European Institute of Innovation and Technology

Invitation to submit proposals
for Grant Agreements covering
KIC Business Plan activities 2026-2028,
Cross-KIC activities 2026-2028 and
HEI activities 2026-2028

(Call HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA)

Version 2.1
27 August 2025

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

Version	Publication Date	Change	Page
		HISTORY OF CHANGES	
2.1	27.08.2025	1. Correct the date of the KIC Hearing in the Timetable	8
		2. Reformulation of condition linked to the PA extension of EIT Manufacturing	26
		3. Revision of the KPI evaluation criterion for EIT Culture&Creativity	27
		4. Correction of a typo in the diversity score	30
		5. Revision of the co-funding percentage of the 4th floor of the EIT House	34
		6. Clarification of targets for the Internship Scheme	39

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

Table of Contents

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

1. Introduction

This is an invitation to submit proposals for EU action grants under the Horizon Europe (HE) Framework Programme for Research and Innovation[1], European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).

The EIT, as part of HE, is governed by a regulatory framework (i.e. EIT Regulation (recast)[2], EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027[3]) and a contractual framework (EIT Partnership Agreement (PA) and HE Model Grant Agreement (GA) in the 2021-2027 period.

The main conditions for the multiannual grants for the 2026-2028 period are defined in this invitation as well as in the respective guidelines and templates. While the proposals are expected to cover activities to be implemented in the 2026-2028 period, the funds are stemming from the 2026 and 2027 EIT budget. Therefore, **while the funding stems from the 2026-2027 budget allocation, the content of the Business Plan of KICs and the activities to be implemented cover the 2026-2028 period**.

The topics of the invitation cover the following three types of EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC) actions:

- **KIC Business Plan activities 2026-2028,**

- **Cross-KIC activities 2026-2028,**

- **Higher Education Initiative (HEI) activities 2026-2028.**

This invitation is launched and the EIT financial contribution to the KICs will be determined based on the criteria and processes, as described below, and in line with the following decisions of the EIT Governing Board:

➢ Decision 38/2023 on the continuation and scaling-up of the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) Innovation Capacity Building Initiative beyond its pilot phase[4];

➢ Decision 36/2024 of the EIT Governing Board on the adoption of the Final Single Programming Document (2025-2027), Annex XI on Grants (EIT Work Programme 2025)[5];

➢ Decision 01/2025 of the EIT Governing Board on the adoption of the Draft Single Programming Document (2026-2028), Annex XI on Grants[6],

---

[1] Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 (OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 1.)

[2] Regulation (EU) 2021/819 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 on the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (recast) (OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 61)

[3] Decision (EU) 2021/820 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 on the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) 2021-2027: Boosting the Innovation Talent and Capacity of Europe and repealing decision No 1312/2013/EU (OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 91)

[4] Ares(2023)8036119

[5] Ares(2024)9134718

[6] Ares(2025)915544

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

➢ Decision 08/2025 of the EIT Governing Board on the principles for the determination of the EIT financial allocation to Knowledge and Innovation Communities' (KICs') for the 2026-2028 Business Plans of the second, third, fourth and fifth wave KICs, to Cross-KIC activities, and to the EIT Higher Education Initiative[7].

The KICs shall submit their proposals in accordance with the conditions laid down in the present invitation and should be aligned with the Horizon Europe Guidelines and attached EIT guidelines as annotated proposal templates. The invitation takes precedence over the guidelines.

KICs are invited to read the **call documentation** carefully, and in particular this invitation, the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement, the EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual, the Horizon Europe Guidelines and the EU Grants AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement.

These documents below provide clarifications and answers to questions that might arise when preparing the above-mentioned proposals.

- The **invitation** outlines:
  - o The topics of the invitation
  - o Available budget and timetable
  - o Admissibility and documents
  - o Eligibility criteria
  - o Exclusion criteria
  - o Financial and operational capacity criteria
  - o Award criteria
  - o Evaluation, funding allocation and award procedure
  - o Legal and financial set-up of the Grant Agreements
  - o How to submit an application

- The **Online Manual** outlines the:
  - o Procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal (Portal)
  - o Recommendations for the preparation of the application.

- The annexed **Guidelines and Templates** contain:
  - o EIT annotated proposals templates for Business Plan, Cross-KIC activities and HEI activities
  - o Precise guidance on what to include in the different sections of the application form

---

[7] Ares(2025)2983206

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

- o Horizon Europe reference documents, online manual, IT how to, Glossary

- The <u>AGA — Annotated Model Grant Agreement</u> contains:

  - o Detailed annotations on all the provisions in the Grant Agreement that KICs will have to sign to obtain the grant *(including cost eligibility, payment schedule, accessory obligations, etc).*

- The <u>EIT's annotation of the provisions of Annex 5 of the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement</u> (Annex 5 Annotation) contains:

  - o Detailed guidelines regarding the provisions of HE MGA Annex 5 *(including the NEFAs, open calls, KIC partnership calls and direct awards).*

2. Available budget

The 2026-2027 overall indicative EIT budget available for grants is 1,173 MEUR including the estimated contributions from EEA-EFTA countries and the contributions from other third countries already associated to Horizon Europe.

Out of this, the indicative EIT budget available for grants under this invitation is 979 MEUR[8]**,** distributed by means of three separate "funds", as follows:

Type of 'Fund'	Indicative budget (in MEUR)
EIT KIC Fund 2026-2027	769
Cross-KIC Fund 2026-2027	80
HEI Fund 2026-2027	130
Total	**979**

The allocation of the above funds comply with the requirements of Chapter 5.1 of the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027 by ensuring that:

- KIC Business Plans include at least 10% and a maximum of 15% of the EIT budget dedicated to implementing EIT RIS activities, thereby increasing the number of KIC partners from targeted countries and regions.

- Cross-KIC activities will not exceed a maximum of 7% of the overall EIT budget (2021-2027), including support to KICs for which the partnership agreement is expired or terminated.

---

[8] This amount may increase by September 2025, after KICs' voluntary decommitment.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

Funding allocation process

As stipulated in the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027, the funding allocation criteria are **performance-based**.

The EIT Governing Board (GB) will take the **multiannual funding allocation decision** for the 2026-2028 period for the EIT KIC Fund, the Cross-KIC Fund and the HEI Fund, based on the assessment of the criteria laid down in Decision 08/2025 of the EIT Governing Board and a prudent multiannual planning.

When the final EIT budget is known for 2027, the EIT Governing Board may take an **additional funding allocation decision** to either finance additional activities within the same Grant Agreements or to identify and finance strategic initiatives, together with the European Commission. The additional funding allocation will take into account the available EIT budget, the ongoing multiannual legal commitments between the EIT and the KICs, the performance of the KICs and the estimated financial needs. If applicable, the conditions and requirements regarding an additional funding allocation will be laid down in an amendment invitation.

3. Timetable and deadlines

The indicative timeline of the submission and evaluation procedure is as follows:

Key dates	Date and time or indicative period
Launch of the Invitation for the 2026-2028 Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI proposals	17 June 2025
Opening date for accessing the submission platform	17 July 2025
Deadline for submission of the 2026-2028 Business Plan, Cross-KIC and HEI proposals	**3 September 2025**
Evaluation period	4 September – 10 October 2025
Hearings with the EIT Governing Board for the grant allocation 2026-28	22-23 September 2025
Funding allocation letters sent to the KICs, the Cross-KIC and the HEI consortia, including conditions and strategic recommendations	15 October 2025
KICs to submit final Business Plan, Cross-KIC and HEI proposals	29 October 2025
Grant award decisions by EIT Director	13 November 2025
Signature of the Grant Agreements for 2026-2028 KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC activities and HEI activities	19 November 2025
First pre-financing payments	Within 30 days following the signature of the GAs

4. Admissibility and documents

Proposals must be submitted no later than the deadline for submission indicated in Chapter 3.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

The proposals must be submitted electronically via the **Funding & Tenders portal** through a dedicated link provided by EIT.

The submission shall comply with the respective Guidelines and the templates and standards available on the Portal. Failure to comply with this requirement may lead to the rejection of the proposal.

The proposals must be drafted in English.

5. Eligibility criteria

5.1 Entities eligible for funding, restrictions

As laid down in the EIT's 2025 Work Programme, Article 198(c) of the EU Financial Regulation authorises the award of grants without a call for proposals to a body with a de jure or de facto monopoly, which is the case for the EIT KICs. Accordingly, **this invitation is addressed to the KICs**, as follows:

- **Business Plan proposals** shall be submitted by KICs under Partnership Agreement. Only KICs under Partnership Agreement may submit a Business Plan proposal.

- **Cross-KIC proposals** shall be submitted by KICs under Partnership Agreement. Participation in the Cross-KIC activities is expected for the KICs under Partnership Agreement, nevertheless, a Cross-KIC Grant Agreement may be signed in case at least 2/3 of them are participating in it. KICs under Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) may also participate in Cross-KIC activities until the end of the duration of their MoC.

- The **HEI proposal** shall be submitted by KICs under Partnership Agreement. Participation in the HEI activities is expected for the KICs under Partnership Agreement, nevertheless, the HEI Grant Agreement may be signed in case at least 2/3 of them are participating in it.

  KICs under Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) may also participate in HEI activities during the duration of their MoC.

In accordance with the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2025[9] and the EIT Final Single Programming Document 2025-2027 and the Draft EIT Single Programming Document 2026-2028, in order to be eligible for funding, the **applicant KICs must be established in one of the eligible countries**, i.e.:

- the Member States of the European Union, including their outermost regions;

---

[9] Horizon Europe Work Programme 2025, General Annex: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2025/wp-14-general-annexes_horizon-2025_en.pdf

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

- the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) linked to the Member States[10];

- countries associated to Horizon Europe[11];

- certain low- and middle-income countries[12].

Legal entities, which are established in countries not listed above will be eligible for funding if their participation is considered essential for implementing the action by the EIT.

For third parties receiving financial support, please see Chapter 15.5.

Business Plan proposals

A Business Plan proposal shall be submitted by the KIC LE on behalf of the KIC partnership. The KIC LE will become a beneficiary and signatory of the grant agreement. Entities associated to the KIC LE (e.g. Co-Location Centres (CLCs), etc.) shall become **affiliated entities to the KIC LE.** Other entities (both KIC partners and non-KIC partners) can be recipients of financial support to third parties.

Cross-KIC and HEI proposals

The Cross-KIC proposals and the HEI proposal shall be submitted by KIC LEs on behalf of the KIC consortium: one KIC should be assigned to lead a Cross-KIC/HEI activity, this KIC LE will be the coordinator of the Cross-KIC/HEI activity. Any KIC under Partnership Agreement may lead a Cross-KIC/HEI activity following the Cross-KIC/HEI governance model, while KICs under Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) cannot lead a Cross-KIC/HEI activity.

The leading KIC leads the Cross-KIC/HEI activity implementation and coordinates the contributions of the participating KICs. All KICs participating in a Cross-KIC/HEI activity (including the leading KIC) must agree on the main objectives, milestones and annual achievements, their individual contributions, as well as the budget distribution. Thus, an overall Cross-KIC/HEI Activity Plan (proposal) must be agreed by the participating KICs with work package level details. KICs participating in the Cross-KIC/HEI activity have to sign a consortium agreement under each Cross-KIC grant agreement.

Entities associated to a KIC LE (e.g. Co-Location Centres (CLCs), etc.) which participate in the Cross-KIC/HEI activity shall accede to the grant agreement as **affiliated entities to the KIC LE**. A KIC may not participate in a Cross-KIC/HEI activity via its CLCs only. Further entities may participate in the activities as subgrantees or subcontractors in accordance with the provisions of the grant agreement.

In the scenario that the MoC of a first wave KIC expires on 31 December 2027 and it is not extended or renewed, the first wave KIC's participation in the Cross-KIC/HEI Grant Agreements will have to be

---

[10] Entities from Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) are eligible for funding under the same conditions as entities from the Member States to which the OCT in question is linked. See the Horizon Europe Programme Guide on the portal for a complete list of OCTs.

[11] Please see the Horizon Europe Programme Guide on the Funding and Tenders Portal for up-to-date information on the current list of and the position for Associated Countries: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/programme-guide_horizon_en.pdf

[12] See the Horizon Europe Programme Guide on the Funding and Tenders Portal for a complete list of these countries.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

terminated by 31 December 2027 by way of amendment. If a first wave KIC is proposed as a work package leader of a Cross-KIC/HEI proposal, the proposal should include a planning for another KIC willing to take on the work package leader role in the grant agreement, if the termination of the first wave KIC's participation would be necessary.

Restrictions

As indicated in the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2025:

- **EU restrictive measures:** Entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)[13] as well as Article 75 TFEU[14], are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

- **Legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine:** Given the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the involvement of Belarus, there is currently no appropriate context allowing the implementation of the actions foreseen in this programme with legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine. Therefore, even where such entities are not subject to EU restrictive measures, such legal entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity. This includes participation as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any). Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for justified reasons.

  With specific regard to measures addressed to Russia, following the adoption of the Council Regulation (EU) 2024/1745 of 24 June 2024[15] (amending Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 of 31 July 2014) concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine, legal entities established outside Russia but whose proprietary rights are directly or indirectly owned for more than 50% by a legal person, entity or body established in Russia are also not eligible to participate in any capacity.

- **Measures for the protection of the Union budget against breaches of the principles of the rule of law in Hungary:** Following the [Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506,](#) as of 16 December 2022, no legal commitments can be entered into with Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain. Affected entities may continue to apply to calls for proposals and can participate without receiving EU funding, as associated partners, if allowed by the call conditions. However, as long as the Council measures are not lifted, such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc.).In case of multi-beneficiary

---

[13] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

[14] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

[15] (OJ L 229, 31.7.2014, p. 1–11).

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

grant calls, applicants will be invited to remove or replace that entity in any funded role and/or to change its status into associated partner. Tasks and budget may be redistributed accordingly.

- **Restrictions for the protection of European communication networks:** The protection of European communication networks has been identified as an important security interest of the Union and its Member States.[16] In line with the Commission Recommendation on the cybersecurity of 5G networks of 2019[17] and the subsequent report on EU coordinated risk assessment of the cybersecurity of 5G networks of 2019,[18] the EU Toolbox on 5G cybersecurity,[19] the second report on Member States' progress in implementing the EU toolbox on 5G cybersecurity of 2023,[20] and the related Communication on the implementation of the 5G cybersecurity toolbox of 2023,[21] the Commission together with the Member States has worked to jointly identify and assess cyberthreats and security risks for 5G networks.[22] The toolbox also recommends adding country-specific information (e.g. threat assessment from national security services, etc.). This work is an essential component of the Security Union Strategy and supports the protection of electronic communications networks and other critical infrastructures.

  Entities assessed as "high-risk suppliers", are currently set out in the second report on Member States' progress in implementing the EU toolbox on 5G cybersecurity of 2023[23] and the related Communication on the implementation of the 5G cybersecurity toolbox of 2023[24].

  The toolbox also underlines that further developing European capacities in the area of 5G and post-5G technologies by leveraging EU Research & Innovation Funding programmes is a strategic risk mitigating measure. This entails the need to avoid the participation of high-risk supplier entities in the development of other technologies linked to the evolution of European communication networks to prevent technology transfer and the persistence of dependencies in materials, semiconductor components (including processors), computing resources, software tools and virtualisation technologies, as well as related cybersecurity.

