



European Institute of
Innovation & Technology

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EIT GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2025 IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE.....	3
2. THE EIT GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2025-2027 OBJECTIVES, KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS	4
2.1. STRENGTHENING GENDER MAINSTREAMING.....	5
2.2. INNOVATION.....	6
2.3. BUSINESS CREATION & ACCELERATION.....	9
2.4. EDUCATION.....	11
2.5. ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY AT THE EIT, INCLUDING GENDER BALANCE IN EIT MANAGEMENT	13



1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union, enshrined in the EU Treaties and reinforced through the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy, which commits the Union to advancing equality across all policy areas. Within the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, this commitment is further strengthened, recognising gender equality as a prerequisite for excellence, inclusiveness and impact in research and innovation.

As Europe's largest innovation ecosystem, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) has a key role in translating this commitment into practice. Strengthening Europe's innovation capacity requires unlocking the full potential of all talent. Across the EIT Community, experience consistently demonstrates that diverse teams generate more innovative solutions, respond more effectively to market and societal needs, and create stronger, more resilient businesses and innovation ecosystems. Integrating gender perspectives into entrepreneurship support, innovation activities, education programmes and organisational practices is therefore not only a matter of fairness, but also a driver of better innovation outcomes and competitiveness.

This report presents the EIT Community's progress in advancing gender equality during 2025 across its education, innovation and business creation activities, as well as through institutional transformation and organisational practices. It demonstrates how embedding gender equality throughout the innovation lifecycle contributes to stronger participation, improved performance and greater societal and economic impact. By widening participation in innovation, the EIT strengthens Europe's capacity to develop solutions that are more inclusive, competitive and responsive to future challenges.



The report also reflects the EIT Community's continued leadership in promoting diversity and inclusion. **In 2025, the EIT was recognised for the second consecutive year with first place in the EU Agencies Network (EUAN) Diversity & Inclusion Award.** This recognition acknowledges the sustained commitment of the EIT Community to fostering an innovation ecosystem where excellence and inclusion reinforce one another and where diversity is recognised as a strategic asset for innovation.

2. THE EIT GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2025-2027

OBJECTIVES, KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

Drawing on the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, the requirements of Horizon Europe, and the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021–2027, the [EIT Gender Equality Action Plan \(GEP\) 2025–2027](#)¹, adopted in December 2024, provides the roadmap for implementing the EIT Gender Equality Policy 2022–2027.

The Action Plan is guided by two overarching objectives:

- Strengthen the EIT's leadership in Europe's innovation landscape by promoting gender equality, women's entrepreneurship and women's leadership across the EIT Community and the wider innovation ecosystem.
- Advance gender equality within the EIT organisation, ensuring equal opportunities and balanced representation across staff, management and decision-making structures.



To deliver these objectives, the Action Plan defines, in six strategic areas, a comprehensive framework of activities, key performance indicators (KPIs), targets and governance arrangements that support effective implementation, monitoring and accountability throughout the 2025–2027 period.

The 2025–2027 Action Plan builds on the achievements of the previous EIT Gender Equality Plan (2022–2024). While the earlier plan focused primarily on increasing the participation of women in the EIT Community innovation, education, and business creation & acceleration programmes, and in leadership positions across the EIT and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities, the new Action Plan adopts a broader and more systemic approach. In addition to continuing efforts to improve gender balance and increase women's participation, it places greater emphasis on integrating the gender dimension into innovation and education content. It recognises that gender-responsive innovation and education are essential for improving quality by reducing bias and blind spots in data, design and testing, strengthening market relevance by addressing the needs of diverse users, and increasing competitiveness. Finally, it supports ethical, inclusive and sustainable innovation aligned with EU values.

This report presents the key aspects of the implementation of the EIT 2025–2027 Gender Equality Action Plan during its first year, highlighting the progress made across its strategic objectives, the results achieved, and the contribution of these actions to strengthening an inclusive and competitive European innovation ecosystem.

