## 7.2 EIT RIS Expert Group

To support the implementation of the EIT RIS Monitoring Framework, an EIT RIS Experts Group (REG) was established in 2022<sup>16</sup>. The REG serves as a dynamic, standing pool of EIT RIS experts supporting the work of the EIT.

The tasks of the REG are assigned annually and outlined in a dedicated Terms of Reference document which is kept updated as necessary in reaction to evolving needs. However, the REG's main function is to support the EIT in taking stock of the implementation of the EIT RIS, including its budgetary uptake, results, and impact, based on the data and results emerging from the EIT's regular monitoring and reviews.

The REG also supports the EIT in activities contributing to the EIT grant-cycle and, based on a mandate provided by the EIT, undertakes direct, focused or reinforced monitoring activities on any relevant aspects linked to the implementation of the EIT RIS. As appropriate, the REG is expected to provide concrete recommendations to the EIT and the EIT KICs for consideration by the EIT Governing Board, via the EIT Management.

In 2022-2024, the REG consisted of two Experts who carried out analyses supporting the EIT in its RIS planning, monitoring and evaluation. With a view to provide the EIT with additional capacity in monitoring the implementation of the EIT RIS, especially in view of the Scheme's widened eligibility in 2025-2027, from 2025, the REG will consist of three Experts.

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<sup>15</sup> EIT RIS activities are activities funded from the 10-15% EIT Grant and co-funded at up to 100%.

<sup>16</sup> The EIT RIS Expert Group is established in line with Decision 21/2019 of the EIT Governing Board on the financial regulation of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (Ares(2019)6810859) and EIT Decision 13/2022 on the Policy on the selection of independent external experts to assist the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (Ares(2022)4210365).

### 7.3 EIT RIS monitoring indicators

The list of EIT RIS-related EIT KPIs, included in the EIT Impact Framework, is contained in Annex IV 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<sup>17</sup>;
2. Number of new CLCs and RIS Hubs established in RIS countries and regions<sup>18</sup>;
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.

Additionally, without causing additional reporting obligations on the EIT KICs, the EIT will utilise data subsets collected from its monitoring activities to compute the results for the following KPIs with a view to obtain a holistic picture of the implementation of the EIT RIS:

- Percentage of EIT grant dedicated to EIT RIS activities;
- Active partners collaborating in the KIC (from EIT RIS countries)(excluding Italy and Spain);
- Percentage of EIT grant dedicated to EIT RIS Countries (excluding Italy and Spain);
- Active partners collaborating in the KIC (from non-EU EIT RIS-eligible countries);
- Number of new and established KIC Partners from RIS countries (from non-EU EIT RIS-eligible countries);
- Percentage of EIT budget spent in non-EU EIT RIS-eligible countries;
- Percentage share of KIC RIS activities that request co-funding;
- Number of RIS HEIs involved in EIT and KIC activities;
- Number of EIT Community Hubs in place;
- Overall average percentage of female participation in EIT entrepreneurial education, business creation and acceleration, and innovation activities in RIS countries.

The performance of the EIT RIS Hubs<sup>19</sup> is assessed via a common set of concrete, time-bound and measurable, multi-annual impact delivery KPIs, which demonstrate contribution to the EIT's and EIT KICs' objectives and KPIs. This list of common KPIs is contained in Annex V.

Whilst mindful of the need not to increase the administrative burden on the EIT KICs, every effort will be made by the EIT to boost the quality and depth of its EIT RIS-related data collection and Business Intelligence efforts, where necessary and appropriate using external tools such as the online EIT Dealroom platform, including to compile data on EIT results delivered in the EU Outermost Regions and on the movement and impact of start-ups and scale-ups that benefit from RIS support.

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<sup>17</sup> Non-ESIF funding is also captured via KPI EITHE11.1 on Financial Sustainability revenues: Total financing generated by the KIC LE in year N (absolute value in EUR).

<sup>18</sup> EIT Community Hubs established in EIT RIS countries and regions are also counted.

<sup>19</sup> See more details on the EIT RIS Hubs under Chapter 9.

## 8. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

In line with Article 2(13) of the EIT Regulation, ‘Financial Sustainability’ means a capacity of a KIC to fund its knowledge triangle activities independently after the end date of the framework partnership agreement.

The EIT RIS activities have to contribute to each KICs’ overall Financial Sustainability Strategy based on identified priorities / targets / financing models. The EIT KICs’ RIS Teams should liaise with their relevant counterparts to ensure that any EIT RIS-specific Financial Sustainability elements are well covered within these fora. The EIT RIS Panel within the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster may serve as a platform for EIT RIS-specific Financial Sustainability exchanges, should these be considered necessary. Relevant EIT and EIT KIC Financial Sustainability counterparts will be involved in any such exchanges.

Within the context of achieving Financial Sustainability, EIT KICs should also aim towards efficiency gains, including through collaborative procurement, Cross-KIC collaborations, including via the EIT Community Hubs based in EIT RIS countries and regions, streamlined data collection and reporting systems. Additionally, EIT KICs should regularly share good practices, learnings and experiences linked to Financial Sustainability and efficiency gains as well as engage in dedicated discussions on Financial Sustainability in relation to the EIT RIS.

Within their internal procedures, EIT KICs should introduce a clear separation between activities that contribute to the financial sustainability of EIT KICs and activities that are not required to contribute to the financial sustainability. Guidance to EIT KICs is provided via the dedicated EIT Financial Sustainability principles and EIT Financial Sustainability Manual.

## 9. EIT RIS-BASED HUBS

EIT RIS Hubs are 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 gap within Europe. In this context, a common strategic approach, underpinning the establishment and operation of all EIT RIS Hubs, aimed at ensuring their consistent effectiveness in contributing towards achieving the EIT’s objectives and KPIs, while also rationalising the EIT Community’s on-the-ground presence was put in place by the EIT in 2023 and is outlined in this Chapter.

### 9.1 Mission

In line with Article 2(4) of the EIT Regulation, an EIT RIS Hub is a “physical hub, established by a KIC and forming part of its structure, 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”.

Established where their EIT KIC's engagement remains limited, EIT RIS Hubs have the core mission of delivering on the EIT's objectives and KPIs, especially those directly related to the EIT RIS. They do this by acting as gateway for new participants into their KIC's activities as well as roll-out capacity building initiatives to help the local innovation ecosystem. EIT RIS Hubs are part of their individual KIC's Business Plans and can have a single country-focus, a regional-focus, or a multi-country focus.

All EIT RIS Hubs must follow the minimum functions outlined in this document. In accordance with the EIT KICs' expansion strategy, RIS Hubs could pave the way to the establishment of a CLC in the targeted region.