  In order to protect the specific policy requirements of the Union and/or its Member States, it is therefore appropriate that the following additional eligibility criteria apply to actions identified as

---

[16] European Council conclusions of 1 and 2 October 2020 (EUCO 13/20), point 11; Council Conclusions on the significance of 5G to the European Economy and the need to mitigate security risks linked to 5G, 14517/19.

[17] Commission Recommendation (EU) 2019/534 of 26 March 2019 Cybersecurity of 5G networks, L 88/42.

[18] NIS Cooperation Group, Report on EU coordinated risk assessment of the cybersecurity of 5G networks, 9 October 2019.

[19] NIS Cooperation Group, EU Toolbox on 5G Cybersecurity, 29 January 2020

[20] NIS Cooperation Group, Second report on Member States' progress in implementing the EU Toolbox on 5G Cybersecurity, June 2023.

[21] Communication from the Commission: Implementation of the 5G cybersecurity Toolbox, Brussels, 15.6.2023 C(2023) 4049 final.

[22] Within the NIS framework NIS 1 + 2 [Directive - 2022/2555 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)]

[23] NIS Cooperation Group, Second report on Member States' progress in implementing the EU Toolbox on 5G Cybersecurity, June 2023.

[24] Communication from the Commission: Implementation of the 5G cybersecurity Toolbox, Brussels, 15.6.2023 C(2023) 4049 final.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

"subject to restrictions for the protection of European communication networks" and to proposals within the MSCA part[25] that concern the evolution of European communication networks (5G, post-5G and other technologies linked to the evolution of European communication networks):

Entities that are assessed as high-risk suppliers of mobile network communication equipment (and any entities they own or control) are not eligible to participate as beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners.

The assessment is based on the following criteria:

- Likelihood of interference from a non-associated third country, for example due to:

  o The characteristics of the entity's ownership or governance (e.g. state-owned or controlled, government/party involvement);

  o The characteristics of the entity's business and other conduct (e.g. a strong link to a third country government);

  o The characteristics of the respective third country (e.g. legislation or government practices likely to affect the implementation of the action, including an offensive cyber/intelligence policy, pressure regarding place of manufacturing or access to information).

- (Cyber-)security practices, including throughout the entire supply chain;

- Risks identified in relevant assessments of Member States and third countries as well as other EU institutions, bodies and agencies, if relevant.

Exceptions may be requested from the granting authority and will be assessed case-by-case, taking into account the criteria provided for in the 5G cybersecurity toolbox, the security risks and availability of alternatives in the context of the action.

The above restrictions shall apply to financial support to third parties as well.

5.1 Eligible activities

In line with Article 7(1) of the EIT Regulation, KICs will undertake in particular:

(a) innovation activities and investments with Union added value, including facilitating the creation of innovative start-ups and the development of innovative businesses in complementarity with the EIC and the InvestEU Programme, fully integrating the higher education and research dimensions to attain a critical mass and stimulating the dissemination and exploitation of results;

(b) innovation-driven research, experimentation, prototyping and demonstration in areas of key economic, environmental and societal interest and drawing on the results stemming from Union and national research, with the potential to strengthen the Union's competitiveness at international level

---

[25] Doctorial Networks, Postdoctoral Fellowships, Staff Exchanges, Cofund.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

and find solutions for the major challenges faced by European society, including those relating to health and the digital market;

(c) education and training activities in particular at master's and doctoral level, as well as professional training courses, in areas with the potential to meet future European socio-economic and socio-ecological needs and which expand the Union's talent base, promote the development of innovation-related skills, the improvement of managerial and entrepreneurial skills and the mobility of researchers and students, and foster knowledge-sharing, mentoring and networking among the recipients of EIT education and training activities, including those that are EIT-labelled;

(d) actions as part of the pilot higher education initiative to better integrate HEIs in innovation value chains and ecosystems and bring them together with other key innovation players from the knowledge triangle and thereby improve their innovation and entrepreneurial capacity;

(e) outreach activities and the dissemination of best practices in the field of innovation with a focus on the development of cooperation between higher education, research and business, including the service and financial sectors, and, where relevant, public and third sector organisations;

(f) RIS activities, fully integrated in the KICs' multiannual strategy and linked to the relevant smart specialisation strategies, in order to strengthen innovation capacity and to develop sustainable innovation ecosystems with a view to decreasing the disparities and divide in innovation performance across the Union;

(g) to seek synergies and complementarities between KIC activities and existing Union, national and regional programmes, in particular the EIC, other European Partnerships and missions of Horizon Europe, as appropriate;

(h) to mobilise funds from public and private sources, in particular seeking to raise an increasing proportion of their budget from private sources and from income generated by their own activities;

(i) to provide, on request, information on research and innovation outputs and results, and related intellectual rights, developed pursuant to the activities of the KICs, and on the relevant inventors.

Moreover, the proposals shall cover activities according to the provisions of Chapter 8 (8.1 and 8.2) and shall be in line with the EIT principles and concepts, as listed and referenced in Annex 1.

- Financing, monitoring and evaluation of KICs
- Financial sustainability principles
- EIT Key Performance Indicators (EIT Impact Framework)
- EIT RIS
- Innovation principles
- EIT Label Framework
- Good governance principles
- Sound portfolio management principles
- Openness and transparency

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

- Non EIT funded KAVAs

- Principles of Cooperation EU & Public Affairs

Furthermore, the proposals shall be aligned with the EIT Regulation, the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027, the EIT Single Programming Document 2025-2027, and the KIC Strategic Agendas (Annex 1 of the Partnership Agreement).

The activities described in the proposals shall be implemented in the 2026-2028 period through the awarded grant.

Ethics

Proposals must comply with ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity) and applicable EU, international and national law. Applicants must have completed the ethics self-assessment as part of their application[26].

Proposals involving ethics issues will have to undergo an ethics review to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific ethics requirements. These requirements become part of the grant agreement as ethics deliverables, e.g. ethics committee opinions/authorisations required under national or EU law.

6. Exclusion criteria

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate[27]:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)

- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)

- guilty of grave professional misconduct[28] (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant

- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done

---

[26] See How to complete your ethics self-assessment.
[27] See Articles 138 and 143 of EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.
[28] 'Professional misconduct' includes, in particular, the following: violation of ethical standards of the profession; wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility; breach of generally accepted professional ethical standards; false declarations/misrepresentation of information; participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition; violation of IPR; attempting to influence decision-making processes by taking advantage, through misrepresentation, of a conflict of interests, or to obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain an advantage; incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence or similar activities contrary to the EU values where negatively affecting or risking to affect the performance of a legal commitment.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of EU Regulation 2988/95 (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant)

- intentionally and without proper justification resisted[29] an investigation, check or audit carried out by an EU authorising officer (or their representative or auditor), OLAF, the EPPO, or the European Court of Auditors.

Applicants will also be rejected if it turns out that[30]:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information

- they were previously involved in the preparation of the invitation and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

Evidence:

Entities acceding the grant agreement shall provide a **Declaration of Honour** (DoH) at the time of the grant agreement signature or the accession request, except when such declarations have already been submitted for the purposes of another award procedure, provided that the situation has not changed, and that the time that has elapsed since the issuing date of the declarations does not exceed one year[31].

In case of doubts, the granting authority may request a DoH during the evaluation procedure.

Before the time of the signature of the grant agreement, the EIT will request **appropriate evidence that the participating entity is not in one of the exclusion situations referred to in Article 138(1) of the EU Financial Regulation:** e.g. a recent extract from the judicial record for the KIC CEO and recent certificates issued by the competent authority/ies of the country of establishment of the KIC Legal Entity (KIC LE) (e.g.

---

[29] 'Resisting an investigation, check or audit' means carrying out actions with the goal or effect of preventing, hindering or delaying the conduct of any of the activities needed to perform the investigation, check or audit, such as refusing to grant the necessary access to its premises or any other areas used for business purposes, concealing or refusing to disclose information or providing false information.
[30] See Article 143 EU Financial Regulation 2024/2509.
[31] Article 139(1) of the EU Financial Regulation

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

certificate from the registry in which the KIC LE is registered, tax certificate, social security certificate)[32]. The EIT Director may waive this obligation in the cases indicated in Article 139(4) of the EU Financial Regulation.

7. Financial and operational capacity

Financial capacity

In accordance with Article 27 of the Horizon Europe Regulation, the financial capacity shall be verified for the coordinator if the requested funding is equal or greater than EUR 500 000. If there are grounds to doubt the financial capacity of an applicant, the EIT shall also verify the financial capacity of the applicant, or of the coordinator even where the requested funding is below the threshold referred to above.

By submitting the proposals, the KICs confirm that they have stable and sufficient financial resources to successfully implement the proposals in which they participate.

If a KIC is participating in several grant agreements, it must have sufficient financial capacity to implement them in parallel.

At the proposal submission stage, the coordinator will be asked to confirm that the organisation has carried out a self-check of the financial capacity of the organisation through the **financial self-check tool**[33] or has been covered by a financial viability check for an EU project for the last closed financial year.

If, after the financial capacity check, a coordinator's/applicant's financial capacity is considered not satisfactory, further information may be required and further measure(s) may be applied:

- an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several responsibility for all beneficiaries or joint and several liability of affiliated entities;
- the financial capacity of the applicant may be structurally guaranteed by another legal entity/ies;
- prefinancing paid in instalments;
- the granting authority may propose no prefinancing;
- the activities may be subject to additional monitoring and reporting based on an action plan;
- the granting authority may request that the applicant is replaced or, if needed, reject the entire proposal.

Evidence:

The financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of the documents the applicant must upload in the Participant Register *(e.g. profit and loss account and balance sheet, business plan, audit report produced by an approved external auditor, certifying the accounts for the last closed financial year, etc)*. The analysis will be based on neutral financial indicators, but will also take into account other aspects,

---

[32] Article 139(3) of the EU Financial Regulation
[33] https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/lfv/lfvSimulation.do

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

such as dependency on EU funding and deficit and revenue in previous years, etc. If needed, it may also be done for affiliated entities.

Operational capacity

By submitting the proposals, the KICs confirm that they have the experience, know-how, qualifications and operational resources (human, technical and other) to successfully implement the proposals.

If a KIC is participating in several grant agreements, it must have sufficient operational capacity to implement them in parallel.

If, in case of doubt, it is necessary to confirm the operational capacity of any applicant, the granting authority may request supporting documents, such as:

- information on the staffing situation of the applicant;

- profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the staff responsible for managing and implementing the activities,

- description of the participants in the grant agreement;

- activity reports of last year(s);

- information and list of other projects implemented.

8. KIC Business Plans 2026-2028

8.1 General requirements

KIC Business Plans shall be aligned and comply with the provisions under the eligible activities section of Chapter 5. Therefore, the description of the strategic approach for the work plan implementation shall be aligned accordingly.

KICs' objectives shall be relevant and appropriate for the 2026-2028 implementation of their multiannual strategy, demonstrating their **excellence** (including objectives and ambition; methodology; financial sustainability), **impact** (including KIC's pathways towards impact; measures to maximise impact - dissemination, exploitation and communication) and **quality and efficiency of the implementation** (including work plan and resources at portfolio level; capacity of participants and KIC Partnership as a whole).

The Business Plans shall address the **societal challenges** and **KTI** targets, contributing to achieving the future high-level results and impacts included in the EIT Impact Framework.

Furthermore, all Business Plans shall address the European Commission's Competitiveness Compass package, including the Union of Skills, the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy, as well as the AI Continent Action Plan, by identifying and describing the activities that will fall under these and related initiatives

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

such a Choose Europe, while addressing thematically relevant future measures to be launched during the period 2026-2028. relevant future measures to be launched during the period 2026-2028.

Specific attention shall be paid when outlining the KIC objectives/priorities in the Business Plan, by describing its objectives using SMART criteria (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound) and outlining why are they pertinent to the KIC Strategic Agenda.

Consequently, the Business Plan should show how the KIC could contribute to the outcomes and impacts described in the KIC Strategic Agenda and the KPIs in the EIT Impact Framework following the specific EIT Impact Pathways, the likely scale and significance of this contribution, and the measures to maximise these impacts in the context of Horizon Europe. Each activity addressing the education, innovation, business creation and RIS pillars financed through the Business Plan should contribute to at least one core EIT KPI.

While the KIC planned activities have to clearly contribute to the KIC Strategic Agenda 2021-2017 objectives and KPIs, specific separated mentioning on activities to be implemented, KPIs and objectives to be achieved in 2028 shall be indicated in the relevant section of the Business Plan[34].

A large part of the KIC's activities is implemented by third parties through the category Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP). KICs are expected to define and outline the activities meant to achieve the KIC Strategic Agenda objectives, taking into consideration the **minimum threshold of 70% for the EIT grant dedicated to the FSTP.**

When engaging third parties through FTSP, KICs shall comply with the **provisions of Annex 5** in terms of procedures and processes as well as submission of mandatory evidence.

KICs are required to implement gender mainstreaming in all activities, and incorporate the gender dimension in the expected outcomes, objectives, scope and impact of the proposed activities, in accordance with the EIT Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan 2025-2027 and the EIT Specific Provisions of HE MGA Annex 5. KICs shall ensure the **development/revision and adoption of Gender Mainstreaming Policy**, going beyond HR aspects, with clear guidance and robust indicators, accompanied by a well-defined and monitored Gender Equality Plan (GEP), with the aim to 1) increase participation of women in the KICs business creation & acceleration, innovation programmes, and in men-dominated education programmes, STEM[35]; 2) integrate the gender dimension into research & innovation, and education content and ensure inclusive programme design; 3) achieve gender balance within the KIC, and at all levels of personnel assigned to the sub-granted actions, including at supervisory and managerial level. In line with the EIT GEP 2025, integration of the gender dimension into KIC Calls shall be obligatory, award criterion, unless specified otherwise in the topic description. KICs shall ensure reaching the objectives and

---

[34] KICs might request an amendment of the Grant Agreement 2026-2027 in case objectives, activities and KPIs need to be revised due to the provisions of the new Strategic Agenda 2028-2034.

[35] In line with the STEM Strategic Education Plan (COM(2025) 89 final), the scope broadly covers the fields of education 'Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (05)'; 'Information and Communication Technologies (06)' and 'Engineering, manufacturing and construction' (07)' of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), as well as related interdisciplinary fields and studies

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

targets set by the <u>EIT Gender Equality Action Plan 2025-2027.</u> Annual Gender Mainstreaming Report deliverable shall be provided.

Business Plans shall be elaborated by taking into consideration the expected actions meant to strengthen the KTI and the RIS applicability.

The proposed estimated budget of each KIC Business Plan proposal outlined in section 8.2 is an average indicative figure. The exact amount will result from the total available budget (which will include also the amounts voluntarily decommitted by KICs in 2025) and the scores received under the award criteria. Accordingly, the final amount might be significantly different (higher or lower).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming a foundational technology for Europe's future competitiveness and resilience, as well as a key enabler of the EU's green and digital transitions. Rooted in European values, AI is playing a critical role in addressing societal and economic challenges, including those tackled by the KICs. The EIT has already taken important steps in this domain by supporting AI-related activities across its KICs and establishing a dedicated EIT Community on AI to foster Cross-KIC collaboration. To scale its leadership in responsible and competitive AI, **each KIC shall allocate at least 5 MEUR** to an impactful AI flagship initiative to address a major structural gap in the EU innovation landscape - namely, the absence of agile, AI-specific support mechanisms that integrate business creation, innovation, and education/skills development. This investment will enable a coordinated, high-impact effort across the EIT Community and lay the foundation for the EIT model to create further impact in the area of AI and Robotics.