¹ Ares(2024)8988241

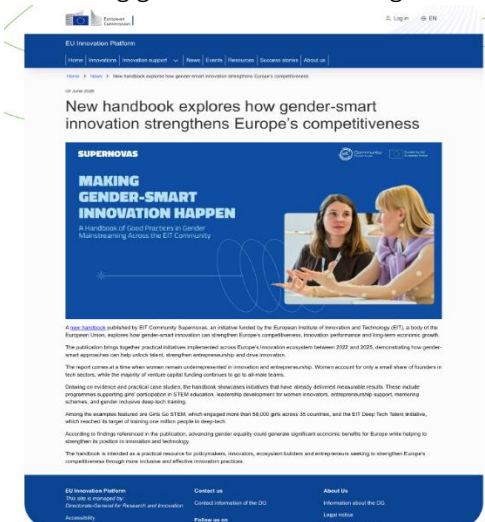
2.1. STRENGTHENING GENDER MAINSTREAMING

While women-focused programmes remain an important instrument for increasing women's participation in innovation and entrepreneurship - as demonstrated by EIT flagship initiatives such as EIT Community SUPERNOVAS and EIT Girls Go STEM - lasting progress towards gender equality requires a broader, systemic approach. The EIT therefore continues to strengthen gender mainstreaming across its activities, as the most effective strategy to achieve gender equality.

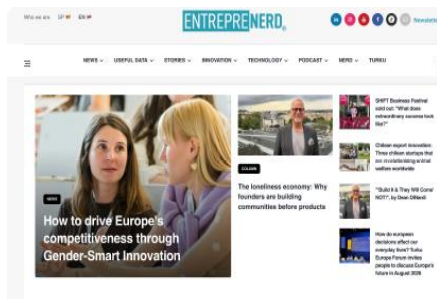
Gender mainstreaming refers to the systematic integration of a gender perspective into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and organisational processes. In the context of research and innovation, this means considering how gender influences participation, leadership, funding decisions, innovation design and the uptake of results, ensuring that innovation outcomes are more inclusive, relevant and impactful.

Throughout 2025, the EIT further embedded gender equality within its strategic planning, governance and monitoring processes. Gender equality requirements were incorporated, among others, in the **Invitation to submit Business Plan Proposals 2026–2028** and the accompanying Guidelines, while the gender equality criteria within the **EIT Calls Monitoring Checklist** were expanded to better assess the integration of gender considerations.

Progress made by the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) continues to be monitored through the annual **EIT KICs Gender Mainstreaming Reports**, which provide evidence for assessing implementation, identifying areas for improvement and facilitating the exchange of promising practices across the EIT Community. To support consistent implementation, the EIT continued to coordinate the **EIT KICs Gender Equality Working Group**, bringing together representatives from all KICs through bi-monthly meetings. The Working Group provides a structured forum for coordination, peer learning and knowledge exchange, supporting the alignment of approaches while enabling KICs to share practical experiences and innovative solutions for advancing gender mainstreaming.



Beyond the EIT Community, 2025 marked an important step in sharing knowledge with the wider European innovation ecosystem through the publication of ***Making Gender-Smart Innovation Happen: A Handbook of Good Practices on Gender Mainstreaming across the EIT Community***. Developed by the EIT Community SUPERNOVAS in collaboration with the EIT and its KICs, the handbook presents tested and transferable practices implemented across the EIT Community between 2022 and 2025, offering practical guidance for organisations seeking to integrate gender perspectives into innovation and entrepreneurship activities.



The publication was disseminated through EIT and EIT Community SUPERNOVAS communication channels and shared directly with key European stakeholders, including the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) and the European Union Agencies Network (EUAN). It reached audiences in more than 20 countries, generated over 6000 social media impressions and attracted more than 300 visits to the publication webpage. The Handbook was featured by specialised media and European innovation platforms, including [European Commission EU Innovation Platform](#), [EU Newsletter.eu](#), and EntrepreNerd, and received very positive feedback from stakeholders across the European innovation ecosystem.

2.2. INNOVATION

In 2025, the EIT continued its efforts to increase the participation of women in the EIT Community innovation activities and began implementing the new objective of enhancing integration of the gender dimension into innovation content.

Progress towards increasing women's participation in EIT Community innovation continued throughout 2025. The latest validated reporting figures² show that **women accounted for 28% of CEOs/Owners of start-ups created of/for innovation**, only two percentage points below the EIT GEP target of 30% women by 2027.