## 9.2 Establishment

New EIT RIS Hubs should be established following a thorough needs analysis and must be subject to an open call.

New EIT RIS Hubs will be established following the consent of the EIT and, where appropriate, after consulting other stakeholders, including the relevant authorities in the EIT RIS countries and regions. Whilst the EIT will assess all proposal submitted by the EIT KICs, in principle, new EIT RIS Hubs should only be established:

- by new EIT KICs in their first 5 years of operation; and;
- in cases where external funding has been secured to fully finance the establishment and long-term operation of the EIT RIS Hub from non-EIT sources.

The procedure for the EIT to assess proposals for new EIT RIS Hubs is based on a dedicated Standard Operating Procedure.

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 State Representative Group](#) (MSRG), via the EIT. The calls should ensure that the process for selecting hubs should be transparent, inclusive, and impartial, giving applicants enough time for developing good quality proposals. The call must also appear in the [European Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal](#), under Horizon Europe. Where appropriate, non-country specific open calls to set up new, impact driven, EIT RIS Hubs, are encouraged.

New EIT RIS Hubs should ensure complementarity with existing EIT RIS Hubs and other EIT KIC Offices present locally, as well as the local EIT Community Hub. New EIT RIS Hubs should also contribute to boosting the EIT KICs' geographical balance across the EIT RIS-eligible countries and territories.

Within a maximum of six years of their establishment, EIT RIS Hubs funded by the EIT must be fully integrated as EIT Community Members.

## 9.3 Minimum Functions

To deliver on their mission, all existing and future EIT RIS Hubs funded by the EIT, are required to fully perform the following minimum functions, all of which must be specifically included as fundamental

requirements in all contractual agreements between the local EIT RIS Hub organisations and their EIT KICs:

### **9.3.1. Improve the innovation capacities of the local ecosystem**

EIT RIS Hubs must deliver on the EIT RIS' objective of improving the innovation capacities of local ecosystems, through capacity building activities, and closer interactions between the local knowledge triangle innovation actors (such as, clusters, networks, regional public authorities, HEIs, research organisations, VET institutions, SMEs) and their activities. These activities should include the dissemination of the EIT Community's results and good practices, as well as activities focused on citizen engagement. EIT RIS Hubs should be able to demonstrate measurable results and impact of their activities and provide opportunities for feedback from local ecosystem stakeholders and adjust their activities accordingly.

### **9.3.2. Attract and facilitate the integration of new participants in EIT Community activities**

EIT RIS Hubs must directly support the EIT RIS' objective of attracting and facilitating the integration of potential new partners and participants in the EIT KICs and their activities. The EIT RIS Hubs must strongly promote EIT Community opportunities within the local innovation ecosystems and help to link these to the EIT Community's pan-European innovation ecosystems. EIT RIS Hubs must also serve as a pipeline of talent and innovation potential (including students, ideas, start-ups, etc.) towards the EIT Community, manifestly contributing to the attainment of the EIT's objectives and KPIs, including the EIT KICs' Financial Sustainability targets and the RIS Hub's own Financial Sustainability targets.

To do this, the EIT RIS Hubs must liaise closely with local / regional / national authorities and stakeholders, including the EIT NCPs. NCPs are expected to act as an assistance, information and referral point for potential beneficiaries, who will be redirected to the respective local EIT RIS Hub or EIT KIC Office according to their needs. To achieve this, the Hubs should regularly provide the EIT NCPs with all relevant information to support their core functions, and if requested, help the NCPs understand the specificities around the KIC they represent and the type of activities they deliver. Once an EIT Community Hub is established in a particular EIT RIS country or territory, the consolidated provision of information to the local EIT NCPs can be centrally delivered by the EIT Community Officer, tasked with serving the EIT Community Hub, with full support from the EIT RIS Hubs. This should also enable EIT RIS Hubs and NCPs to team up for regular outreach, communication, dissemination and awareness raising activities, and eventually reach new audiences and increase the number of national EIT beneficiaries.

The EIT RIS Hubs should additionally actively scout for the most promising talent and innovation potential in their local ecosystems with a view to channel such talent towards their EIT KICs' entrepreneurial education and skills programmes, Accelerators and so on.

### **9.3.3. Support the establishment of synergies**

With support from the EIT in a "door opener" role, via the MSR representative and EIT NCPs, the EIT RIS Hubs must spearhead efforts to establish synergies between EIT Community activities and the local innovation ecosystem, aligned with the relevant RIS3s. EIT RIS Hubs should engage with relevant local

authorities as well as, undertake regular mapping exercises to identifying potential funding and collaboration opportunities.

With a view towards the EIT RIS Hubs' own financial sustainability, they should also actively seek possibilities for co-funding of their activities from local private and public funding sources. Special attention should be paid to efforts aimed at realising synergies with the ESIF and IPA III. Here too, the EIT will support in a "door opener" role, via the national EIT MSR representative and EIT NCPs. EIT RIS Hubs must additionally serve to support the implementation of capacity-building synergies identified between the EIT and the [European Innovation Council](#) (EIC), including by contributing to capacity building actions supporting the EIT-EIC Fastrack Scheme and facilitating the cross participation of local start-ups and SMEs in EIT and EIC activities.

#### 9.3.4. Coordinate with other EIT RIS Hubs and other EIT KIC Offices

To fully perform all these minimum functions, each EIT RIS Hub must coordinate its work closely with other Hubs and EIT KIC Offices, such as CLCs and Branches, present in the same innovation ecosystem. This includes providing other EIT RIS Hubs and EIT KIC Offices with regular updates on its ongoing and planned activities, including via any coordination mechanisms to be put in place, as well as, concrete cooperation, including joint activities with a view to maximise impact. Once an EIT Community Hub is established covering a given country or territory, all Hubs present in that ecosystem should be linked to it and therefore, this coordination and information distribution amongst EIT RIS Hubs and other EIT KIC Offices will be supported by the EIT Community Officers tasked with serving the EIT Community Hubs based in EIT RIS countries and regions.

The EIT RIS Hubs should dedicate, on average, at least 10% of their time to coordinate with the EIT Community Hub, other EIT RIS Hubs and other EIT KIC Offices. Additionally, each EIT RIS Hub must also be able to accurately address queries beyond their EIT KIC specifically, including, via the local EIT Community Officer helping to refer stakeholders to contact persons within other relevant EIT KICs, better suited to support their needs.