Education

KICs are expected to demonstrate an increased ambition in delivering impactful results focussing on the EIT Label programmes (e.g. more startups created, etc.) and alignment with the EU priorities and strategies (Union of Skills, STEM Education Strategic Plan), **addressing Europe's skills gaps and boosting its competitiveness** and in particular promoting broad-based entrepreneurial education and skills development, lifelong learning, and skills portability to create a flexible and adaptable workforce.

In general terms, KICs shall **strengthen their financial sustainability prospects in education**, with concrete business models and plans behind, while also ensuring a better integration of the education portfolio under the EIT Campus. Every education programme supported through EIT funding must have in place clear market and need analysis. KICs are invited to include only activities that can demonstrate that they are clearly and evidently on course of becoming financially sustainable.

KICs' education activities shall aim to deliver on the following objectives.

- **Developing a highly skilled workforce**: equipping the learners in KIC specific thematic areas with the skills and entrepreneurial mindset needed to drive innovation in strategic sectors. This includes a strong emphasis on STEM skills and digital literacy, increasing participation of women in STEM, and integrating the gender dimension into education content, directly addressing the Competitiveness Compass's emphasis on innovation-led productivity growth.

- **Fostering innovation and entrepreneurship**: the KICs' educational programmes shall go beyond technical skills, cultivating creativity, problem-solving and entrepreneurial capabilities. By

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

connecting learners with industry partners and supporting start-up development, the EIT significantly accelerates the translation of research into market-ready products and services.

▪ **Strategic collaboration**: the impact of the KICs' activities shall be amplified through close collaboration and synergies with other European instruments and national programmes, creating a robust and interconnected innovation ecosystem across Europe.

Innovation

KICs are expected to implement **ambitious and well-structured innovation portfolios** that generate **measurable impact** in tackling key societal challenges within their respective thematic areas while addressing EU strategic priorities, including the package of relevant measures under the EU's Competitiveness Compass, as well as the AI Continent Action Plan. These portfolios should complement existing EU programmes and initiatives, offer a **clear value-added proposition** and result in the development and market deployment of **high-potential products and services**, underpinned by **solid Intellectual Property (IP) strategies**. Innovation activities must explicitly comply with **EIT Innovation Principles**, including mechanisms for post-funding monitoring, and should significantly contribute to both **KIC-specific and EIT core Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**.

A **balanced mix of incremental and breakthrough innovations** is encouraged, ensuring a diverse and impactful innovation portfolio. Innovations supported by the EIT should be close to the market and lead to effective commercialising, the creation of IP and commercialising via start-ups or other participants in the activities. **Strong integration with business creation and education activities** is essential, fostering synergies across the Knowledge Triangle. In line with their Strategic Agenda, KICs must also ensure **the financial sustainability of their innovation activities** through robust business models and clear revenue-generation plans - such as Return on Investment (ROI) and equity stakes in supported ventures. KICs should take on board lessons learnt and make adjustments to their previous innovation activities, where these have not been sufficiently successful. Integration of the gender dimension into innovation content shall be treated as obligatory, unless specified otherwise in the topic description. Proposals must demonstrate a **clear strategy for scaling innovation outcomes** across national, European and global markets, maximising the long-term impact of EIT investments and ensuring that successful innovation create a return for the KIC.

Business Creation

KICs are expected to implement **ambitious and well-structured Business Creation portfolios** that generate **measurable impact** in tackling key societal challenges within their respective thematic areas while contributing to the EU strategic priorities in line also with the EC Startup & Scaleup Strategy to be adopted in May/June 2025. These portfolios of Business Creation activities should include growth support activities of new and existing innovative startups at European level, with a special focus on supporting women-led start-ups, and should significantly contribute to both **KIC-specific and EIT core Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and KICs Financial Sustainability**, in line with the KICs Strategic Agendas.

Business Creation portfolios should also include **concrete actions to improve** private sector involvement **(particularly SMEs and start-ups) and** investors **in the KICs knowledge triangle activities in Education and**

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

Innovation, as well as deliver on synergies **with the relevant EC services (GROW-EEN, RTD-EIC-EISMEA, DEFIS-EUSPA, CONNECT…) and EIB-EIF where relevant.**

Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS)

In line with the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021-2027, **10-15% of the EIT grant shall be earmarked to the EIT RIS on a multiannual basis.** However, as suggested in the EIT RIS Implementation Framework, on average, this should not be less than 13% in the 2025-2027 period. From this, **each KIC should ringfence at least 5 MEUR, but ideally more, to co-invest in ventures** supported by the EIT Regional Innovation Booster pilot.

KICs should ensure that partners and participants established in EIT RIS eligible countries and territories[36] increasingly participate in KIC portfolio of activities moving towards the objective to integrate EIT RIS participants into the portfolio. The EIT expects that by implementing the EIT RIS and by integrating additional EIT RIS organisations, the KICs will realise the ambitious EIT RIS related EIT Core KPIs at portfolio level, as well as ensure better geographical diversity of their activities.

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, 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 KICs and link local innovation ecosystems to pan-European innovation ecosystems, including through the establishment of CLCs and RIS Hubs, as part of a "place-based" innovation approach;

- Used as a bridge towards relevant RIS3s (Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategies);

- Leverage additional private and public funding, with particular attention to European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

In this context, the KICs are strongly expected to engage with local players from EIT RIS countries and territories, most especially in those geographical areas where their engagement remains limited[37], with the aim of attracting and facilitating their participation in their activities.

---

[36] In line with the EIT RIS eligible criteria from 2025, the following countries and territories are eligible for the EIT RIS: EU Member States: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain. Horizon Europe Associated Countries: Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Israel. Outermost Regions: Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Réunion, Martinique, Mayotte and Saint-Martin (France), the Azores and Madeira (Portugal), and the Canary Islands (Spain).

[37] In line with Chapter 4.3 of the EIT RIS Implementation Framework, each EIT KIC is expected to annually undertake an assessment of the countries and territories eligible for the EIT RIS to identify those 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.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

Whilst having to adhere to the EIT RIS Implementation Framework, the KICs have a certain degree of flexibility in designing their own EIT RIS activities, provided the activities contribute towards achieving the EIT's overarching objectives as defined in Annexes I and Ia to the Regulation establishing Horizon Europe, as well as the specific objectives of the EIT for the period of 2021-2027, including the EIT Gender Equality Action Plan 2025-2027, as outlined in the EIT SIA. Namely, the KICs are free to design the best-fitting approach in line with their multi-annual strategies and priorities to deliver the desired tangible deliverables and impact, especially in terms of widening participation in the KICs. In designing these activities, the EIT KICs must demonstrate how these will contribute to the EIT / EIT RIS KPIs outlined in the EIT Impact Framework.

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

However, the use of 100% co-funding should be clearly used in exceptional cases. Instead, to the greatest extent possible, while ensuring a balanced approach that does not create barriers to work with EIT RIS countries and regions, EIT RIS activities should aim at attracting co-funding and, over time, demonstrate the ability that activities achieve the objective of becoming financially sustainable.

It is pertinent to note that beyond the 15% maximum budget dedicated to the EIT RIS, entities and partners from EIT RIS countries and territories will still be fully involved in all activities in line with the co-funding rates delineated in the EIT SIA. Yet, the up to 100% 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 GB will regularly monitor and evaluate the EIT RIS funding and may issue strategic guidance as appropriate.

8.2 Description of topics of this invitation

In addition to the General Requirements above that have to be addressed by all KIC Business Plans, the specific requirements below will need to be addressed individually by each respective KIC.

8.2.1 EIT Health Business Plan 2026-2028 (Topic ID: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA-H)

(1) In WP1 on Innovation, EIT Health shall explicitly describe key measures speeding up the delivery of marketed innovations. EIT Health shall also further strengthen its efforts to ensure the incorporation of the gender dimension into its innovation content and address the gender inequalities in health sector.

(2) In WP2 on Education, EIT Health shall describe key measures on expanding and increasing the impact of the Education activities, addressing the shortage of skills in health care sectors, with

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

particular focus on redesigning the degree education. EIT Health shall also strengthen the efforts to incorporate the gender dimension into education content.

(3) In WP3 on Business Creation, EIT Health shall explicitly describe key measures delivering on start-ups created by EIT students and start-ups created as a result of innovation projects.

(4) In WP5 on Coordination, EIT Health shall explicitly describe key measures ensuring effective cost controls for safeguarding its value proposition to partners.

(5) In WP7 on Financial Sustainability, EIT Health shall explicitly clarify its plans for expanding the KICs equity portfolio.

The estimated EIT funds to be allocated for this proposal ranges around 70 MEUR.

8.2.2 EIT RawMaterials Business Plan 2026-2028 (Topic ID: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA-RM)

(1) In WP1 on Innovation, EIT RawMaterials shall explicitly describe key measures speeding up the delivery of marketed innovations.

(2) In WP2 on Education, EIT RawMaterials shall describe key measures on expanding and increasing the impact of the Education activities in life-long learning segment.

(3) In WP5 on Coordination, the KIC shall explicitly elaborate on its plans to collaborate with the European Commission services and contribute to their political priorities. Alternatively, the KIC can add an additional WP on Synergies.

(4) In WP7 on Financial Sustainability, EIT RawMaterials shall explicitly clarify its plans for expanding the KICs equity portfolio

(5) EIT RawMaterials shall further strengthen its efforts on gender equality, implementing quality GEP with strategies and measures for all key areas, in particular, in WP3, increasing the investment in and number of supported women-led start-ups and scale-ups.

The estimated EIT funds to be allocated for this proposal ranges around 70 MEUR.

8.2.3 EIT Food Business Plan 2026-2028 (Topic ID: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA-F)

(1) In WP1 on Innovation, EIT Food shall explicitly describe key measures speeding up the delivery of marketed innovations. EIT Food shall also further strengthen its efforts to ensure incorporation of the gender dimension into innovation content and address gender inequalities in food sector.

(2) In WP2 on Education, EIT Food shall describe key measures on expanding and increasing the sustainability of the education portfolio in line with the KICs Strategic Agenda in Education. EIT Food shall also strengthen its efforts to incorporate the gender dimension into education content.

(3) in WP5 on Coordination, EIT Food shall explicitly describe key measures ensuring effective cost controls for safeguarding its value proposition to partners.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

(4) In WP7 on Financial Sustainability, EIT Food shall explicitly clarify its plans for expanding the KICs equity portfolio.

The estimated EIT funds to be allocated for this proposal ranges around 117 MEUR.

8.2.4 EIT Urban Mobility Business Plan 2026-2028 (Topic ID: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA-UM)

(1) In the WP1 Innovation, the KIC shall explicitly describe how it will select and support impactful and scalable innovations that lead the way towards the joint objectives of decarbonisation and competitiveness of Europe in the area of the KIC's societal challenge. The KIC shall further strengthen its efforts to incorporate the gender dimension into innovation content and address gender inequalities in urban mobility sector.

(2) In WP2 on Education, EIT Urban Mobility shall describe key measures on expanding and increasing the impact of the Education activities in scale and boosting entrepreneurial results, as well as strengthen incorporation of the gender dimension into education content.

(3) The KIC shall present in WP3 on Business Creation how its start-up support strategy will be more strategy-driven and result in an investment portfolio with a transparent market valuation by indicating concrete actions and measures and inclusion of relevant targets The KIC shall also further increase the investment in and support to women-led start-ups and scale-ups.

(4) The KIC shall describe in WP7 Financial Sustainability and other relevant WPs (e.g. WP5 Coordination) how it will diversify and substantially increase its revenues to deliver on its financial sustainability targets, along with concrete measures implemented to achieve more effective cost control and a sustainable balance between costs and revenues, while safeguarding its value proposition to partners.

(5) Furthermore, the KIC is expected to outline in the relevant WPs (e.g. WP2 Education, etc.) the measures taken to better engage the KIC partnership and potential new partners in the implementation of its Strategic Agenda objectives, especially in the KTI areas where significant subcontracting costs were sustained.

The estimated EIT funds to be allocated for this proposal ranges around 187 MEUR.

In case the Partnership Agreement is not extended for the second 7-year term before 31 December 2026, the Grant Agreement 2026-2027 shall be terminated by the same date.

8.2.5 EIT Manufacturing Business Plan 2026-2028 (Topic ID: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA-M)

(1) In the WP1 Innovation, the KIC shall explicitly describe how it will select and support impactful and scalable innovations to solving the significant challenges lying ahead of the European manufacturing sector while broadening its current technological focus towards new growth sectors and potentially ground-breaking new technologies. The KIC shall further strengthen its efforts to incorporate the gender dimension into innovation content and address gender inequalities in manufacturing sector.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

(2) In WP2 on Education, EIT Manufacturing shall describe key measures on expanding and increasing the sustainability of the education portfolio in line with the KICs Strategic Agenda in Education. EIT Manufacturing shall also strengthen its efforts to incorporate the gender dimension into education content.

(3) The KIC shall present in WP3 on Business Creation how its start-up support strategy will be more strategy-driven and result in an investment portfolio with a transparent market valuation by indicating concrete actions and measures and inclusion of relevant targets The KIC shall also further increase the investment in and support to women-led start-ups and scale-ups.

(4) The KIC shall describe in WP7 Financial Sustainability and other relevant WPs (e.g. WP5 Coordination) how it will diversify and substantially increase its revenues to deliver on its financial sustainability targets, along with concrete measures implemented to achieve more effective cost control and a sustainable balance between costs and revenues, while safeguarding its value proposition to partners.

(5) Furthermore, the KIC is expected to outline in the relevant WPs (e.g. WP5 Coordination, but also WP1 Innovation, WP2 Education, WP3 Business Creation, etc., as necessary) the measures taken to better engage the KIC partnership and potential new partners in the implementation of its Strategic Agenda objectives. The KIC shall present a solid call schedule, call planning and call selection process in order to avoid high cancellation rates and include measures that ensure a compliant, fair and transparent selection process of activities that receive public grants.

The estimated EIT funds to be allocated for this proposal ranges around 187 MEUR.

In case the Partnership Agreement is not extended for the second 7-year term before 31 December 2026, the Grant Agreement 2026-2027 shall be terminated by the same date. Furthermore, the award of any grant 2026-2027 (including Cross-KIC/HEI) to EIT Manufacturing is conditional upon the positive resolution of the ongoing legal procedures.

8.2.6 EIT Culture & Creativity Business Plan 2026-2028 (Topic ID: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA-CC)

(1) The KIC shall describe in the relevant WPs (e.g. WP 5 Coordination, but also WP1 Innovation, WP2 Education, WP3 Business Creation, etc., as necessary) how it will improve its call selection processes and strengthen the operational capacity of the organisation, including by ensuring that sufficient and experienced staff is in place to manage the distribution of public grants in a transparent and regular manner, in compliance with the applicable EU and EIT legal framework.