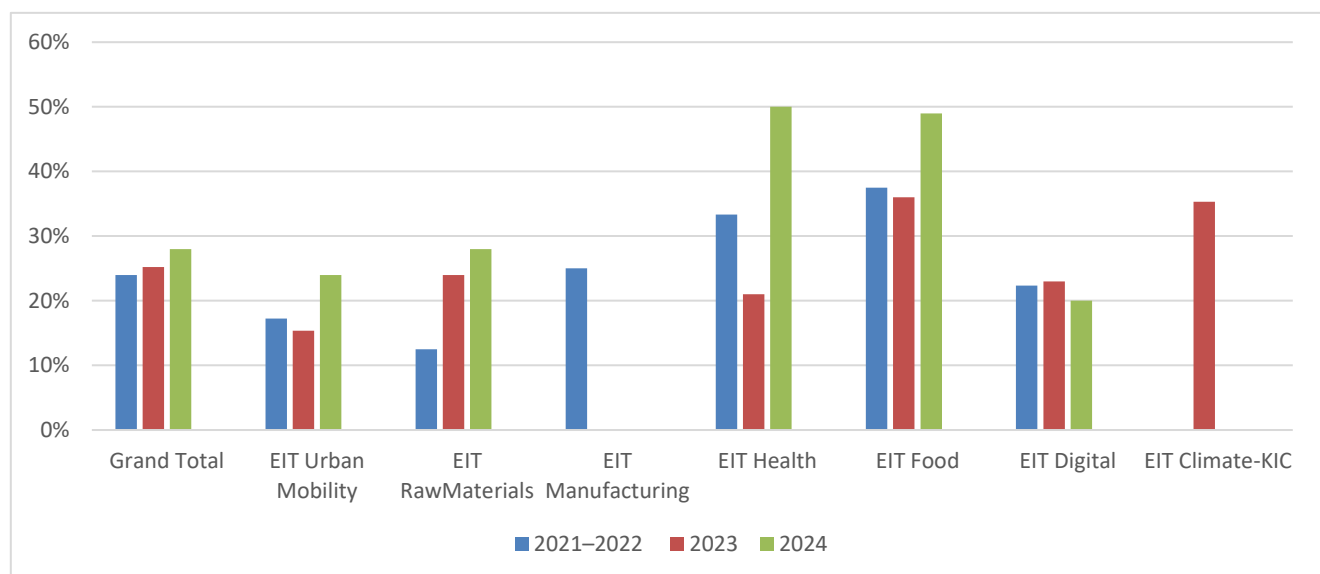


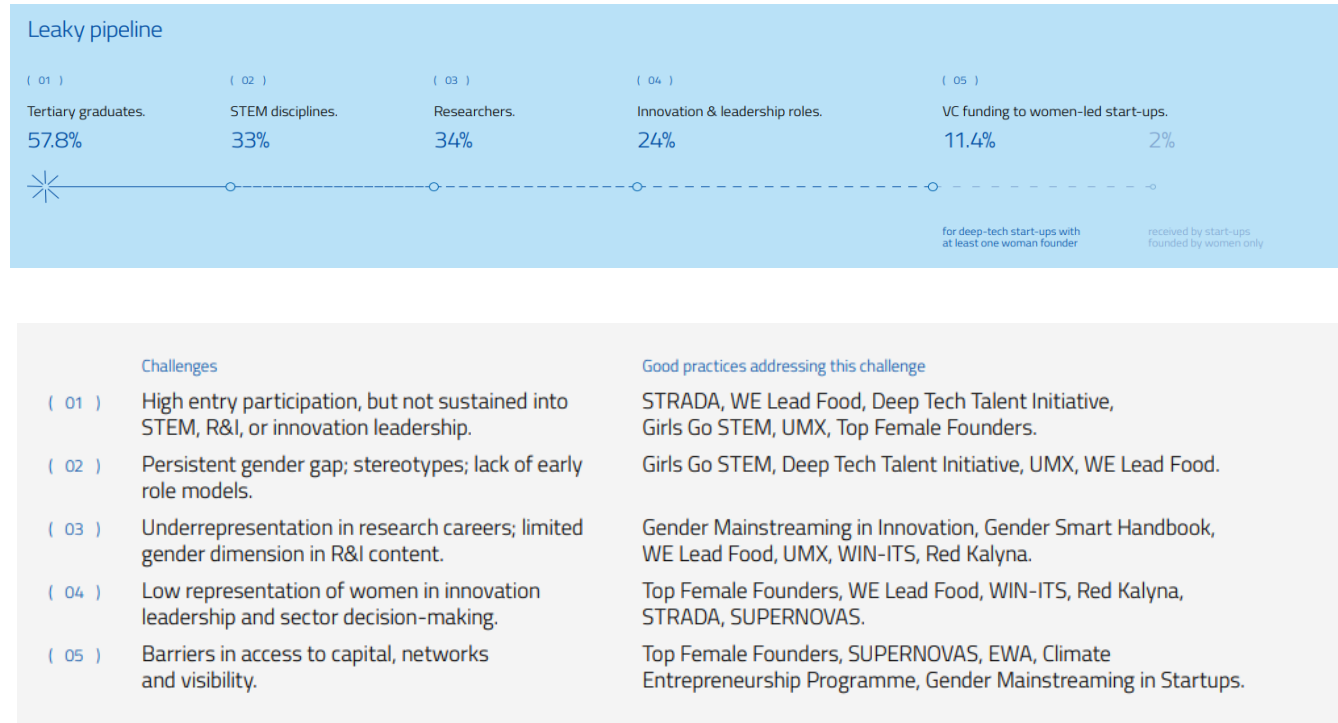
Figure 1 Start-ups created of/for innovation. KPI EITHE 04.1 – Gender