## 9.4 Financing and Performance Assessment

EIT RIS Hubs are co-funded by the EIT KICs as either a local independent organisation or a consortium of organisations working with the EIT KICs as KIC partners, subcontractors or subgrantees. Local organisations engaged to serve as EIT RIS Hubs will only be eligible to receive EIT RIS funding for operational activities directly related to the fulfilment of its mission. Administrative costs, including offices and related infrastructure, are not eligible. All EIT RIS Hubs must demonstrate cost effectiveness.

As part of their Business Plan submissions, the EIT KICs should include binding, multi-annual Financial Sustainability targets for each of their EIT RIS Hubs. All EIT RIS Hub will need to achieve 100% financing from non-EIT sources by the time their EIT KIC reaches the maximum fifteen-year period of EIT grant support.

Each EIT KIC must develop a system to closely track, measure, and assess the timely performance of their own EIT RIS Hubs, fully aligned with unified and simplified evaluation and reporting principles, which will ascertain the measurement of the performance of the EIT RIS Hubs against the common set

of EIT RIS Hub KPIs. These KPIs have the primary goal of demonstrating the EIT RIS Hubs' contribution to the EIT's and EIT KICs' objectives and KPIs. The EIT KICs must ensure that their individual RIS Hubs performance-assessment systems, including in cases of underperformance applicable financial penalties and other mitigating measures, are thoroughly and transparently documented, and communicated to the EIT and its EIT RIS Hubs.

The EIT KICs must report to the EIT on the performance of their EIT RIS Hubs by means of their annual EIT RIS Hubs Activity Reports, based on templates provided by the EIT. From its side, the EIT will develop a system for monitoring the performance of the EIT RIS Hubs which will be implemented with the support of the REG.

## 9.5 EIT Community Hubs

With a view towards strengthening local-level synergies and ensuring the presence of the EIT Community in every EIT RIS-eligible country and territory, in 2023, the EIT, via the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster, started rolling out a new network of EIT Community Hubs based in EIT RIS countries and regions. EIT Community Hubs will be established in all EIT RIS-eligible countries, including covering the EU Outermost Regions, through Hubs in France, Spain, and Portugal.

EIT Community Hubs based in EIT RIS countries and regions, whilst being well aligned with the definition of EIT RIS Hubs as outlined in the EIT Legislative Framework, differ from EIT RIS Hubs by serving as a one-stop-shop for the whole EIT Community. The EIT Community Hubs based in EIT RIS countries and their regions will, primarily, be a coordination mechanism, providing local innovators with a unified source of information on all services and opportunities provided by the entire EIT Community, both locally and internationally. They serve as a gateway to all EIT KICs, attracting and engaging an increasing number of participants, from across the KT, into EIT Community activities. They also spearhead the EIT Community's engagement with local authorities, including providing policy support and expertise as required, including the local NCPs.

### 9.5.1 EIT Community Officers

Each Hub is served by an EIT Community Officer, selected by the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster, in principle, via an open call. The tasks and responsibilities of the EIT Community Officers are outlined in Annex VI of this document. In the fulfilment of their tasks and responsibilities, the EIT Community Officers must be fluent both in English and in the official local language/s, act impartially without favouring the interests of individual stakeholders, either within or outside of the EIT Community, and avoiding all instances which may lead to real or even potential conflict of interest and / or unfair competition<sup>20</sup>.

With active support from the EIT, as appropriate, national authorities may be invited to finance or co-finance the cost of establishing and / or operating their local EIT Community Hubs, as well as joint

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<sup>20</sup> The EIT Community Hubs Governance Memorandum of Understanding (see Chapter 9.6 for more information), including a conflict of interest policy which all members of the Hubs, including the EIT Community Officers, must strictly adhere to.

activities aligned with the local RIS3 priorities from which all Community Members could potentially benefit.

EIT Community Officers are expected to coordinate and collaboration amongst themselves. In this context, the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster will provide the EIT Community Officers with a platform to foster such cooperation and collaboration, as well as support and guidance in terms of the delivery of their tasks.

### 9.5.2 EIT Community Officers Financing and Performance Assessment

Unless external funding can be found, the cost of the EIT Community Officer, will be compensated based on a performance-based system of remuneration. Other direct and indirect costs related to the running of the EIT Community Hub, such as the set up and maintenance of a small physical space (if this cannot be accommodated within an existing EIT Community space or another offered space), as well as Cross-KIC management costs related to operationalising the Hubs, will be covered from the budget of the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster.

In 2023, a monitoring and reporting system was introduced for the EIT Community Hubs managed by the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster to assess the performance of the EIT Community Officer. This system is operated by all the KICs jointly within the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster. The EIT Community Officers' individual multi-annual targets, *inter alia*, demonstrating their contribution to the EIT's and EIT KICs' objectives and KPIs will need to be communicated to the EIT for approval as part of the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster Business Plan process.

For the 2025-2027 period, the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster is expected to update its EIT Community Hubs monitoring and reporting system to better align with the updates tasks of the EIT Community Officers. This should include well-defined indicators that measure the effectiveness of the EIT Community Hubs online promotional activities, at the country level, tracking not only the volume and types of promotional efforts but also their geographical and demographic reach and the engagement they generate. The updated EIT Community Hubs monitoring and reporting system should be in place in 2025.

## 9.6 Members of the EIT Community Hubs

In those ecosystems where EIT RIS Hubs are already established, the EIT Community Hubs will integrate them and consider them as an integral part of their structure. Former EIT RIS Hubs which become integral Members of their local EIT Community Hub will maintain their KIC functions but will be required to:

- simplify the naming in line with needs of external audiences – a common naming and branding approach across all EIT Community Hubs, including their Members will be put in place, using nomenclature and a common visual identity, jointly agreed by EIT KICs, based on guidance provided by the EIT; and;
- commit to an enhanced level of cooperation with the other Members operating under the same EIT Community Hub, including by implementing joint activities.



This process of integration, which should be completed for existing KICs by the end of 2025, aims to ensure that the added value, on-the-ground network the EIT KICs have been building since 2016 is in no way dismantled or lost but rather better integrated into a more unified EIT Community structure. In fact, former EIT RIS Hubs which become integral Members of their local EIT Community Hub will be given greater operational independence and will not be subject to the EIT RIS Hubs minimum functions and common set of KPIs outlined in this document. At the same time, all the EIT Community Hub Members that hold a subcontracting or sub-granting relation with a KIC will be expected to strongly and demonstratively contribute towards the EIT's objectives and KPIs via their respective EIT KICs' Business Plans. Their activities will be part of the KIC's specific EIT RIS activity budget and subject to similar requirements, including in terms of co-funding. Working together within their EIT Community Hub, all Members will be expected to scale-up ongoing activities and are encouraged to implement Cross-KIC activities, including jointly funded activities, tailored to the local needs.