(2) In WP7 on Financial Sustainability, EIT Culture & Creativity shall explicitly describe measures to implement an ambitious and diversified financial sustainability strategy, combined with effective cost controls, including related to its Supervisory Board, to safeguard its value proposition to partners. The KIC shall also present measures taken to address the risks of low own reserves.

The estimated EIT funds to be allocated for this proposal ranges around 140 MEUR.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

8.3 Award criteria

For the multiannual funding allocation 2026-2027 (covering the implementation of the years 2026-2028), the budget multipliers to account for maturity is as follows:

KIC wave	KIC	Indicative coefficient
Second wave: years 12-14	EIT Health, EIT RawMaterials	15%
Third wave: years 10-12	EIT Food	25%
Fourth wave: years 8-10	EIT Manufacturing, EIT Urban Mobility	40%
Fifth wave: years 4-6	EIT Culture & Creativity	30%

The EIT Governing Board will decide on the funding for each KIC, which will be calculated on a set of criteria, taking into account the performance of KICs:

Criteria	Maximum score	Type	Evidence
1) Progress in achieving multiannual impact targets: ▪ societal and economic impact targets ▪ KIC challenges based on GB recommendations incl. governance	50	Qualitative, progress and strategic plans	EIT GB Hearing
2) Past performance (2021-2024) ▪ Core KPI ▪ Level of Financial Sustainability	30	Quantitative, past performance 2021-2024	KIC reported and validated targets (EIT IT tool)
3) Business Plan proposal (2026-2028)	20	Qualitative, future outlook and beyond	Business Plan 2026-2028

The score received by individual KICs will be converted to funding, based on the indicative budget per wave, in proportion of the KICs' relative scores.

In the case of EIT Culture & Creativity, due to the absence of historical data for the reference period, EIT core KPIs will not be scored. This aligns with the maturity of the KIC. Nevertheless, as part of the past performance assessment, the financial sustainability coefficient and diversity sub-criteria will also apply for EIT Culture & Creativity. This results in a total maximum score of 77.5 points for this KIC, which will ultimately be calibrated to a scale of 0-100 to make the outcome comparable with other KICs.

The detailed sub-criteria, scoring methodology and evaluation evidence are explained in the following subchapters.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

8.3.1 Progress in implementing the multiannual strategy (related to criterion 1)

The following will be considered when assessing the achievement of the multiannual impact targets criterion:

- Consistency with the strategic objectives of the European Union, in particular Horizon Europe and KIC's contribution to achieving these goals;

- Progress in addressing the KIC's key strategic challenges including strategic recommendations issued by the EIT Governing Board and effectiveness in integrating the knowledge triangle.

- Progress in achieving multiannual impact targets and specifically in achieving societal and economic impact.

The key strategic challenges are KIC-specific and may encompass topics, such as KIC's strategic objectives, impact and KPIs, partnership, governance, openness and transparency and/or financial sustainability (including diversification of revenue streams and asset positions). A key element of the assessment is the visit of EIT GB Rapporteurs to each KIC in order to familiarise with the KICs' strategic and multi-annual development. The final score however will be determined by the EIT Governing Board after the Hearings.

The following indicative scale will be used (maximum 50 points):

- 0-8: KIC fails to demonstrate sufficient strategic focus, insufficiently addressing the key recommendations.

- 9-16: Poor – KIC addresses the relevant aspects inadequately or there are serious inherent weaknesses

- 17-25: Fair – KIC broadly addresses the relevant aspects, but there are significant weaknesses

- 26-34: Good – KIC addresses the relevant aspects well, but a number of shortcomings are present

- 35-42: Very good – KIC addresses all relevant aspects very well, but small number of shortcomings are present

- 43-50: Excellent – KIC successfully addresses all relevant aspects. Any shortcomings are minor.

Evidence: The evaluation with scores will be based on:

- the information provided by EIT and KICs in the framework of the EIT GB Rapporteur visit;

- the briefings per each KIC prepared by EIT and approved by EIT GB Rapporteurs in advance of the Hearings

- the Hearings with the EIT Governing Board.

As for the briefings per KIC, the EIT will provide to the EIT Governing Board synthesised information from different available sources, among others based on the results of monitoring activities performed, identifying strengths / weaknesses and critical challenges. They will focus on multi-annual aspects and trends. The KICs will be requested to address challenges at the Hearings with the EIT Governing Board through a presentation and at the Q&A session.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

8.3.2   Level of financial sustainability achieved (2024) (related to criterion 2)

The financial sustainability coefficient will be scored as follows, based on validated data for the year 2024:

Score	2nd wave KICs	3rd wave KIC	4th wave KICs	5th wave KICs
5	≥40%	≥35%	≥25%	≥10%
4	≥32% - <40%	≥28% - <35%	≥20% - <25%	≥8% - <10%
3	≥24% - <32%	≥21% - <28%	≥15% - <20%	≥6% - <8%
2	≥16% - <24%	≥14% - <21%	≥10% - <15%	≥4% - <6%
1	≥8% - <16%	≥7% - <14%	≥5% - <10%	≥2% - <4%
0	<8%	<7%	<5%	<2%

The financial sustainability coefficient captures the ability of the KIC Legal Entities and Co-location Centres to generate revenues from and attract financing to its KAVA activities, composed of EIT Funded Activities (EFA) and Non EIT Funded Activities (NEFA). The allowed categories of financing are listed in the KICs Financial Sustainability principles adopted in March 2022 by the EIT GB[38]. The financial sustainability coefficient is calculated as the total amount of revenues and financing attracted excluding the financial contribution from the EIT divided by the EIT funding provided for EIT Funded Activities, excluding the EIT Cross-KIC and HEI activities.

Evidence: The evaluation with scores will be based on the submitted and validated KIC FS Reports 2024.

8.3.3   Impact achieved measured by EIT core KPIs (2021-2024) (related to criterion 2)

The final score will be calculated as the sum of the results for the following EIT core KPIs based on the validated values achieved in the years 2021-2024 *(does not apply to EIT Culture & Creativity)*:

Code	Title	Score
EITHE02.4	Number of **innovations launched on the market** during the KAVA duration or within 3 years after completion with a sales revenue of **at least 10 000 EUR** documented	Max 4
EITHE04.4	Number **of start-ups created** as a result / based on the output(s) of KAVA(s), or start-ups created for the purpose of an innovation project to organise and support the development of an asset (but not later than three years after the completion of KAVA) having a financial transaction of **at least 10 000 EUR** for a service/product sold to customers	Max 4
EITHE05.1	Number of **start-ups created by students enrolled and graduates from**	Max 4

---

[38] https://eit.europa.eu/library/gb-decision-062022-amendment-principles-financial-sustainability-knowledge-and-innovation

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

	EIT-labelled MSc and PhD programmes	
EITHE06.1	**Investment attracted** in EUR by KIC-supported start-ups and scale-ups	Max 4
EITHE07.4	Number of **graduates from EIT-labelled** MSc and PhD programmes	Max 4

The results will be benchmarked against the annual targets for 2021-2024 approved in the KIC Strategic Agenda. Any 10% underachievement will lead to 0.5 point deduction from the maximum for each of the EIT core KPIs set out in the above table. Overachievement will be awarded by 0.5 extra point per 10%, however up to a maximum of 1 extra point, and the total score for the five KPIs cannot be higher than 20 points.

Furthermore, if for any of the above EIT core KPIs at least 15% of the achievement is attributable to RIS countries (i.e. innovation, start-up or student originating from RIS country), 0.5 extra point will be awarded per KPI. As such the RIS element accounts for a maximum of 2.5 points.

In addition, diversity will be scored as follows, taking into account the less represented gender in top governance and management positions combined *(applies also to EIT Culture & Creativity)*:

Score	Proportion of less represented gender
2.5	≥40%
1	≥25% - <40%
0	<25%

Top governance refers to the members of KIC boards (Supervisory Board or equivalent), whilst KIC management refers to the KIC CEO, COO, CFO / Director of Finance, Chief Strategy Officer, Pillar directors (Education, Innovation, Business Creation) and CLC Directors.

Evidence: The assessment with scores for the EIT core KPIs will be based on the submitted KIC Reports 2024 and their assessment carried out by experts and validated by the EIT. As for diversity, the score will be given based on the state of play as of 31 July 2025, validated by the EIT.

8.3.4 Business Plan proposal (related to criterion 3)

Business Plans for 2026-2028 will be assessed by the EIT with support of external experts, with respect to three sub-criteria:

- Excellence, including objectives and ambition; methodology; financial sustainability; contribution to gender equality objective.

- Impact including KIC's pathways towards impact; measures to maximise impact - dissemination, exploitation and communication.

- Quality and efficiency of the implementation including work plan and resources at portfolio level; capacity of participants and KIC Partnership as a whole.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

Each of the three sub-criteria can score maximum 5 points. The following scale will be used:

- 0: KIC <u>fails to address</u> the relevant aspects

- 1: Poor – KIC addresses the relevant aspects <u>inadequately</u>, or there are <u>serious inherent weaknesses</u>

- 2: Fair – KIC broadly addresses the relevant aspects, but <u>there are significant weaknesses</u>

- 3: Good – KIC addresses the relevant aspects <u>well</u>, but <u>a number of shortcomings</u> are present

- 4: Very good – KIC addresses all relevant aspects <u>very well</u>, but <u>a small number of shortcomings</u> are present

- 5: Excellent – KIC successfully addresses all relevant aspects. Any shortcomings are minor.

Evidence: The evaluation with scores will be based on the evaluation of submitted Business Plans and compulsory annexes, supported by external experts.

The overall score will be converted to a scale of 0-20 points (final score divided by 15 and multiplied by 20).

9. Cross-KIC activities 2026-2028

Through joining forces, the KICs should design and implement **added-value Cross-KIC Strategic activities and shared services that shall explore the potential synergies and economies of scale, enhance the innovation potential across KICs, develop new innovation delivery mechanisms, promote the EIT Community and increase its visibility** as defined in the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027 and the EIT Single Programming Document 2025-2027. A genuine Cross-KIC activity should allow all participating KICs to be involved in the delivery of the actions with clear objectives, milestones and achievements, as well as clear allocation of roles. Cross-KIC activities on a cluster level must contribute to the EIT core KPIs.

Responsibilities, coordination mechanisms, and decision-making procedures must be outlined in a **Consortium Agreement** for each Cross-KIC proposal, following the model provided by the EIT in 2023 (at least a draft Consortium Agreement should be submitted with each Cross-KIC proposal). **Each Cross-KIC project (i.e. cluster) shall be managed through a separate Management and Communication Work Package (WP)** to ensure coordination, monitoring of the activities' implementation and reporting the progress to the EIT, managing the grant reporting process in a close collaboration with the EIT ('Management and Communication WP'). The Cross-KIC cluster leaders shall have ownership of the cluster activities and be responsible for the planning of activities and operations (including information sharing) of the cluster in an open, transparent and impartial manner (not discriminating any KIC), also including decision-making processes. The Management and Communication WP shall ensure proper document management strategy at a cluster level, ensuring that all participant KICs have access to updated information.

The Management and Communication WP shall include a coordinator (at least 0.75 FTE) and ensure the operationalisation of the Steering Committee overseeing the activity implementation, which shall meet

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

at least every quarter and be open for EIT and KICs (to be described in the Consortium Agreement). The management costs shall be justified and demonstrate efficiency gains from the coordination efforts (for example through centralisation of some activities).

The Cluster Management and Communication WP shall also fully coordinate and ensure adequate visibility, communications and dissemination of results of the Cross-KIC activity, including the fulfilment of EIT communication requirements, such as compliance with the EIT branding, key deliverables and Communication KPIs, participation in external events, ensuring adequate representation from all KICs involved in activities. Furthermore, it shall ensure the dissemination of programmes and achievements via the Horizon Europe Results Platform.

Cross-KICs are required to implement gender mainstreaming in all activities, and incorporate the gender dimension in the expected outcomes, objectives, scope and impact of proposed activities, in accordance with the EIT Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan (GEP) 2025-2027 and the EIT Specific Provisions of HE MGA Annex 5, with the aim to 1) increase participation of women in business creation & acceleration, innovation, and man-dominated education programmes (STEM); 2) integrate the gender dimension into research & innovation, and education content and ensure inclusive programme design; 3) ensure gender balance in decision-making at all levels of personnel assigned to the sub granted actions, including at supervisory and managerial level. In line with the EIT GEP 2025, integration of the gender dimension into Cross-KIC Calls shall be obligatory, award criterion, unless specified otherwise in the topic description.

Cross-KIC activities shall contribute to the **outcomes and impacts** described in the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (2021-2027), the KICs' Strategic Agendas and the KPIs in the EIT Impact Framework following the specific EIT Impact Pathways, the likely scale and significance of this contribution, and the measures to maximise these impacts in the context of Horizon Europe. KPIs achieved by each KIC while implementing Cross-KIC activities shall be identified per KIC and reported together with those achieved during the activity implementation.

When engaging partners through FTSP, KICs shall comply with the **provisions of the HE MGA Annex 5** in terms of procedures and processes as well as submission of mandatory evidence.

9.2   Description of topics of this invitation

The Cross-KIC activities in 2026-2028 shall be structured in four proposals according to the detailed description provided below.

The main objectives of the Cross-KIC activities shall focus on:

- Expand the EIT Community's impact within the relevant areas, measured by the EIT Impact Framework.

- Elevating the EIT Community impact in key strategic areas, to enhance the strength and visibility of the EIT KICs education and innovation ecosystems, and positioning among key stakeholders.

- Adding value in coordination and complementarity with KICs' strategic agendas, EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027 and EU policy priorities.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

- Bring visibility to Cross-KIC activities, disseminated also via i.a. the Horizon Europe Results Platform.

9.2.1   Cross-KIC Shared Services 2026-2028 (Topic ID: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA-ShServ)

KICs shall propose and develop a concept for a **Centre of Administrative Excellence,** i.e. a dedicated organisational team within a KIC or within different KICs, which will provide services to all KICs, on a needs basis, in administrative and operational domains and processes that are common to all KICs.

Its objective will be the efficiency and effectiveness of operations of the KICs through development of joint operational activities and consolidation of KICs operational processes to result in a reduction of administrative costs and overheads by pooling resources and joint handling of operational and administrative tasks related to EIT grant management common to all KICs.

The Centre of Administrative Excellence will comprise of the following mandatory activities divided into work packages (WPs).

1. **Management and coordination**: an effective management and coordination of the Centre of Excellence shall be established under the guidance of a selected KIC, but associated to a committee/board composed of the COO (or their representatives) of each participating KIC. The responsibilities and decision-making shall be outlined in a signed consortium agreement, to be submitted with the proposal.

   Within this WP, the coordination and organisation of working groups according to the needs of the participating KICs and EIT shall be included.

2. **Cost control and audit**: a scheme for ensuring an appropriate minimum costs control of KICs' subgrantees shall be included. In this respect, the main activities shall focus on a) the management centre of the CFS audit, compulsory for all beneficiary and subgrantee costs that reach the given threshold; b) regular trainings for KICs and subgrantees on costs eligibility; c) creation of a joint cost control centre according to the recommendations outlined in the "*EIT Guidelines for KICs' financial control and audit mechanism",* through desk checks/cost verifications of costs reported by subgrantees, creation and implementation of a certification programme for KICs' staff acting as financial controllers/ activity leaders to further enhance their skills in the field of EU funding, etc.