EIT GEP target by 2027: 30%

2024 reporting figures: 28%

² All Reporting figures refer to the validated 2024 EIT KICs reporting, with 2025 validated figures not being available yet

The following visuals³ present key challenges affecting women's participation in innovation, and examples of EIT Community practices addressing them:



EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES FROM THE EIT COMMUNITY

EIT HEALTH: Steering Large-Scale Innovation Towards Patient-Centred Digital Transformation

EIT Health's 2025 Flagships Call demonstrates a strong shift toward patient-centred digital transformation of healthcare systems. The call prioritises large, multi-partner projects that deliver integrated digital solutions—including clinical decision-support tools, remote monitoring, and data-driven devices explicitly designed to improve patient outcomes and diverse user experience. A key promising practice is the alignment of innovation activities with the new EU Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Regulation. This ensures that digital products are reimbursable, scalable across Member States, and ready for real-world deployment.

This approach embeds gender-sensitive and patient-centred design principles into innovation pipelines while strengthening regulatory preparedness. One of the Call's mandatory KPIs refers to promoting gender equality and inclusivity in healthcare innovation and technology (for example, by considering the differential impact of health innovations on various genders and ensuring diversity within project teams and target populations).

EIT URBAN MOBILITY: THE WOMEN IN NORDIC INTELLIGENT TRANSPORT SYSTEMS

Implemented by EIT Urban Mobility, WIN-ITS created a cross-Nordic network to promote women's participation

³ Source: EIT Community SUPERNOVAS [Making Gender-Smart Innovation Happen: A Handbook of Good Practices on Gender Mainstreaming across the EIT Community](#)

in the intelligent transport sector. Between 2023 and 2025, the project delivered 10 events (webinars,

workshops, national events, and a congress panel) and published more than five articles highlighting gender equality in mobility. The initiative enhanced visibility for women in transport innovation, influenced new funding proposals (NIKK, VELUXFONDEN, NOVO NORDISK FONDEN), and demonstrated the value of integrating gender perspectives directly into mainstream innovation events.

EIT FOOD

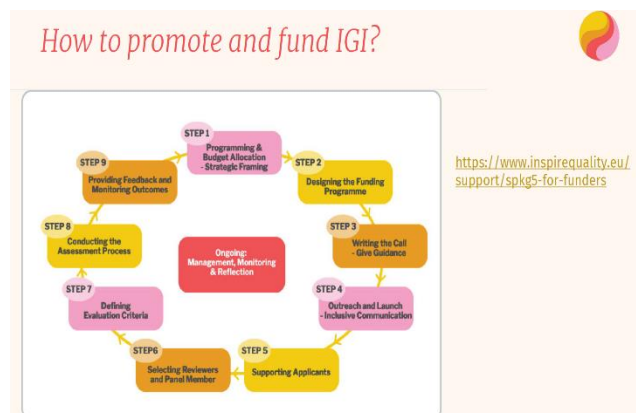
GENDER MAINSTREAMING SESSIONS

EIT Food strengthened internal gender mainstreaming in innovation, through organisation-wide gender mainstreaming sessions and an e-learning course. Through seven tailored sensitising sessions and a new e-learning course 'Gender-Inclusive Agrifood Innovations', the initiative achieved measurable change: innovation calls now award additional points for proposals that consider gender and diversity in their impact analysis, embedding gender equality at the institutional level and demonstrating how organisational change can be achieved.