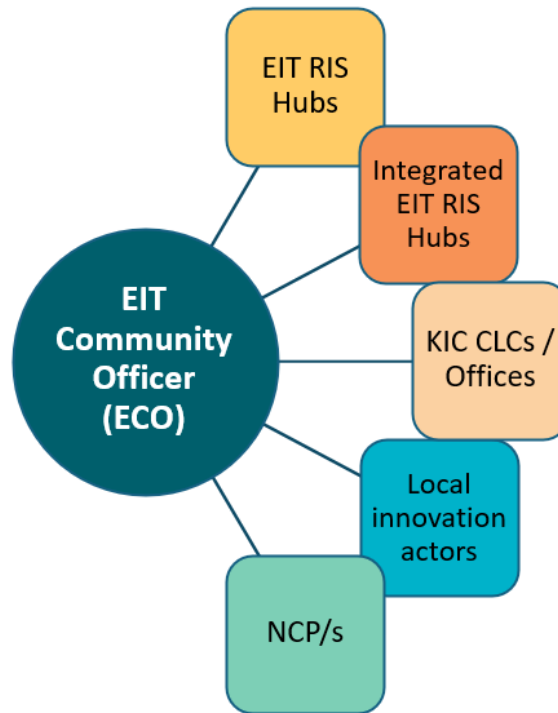
In locations where the EIT KICs do not have EIT RIS Hubs locally to be integrated within the EIT Community Hub, they may choose to select a Member, via an open call process, to represent them within the local EIT Community Hub and deliver activities on their behalf benefitting the local innovation ecosystem.

Other EIT KIC Offices present in the local ecosystem will also be expected to join the EIT Community Hubs as members. Additionally, EIT Community Hubs will be open to accept additional Members from outside the EIT Community, in a transparent manner, to ensure the widest thematic expertise, based on a Governance Memorandum of Understanding, which will also contain a Conflict-of-Interest policy and regulates relations among all members of the EIT Community Hub. Local EIT NCPs are especially welcome to join their local EIT Community Hubs. Members of the EIT Community Hubs will be eligible to:

- access the EIT's pan-European innovation network;
- benefit from the activities of the ECO;
- participate in regular coordination meetings organised by the ECO;
- propose joint activities;
- contribute to the development of the ECO's yearly plan;
- being consulted about the ECO's meetings with local authorities and public agencies and, where appropriate and relevant, invited to take part in these meetings;
- being assisted by the ECO to establish contacts with KICs, new or existing partners, other EIT Community Hubs, and so on;
- being updated by the ECO about identified collaboration and funding opportunities;
- use of the EIT Community Hub logo;
- participation in EIT-sponsored events and programmes.

The expected structure an EIT Community Hub, integrating both EIT Community and non-EIT Community members, has been visualised below:

## EIT Community RIS Hubs



### 9.7 EIT RIS Country-specific Roadmap

The EIT KICs' current and planned on-the-ground presence in the EIT RIS should be outlined in an EIT RIS Country-specific Roadmap, maintained for internal planning purposes only. The Roadmap timeline will correspond to the Business Plan timeline. It will be drawn up in consultation with and adopted by the EIT as part of the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster Business Plan process.

The aim of the EIT RIS Country-specific Roadmap is to describe, in a single document, the country-by-country-specific plans of the KICs, to be implemented either individually or jointly, including:

- 1 planned changes in the EIT KICs' on-the-ground presence;
- 2 plans for Cross-KIC activities, aligned with the local RIS3 priorities, to be implemented locally; and;
- 3 whether applicable, a timeline towards the establishment of the local EIT Community Hubs and the integration of EIT RIS Hubs.

The EIT RIS Country-specific Roadmap must take into consideration the specificities of the target territory. The EIT KICs are entitled to propose updates to the EIT RIS Country-specific Roadmap, in circumstances driven by unforeseen fundamental changes that make this necessary, for consideration by the EIT.

## 10. 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 achieving the KICs strategic objectives, 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 EIT RIS countries and their regions, as well as 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.

As with all their activities, and in line with the EIT Call Monitoring Checklist, 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 on the [EIT opportunities webpage](#), in the dedicated KIC websites, as well as on the [EIT RIS platform](#) maintained by the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster, 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 essential and should be driven via the local EIT Community Hubs.

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. The EIT Community Hubs based EIT RIS countries and regions should be mandated with supporting the communication and dissemination of calls open to local stakeholders.

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.

## 11. Gender balance and inclusivity

One of the EIT's priorities is to bridge gender gaps in European innovation and entrepreneurship. To date, EIT RIS activities have been particularly successful in significantly increasing participation of women from EIT RIS countries and regions in EIT activities.

In this context the EIT KICs are urged to further increase their efforts with the goal of reaching gender balance<sup>21</sup>, and incorporate gender dimension in innovation and education content, in EIT RIS activities by 2027. Towards this end, as part of their EIT RIS activities, the EIT KICs should implement strategies and measures ensuring 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 documents<sup>22</sup> 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 initiatives aimed at achieving gender balance.

Building on this, in the 2025-2027 period, EIT RIS activities should additionally increasingly be used to support marginalised groups, thereby helping to boost inclusivity, in all its forms, within the innovation sector. The EIT RIS must be at the forefront of the EIT's wider efforts to ensure that everyone, regardless of their geographical location, gender, age, abilities, or circumstances, can benefit from and contribute to Europe's innovation.

## 12. Synergies with EU, national, regional and local initiatives

Every effort 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 and the [Enterprise Europe Network](#)) 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 synergies between local needs and priorities and their multi-annual strategies.

In particular, the EIT RIS should be used as a pathway to strengthen links with RIS3 and, to the greatest extent possible, seek to leverage ESIF and other EU, public and private funds. To achieve this, the KICs, where appropriate, drawing on the knowledge and support of the EIT Community Hubs and its Members, should approach relevant authorities in EIT RIS countries and regions, in coordination with the EIT, to avoid overlap and duplication, with a view to strengthen links with RIS3, better use the RIS to leverage ESIF as well as other EU, public and private funds and establish possible synergies with

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<sup>21</sup> The widely accepted definition of gender balance, including by the International Labour Organisation, is a 40/60 minimum split.

<sup>22</sup> EIT KIC Strategic Agenda and EIT KIC Gender Equality Strategy.

national or regional initiatives. Where appropriate, this could possibly be done in cooperation with the Joint Research Centre. Towards this end, the EIT KICs should aim to increase their participation in national and regional planning activities aimed at supporting the development of and ensuring alignment with evolving RIS3 priorities. A Cross-KIC approach is also highly recommended in this regard, further underlining the central role played by the EIT Community 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 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, including via the EIT MSR and network of EIT NCPs, to serve as a “door-opener” for the EIT KICs. Potential areas of synergies with ESIF and other funds such as the IPA III could include:

- 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.