3. **Grant management support centre**: a support unit meant to coordinate the needs for training and capacity building of KICs, legal support and data protection, anti-fraud measures, expert selection, document management, etc. Furthermore, this support unit will be tasked to develop call templates (e.g. invitations, ranking list, call report, agreements, etc.) and general grant management tools (e.g. minimum requirements for project implementation, etc.).

4. **Common IT solution**: for the maintenance and utilization of the common IT system (Netsuite). Further developments from 2026 will be focused on (but not limited to): direct up taking of the Netsuite grant management tool and solution by any additional KICs, development of data pipeline to connect each KICs IT tool with the EIT Portal (to be applied first within the Netsuite

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

tool), harmonisation of the KICs front-end portal as a single EIT KIC portal, harmonisation of the KICs' application forms front-end page.

5. **Partners onboarding**: validation of subgrantees recipients of EIT funds, according to the provisions followed by REA in validating HE beneficiaries. Improvement of the IT management tool according to upcoming needs, after previous agreement with EIT. External audit to be performed yearly.

6. **EIT House**: Financial support of 100% of the rental costs of the fourth floor of the EIT House (meeting space) and up to 50% of the rental costs of the other floors of the EIT House in Brussels, provided that at least 10 external events per year will be organised by at least five different KICs. In this respect, the involvement of the KICs' EU Affairs officers will be coordinated by EIT to ensure a minimum level of engagement.

7. **EIT Community Hub Hungary**: Financial support up to 50% of the total rental costs of the EIT Community Hub Hungary provided that at least 10 external events per year will be organised by at least three different KICs.

8. **Joint CLCs**: Support up to 50% of the total rental costs in 2026, 40% in 2027 and 30% in 2028 of the CLCs in Paris, Stockholm, Berlin, Espoo (in case confirmed) provided that at least 10 external events per year in each CLC will be organised by at least three different KICs.

KICs will need to identify measurable results and impact KPIs, together with the cost benefit analysis of the proposed actions. The Cross-KIC activity should demonstrate in the proposal how it indirectly contributes to KICs' financial sustainability and how it contributes to the EIT core KPIs.

The estimated budget for this Cross-KIC proposal is 17.2 MEUR.

9.2.2 Cross-KIC Regional Innovation & Internationalisation 2026-2028 (Topic ID: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA-CrossKIC-RegInnovInt)

The Cross-KIC Regional Innovation & Internationalisation will comprise of the following mandatory activities divided according to the following work packages (WPs), in addition to the WP Management and Communication.

1. **Regional Innovation**: The objective of this activity is to maximise the EIT Community's impact in the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme area, including the EU Outermost Regions, as well as other priority countries and regions, including Ukraine, the Western Balkan economies and Moldova, with the possibility to cover additional EU priority neighbourhood counties, associated to Horizon Europe. The expected impact is to be defined by applicants addressing the specific objectives of the activity, its scope and expected results in the context of elevating the impact of the EIT Community in the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme area, as well as other priority countries and regions and increasing their competitiveness and innovativeness level. The impact description should be supported by results KPIs and qualitative and quantitative description of the long-term impact in line with the impact KPIs in the EIT Impact Framework. The Cross-KIC activity should demonstrate in the proposal how it contributes to KICs' financial sustainability and to the EIT core KPIs.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

2. **Internationalisation**: The activity should maximise the EIT Community's impact as measured by the Impact Framework, and contribute to the KICs financial sustainability through its global presence. The scope of the activity should focus on*:*

- Further development of EIT Community Hubs in United Kingdom (London), Israel (Tel Aviv);
- Linking the innovation ecosystem of Europe with that of the selected priority outreach locations including those without an EIT Community Hub, in particular India;
- Supporting EIT and overall EU innovators and entrepreneurs in the selected priority outreach locations, with a special focus on women innovators and entrepreneurs, e.g. access to new partners and markets, soft landing services;
- Alignment with the EU principles on Global Approach in R&I and the EIT Strategic Framework for EIT Community Global Outreach Activities.
- Promote and implement synergies with "Choose Europe" initiative, attracting world class researchers to work on projects where they can truly make a difference in Europe.

The expected Impact is to be defined by applicants addressing the specific objectives of the activity, its scope and expected results in the context of elevating the impact of the EIT Community and improving its financial sustainability through expanding the KICs operations beyond Europe. The impact description should be supported by results core KPIs and qualitative and quantitative description of the long-term impact. The results KPIs should be accompanied/ justified by the outputs KPIs (for example in relation to the financial sustainability area to indicate revenues to be generated by each location in short-term). The Cross-KIC activity should demonstrate in the proposal how it contributes to KICs' financial sustainability and the Financial Sustainability of the EIT GO Hubs with a FS target (revenues vs EIT Funding) of 50% , and how it contributes to the EIT core KPIs.

The expected outcome should be focused (but not be limited to) on:

- Strengthening the EIT KICs' presence, outreach and integration within the EIT RIS-eligible geographical area, including the EU Outermost Regions, as well as and other EU priority neighbourhood regions associated to Horizon Europe, including a specific focus on supporting the objective of attracting and facilitating the integration of potential new partners in the EIT KICs;
- Exploring, establishing and implementing linkages and synergies between the EIT Community and local innovation ecosystems and Smart Specialisation Strategies, and provide capacity building support;
- Maintaining and enhancing the network of EIT Community Hubs, in line with the EIT RIS Implementation Framework, as well as potentially widen it to cover EU priority neighbourhood counties, associated to Horizon Europe but not currently eligible for the EIT RIS;

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

- Exploring, establishing and implementing strategic alliances and possible cooperation with key actors in the targeted countries and regions, at different levels (e.g. local innovation ecosystems, COST, Regional Cooperation Council, Enterprise Europe Network, among others);

- Exploring and implementing synergies with other potential funding streams including the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), ESIF and European Innovation Council;

- Supporting high-potential, early-stage innovators from emerging European regions, with a special focus on women innovators, embark on their entrepreneurial journey by implementation of the joint pre-accelerator EIT Jumpstarter, including potentially widen its eligibility to cover additional EU priority neighbourhood regions counties, associated to Horizon Europe but not currently eligible for the programme, aiming to help launch at least 15 innovations on the market, 75 new ventures established and 10 MEUR in investment attracted;

- Boost EIT-backed commercial success stories in the EIT RIS area by piloting the EIT Regional Innovation Booster in at least 4 targeted counties, with a view to create country-by-country bespoke innovation support journeys for the most promising local ventures, by plugging-in existing initiatives offered by the local authorities, the EIT Community as well as facilitate their access to investment from the European Innovation Council and through private venture capital, with a target of helping a total of at least 12 ventures achieve a minimum of 5 MEUR in external investment, or EUR 250,000 in annual revenues by 2028;

- Further developing the activities of the existing Global Outreach Programmes, delivered via the EIT Community hubs (Israel, UK) and through the EIT Global Platform, in particular in India, with participation of several KICs. EIT Global Platform activities should not represent more than 10% of the total budget of the Global Outreach activities.

- Implementing impactful activities linking the innovation ecosystem of Europe with that of the selected outreach locations through:
    - Forging synergies with global innovation leaders;

    - Attracting new talents and partners to the EIT Community and Europe as an innovation hotspot;

    - Contributing to the KPIs in the EIT Impact Framework as detailed in the accompanying guidelines.

- Proposed activities should reflect EIT's knowledge triangle model and be fully aligned with the Global Approach in R&I and the Strategic Framework for EIT Community Global Outreach activities [39], as well as priorities under the bilateral international cooperation agreements between the EU and the respective outreach countries;

The estimated budget for this Cross-KIC proposal is 16.8 MEUR.

---

[39] https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-38_20221214_gbwp_strategic_framework_for_global_outreach_activities-min.pdf

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

9.2.3 Cross-KIC EIT Entrepreneurial Education & Skills 2026-2028 (Topic ID: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA -EntrEduSkills)

The Cross-KIC Entrepreneurial Education will comprise of the following mandatory activities divided according to the following work packages (WPs), in addition to the WP Management and Communication.

1. **EIT Girls Go STEM** should be the evolution of the EIT Girls Go Circular programme stemming from the European Digital Education Action Plan, to increase women's participation in STEM studies and careers. It will implement the Union of Skills and the STEM Education Strategic Plan announced on 5 March 2025 by the European Commission, with an aim to attract women secondary students into STEM study fields, including in VET, into STEM professions, and developing their technical and entrepreneurial skills in STEM domains, including through induction periods and mentorship.

    The activity shall reach the following impact:
    - Develop a holistic concept and implementation plan for the initiative for 2026-2028.
    - Train minimum 100,000 female students enrolled in secondary level education in a broad range of STEM subjects, fostering creativity and entrepreneurial skills, including innovation and IP education;
    - Develop at least 10 new STEM learning module, keeping in mind integration of the gender dimension into education content, utilizing innovative teaching methodologies, including blended learning, interactive simulations, and project-based learning through real-world experience, helping young people build practical skills;
    - Ensure quality certification through the EIT Label for Non-Degree Education of all the learning modules;
    - Award micro-credentials to certify the skills acquired through the developed learning modules ;
    - Train-the-trainer programme: Provide training and certification for at least 70 trainers, ensuring minimum 50% of women trainers, to roll out the programmes across all 27 Member State countries and additional 8 Horizon European Associated countries;
    - Create strong partnerships with at least 15 industry players;
    - Organize the annual Challenge and the Women and Girls in STEM Forum event, including hackathons;
    - Create a collaboration mechanism with Erasmus+, the European Universities alliances, European Alliance for Apprenticeships and digital skills academies to achieve the overall target of training 1 million girls by 2028;
    - Generate an ambitious business model that ensures that over time the scheme is able to be self-financing from diversified streams based on its attractiveness and uniqueness;

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

- Develop a financial sustainability plan for activities 2026-2028, ensuring they become gradually independent of EIT funding. This should include exploring ways of embedding the training programmes into national or EU schemes, incorporating co-financing and self-financing approaches, and attracting other sources.

2. **EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction** should be the evolution of the EIT Deep Tech Talent Initiative stemming from the new European Innovation Agenda announced in 2022. As per the Union of Skills and the STEM Education Strategic Plan announced on 5 March 2025 by the European Commission, the STEM Tech Talent Induction will attract more students from diverse backgrounds to STEM studies in secondary education, VET and tertiary education. Its induction activities will be designed to attract young people to STEM careers and involving role models and entrepreneurs. Its contribution towards the Union of Skills will also include addressing the STEM skills gaps, and upskilling and reskilling adults and professionals in STEM.

The activity shall reach the following impact:
- Develop a holistic concept and implementation plan for the initiative for 2026-2028;
- Transition from the EIT Deep Tech Talent Initiative to the EIT STEM Tech Talent Induction, repurposing of assets and partnership built;
- Demonstrate how lessons learnt and best practices from DTTI will be transferred to the EIT STEM Tech Talent Initiative;
- Directly and indirectly train 700,000 individuals, ensuring minimum 40% women participation, and integration of the gender dimension into education content, and equip them with STEM skills crucial for the strategic sectors and breakthrough technologies across all education levels and through life-long learning programmes;
- Develop at least 3 modular and certified STEM trainings, which include transversal topics of entrepreneurship, innovation and IP, available on the platform in multiple EU national languages;
- Ensure quality certification through the EIT Label Non-Degree Education of learning modules;
- Issue skills recognition through micro-credentials to validate the skills acquired from the developed and disseminated STEM curricula for the envisaged learners;
- Train and certify at least 50 education and training providers to roll out the developed STEM curricula across all 27 EU Member States for the envisaged learners;
- Initiate at least 50 collaborative multi-stakeholders STEM upskilling and reskilling projects based on industry needs;
- Establish active partnerships with at least 30 major industry players.

3. Develop a financial sustainability plan for activities 2026-2028, ensuring the scheme becomes gradually independent of EIT funding by the end of its implementation period. This should include exploring ways of incorporating co-financing and self-financing approaches, and attracting other sources. **EIT Campus** should act as a **coordination backbone** that will support all the EIT KICs Education initiatives, including the joint portal, promotion, quality assurance of the EIT labelled programs and Academies, and the creation of a skills passport system, certifying transferable skills that are recognized across sectors and regions.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

The activity shall reach the following impact:

- **EIT Campus Portal** to include the educational offer from all EIT KICs and to help multiply the impact and reach of the KICs' education activities, including an improved Quality Assurance;
- Propose a sustainable business model that does not depend on EIT funding but mobilise further funds and also create revenues.

4. **EIT Talent** should look at talent development and growth, and will combine KICs Alumni Coordination, the Alumni Connect and the Innovation Internship Scheme. It will support EIT KICs in scaling the engagement of their Alumni Communities (including EIT HEI Alumni), fostering a co-ordinated approach. The EIT Internship Scheme focuses on aspiring Innovators, to equip KICs Alumni with essential business experience and entrepreneurial skills, empowering them to contribute to real-world solutions.

The activity shall reach the following impact:

- Incorporate the coordination activities of the EIT Alumni Communities, organize the annual flagship event CONNECT, and run the EIT contribution to the InnoNext internship Scheme as a joint initiative between EIC, ERC, MSCA (subject to a written confirmation on the internship continuation between the programmes for 2026);
- Through the activities of the EIT Alumni, enhance community engagement via events, innovation challenges, create a collaborative environment, create and support a network of 500 Alumni volunteers Ambassadors (non-paid) and partnerships with at least 50 companies;
  Through the activities of the EIT Internship Scheme in 2026, establish job placement programmes with business partners to connect EIT Talents with companies, while supporting start-ups or scale ups, ensuring gender-balanced participation. The total number of both interns and supported start-ups/scale-ups should reach 150 by end of 2026 (including results achieved in 2025), to ensure the overall commitment towards the InnoNext Scheme.

The **expected outcomes** should be focused (but not be limited to) on:

- Strengthening and increasing impact through coordinated approach by the EIT Community Education in EU policy priority areas, such as the **Union of Skills and the STEM Education Strategic Plan**;

- Cooperating with **key EU-level stakeholders and initiatives in the area of education and skills**, such as European Patent Office, European Union Intellectual Property Office, European Training Foundation, the Erasmus+ programme, the flagships such as the European Universities Alliances, European Alliance for Apprenticeships, Digital Skills Academies and others;

- Exploring, identifying and establishing **linkages and synergies between the EIT Community Education and the relevant EU, national, and regional programmes** in the areas of education and skills development;

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

- Contributing to the core KPIs within the **EIT Impact Framework** and to the **Financial Sustainability** of the participating KICs;

- Propose a sustainable business model that does not depend on EIT funding but mobilise further funds and also create revenues.

The estimated budget for the topic is 25.5 MEUR.

9.2.4 Cross-KIC EIT Innovation & Business Creation 2026-2028 (Topic ID: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA -INBC)

The Cross-KIC Innovation & Business Creation will comprise of the following mandatory activities divided according to the following Work Packages (WPs), in addition to the WP Management and Communication.