WE LEAD FOOD

Launched in 2018, **WeLead Food** addresses the persistent leadership gap in the agrifood innovation by equipping women researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs with training, mentorship, and networks. To date, over 850 participants from 60+ countries have taken part. The programme has led to measurable increases in women-led start-ups and greater participation of women in EIT Food innovation programmes. Participants report higher leadership confidence and systemic-change competencies.

EIT: Cooperation with the Horizon Europe [INSPIRE](#) Centre of Excellence for Inclusive Gendered Innovation



The integration of the gender dimension into innovation content, introduced as a new objective under the EIT 2025-2027 gender equality action plan, requires additional knowledge, tools and practical approaches. To support the EIT Community in this area, the EIT initiated cooperation with the Horizon Europe INSPIRE Centre of Excellence for Inclusive Gendered Innovation. As part of this cooperation, INSPIRE developed [Support Package 5 on Integrating the Gender Dimension in Research and Innovation](#), tailored to the objectives and

needs of the EIT Community.

RECOGNISING WOMEN INNOVATION LEADERS

EIT and EIT: European Prize for Women Innovators

Jointly managed by the European Innovation Council (EIC) and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), the European Prize for Women Innovators recognises outstanding women entrepreneurs whose innovations generate societal and economic impact across Europe. Alongside the Women Innovators and Rising Innovators categories, the Prize includes the EIT Women Leadership category, recognising exceptional

women innovators from the EIT Community. By celebrating successful innovators as visible role models, the Prize

helps address the persistent underrepresentation of women in innovation leadership while strengthening collaboration between the EIT and the EIC in promoting a more inclusive European innovation ecosystem.

EIT JUMPSTARTER: RED KALYNA



EIT [Red Kalyna](#) was launched in 2023 and is committed to showcasing the exceptional contributions of Ukrainian women innovators in business, science, research, and leadership, celebrating their successes on a global scale. By bringing their achievements to the forefront, the initiative fosters a culture of resilience, collaboration, and innovation, amplifying the impact and visibility of women leaders worldwide.

Following its successful launch in 2023, the 2025 edition attracted more than 100 nominations from Ukrainian women innovators – twice as many as in

2024 – demonstrating growing recognition of the initiative and increasing visibility of Ukrainian women-led innovation.

2.3. Business creation & acceleration

The EIT has a long-standing tradition of supporting projects and initiatives that promote women's entrepreneurship and leadership. Since the launch of the EIT Women Leadership Award in 2018, the EIT community has continued to expand initiatives supporting women entrepreneurs. By 2025, all EIT KICs have implemented targeted strategies and measures to increase participation of women in its Business Creation & Acceleration Programmes. In 2025, the EIT Community has also began implementing the new objective of enhancing inclusive programme design.

The latest validated reporting figures⁴ show that **women accounted for 26% of CEOs/Owners of start-ups and scale-ups supported**. This result indicates that further efforts are needed to achieve the EIT GEP target of 35% women by 2027. It also underlines the importance of continued monitoring and impact assessment of the measures implemented across the EIT Community.

⁴ All Reporting figures refer to the validated 2024 EIT KICs reporting, with 2025 validated figures not being available yet