The ESIF and other EU, public and private funds 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 the activities of the EIT KICs as well as of the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster, 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,

especially, 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) and EIT-[European Cooperation in Science and Technology](#) (COST) Memoranda of Understanding, signed in 2021 and 2022 respectively, the EIT KICs should develop synergies with EIF and COST 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 relevant Union Programmes and instruments, including [ERASMUS+](#) and the [Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions](#) (MSCA).

## 13. 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.

### 13.1 EIT RIS Panel

From 2025, an EIT RIS Panel will be established within the structures of the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster but disconnected from the steering of the Cluster's work. The Panel will serve as a primary platform for discussing matters related to EIT RIS governance and will be mandated to take consensus-based decisions on common EIT RIS issues, when appropriate. The EIT RIS Panel will not discuss or take decisions on specific RIS activities of individual EIT KICs, but will instead have a wholly horizontal nature, focusing on matter impacting most of the EIT KICs' RIS Work Packages.

The EIT RIS Panel will ensure close interaction and coordination of EIT RIS activities between the EIT and the EIT KICs as well as amongst the EIT KICs themselves to ensure efficiency and avoid fragmentation of efforts among KIC activities.

In principle, the EIT RIS Panel should convene quarterly and will be Co-Chaired by the EIT and a representative of the EIT KICs. All members of the EIT RIS Panel should be nominated by the KIC CEOs at Director-level and mandated to represent their KIC in a consolidated manner and, as and when appropriate, take relevant decisions. The members of the EIT RIS Panel may be supported by their EIT RIS Managers as necessary.

The full mandate, rules and procedures governing the operation of the EIT RIS Panel are outlined in the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster Terms of Reference.

### 13.2 EIT Governing Board Advisory Group covering the EIT RIS

Whilst no dedicated EIT Governing Board EIT RIS Advisory Group is planned, with the aim of ensuring the EIT RIS fully delivers on its objectives and, in turn, contributes to the EIT's own objectives, from 2025, an existing EIT Governing Board Advisory Group may have its mandate extended to also cover the EIT RIS.

Such an Advisory Group will convene as needed and will provide strategic guidance to the EIT and the EIT KICs on the implementation of EIT RIS activities as well as activities implemented by the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster which contribute to the objectives of the EIT RIS. If considered necessary, a member of the Advisory Group could potentially serve as EIT RIS Rapporteur and facilitate better interaction between the Advisory Group and the EIT Governing Board.

## 14. 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 HEIs, 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. The EIT 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, the EIT MSRSG and EIT NCPs.

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 each of the EIT KIC's 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, the [Opportunities webpage](#) on the EIT website and on the [EIT RIS platform](#) maintain by the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster. Each EIT RIS opportunity to also be promoted on the central EIT KICs' 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 NCPs. For the same purpose, Call results and statistics should be timely communicated to the EIT as soon as they are available by the KIC. Similarly, calls related to EIT RIS activities should be sent to the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster for dissemination via the EIT RIS platform and the network of EIT Community Hubs.
- 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 EIT Community awareness days, in cooperation with the EIT and the EIT NCPs.
- Participate in workshops, conferences, events, and so on, 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.

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.

The first EIT RIS Panel meeting of the year should, *inter alia*, focus on EIT RIS external communication. During that meeting, in which the EIT and the EIT KIC's Communications Teams will also participate, each EIT KIC be expected to outline its external communication strategy for the year ahead, including:

- the main aspects to be communicated (key messages, opportunities, success stories and so on);
- proposed forms of communication, taking into consideration the specificity of the local context where the communications are to be applied;



- how the KIC will gather and measure data on the reach of their communication (across channels, methods of engagement and audiences);
- present the results from the previous year which should also be provided to the EIT in written form.

The goal of this standing session will be to align on an overall EIT RIS external communication approach and identify synergies. The EIT may request the EIT KICs to provide EIT RIS communication strategy, in the form a short, stand-alone document, for approval.

If considered necessary by the EIT Communications Team, the EIT will facilitate discussions with the EIT KICs to develop well-defined indicators that measure the effectiveness of online promotional activities, at the country level. These discussions will focus on crafting metrics that can accurately assess the reach and impact of EIT RIS external communication efforts, tracking not only the volume and types of promotional efforts but also their geographical and demographic reach and the engagement they generate. The EIT Communications Team may utilise the aggregated data collected from these indicators, potentially via the annual EIT RIS Activity Update, the template of which would need to be updated accordingly, to facilitate an annual analysis and comparison between channels, countries, and audiences.

## 15. 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, where appropriately driven by the EIT Community Hubs based in EIT RIS countries and regions, 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.

Contributing to the dissemination of results and good practices from EIT Community activities delivered in EIT RIS countries and regions, the EIT will publish an annual EIT RIS Activity Report, compiled with the support of the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster, which will highlight key EIT RIS results, activities, and success stories.

The EIT KICs and the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster are required to upload 3 results per year on the Horizon Results Platform. The EIT KICs and the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster should also share with the EIT any relevant EIT RIS-related studies / publications, good practices and so on, to be uploaded on the [EIT Knowledge Centre](#).

## 16. Cross-KIC EIT RIS activities

Whilst not financed from the EIT grant allocated to the EIT RIS but instead from the funds earmarked for EIT Community (Cross-KICs) activities, the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster serves as a significant contributor of the objectives and KPIs of the EIT RIS, and strongly supports the implementation of the EIT RIS Implementation Framework.

The activities of the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster are highly complementary to the EIT RIS including by:

- helping to extend preferential EIT Community support to lower innovation performing countries, of significant EU priority, but which may not be eligible for the EIT RIS (including Moldova and other EU Accession Countries);
- spearheading the EIT Community's rapid reaction and longer-term contribution to emerging and established EU policy priorities, including by driving engagement with EU accession countries and supporting their innovation capacity;
- establishing and managing the network of EIT Community Hubs based in EIT RIS countries and regions, including ensuring close collaboration with and within the network as well as monitoring the performance of the EIT Community Officers<sup>23</sup>;
- serving as a gateway towards other EIT KIC activities, including a notable channel of early-stage talent towards the EIT KIC's Accelerator Programmes via the [EIT Jumpstarter](#);
- from 2025, piloting a new flagship initiative in EIT RIS-eligible countries aimed at providing a more integrated and in-depth, place-based tailored support beyond capacity building with a view to boosting EIT RIS commercial success stories and better plug-in with existing initiatives, including existing national support schemes, the EIT KICs' Accelerator Programmes and the EIC – indicatively referred to as the EIT Regional Innovation Booster.