1. **Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Robotics** in particular, joint projects, a common platform for EIT KICs, namely through the **EIT Community on AI**, and their partners to support and accelerate EIT AI & Robotics start-ups and innovation activities, exploring synergies and funding opportunities from investors and with other EU and non-EU funded programmes, investor networks, and raise awareness and enhance the reputation of the EIT Community's AI & Robotics activities. The activity shall foster a **human-centric** and **responsible AI/Robotics ecosystem**, driving **innovation in research, industry adoption, and ethical AI, including increasing participation of women, and integration of the gender dimension into AI innovation.** By supporting start-ups and advancing **AI/Robotics solutions**, the activity shall accelerate **AI-driven entrepreneurship** while ensuring alignment with **European values and regulations**. The activity shall aim to position **EIT-driven AI** as a key enabler of sustainable innovation and economic growth in Europe.

   As an EIT Community effort, **outputs** shall comprise, among others, the following:
   - Identify, support and accelerate 12 high-potential frontier/below frontier AI/Robotics start-ups, aiming to raise 80 MEUR in investment.
   - Implement two major AI/Robotics innovation projects.
   - Launch at least 14 innovations on the market.

   New European Bauhaus (NEB) in particular, build on the 2023-2025 activities, further link the EIT Community NEB activities related to acceleration, education/skill development, community engagement, with the EU's NEB agenda, explore synergies and funding opportunities of EIT KICs and their partners with other EU and non-EU funded programmes, support the delivery phase of the NEB; create synergies and excellence networks with other NEB related programmes and stakeholders. The activity shall establish the **EIT as a key design and delivery partner of the NEB** at the EU level, driving **socially-driven innovation**, start-up acceleration, and community-based capacity building. By fostering a more **sustainable, inclusive, and aesthetically enriching** Europe, the activity shall contribute directly to the **Green Deal** and NEB's transformative vision. **Strengthening the EIT NEB ecosystem**, the activity shall refine program portfolios, enhance visibility, and expand engagement to build a vibrant and collaborative NEB Community. By fostering **synergies with EU initiatives**, including JRC's NEB Facility, the EIT shall position itself as

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

a **key enabler of impactful, cross-sectoral innovation** that integrates sustainability, social inclusion, and creativity into Europe's future.

As an EIT Community effort, **outputs** shall comprise, among others:
- Identify, support and accelerate at least 60 NEB start-ups, aiming to raise 10 MEUR in investment;
- Implement 3 Flagship NEB Innovation Projects leading to products/services launched on the market;
- Training 1,000 NEB Learners;
- Launch at least 12 NEB Ideation Events (50% in RIS countries);
- Implement at least 60 Citizen Engagement Projects;
- Expand the NEB Mentors Community to at least 500;
- Organize one annual EIT Community NEB Event.

2. **Women Entrepreneurship** in particular, build on and farther strengthen the 2023-2025 activities, focusing on business internalization, high-quality investment training, and strengthening Women Investor Network: SUPERNOVAS VC Academy, Women2Invest, Business Angels Academy, Rocket Up, Investment Forums (ensuring quality synergies with Rocket Up), The programme shall further focus on improving its communications strategy and impact, as well as on the financial sustainability mechanism. Additionally, the programme shall continue its, initiated in 2025, gender mainstreaming activity – supporting the EIT KICs in their efforts towards achieving gender equality. SUPERNOVAS shall position the EIT as the European leader in women entrepreneurship and investment, serving as a key reference for women-led business acceleration, internationalization, and high-quality investment training. The program shall increase participation and support advancement of women in venture capital, attract women STEAM professionals to the VC space, increase investment in women-led startups and support successful internalization of high potential women-led start-ups.

As an EIT Community effort, **outputs** shall comprise, among others:**50 women-led supported start-ups**; **40 MEUR investment raised by supported start-ups**; : **500 graduates** from the SUPERNOVAS education programmes and trainings (including: Women2Invest, VC Academy, BC Academy) ; **500 members** in the Women Investors Network (WIN)**; Investment in women-led start-ups made by SUPERNOVAS WIN** members and companies/VC funds of community members.

The **expected outcomes** should be focused (but not be limited to) on:

- **Enhanced impact through coordinated and joint approach by the EIT Community in EU policy priority areas**, in particular in the areas of **Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Robotics, New European Bauhaus (NEB) and Women Entrepreneurship and Investment.**

- Development of sustainable **joint activities** in the key strategic areas, including support systems/ activities for ventures, promoting gender equality, citizens engagement activities, innovation projects and/or education activities run by the KICs.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

- **Identification and dissemination of good practices and lessons learnt,** including at policy level, from implementation of the activities.

- **Engaging with key stakeholders and local innovation ecosystems** in the key strategic aeras to elevate the impact of the KICs activities.

- Identifying and **linking with the relevant other EU/national/regional programmes** in the key strategic areas.

The Cross-KIC activity should demonstrate in the proposal how it contributes to **KICs' Financial Sustainability (FS)** and its **significant contribution to the EIT KPIs from the EIT Impact Framework**. By the end of the 2026-2028 cycle, each Work Package (WP) must achieve a **Financial Sustainability (FS) Coefficient of at least 15%**, calculated as the ratio of cumulative eligible revenues (e.g. license fees, equity returns, service fees, co-investments, etc.) generated by the KIC against the EIT funding received for that WP.

For Work Packages involving high-investment thematic areas such as AI, **higher FS performance is expected**, supported by clear revenue pathways and risk-sharing mechanisms (e.g. co-investments or matched funding). Revenue-generating activities must be **tracked annually** to assess tangible returns, with corrective measures introduced if performance deviates from expectations. Promises of long-term impact must be backed by **credible commercialization and scaling plans**, and the FS strategy should include both ex-ante projections and ex-post performance tracking. KICs are also encouraged to identify co-financing or blended finance opportunities with external partners to further **strengthen FS outcomes.**

The estimated budget for the topic is 20 MEUR.

9.3 Award criteria

Criteria: All Cross-KIC strategic proposals will be evaluated against the following award criteria aligned with the Horizon Europe legal framework: excellence, impact and implementation as follows:

EIT Strategic activities	Excellence	Impact	Implementation
Maximum score	40	40	20
Sub-criteria	- Relevance, value added and objectives - Quality of the proposed methodology - Financial sustainability - Contribution to gender equality objective	- Impact - Dissemination, and communication	- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, e.g. value for money - Implementation efficiency - Capacity and role of each participant
EIT Shared Services	Excellence	Impact	Implementation
Maximum score	20	20	60

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

Sub-criteria	- Relevance, value added and objectives - Quality of the proposed methodology - Contribution to financial sustainability	- Impact	- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, e.g. value for money - Implementation efficiency - Capacity and role of each participant

The EIT may prioritize or reject a Cross-KIC activity based on the available budget and the outcome of the evaluation process. If the requested grant exceeds the amount available in the EIT Cross-KIC Fund, the funding level will be adjusted accordingly.

Evidence: The evaluation will be based on the submitted proposals.

Depending on the evaluation outcomes and identified weaknesses of proposals, the EIT might reduce the requested funding. Following the evaluation round, EIT might also provide requirements to the applicants to revise the content of the proposal and adjust the budgetary request accordingly.

10. HEI activities 2026-2028

10.1 Background

The purpose of the EIT HEI is to create systemic impact in Europe by strengthening the entrepreneurial and innovation capacity of higher education institutions. This will be realised by developing a strategic directions and innovation vision action plan, which must allow for flexibility and experimentation. The EIT HEI aims at:

- Increasing the entrepreneurial and innovation capacity of higher education institutions (HEIs), both regarding HEIs' own capacity to be entrepreneurial and innovative as well as being able to teach and foster innovation and entrepreneurship;

- Strengthening and safeguarding the integration of HEIs in innovation ecosystems.

Therefore, the EIT HEI activity shall achieve the following specific objectives:

- Create systemic impact in higher education at the institutional level, by supporting HEIs to increase their innovation and entrepreneurial capacity and better integrate into and engage with innovation ecosystems;

- Ensure that the EIT HEI delivers on the strategic contribution to the EU's competitiveness agenda as set out in the **Union of Skills** and **STEM Education Strategic Plan**, notably by:

  o Enhancing the knowledge transfer, strengthening the university-industry collaborations and fostering institutional transformation;

  o Develop and implement a targeted collaboration with European Universities Alliances ensuring their active participation in projects and contribution to the Union of Skills / STEM Strategy (a specific aim is to train 200,000 higher education students, academics, and staff on innovation, entrepreneurship, and IP management in STEM-related fields),

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

while respecting the principles of sound financial management (avoiding double funding) and the flexibility for organisational arrangements. The proposal should outline a plan aiming at enabaling the integration of EUAs into the KICs networks.

- Promote, encourage and implement synergies with other EU instrument, as foreseen in the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027, as well as addressing the current policy priorities, namely Choose Europe - attracting entrepreneurial students and innovators to the EU.

- Ensure that the activities and outputs of the EIT HEI initiative link with the **broader strategic EIT education framework** e.g. primarily that trainings lead to EIT Label accreditation and are implemented in alignment with EIT Campus and the EIT Alumni activities to maximise visibility and outreach of EIT education activities;

- Encourage strong **business participation;**

- Ensure **financial sustainability** for the activities, including addressing intellectual property rights of the materials developed and enabling a solid business model for the future, which is also reflected in the Innovation Vision Action Plans;

- Ensure the endorsement of the **Innovation Vision Action Plans** of the participating HEIs at the highest levels, including their thorough implementation and sustainability of the results and their continuation beyond the project period.

10.2 General requirements

To ensure the success of the EIT Higher Education Initiative, KICs shall provide **funding as well as specific guidance, expertise and coaching** to participating HEIs, including the European Universities alliances, and target HEIs from across Europe and beyond. Particular attention will be paid to HEIs from countries (and regions in those countries) that are moderate and modest innovators and other low performing regions that wish to develop their innovation capacities and strengthen their innovation footprint and smart specialisation strategies.

Furthermore, the EIT HEI consortium shall ensure an open and inclusive approach to attract HEIs beyond the KICs' partners aiming for wide geographical coverage; an inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral approach; a broader participation of women in sectors where they are underrepresented; and a link with the EIT RIS, relevant thematic platforms and smart specialisation strategies, and the Policy Support Facility when appropriate.

The activities financed under the initiative must be in line with the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027 and should clearly contribute to the core EIT KPIs. Furthermore, **a minimum of 82% of the EIT grant shall be allocated to the Financial Support to Third Parties (FSTP)**. When engaging partners through FTSP, KICs shall comply with the **provisions of the HE MGA Annex 5** in terms of procedures and processes as well as submission of mandatory evidence.

As foreseen in the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021-2027, **the activities shall address the capacity development of HEIs**. Furthermore, the EIT Higher Education Initiative must directly contribute to **closing the skills gap identified in the "Union of Skills"** and respond to the needs of increasing competitiveness in Europe by **boosting innovation and entrepreneurship competences of higher**

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

education students, academics and staff mainly in STEM programmes, as set out in the EU's STEM Education Strategic Plan.

Activities shall also engage with the **broader policy context** in Europe related to education innovation, skills development, and global competitiveness (e.g. European Education Area, 'Chose Europe!' and the Start Up and Scale Up Strategy).

Responsibilities, coordination mechanisms, and decision-making procedures must be outlined in a **Consortium Agreement** following the DESCA model provided by the EIT (to be signed and submitted with the proposal).

Activities shall be divided in the following main Work Packages in the Part B

WP0: Management and Communication

- The EIT HEI activity shall be managed through a separate Management and Communication Work Package (WP) to ensure coordination, monitoring of the activities' implementation and reporting the progress to the EIT, managing the grant reporting process in a close collaboration with the EIT. The EIT HEI coordinator shall have ownership of the HEI activities and be responsible for the planning of activities and operations (including information sharing) in an open, transparent and impartial manner (not discriminating any KIC), also including decision-making processes. The Management and Communication WP shall ensure proper document management strategy, ensuring that all participant KICs have access to updated information.

- The Management and Communication WP shall include a coordinator and ensure the operationalisation of the Steering Committee overseeing the activity implementation, which shall meet at least every quarter and be open for EIT and KICs (as detailed in the Consortium Agreement, DESCA model). The management costs shall be justified and demonstrate efficiency gains from the coordination efforts (for example through centralisation of some activities).

- The Management and Communication WP shall also fully coordinate and ensure adequate visibility, communications and dissemination of results of the EIT HEI activity, including the fulfilment of EIT communication requirements, such as compliance with the EIT branding, key deliverables and Communication KPIs, participation in external events, ensuring adequate representation from all KICs involved in activities. Furthermore, it shall ensure the dissemination of programmes and achievements via the Horizon Europe Results Platform.

WP1: Continuous implementation of Phase 2 of Call 4 (cohort 4)

- The EIT HEI consortium shall continue with the financial and technical support to the Phase 2 of projects under Call 4 of the EIT HEI, including the management of awarded projects' implementation.

- The EIT HEI consortium shall monitor the implemented projects, ensuring the following: exchange and implementation of best practices in knowledge triangle integration, including organisational learning, training for up-skilling and re-skilling, coaching and mentoring.

- The EIT HEI consortium shall monitor the implemented projects, ensuring that they contribute to achieving the EU level target to provide dedicated training on innovation, entrepreneurship and

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

IP management to 200 000 STEM higher education students, academics and staff by 2028 in synergy with the European Universities alliances and the EIT KICs.

WP2: Strategic implementation of Call 5 (cohort 5)

- The EIT HEI consortium shall monitor the implemented projects, ensuring that they contribute to achieving the EU level target to provide dedicated training on innovation, entrepreneurship and IP management to 200 000 STEM higher education students, academics and staff by 2028 in synergy with the **European Universities alliances** and the EIT KICs. In addition, the call concept should also contribute to activities of the current policy priorities, namely Choose Europe - attracting entrepreneurial students and innovators to Europe.

- In collaboration with EIT, the EIT HEI consortium shall design and define the strategic steps for launching cohort 5 of the EIT HEI, including the management, monitoring and reporting of the selected projects' implementation.

- The EIT HEI consortium shall ensure that selected proposals develop action plans on how to address identified needs in areas such as innovation management, start-up creation and development, technology transfer including intellectual property rights management, sustainability and climate neutrality by design, people and organisational management, the integration of gender approaches in innovation and engagement with local stakeholders and civil society; and the implementation of innovation capacity development action plans and follow-up actions.

- The EIT HEI consortium shall monitor the implemented projects, ensuring the following: exchange and implementation of best practices in knowledge triangle integration, including organisational learning, training for up-skilling and re-skilling, coaching and mentoring.

The EIT Higher Education Initiative should extend the EIT impact beyond KICs and contribute to the following:

- Reinforced innovation capacity of the Member States and Associated Countries, therefore contributing to the EIT's core mission of boosting sustainable economic growth and competitiveness, in line with the Horizon Europe goals of fostering entrepreneurial and innovation skills in a lifelong learning perspective;
- Reinforced the EIT's pivotal role in strengthening EU competitiveness;
- Increased capacities of KICs at the institutional level across Europe.

The EIT HEI consortium is **requested to give special attention to gender mainstreaming, and incorporation of the gender dimension in the expected outcomes, objectives, scope and impact of proposed activities,** in accordance with the Annotation to the EIT specific provisions of HE MGA Annex 5, and the EIT Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan.

