



## Explanatory Note | Measures to ensure transparency and fair competition for the EIT Call for Proposals 2025 to select a KIC in Water, Marine and Maritime Sectors and Ecosystems

The aim of this note is to present measures that EIT takes to ensure that the selection of a KIC in Water, Marine and Maritime Sectors and Ecosystems (EIT Water) is implemented in a transparent way, ensuring fair competition and compliance with the applicable legal framework. The note presents processes put in place by EIT for the EIT Call for Proposals 2025 which are based on the positive experiences and lessons learnt from the previous EIT Calls to select new KICs.

### Information available to applicants

All information regarding the EIT Call for Proposals 2025 is available on the [EIT website](#) in order to ensure that each applicant has access to the same information.

### Queries from potential applicants

EIT has set up a functional mailbox for all queries regarding the EIT Water Call:

[EIT-KICs-Call-2025@eit.europa.eu](mailto:EIT-KICs-Call-2025@eit.europa.eu).

Typically, queries are answered within 1 to 5 business days, depending on the complexity of a question. All questions and answers are published on the [EIT website](#).

**EIT does not engage with potential applicants and cannot provide individual presentations or consultations, neither will it provide answers on specific cases or situations.**

### Evaluation of proposals by the EIT Evaluation Committee and by external experts

All proposals must be submitted via the [EC Tenders and Funding Portal](#) and evaluated via the EC Proposal submission and evaluation system (SEP).

The proposals will be first checked against the admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria by the EIT Evaluation Committee made up of EIT staff appointed by the EIT Director. Members of this Committee must declare any actual and potential conflict of interest situations regarding the applying organisations.

Then, the proposals will be evaluated by a panel of external, independent experts. In accordance with the EIT Expert policy<sup>1</sup>, external experts are selected via the European Commission Expert Database, which is used for all other Horizon Europe programmes in the 2021-2027 period. Any individual can register to be included in the expert database. The experts are selected in accordance with pre-defined criteria regarding their knowledge, experience, etc.

Before the evaluation phase begins, all experts must sign an expert contract which includes a Code of Conduct. All experts must declare any actual and potential conflict of interest situations, in accordance with the Code of Conduct. If a conflict of interest is confirmed by the EIT, the expert will be replaced. All experts are bound by confidentiality. EIT will run a briefing session for the experts presenting the evaluation criteria. The briefing session will be mandatory for all the experts, rapporteur and independent observer.

The expert panel for evaluation of the proposals will consist of **five independent external experts** (two

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<sup>1</sup> EIT Decision 29/2024 adopted by the EIT Director.



thematic experts and three horizontal experts for education, entrepreneurship and innovation management) and one independent external expert acting as **rapporteur** who consolidates inputs from all experts. The same panel of experts will evaluate all proposals. The evaluation will be carried out **solely** based on the evaluation criteria and scoring as presented in the section 6.6 *Technical evaluation criteria* of the [Call Invitation text](#). **No additional sub-criteria or supplementary criteria** will be provided by the EIT to external experts.

The results of the expert evaluation phase are subject to the approval by the EIT Governing Board at its extraordinary meeting in end-October 2025.

### EIT Governing Board Hearings

Proposals reaching at least 70 points out of 100 points in the expert assessment will be invited to the EIT Governing Board Hearing in November 2025. The Hearings will be **solely** conducted based on the criteria and scoring presented in the section 6.7 *Hearing with the EIT Governing Board* of the [Call Invitation text](#). **No additional sub-criteria or supplementary criteria** will be examined during the GB Hearings.

In due time, before the EIT GB Hearings, EIT will provide briefing to the EIT GB Members regarding the received proposals, as well as on the criteria to be used for the assessment of the proposals and the proposed interim management teams and Coordinators.

### Independent Observer

In addition to the external experts and external rapporteur, EIT is selecting an external expert to act in a capacity of independent observer. Independent observer is selected via the same EC Expert Database, and is observing the entire evaluation and selection process, including the EIT GB Hearings. The independent observer has access to all documents. The independent observer drafts his/her report presenting his/her observations and recommendations regarding the call procedure.

Reports from previous KIC Calls (2021, 2018, 2016, 2014) are published on EIT's website:

- a) [Report of the Independent Observer \(IO\) 2021 EIT Call for Proposals in the area of Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industry \(CCSI\)](#)
- b) [Independent Observer's \(IO\) Report EIT 2018 Call for Knowledge and Innovation Communities \(KICs\)](#)
- c) [Independent Observer's Report - EIT 2016 Call for KIC](#)
- d) [Independent Observer's Report on the conduct of the evaluation process and the application of the selection criteria 2014](#)

The EIT will also publish an Independent Observer report concentrating the EIT Water call.

Throughout the evaluation and selection process, the names of external experts, rapporteur and independent observer are confidential.

### Management of Conflict of Interest

EIT pays utmost attention to a proper management of potential conflict of interest (Col). Absence of Col is verified in due time for all parties involved:

- 1) EIT staff involved in selecting external experts for the evaluation of proposals sign an 'Absence of



Conflict and Confidentiality Declaration’ and must notify the Call Coordinator/ Legal Officer if any Col may appear during the expert selection process.

**EIT staff involved in the EIT Evaluation Committee** and staff involved in the administrative management of the call procedure sign an ‘Absence of Conflict and Confidentiality Declaration’ and must notify the Call Coordinator/ Legal Officer if any Col may appear during the process.

- 2) **External experts, including the Independent Observer** undergo a pre-check regarding potential conflict of interest when contacted to verify their availability; and after the selection experts undergo a check of potential conflict of interest against the list of applying organisations. Access to submission and evaluation system and proposals is only granted to experts after a successful verification of absence of conflict of interest.
- 3) **EIT GB members** are subject to a declaration of interest related to the EIT Call for Proposals 2025. Following the expiry of the Call’s deadline, a screening and an assessment of absence of conflict of interest in relation to all applying organisations will be conducted by the EIT. In accordance with the GB Code of Conduct<sup>2</sup>, GB members with actual or potential Col will be subject to measures following a case-by-case assessment (such as excluding from decision making when designating the new KIC).

### Internal Audit Service

The Internal Audit Service has audited the EIT Call for Proposals 2021. The objective of this audit was to assess the adequacy of the design and effective implementation of the internal control systems put in place by the EIT for the selection and designation of new KICs. The IAS concluded that the EIT’s internal control systems put in place for the selection of new KICs are **adequately designed and effectively implemented**.

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<sup>2</sup> Decision 25/2023 of the EIT Governing Board