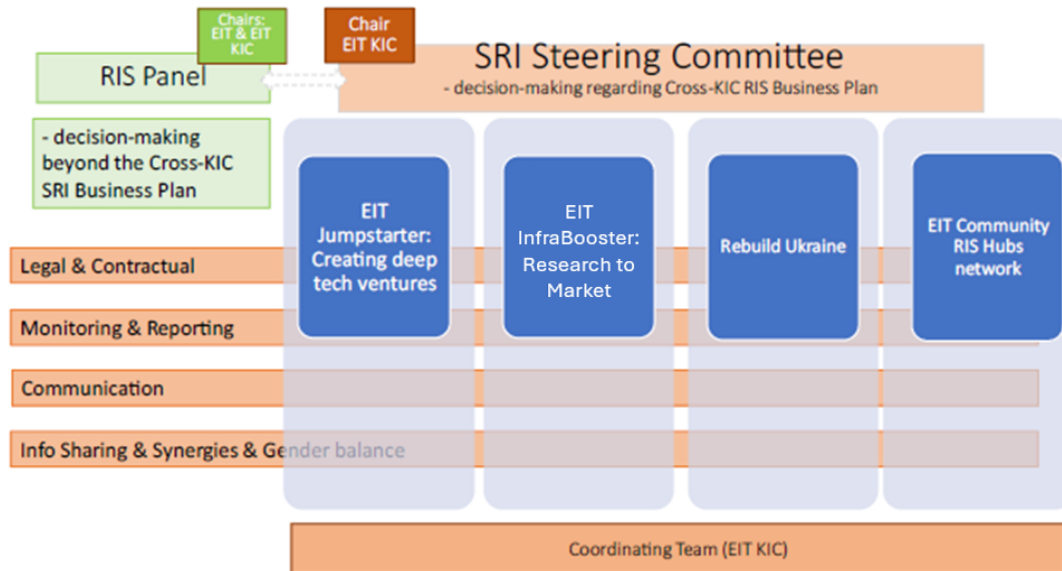
Additionally, the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster plays a critical role beyond the direct implementation of its Business Plan and serves as a focal point for EIT RIS interactions within the EIT Community, *inter alia*:

- ensuring greater and more coherent visibility of the EIT RIS and its achievements externally, including via the EIT RIS platform which the Cluster manages and maintains;
- serving as a KT integration best practise, knowledge, and tools repository; and;
- facilitating the process of reaching out to EIT RIS stakeholders in a joint and coordinated manner, based on the common KT integration approach, and thereby ensure the coherent representation of the EIT Community in EIT RIS eligible countries and regions.

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<sup>23</sup> In 2023, the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster developed a performance-based system for assessing the level of fulfilment of each EIT Community Officer's tasks and responsibilities. With the EIT RIS Hubs integration exercise expected to be completed by the end of 2025, and building on lessons learnt in 2023-2025, the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster will be expected to revisit the performance-based assessment system for EIT Community Officers, to be implemented in 2026-2028, possibly with the support of the REG, for approval by the EIT.

The structure of the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster at the end of 2024 is represented in the visual below:



The rules of procedure of the EIT Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster are outlined in a dedicated Terms of Reference document.

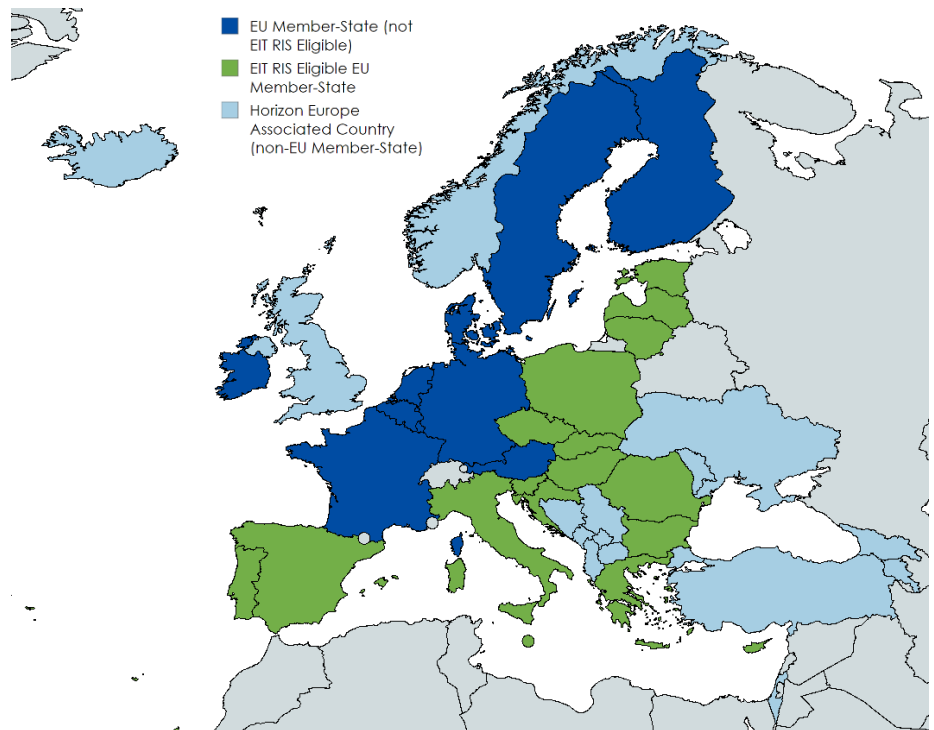
## 17. Annual RIS Activity Updates

On an annual basis the EIT KICs should submit an EIT RIS Activity Update, based on a template provided by the EIT, *inter alia*, providing information on the main activities, including capacity building activities, and events undertaken, with a focus on outcomes, financial data (EIT KICs expenditures) related to the respective activities, information on the entities taking part in these activities, details of collaborations implemented with national and regional stakeholders and entities representing the knowledge triangle and 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 EIT RIS Hubs Activity Update, also based on a template provided by the EIT, outlining the work of their individual RIS Hubs, including their Hubs' performance against their targets. Those EIT KICs which have fully integrated their EIT RIS Hubs in line with Chapter 9.6 of this document, do not need to submit an EIT RIS Hubs Activity Update.