The HEI activity shall contribute to the following KPI (from the EIT Impact Framework and specific for HEI):

- EITHE1.1 – Number of innovative products, processes and methods & Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) applications resulting from KIC activities

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

- EITHE2.1 – Number of all innovations introduced on the market during the KAVA duration or within 3 years after completion. Innovations include new or significantly improved products (goods or services) sold

- EITHE2.4 – Number of innovations introduced on the market during the KAVA duration or within 3 years after completion <u>with a documented sales revenue of at least 10 000 EUR.</u>

- EITHE3.1 - Number of start-ups and scale-ups supported by KICs for at least 2 months in year N, provided the KIC's services contribute to the company's growth (including potential growth)

- EITHE4.1 – Number of start-ups established in year N as a result / based on the output(s) of KAVA(s), or start-ups created for the purpose of an innovation project to organise and support the development of an asset (but not later than three years after the completion of KAVA).

- EITHE4.4 – Number of start-ups established in year N as a result / based on the output(s) of KAVA(s), or start-ups created for the purpose of an innovation project to organise and support the development of an asset (but not later than three years after the completion of KAVA) having <u>financial transactions of at least 10 000 EUR</u> for services/products (result of the KIC KAVA) sold to customers

- EITHE6.1 – Investments attracted by KIC-supported start-ups and scale-ups

- EITHE8.1 – Number of successful participants in EIT professional development courses, online training courses and other education/training activities delivered or in a process of delivery

- EITHE19.1 – Number of new and/or improved support structures and mechanisms established within or mobilized by the HEIs participating in the HEI Capacity Building Initiative

- EITHE20.1 – Number of new partnerships established by participating HEIs and businesses, research organisations, other actors

- HEI01 – Success stories

- HEI02 – Best practices

- HEI03 – Number of participants in training on innovation, entrepreneurship and IP management as defined in the STEM Strategy

The EIT HEI consortium is requested to provide the following mandatory deliverables.

Title	Description	Delivery month(s)
Data Management Plan	Short description of FAIR data, security, ethics, etc.	6
Annual Gender Mainstreaming Report	Annual report on gender mainstreaming - following the EIT template with instructions provided – including an overview of the HEI consortia's strategies, initiatives and results on gender equality, with a special focus on: increasing	3, 15, 27

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

	participation of women in male dominated sectors, STEM; inclusive programme design; integration of the gender dimension into education content; and gender balance within the projects and in all sub-granted activities, including in decision making in all levels.	
Annual Dissemination Report	Annual report on the identification, codification, sharing and dissemination activities, including the number of results published on the Horizon Results Platform and the uptake of services offered by the European Commission	1, 13, 25
Annual Communication Action Plan and Calendar	Annual Action Plan that covers the planned and foreseen tasks related to external communications and branding, stakeholders engagement, dissemination and exploitation activities as well as the channels and tools to be mobilised, including expected results and KPIs of the EIT Impact Framework for the given year. A calendar containing the key events and announcements (press releases, key Call openings etc.) planned by the KIC, as well as key events, meetings with institutional stakeholders at EU and Member State level and announcements planned by the KIC. The overview should present clear links to the KIC Strategic Agenda and the KPIs and targets. The calendar foresees regular updates throughout the year	1, 13, 25
FS Yearly Report (N-1)	Yearly report on financial sustainability across all Work Packages based on the provided EIT template.	7, 19, 31
Sustainability report	Yearly report describing the strategy to design and follow-up on activities aimed at ensuring the sustainability of projects in the post funding period	7, 19, 31
Factsheet	Factsheet with mission and vision, key results and impact numbers achieved and most recent impact stories, testimonials from high-level stakeholders,	6, 18,30
STEM Report	Information on the activities related to the STEM Strategic Education Plan, including a statistical design and reporting, with a focus on data and information to be used in external communication purposes.	3, 12, 18, 30, 36

10.3 Award criteria

Criteria: The HEI proposal will be evaluated against the following award criteria aligned with the Horizon Europe legal framework: excellence, impact and implementation as follows:

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

Criteria	Maximum score
Excellence - Clarity pertinence and relevance of the proposal's objectives - Quality of the proposed coordination and/or support measures including soundness of methodology. - Quality of synergies and links with existing initiatives at EU, national and regional level. - Credibility of the financial model and contribution to KICs financial sustainability.	40
Impact - Credibility of the pathways to achieve the expected outcomes and impacts specified in the EIT SIA 2021-2027, participating KICs' strategic agendas and in the EIT Impact Framework, and the likely scale and significance of the contributions due to the proposal. - Suitability and quality of the measures to maximise expected outcomes and impacts, as set out in the dissemination and exploitation plan, including communication activities.	40
Quality and efficiency of implementation - Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, assessment of risks, and appropriateness of the effort assigned to work packages, and the resources overall, e.g. value for money. - Capacity and role of each participant, and extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise.	20

Evidence: The evaluation will be based on the submitted proposal.

Depending on the evaluation outcomes and identified weaknesses of the proposal, the EIT might reduce the requested funding. Following the evaluation round, EIT might also provide requirements to the applicant consortium to revise the content of the proposal and adjust the budgetary request accordingly.

11. Submission of proposals

Proposals must be submitted electronically using the electronic submission system of the Portal of the European Commission, **the link to the submission platform will be provided by the EIT following the opening date for the submission**.

Proposals must be created and submitted by a representative/contact person of the coordinating organisation.

The electronic submission system is an online wizard that guides the applicant step-by-step through the preparation of your proposal. The proposal itself consists of two main parts as structured the Proposal Template:

- PART A) administrative forms (structured information of the basic administrative data, declarations of partners, organisations and contact persons, etc.)

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

- PART B) technical annex, which is the detailed description of the planned Business Plan, Cross-KIC, outlining work packages, costs, etc.

Further mandatory annexes required by the invitation are outlined in the Guidelines.

More information on how to participate in Horizon Europe proposals is available here: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/how-to-participate/1

At proposal submission, you will have to confirm that you have the **mandate to act** for all applicants. Moreover, you will have to confirm that the information in the application is correct and complete and that the participants comply with the conditions for receiving EU funding (especially eligibility, exclusion, financial and operational capacity, etc). Before signing the grant agreement, each beneficiary and affiliated entity will have to confirm this again by signing a Declaration of Honour. Proposals without full support will be rejected.

Your application must be **readable, accessible and printable**.

Proposals are limited to a maximum of **50 pages** (Part B) in the case of Business Plans, and to a maximum of **45 pages** (Part B) in the case of Cross-KIC and HEI activities. All tables, figures, references and any other element pertaining to these sections must be included as an integral part of these sections and are thus counted against this page limit. The number of pages included in each section of this template is only indicative. The page limit will be applied automatically. In the Call Package, you can see the structure of the actual proposal template that you need to submit, please remove all instruction pages that are watermarked.

KICs may be asked at a later stage for further documents (for legal entity validation, financial capacity check, bank account validation, exclusion criteria evidence, etc).

12. Data model and IT tools

eGrants

EIT and KICs will use the eGrants IT system for the purpose of grant management, therefore proposal submission, grant agreement signature and reporting will be managed via this tool. Each KIC should submit the data in the agreed format through a portfolio approach via proposal and reporting templates into the eGrants platform. Additionally, throughout the grant agreement implementation, each KIC will need to collect and import additional data (e.g. project, partner, proposal, FS, Impact etc.) directly to EIT IT Portal. All data from the EIT Portal will be transferred to *CORDA - European Union's data warehouse* feeding *eCORDA* (accessible by member state representatives) and Horizon Dashboard – publicly accessible through any web browser.

By using CORDA, the EIT will ensure it meets the standards of Horizon Europe with respect to transparency and openness.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

EIT IT Portal

While eGrants is a European Commission grant management tool used for selection, signature and reporting on grant agreements between KICs and the EIT, **the EIT IT Portal is used to collect additional, more granular data relevant for assessment/monitoring, analysis guiding strategic decision-making but also for statistical purposes and business intelligence.** This collection should include data on KIC performance (Impact indicators, KPIs, FS etc.), KIC calls (call calendar, call text, call evaluation outcome) but also data proposals submitted to KIC calls and subgranted projects/participants to allow for monitoring of EIT grant consumption (e.g. per Area, country etc).

By the time the data pipeline is developed, KICs should import all project data to the EIT portal on a monthly basis at the latest, ensuring that all collected data are up to date. Besides of projects, other different datasets might have different deadlines specified by the EIT (e.g. in the data guidance note or other) e.g. KPIs can be reported throughout the whole year with annual hard deadline for reporting period, proposals should be submitted as soon as the call evaluation is completed and evaluation summary report is submitted to the Portal, Financial Sustainability data reporting happens on a quarterly basis etc.

KICs should as well develop a data pipeline under the Cross-KIC Shared Services Grant Agreement which should be used by all KICs for data reporting. As ultimate aim, EIT should ping the API and retrieve relevant data when needed, ensuring smooth data import.

All EIT data reporting needs are specified in the EIT guidance documents.

13. Evaluation Process

13.1   Proposal assessment

The proposals shall be assessed by **independent external experts** selected by the EIT and organised in panels. The assessment will be supported by EIT officers.

The KICs shall not have direct or indirect contact with the external experts regarding the evaluation at any time, including during or after the evaluation exercise. The information and the names of the experts shall remain confidential.

The evaluation will be carried out and scored against the award criteria **at portfolio level,** based on the evidence presented in the previous chapters. To ensure quality of the Business Plan at portfolio level, and the Cross-KIC and HEI, the proposals will be assessed in terms of **(a) Excellence**, **(b) Impact** and **(c) Quality and efficiency of the implementation**. Furthermore, regularity and legality and other elements relating to the applicable Grant Agreement provisions are also verified.

The outcomes of the Business Plan, Cross-KIC and HEI evaluations are included in the evaluation reports which contains scores substantiated by evaluative justifications. The outcome of this assessment leads to the formal EIT requirements, which shall be met prior to the approval of the Business Plan, Cross-KIC and HEI as a condition for the grant award and the Grant Agreement signature.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

The evaluation will be based on the whole Business Plan, Cross-KIC and HEI proposals. The EIT and the experts may also consult other submitted documentation, as described by the annotated templates and Horizon Europe Guidelines, or may browse publicly available sources to verify information provided by the KICs.

13.2 Multi-annual strategy assessment

The strategy and multi-annual progress assessment of the KIC Business Plan will be carried out by the **EIT Governing Board** with support from the appointed EIT GB Rapporteurs. It will focus on the **KIC development and achievements over the years from the strategic perspective**, i.e. how successful is the KIC in reaching the EIT's and KIC's strategic objectives and societal and economic impact targets. Part of this assessment will be also to verify that the strategic recommendations made by the EIT Governing Board in previous years have been addressed by the KICs and that monitoring recommendations are followed up. It will also include the performance of the KIC during the Hearings with the EIT Governing Board.

EIT GB Rapporteurs, designated by the EIT Governing Board, will oversee the progress and related assessment process during the year and will report back to the Board during the Hearings with the KICs.

Four EIT GB Rapporteurs, members of the EIT Governing Board, are appointed (two per each wave of KICs, second and third wave combined, and fourth and fifth wave combined). Two GB Rapporteurs are appointed as Lead Rapporteurs whilst two are appointed as Associate Rapporteurs to support the tasks of the Lead Rapporteur. The EIT GB Rapporteurs' main role is to **visit the KICs in the particular wave in order to familiarise with the KICs' strategic and multi-annual development.** The EIT GB Rapporteurs will discuss the state-of-play of implementing the strategic recommendations with high-level representatives of the KIC (CEO, Chairperson or Members of the KIC Board). Any other topics of strategic importance identified during the year can also be discussed. Based on the knowledge gained during the visit and the KIC's strengths and weaknesses identified, a briefing to the EIT GB will be prepared by EIT and approved by the GB Rapporteurs. In the preparatory session for the Hearings, EIT GB Rapporteurs will highlight the KIC's progress and key challenges which will then be discussed at the Hearings with the KICs.

13.3 Hearings with the KICs

The Hearings with the KICs constitute an important part of the multi-annual strategy assessment of the KIC Business Plan, but also, they embrace the whole financial allocation process.

The Hearings with the KIC CEOs will be held in person or online on the date shown in the indicative timeline in Chapter 3. The modalities of the Hearings, in particular the scope and structure of the KIC interventions and the time allocated, will be communicated to the KICs in due time.

The main objective of the Hearing will be to conclude on the Multi-Annual Strategy criterion (criterion 1) assessment and to issue strategic recommendations to the KICs as applicable.

The Hearings will comprise of an introduction and an in-depth Q&A session aiming to increase the level of interaction with the KICs, enabling a discussion and understanding of the KIC strategy. The sessions will

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

focus on key strategic challenges in areas such as the KICs' e.g. impact, synergies, KIC business model and progress towards financial sustainability, building the EIT Community Brand Identity, KIC governance, partnership and openness.

Following the Hearings, the EIT Governing Board will take a decision on the final scores for criterion 1, see Chapter 8.3.1.

The EIT Governing Board may issue recommendations to KICs on strategic elements to improve key areas in order to maximise the impact and deliver on the EIT's Strategic Innovation Agenda.

No Hearings are foreseen concerning the Cross-KIC and HEI proposals.

14. Funding allocation decision – Grant Agreement signature

Following the Hearings, the EIT Governing Board will take the **funding allocation decision** on:

- the maximum EIT financial contribution for each KIC (whose Business Plan proposal met the admissibility, eligibility, exclusion, and financial and operational capacity criteria, and was positively evaluated under the award criteria, and for which a hearing was held by the EIT Governing Board);
- the maximum EIT financial contribution for the Cross-KIC activities;
- the maximum EIT financial contribution for the HEI activities.

The EIT Director will communicate the evaluation results to the KICs and request the submission of the updated version of the proposals based on:

(a) the EIT requirements for the proposal revision, and

(b) the EIT Governing Board strategic recommendations (or other measures in line with the EIT Supervision Framework[40]), in case of Business Plan only.

The formal requirements issued by the EIT – including the maximum EIT contribution – shall be met prior to the approval of the proposals as a condition for the grant award and the signature of the Grant Agreements.

A clarification session is offered following each EIT requirements letter.

The EIT Governing Board's funding allocation decision will serve as the basis for the **award of the grants by the EIT Director** and for the conclusion of the Grant Agreements, provided that the updated version of the proposals, including the estimated budget:

- are in compliance with the requirement laid down in this invitation and respective guidelines;

---

[40] https://www.eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-42_20211125-gb69-42_supervision_framework_of_kics.pdf

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

- meet the requirements for the revision of the proposals issued by the EIT Director, including the decided maximum EIT financial contribution;

- are aligned with the Strategic Recommendations issued by the EIT Governing Board (as applicable).

In the event of the grants awarded by the EIT Director, the EIT will sign the grant agreements (GA) detailing the conditions and level of funding with the KICs.

The grant agreements are inbuilt in the eGrants tool and will be signed within the tool (not on paper). The grant agreements follow the Horizon Europe legal framework and the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (MGA). The MGA is published on the Funding and Tenders portal[41]. Please note that EIT-specific provisions can be found in Annex 5 of the HE MGA.

Any amendment to it should also be managed in eGrants.

