



EIT INVESTS €70 MILLION TO BOOST INNOVATION SKILLS IN UNIVERSITIES AND DEEPEN COOPERATION WITH THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCES

Budapest, 8 July 2026 – The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) has selected 35 projects to receive €70 million in funding to help higher education institutions (HEIs) across Europe turn research into real-world innovation, strengthen entrepreneurship education and deepen collaboration with businesses. Awarded through the 2025 EIT Higher Education Initiative's Call for Proposals, the funding will support 552 organisations from 49 countries, including universities, businesses, research centres and public authorities.

This investment marks a major step towards achieving the goal of equipping Europe's future innovators with the skills needed to launch startups, bring new technologies to market, and drive Europe's competitiveness.

Contributing to the EU's Startup and Scaleup Strategy, the Union of Skills and its STEM Education Strategic Plan, the EIT has committed to training 200 000 science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) students and staff in innovation, entrepreneurship and intellectual property management by 2028. For the first time, this call also strengthens cooperation between the EIT's Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) and the [European Universities alliances](#).

Roxana Mînzatu, Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness, said: *'Europe's greatest innovation asset is its people. Every day, students, researchers, educators and entrepreneurs are developing ideas with the potential to create jobs, strengthen our competitiveness and improve lives in line with Europe's political priorities. The EIT Higher Education Initiative helps turn that potential into impact by connecting talent with entrepreneurship, industry and investment. For the first time, this call also brings European Universities alliances into Europe's largest innovation ecosystem.'*

Ekaterina Zaharieva, Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation, added: *'Europe's universities generate world-class knowledge, but too many promising ideas never make it beyond the laboratory. By connecting students, researchers, entrepreneurs and businesses, we can help turn research into innovation and innovation into economic growth. Strengthening entrepreneurial skills and closer cooperation with industry will help create the next generation of European startups and scaleups.'*



A record 138 consortia, representing 1 865 organisations, applied to the latest call, highlighting growing demand for innovation capacity building in higher education. Nearly half of all European Universities alliances submitted proposals, underlining their increasing focus on entrepreneurship and innovation.

Stefan Dobrev, Chairperson of the EIT Governing Board, said: *‘Five years on, the EIT Higher Education Initiative has demonstrated the catalytic effect of entrepreneurial skills on commercialising research. The high participation in this call reflects a growing enthusiasm for taking technology beyond campus walls and all along the innovation value chain. We look forward to welcoming the 35 selected projects and helping them create impact for students, researchers and their wider communities.’*

The call comprised two strands. The first supports entrepreneurship and innovation capacity in STEM disciplines. The second supports long-term cooperation between the EIT’s KICs and the European Universities alliances supported under Erasmus+.

Each alliance will work with its assigned KIC in areas of shared interest, with activities developed jointly based on the priorities and strengths of both partners. The aim is to strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship across each alliance. Of the 35 selected projects, 18 will focus on the first strand and 17 on the second.

In total, 351 organisations will participate as full project partners, including 218 HEIs, 76 businesses and 57 other organisations, such as research centres, public authorities and intermediary organisations. A further 201 organisations will participate as associated partners. Since 2021, the initiative has reached 622 HEIs. The 35 selected projects bring together partner organisations from 49 countries. Italy has the highest number of participating organisations (51), followed by Germany (48), Spain (43), Greece (34), and France and Portugal (30 each).

A full list of the selected projects, including participating organisations, countries, budgets, project summaries can be found [here](#), while an interactive map is available [here](#).

The new projects will start in September 2026 and run for two years with each receiving up to €2 million in funding. Together, they will strengthen innovation, entrepreneurship and intellectual property education, train tens of thousands of students and staff, improve technology transfer, and build lasting partnerships across sectors including artificial intelligence, clean technologies, health, maritime industries and space. Businesses are at the heart of every project, helping to design training that meets industry needs, attracts investment and brings new innovations to market.

**ABOUT THE EIT HIGHER EDUCATION INITIATIVE**

The EIT Higher Education Initiative is a European funding programme focused on innovation in higher education. By bringing together HEIs and a diversity of innovation partners through its projects, it delivers creative and original approaches to innovation and entrepreneurial capacity building. The links established between HEIs and businesses, research and public bodies have led to integrated ecosystems in which HEIs act as hubs creating lasting and systematic impact. Its projects have trained students and staff on innovation and entrepreneurship, supported the creation and growth of startups and scaleups, and helped bring innovations to market. The EIT KICs collectively implement the EIT Higher Education Initiative, with EIT RawMaterials in the coordinating role.

More details about the past calls can be found [here](#).

ABOUT THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY (EIT)

The EIT strengthens Europe's ability to innovate by powering solutions to pressing global challenges and by nurturing entrepreneurial talent to create sustainable growth and skilled jobs in Europe. The EIT is an EU body and an integral part of [Horizon Europe](#), the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. The Institute supports dynamic pan-European partnerships, EIT KICs, among leading companies, research labs and universities. Together with their leading partners, the EIT Community offers a wide range of innovation and entrepreneurship activities across Europe: entrepreneurial education courses, business creation and acceleration services and innovation-driven research projects.

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