# Annex I - List of EU Member States eligible for the EIT RIS in 2025-2027

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

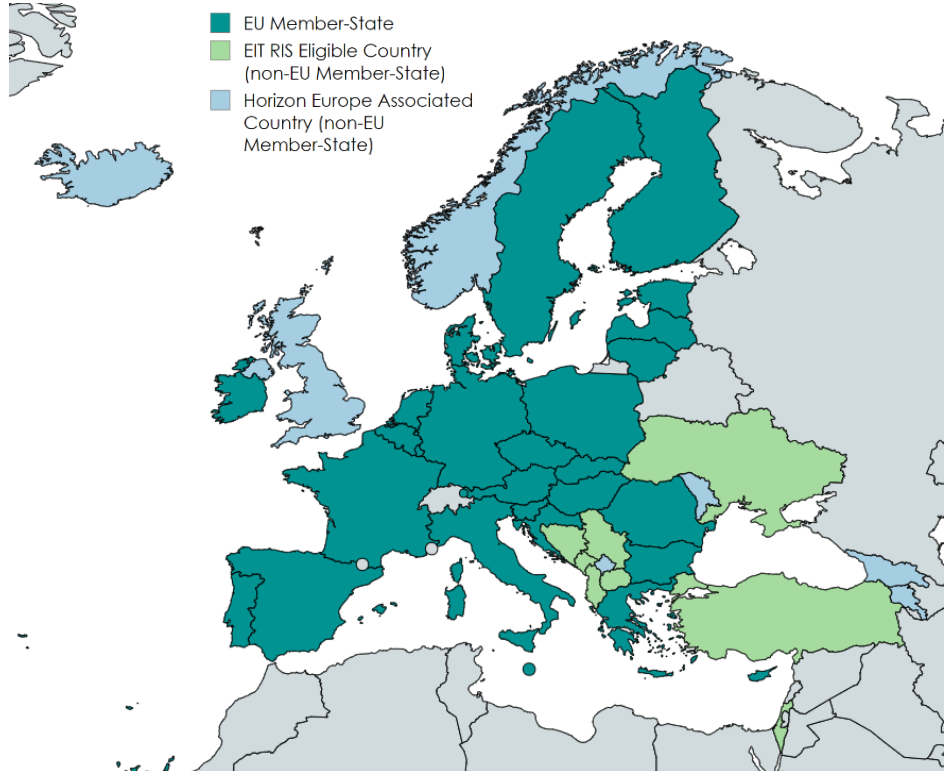


## Annex II – List of EU Outermost Regions as defined in Article 349 TFEU

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

## Annex III - List of third countries, associated to Horizon Europe, which will be eligible for the EIT RIS in the period 2025-2027

1. Albania
2. Bosnia and Herzegovina
3. Israel
4. Montenegro
5. North Macedonia
6. Serbia
7. Türkiye
8. Ukraine



## Annex V – List of EIT RIS KPIs

*NOTE: This table list only the periodically reported, EIT RIS-specific KPIs, linked to both Core and non-Core EIT KPIs. The tables does not list impact KPIs or periodically reported KPIs which includes country data from which EIT RIS figures can also be drawn out. For full definition of and more details for the KPIs please consult the [EIT Impact Framework 2022 - 2027](#).*

EIT KPI Code	EIT RIS KPIs
EITHE02.2-EITRIS	EIT RIS # products or processes (as per EITHE02.1 definition) launched on the market by organisations from the EIT RIS countries
EITHE02.3-EITRIS	EIT RIS countries – # of EIT RIS countries related to the products introduced on the market (as per EITHE02.1 definition)
EITHE03.2-EITRIS	EIT RIS Start-ups/scale-ups supported: Number of start-ups and scale-ups registered in EIT RIS country supported by KICs for at least 2 months in year N.
EITHE03.3-EITRIS	EIT RIS countries – KIC supported start-ups/scale-ups: Number of EIT RIS countries where start-ups/scale-ups supported by KICs are registered.
EITHE04.2-EITRIS	EIT RIS Start-ups created of/for innovation: Number of start-ups registered in EIT RIS country in year N and established as a result/ based on the output(s) of Innovation/ Research related KAVA(s), or created for the purpose of an innovation project to organise and support the development of an asset
EITHE04.3-EITRIS	EIT RIS countries - start-ups created of/for innovation: Number of EIT RIS countries where start-ups of/for innovation (as per EITHE04.1 definition) were registered.
EITHE05.2-EITRIS	EIT RIS start-ups created of EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes: Number of start-ups established in EIT RIS countries in year N by EIT labelled MSc and PhD students or graduates or by learners / participants in other EIT labelled activities
EITHE05.3-EITRIS	EIT RIS Countries - Start-ups created of EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes: Number of EIT RIS countries

EIT KPI Code	EIT RIS KPIs
	where the start-ups created by EIT labelled MSc and PhD students or graduates are registered
EITHE06.2-EITRIS	Investment attracted by KIC supported EIT RIS start-ups/scale-ups: Total EUR amount of private and public capital attracted within year N by supported start-ups/scale-ups established in the EIT RIS countries, that have received KIC business creation services support of total duration of at least two months, within a maximum of three years following the last received KIC KAVA support activity.
EITHE06.3-EITRIS	EIT RIS Country - Investment attracted by KIC supported EIT RIS start-ups/scale-ups: Number of EIT RIS Countries where the supported start-ups/scale-ups which attracted investment were registered
EITHE07.2-EITRIS	EIT RIS Graduates from EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes and other education activities awarded EIT Label: Number of graduates from EIT labelled Master and PhD programmes in year N with citizenship in EIT RIS countries
EITHE08.2-EITRIS	EIT RIS Participants in (non-degree) education and training: Number of successful participants in EIT professional development courses, online training courses and other education/training activity delivered or in a process of delivery with citizenship in EIT RIS countries
EITHE10.2-EITRIS	EIT RIS Active KIC Partners: Number of active KIC partners registered in the EIT RIS countries
EITHE10.3-EITRIS	EIT RIS countries – active KIC Partners: Number of EIT RIS countries where active KIC partners are registered
EITHE22.2-EITRIS	Number of new KIC Partners from RIS countries
EITHE22.3-EITRIS	Number of established KIC Partners from RIS countries