15. Legal and financial provisions

15.1 Starting date, eligibility period

The following table shows the grant agreements, the starting date and the eligibility periods:

Topics	Grant agreements (GA)	Starting date and eligibility period of GA
1) Six KIC Business Plans: - EIT Health Business Plan - EIT RawMaterials Business Plan - EIT Food Business Plan - EIT Manufacturing Business Plan - EIT Urban Mobility Business Plan - EIT Culture & Creativity Business Plan	One grant agreement per KIC	1 January 2026 – 31 December 2028
2) Four Cross-KIC activities: - Cross-KIC Shared Services - Cross-KIC Regional Innovation & Internationalisation - Cross-KIC Entrepreneurial Education & Skills - Cross-KIC Innovation & Business Creation	One grant agreement for each Cross-KIC topic	1 January 2026 – 31 December 2028
3) One Higher Education Initiative activity	One grant agreement	1 January 2026 – 31 December 2028

---

[41] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/agr-contr/general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

The action's start date and duration will be fixed in the grant agreements.

This duration may be extended by the EIT in an exceptional situation with due justification. Such an extension shall be formalised with an amendment of the grant agreement.

15.2 Maximum grant amount, reimbursement of eligible costs

The eligible and ineligible costs, the form of grant and reimbursement, calculation of the final grant amount, reporting and payment arrangements together with other financial conditions are described in the model grant agreement.

The grant awarded may be lower than the amount requested.

The EIT grant will be a reimbursement of actual costs grant. This means that it will reimburse ONLY certain types of costs (eligible costs) and ONLY those costs *actually* incurred (NOT the *budgeted* costs).

15.3 Funding requirements in the EIT SIA 2021-2027 and funding rate in the GAs

EIT funding for KIC Business Plans shall be provided in line with the maturity of KICs and funding requirements aligned with the EIT SIA 2021-2027. The respective EIT SIA funding condition applicable for the reference year for the KIC will have to be met at portfolio level that will consider both **EIT funded activities** and **Non EIT Funded activities (NEFA)**. The principle of proportionality shall be respected when allocating NEFAs to the portfolios, limiting unjustified excessive use of the concept. The rules and guidance regarding NEFAs can be found in Annex 5 of the HE MGA and in the Annex 5 Annotation.

The costs will be reimbursed at the **single reimbursement rate (SRR)** indicated in the grant agreement. Co-funding will be mostly provided at the level of projects implemented through financial support to third parties. The conditions for financial support to third parties, including co-funding requirements are set out in Annex 5 of the grant agreement.

Additionally, in accordance with Chapter 3.6.2 of the EIT SIA 2021-2027, some KIC activities, due to their specific nature, might need extra incentives to be performed. To this aim, the EIT Governing Board decided by its *Decision 08/2025 on the principles for the determination of the EIT financial allocation to Knowledge and Innovation Communities' (KICs') for the 2026-2028 Business Plans of the second, third, fourth and fifth wave KICs, to Cross-KIC activities, and to the EIT Higher Education Initiative* that:

- the EIT RIS activities will be implemented in 2026-2028 at a funding rate **up to 100%**,

- Cross-KIC and shared services, and HEI activities will be implemented in 2026-2028 at a funding rate **up to 100%** (with the exception of some activities under the shared Services).

The estimated budgets for the KIC Business Plans, the Cross-KIC and HEI proposals shall be prepared in the line with the annexed annotated templates and Horizon Europe Guidelines.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

15.4   Reporting and payment arrangements and deliverables

The reporting and payment arrangements will be fixed in the grant agreement (Data Sheet, point 4 and Article 21 and 22). Mandatory deliverables set in the annotated templates (i.e. EIT Guidelines) and Horizon Europe Guidelines are expected to be submitted during the implementation years, while majority of deliverables are to be submitted together with the interim and/or final reports, as result of the implementation.

At the end of the implementation years, KIC shall submit a report and EIT will calculate the final EIT grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, EIT will ask the KIC LE to pay back the difference (recovery).

All payments will be made to the coordinator.

Please also note that KICs are responsible for keeping records on all the work done and the costs declared.

The payment of the grant will be made in **one prefinancing instalment,** two **interim payments** and a **final payment (the balance)**. The aim of the prefinancing is to provide the beneficiaries with a float. The prefinancing remains the property of the EU until they are cleared against eligible costs or contributions accepted by the granting authority (normally at final payment).

The following payment and reporting scheme is foreseen:

	When	Requirements	Reporting period
First pre-financing payment (up to 50% of overall grant)	Within 30 days following the signature of the grant agreement.	5% as a contribution to the Mutual Insurance Mechanism will be retained from the first prefinancing payment.	
First Interim Report	Within 90 days [42] following the end of the reporting period.	Interim report shall include a technical part and a financial part (i.e. individual and consolidated financial statements, explanation on the use of resources, certificates on the financial statements (CFS) if required, etc).	1-12 months
First Interim payment	Within 90 days from receiving the Interim Report.	Based on the declared actual costs, with a ceiling that pre-financings and the interim payment together cannot be more than 90%	
Second Interim Report	Within 90 days [43] following the end of the reporting period.	Interim report shall include a technical part and a financial part (i.e. individual and consolidated financial statements, explanation on the use of	13-24 months

---

[42] The KICs are allowed to submit the periodic reports within 90 days (i.e. beyond the formal deadline of 60 days due to the time required for the CFS report submissions).

[43] See previous footnote.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

		resources, certificates on the financial statements (CFS) if required, etc).	
Second Interim payment	Within 90 days from receiving the Interim Report.	Based on the declared actual costs, with a ceiling that pre-financings and the interim payment together cannot be more than 90%	✕
Final Report	Within 90 days [44] following the end of the reporting period.	The Final Report shall include a technical part and a financial part (i.e. individual and consolidated financial statements, explanation on the use of resources, certificates on the financial statements (CFS) if required, etc).	25-36 months
Final payment	Within 90 days from receiving the Final Report.	The EIT will calculate the final EIT grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, EIT will ask the beneficiary/ies to pay back the difference (recovery).	✕

15.5 Financial support to third parties

Financial support to third parties (FSTP) involves funding provided by the beneficiary (e.g. the KIC LE) to a recipient that is not a party to the grant agreement. Financial support to third parties includes sub-grants (financial support to third parties, Article 6.2.D.1 (a) of the GA); and financial support in the form of prizes (Article 6.2.D.1 (b) of the GA). KICs are strongly encouraged to use the lump sum sub-grant type when awarding FSTP.

KICs need to respect a **minimum threshold for the EIT budget dedicated to the FSTP outlined in Chapter 8.1.**

The KIC budget shall be aligned with the above threshold. If at the final reporting stage the threshold is not respected, the reported non-FSTP amounts exceeding the threshold will be considered ineligible.

The EIT-specific rules laid down in Annex 5 of the HE MGA shall be followed when launching open calls, KIC partnership calls, or direct awards. Please also refer to the Annex 5 Annotations.

Financial support to third parties established in HE eligible countries

As a general rule, **financial support should be awarded to entities established in HE eligible countries (see Chapter 5).**

Within this Invitation, the maximum amount of financial support to third parties should not exceed **6 MEUR** per recipient for a grant agreement of three-year duration.

Financial support to third parties established in non-HE eligible third countries

If the recipient of financial support is established in a third country not eligible under HE:

---

[44] See previous footnote.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

- in case of recipients of financial support **above EUR 60 000 per grant agreement**: if the entity is not eligible for funding under a national scheme, they may receive EIT funding on an exceptional basis agreed with the EIT, if the participation of the entity established in the third country is deemed essential for the action;

- in case of recipients of financial support **below EUR 60 000 per grant agreement**: the KICs may award financial support to third parties, if duly justified.

15.6 Eligibility of direct and indirect costs

Notwithstanding the key importance for the operations of the KIC, the **costs of top governance** (Supervisory Board or equivalent) and KIC management (C-level staff) cannot be claimed as direct costs (regardless of the cost category), even if top governance and C-level staff perform activities directly linked to the performance of the action.

Similarly, the following costs of indirect nature cannot be claimed by the KIC LE and entities associated to the KIC LE (CLCs etc.) as direct costs: **office costs** (utilities, maintenance, telecommunication, licences, etc.), **office supplies** (furniture, stationery, etc.), **corporate finance** incl. bookkeeping, **HR-related costs** (incl. recruitment costs), **IT equipment** (laptops, computers, monitors, mobile phones, etc.), **postage**, etc.

Those costs shall be covered by the indirect costs flat-rate 25% of eligible direct personnel costs and purchase costs (travel & subsistence, equipment, other goods, works & services).

Despite IT and rental costs are normally considered as indirect costs, the following exceptions apply:

- IT costs (including licences) covered by the Shared Service "Centre of Administrative Excellence" and/or related to IT tools used for the implementation of a specific thematic activity (e.g. education platform development and licences, etc.);

- Rental costs covered under the framework of the Shared Service "Centre of Administrative Excellence".

Moreover, in case the **FSTP thresholds** referred to in Chapter 8 for the KIC Business Plans and in Chapter 10 for the HEI activities, the cost in excess will be considered as ineligible.

Also, KICs shall ensure that costs incurred by KIC LE and CLC staff and/or by (sub)contracted organizations, which are involved in **activities related to EU and Public Affairs**, follow the Principles of Cooperation EU & Public Affairs. Any activity implemented by staff of the KIC LE and CLC and/or by (sub)contracted organizations that go against the Principles or harm the reputation of the EIT will not be eligible for funding.

Nota bene: KICs need to pay particular attention on properly budgeting direct and indirect costs, in line with this invitation's conditions and GA provisions. The EIT reserves the right to review the cost classification provided in Annex 1 during the assessment of financial reports. If a cost declared as a direct cost does not meet the relevant eligibility criteria of the grant agreement, the EIT will consider it ineligible.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

15.7 Eligible costs for equipment, infrastructure, and other assets

In line with Art. 6.2.C.2 of the GA, purchase of equipment, infrastructure or other assets used for the action must be declared as depreciation costs calculated on the basis of the costs actually incurred and written off in accordance with international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual accounting practices.

For the following equipment, infrastructure or other assets purchased specifically for the action (or developed as part of the action tasks) **within the EIT KIC Business Plan GA**, costs may exceptionally be declared as full capitalised costs:

Direct costs for construction of a prototype or pilot plant, if they fulfil the cost eligibility conditions applicable to their respective cost categories and if all of the following applies:

- building the prototype or pilot plant is (one of) the main action task(s) as described in the KIC Business Plan (Annex 1),

- the costs are foreseen in the estimated budget (Annex 2),

- the eligibility conditions of Art. 6.1 and 6.2 of the GA are met.

If the beneficiary records the construction costs directly under a fixed assets account in the balance sheet rather than as expenses of the year, those costs will normally be considered as compliant with Art. 6.1(a)(v) GA provided that:

- it is in accordance with the national accounting standards and with the beneficiary's usual cost accounting practices,

- there is no double charging of costs (in particular, no charging of depreciation costs for the prototype or pilot plant to another EU or Euratom grant).

If such equipment, infrastructure or other assets are rented or leased, full costs for renting or leasing are eligible, if they do not exceed the depreciation costs of similar equipment, infrastructure or assets and do not include any financing fees.

15.8 Joint and several liability of affiliated entities

As a rule, declarations on joint and several liability will be requested by EIT if the budget of the affiliated entity is higher than the budget of the beneficiary, with the following exceptions:

a. If the total budget of the affiliated entity is lower than EUR 100,000;

b. If the affiliated entity is a public body.

The KIC LE shall collect the Declaration on joint and several liability from the affiliated entities falling into the above situation and submit these to the EIT. Non-submission of the declaration may result in rejection of the costs for the affiliated entity concerned.

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

15.9 KIC's control strategy

The **KICs must have in place effective and reliable financial control and audit mechanisms**, in line with the provisions of the HE MGA Annex 5.

The mechanisms must include all the necessary elements defined in the '*EIT Guidelines for KICs' financial control and audit mechanisms*', further to the services provided under the joint Centre of Administrative Excellence.

16. Processing of personal data

The reply to the present invitation involves the recording and processing of personal data (such as name, address and CV). Such data will be processed by the EIT pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data[45]. Any personal data requested in accordance with the Invitation for Business Plans and Cross-KIC activities will be processed solely for that purpose by the EIT. The EIT privacy statement for the management of grants is available at: https://eit.europa.eu/data-protection

Personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) by the Commission, should the beneficiary be in one of the situations mentioned in Article 138 and 143 of the Financial Regulation 2024/2509 (for more information see the Privacy Statement on:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/data-protection-public-procurement-procedures_en.

---

[45] Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC

Annex 1: Key principles and concepts of the EIT KIC model

Besides the EIT Regulation and the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027, the following reference documents and related working documents shall be applied:

Principle/concept	Reference documents	Link
Financing, monitoring and evaluation of KICs	• Decision 14/2021 of the EIT Governing Board on the principles for financing, monitoring and evaluating KIC activities • Articles 11-12 of the KIC Partnership Agreement	https://eit.europa.eu/library/2021-1420210507-gbwpprinciples-finmonevalkics-activities-gbdml-eit EIT PA updated version
Financial sustainability principles	• Decision 06/2022 of the EIT Governing Board on the principles on the financial sustainability of KICs	https://eit.europa.eu/library/gb-decision-062022-amendment-principles-financial-sustainability-knowledge-and-innovation
EIT Key Performance Indicators (EIT Impact Framework)	• Decision 08/2022 of the EIT Governing Board on the EIT Key Performance Indicators	https://eit.europa.eu/library/gb-decision-082022-amendment-eit-key-performance-indicators-kpis-and-repealing-gb-decision
EIT RIS	• EIT RIS Implementation Framework 2021-2027 • EIT RIS Hubs Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles	https://eit.europa.eu/our-activities/eit-regional-innovation-scheme https://eit.europa.eu/library/ris-hubs-minimum-standards-and-guiding-principles
Innovation principles	• Article 7.4.1 of the KIC Partnership Agreement	EIT PA updated version
EIT Label Framework	• Decision 11/2021 of the EIT Governing Board on the new EIT Label Framework	https://eit.europa.eu/library/2021-1120210317-gb66-11labelframework

Call: HORIZON-EIT-2025-KIC-IBA - Invitation to submit proposals for GAs covering KIC Business Plans, Cross-KIC and HEI activities for 2026-2028

EU Grants: Call document EIT: V1.0 – 23.05.2025

	• EIT Decision 26/2021 on the adoption of the new EIT Label Handbook for degree programmes • EIT Decision 62/2022 on the adoption of the EIT Label Handbook for the EIT Fellowships and the EIT Label Handbook for non-degree education and EIT competence certification model.	https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eit_label_handbook_degree_programmes_-_final.pdf https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eit_label_fellowship_handbook.pdf https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eit_label_nondegree_handbook.pdf
Good governance principles	• Article 6.1 of the KIC Partnership Agreement (PA)	EIT PA updated version
Sound portfolio management principles	• Article 7.1 of the KIC Partnership Agreement (PA)	EIT PA updated version
Openness and transparency	• Article 7.2 of the KIC Partnership Agreement (PA) • Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement, Annex 5 • Annex 5 Annotation	EIT PA updated version https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/agr-contr/general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf Available in the TFS folder
Non EIT funded KAVA	• Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement, Annex 5 • Decision 06/2022 of the EIT Governing Board on the principles on the financial sustainability of KICs	https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/agr-contr/general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf https://eit.europa.eu/library/gb-decision-062022-amendment-principles-financial-sustainability-knowledge-and-innovation
EIT Supervision Framework	• Decision 42/2021 on the Supervision Framework of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs)	2021-42_20211125-gb69-42_supervision_framework_of_kics.pdf