## Annex V – List of common EIT RIS Hub KPIs

EIT Core KPI Code / Link to EIT Strategic documents	Hub KPIs
EITHE02	Number of innovations, referred by the Hub, launched on the market with KIC support
EITHE04	Number of start-ups, referred by the Hub, created by the KIC
EITHE03	Number of start-ups and scale-ups, referred by the Hub, supported by the KIC
EITHE09	Number of students enrolled in EIT-labelled programmes, supported and / or referred by the Hub
EITHE07	Number of graduates from EIT-labelled programmes, supported and / or referred by the Hub
EITHE08	Number of participants in non-labelled EIT education and training activities, supported and / or referred by the Hub
EITHE22	Number of new and established KIC Partners from RIS countries, supported and / or referred by the Hub
EITHE10	Number of active partners collaborating in the KIC, initially supported and / or referred by the Hub
Impact Framework KPI (page 6)	Number of entities / organisations participating in EIT and KIC activities from regions outside the KICs' CLC regions, supported and / or referred by the Hub
Hubs-specific KPI linked to Minimum Functions	Number of KIC-specific events, workshops, meetings, organised by the Hub, and the number of participants;
Hubs-specific KPI linked to Minimum Functions	Cross-KIC events and / or activities organised or participated in by the Hub, in coordination with other EIT Community offices in the country, and the number of participants;
Hubs-specific KPI linked to Minimum Functions	Number of national-level innovation events attended by the Hub to promote the EIT Community;
Linked to EITHE21	Amount of external funding, attracted from synergies / cooperation agreements identified / concluded by the Hub, contributing to the Financial Sustainability of the Hub, and the amount of funding attracted;
Linked to EITHE21	Amount of external funding, attracted from synergies / cooperation agreements identified / concluded by the Hub, contributing to the Financial Sustainability of the KIC, and the amount of funding attracted;
Linked to EITHE17	Number of media mentions of the KIC / Hub in local publications / news outlets.

## Annex VI – Tasks and Responsibilities of the EIT Community Officers

- Develop a good understanding of the EIT model and keep up-to-date with the KICs activities;
- Maintain a fully updated understanding of the local innovation ecosystem, including its innovation needs and gaps;
- Build a strong working relationship with the key local innovation stakeholders, including relevant NCPs and other national authorities, as well as representatives of other innovation support actions present in the local innovation ecosystem, including the local COST National Coordinators and the Enterprise Europe Network representatives, amongst others.
- Deploy and keep up-to-date the governance Memorandum of Understanding of the EIT Community Hub that sets up the working relations with all Members of the EIT Community Hub, including other EIT KIC Offices present in the same ecosystem nationally;
- In consultation with the Members of the EIT Community Hub, and other EIT KIC Offices present in the same ecosystem, establish a smooth and efficient working method which limits administrative burdens, while supporting their minimum functions;
- Set up and maintain a physical space, in a city accepted by the Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster and the EIT, after having consulted with or at least informed the national authorities in advance, where local stakeholders, including NCPs, can physically, walk-in to obtain information on, as well as gain access to the EIT Community, while additionally, aiding with the EIT's on-the-ground visibility and branding;
- Design an appropriate work method and necessary tools for information sharing / coordination so as to facilitate continuous information exchange between the Members of the EIT Community Hub, and other EIT KIC Offices present in the same ecosystem nationally;
- Collaborate closely with the wider network of EIT Community Officers including by sharing information, good practises, collaborating on joint initiatives as well as any other activities which would support the EIT Community and the local innovation ecosystem;
- Collect information to share through applicable channels related the EIT KICs' activities, events, results and opportunities of interest to local stakeholders with a view to their dissemination internally and externally;
- Coordinate the collection of local funding opportunities and relevant key national events and bring these to the attention to the EIT KICs, the Members of the EIT Community Hub Members, and other EIT KIC Offices;
- Contribute to, support and where appropriate, with the agreements of the EIT KICs, lead any horizontal exploratory efforts towards securing co-funding opportunities, including matching KIC thematic area with the local RIS3 priorities, securing meetings with relevant national / regional authorities and facilitate the preparation for the submission of joint proposals for national / regional funding in case of general EIT Community actions;

- Coordinate and support local joint EIT Community communication efforts, including by:
  - managing and updating the EIT Community Hub website, in the local language, with information on EIT Community activities and opportunities, including dedicated sections targeted towards specific stakeholders, including, students, start-ups, national authorities and so on, as well as the EIT Community Hub social media channels;
  - facilitating the organisation of EIT Community awareness-raising events and coordinating and supporting the participation of EIT Community representatives in relevant national events;
- To the greatest extent possible, and when appropriate, ensure a coordinated approach amongst the EIT KICs, Members of the EIT Community Hub, and other EIT KIC Offices towards national authorities including relevant NCPs and Managing Authorities;
- Scout for and recommend to the EIT KICs opportunities to implement joint projects, including projects involving local authorities and institutions, financed through other EU / national / regional funds (including ESIF and IPA III) as well as local talent which could be supported via the portfolio of opportunities offered by the EIT Community;
- Suggest and support, including, where appropriate and with the agreement of the EIT KICs, lead, the implementation of possible joint activities amongst the EIT KICs, to be implemented nationally and / or Regionally, aligned with relevant RIS3 priorities;
- At the request of the EIT KICs, support any necessary updating of the local Country-specific roadmap and support with its implementation, as appropriate;
- Serve as a centralised contact gateway for local stakeholders to the EIT Community as a whole, and refer stakeholders to contact persons within other relevant EIT KICs, best suited to support their needs and, in cases where EIT Community support is not possible, refer local stakeholders to other support networks such those run by the national and regional authorities, Enterprise Europe Network and COST;
- Identify the need for and facilitating the implementation of shared services for Hub Members with a view to improve efficiency;
- Provide support, in close cooperation with other Hub Members and potentially other EIT Community Officers, to the EIT and the EIT KICs with navigating the local innovation landscape, including by:
  - contributing to the development of EIT maps / ecosystem mapping;
  - identifying and regularly reporting (potentially based on a template to be provided by the Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster) on the most pertinent challenges observed in delivering EIT activities and achieving results on a national and / or regional level, including observed political climate shifts, important regulatory changes, or other factors seen as potentially impacting the execution of EIT activities and outcomes.
  - identifying and regularly reporting (potentially based on a template to be provided by the Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovations Cluster) on identified unexplored potential opportunities and promising areas of growth, including shifts in policies or regulations, which encourage specific areas of promising development in terms of innovation.

- Any other tasks mandated by the EIT Management which, in principle, supports the EIT RIS Hubs to contribute to the achievement of the EIT's Objectives and implementation of its Strategy and Annual Work Programmes.

It is pertinent to note that in countries where other KIC Offices, including CLCs and EIT RIS Hubs operate, the list of tasks will be adapted to avoid duplication and maximise the effectiveness of the activities of the EIT Community Officer. In all their tasks, the EIT Community Officer must adhere to the key principles of fair competition, avoid all forms of real or perceived conflict of interest and confirm to the requirements under the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).