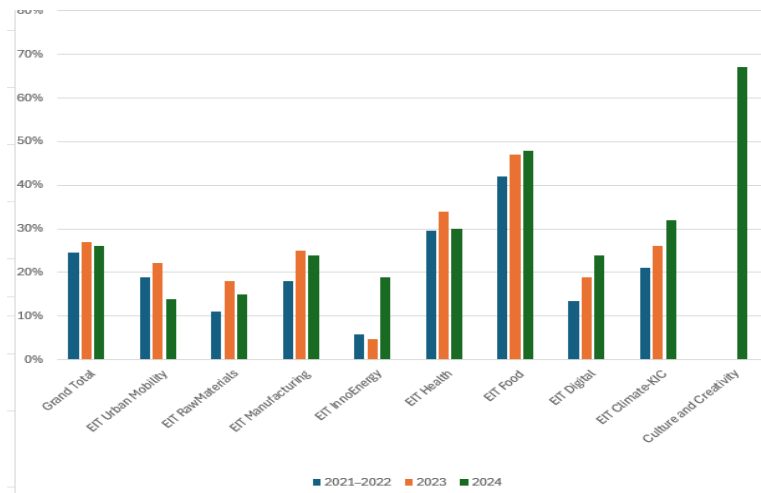


Figure 2 Start-ups and scale-ups supported. KPI EITHE03.1 – Gender

EIT GEP target by 2027 35% women. Status: 26% (2024 Reporting)

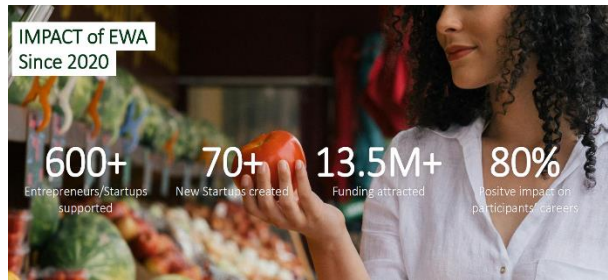
EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES FROM THE EIT COMMUNITY

EIT COMMUNITY SUPERNOVAS

An ecosystem that produces innovation only from one part of its talent base is not only unjust — it is less effective. [EIT Community SUPERNOVAS](#), launched in 2022, is a flagship cross-KIC initiative, addressing the persistent gender gap in European entrepreneurship and investment. Between 2022 and 2025, Supernovas supported 100 women-led startups and trained 667 women in investment, through its unique education programmes: Women2Invest, VC Academy and Business Angels Academy. Startups supported by Supernovas attracted over €93 million investment, with 103 x leverage effect. Its Women2Invest programme trained 243 women with STEAM background from 28 countries to transition into venture capital roles, and established collaboration with 40 VC funds.

These are not diversity statistics. They are ecosystem outputs: companies funded, investors placed, networks expanded. By expanding the pool of both founders and capital allocators, Supernovas does not simply support individual women — it changes the structural composition of the European venture ecosystem.

EIT FOOD: EMPOWERING WOMEN IN AGRIFOOD (EWA)



EWA strengthens long-term innovation capacity by building a high-quality, gender-inclusive pipeline of early-stage agrifood innovators, delivering scalable and context-relevant impact across countries through foundational entrepreneurship knowledge and tailored support.

In 2025, the [EWA](#) continued to provide 360-degree support for women entrepreneurs in agrifood sector, to build and scale sustainable businesses. In 2025 the programme has reached thirteen countries from the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme, offering mentoring, training on business development, pitching and market access, as well as networking opportunities. Since 2020, it has supported 600+ entrepreneurs/start-ups, 70+ new start-ups were created, and €13.5 million funding raised.

CLIMATE-KIC - [INCLUSIVE DESIGN FOR CLIMATE INNOVATION: A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE](#)

Launched in 2025, the [Guidebook](#) is practical resource designed to transform how climate innovation programming approaches inclusivity from the ground up. It provides a complete 5-step project lifecycle framework – from initiation and planning to execution, monitoring, evaluation and closure – with practical exercises that enable teams to: understand: what inclusivity truly means beyond tracking numbers; meaningfully involve diverse target groups throughout the process; measure impact through inclusive metrics; examine power dynamics within organisations and value chains; build programmes and climate initiatives where inclusivity is intentionally designed from day one.

EIT GLOBAL OUTREACH: GENDER MAINSTREAMING

A straightforward yet impactful measure: gender-sensitive scoring in global innovation. EIT Global Outreach decided to award additional points to women-led start-ups. The proportion of women-led start-ups rose from 20% in 2023 to 50% in 2025. Simple, transparent adjustment, highly replicable across programmes.

2.4. EDUCATION

The EIT Community education activities strongly contribute to the New European Innovation Agenda and goals set in Action 13 of the European Digital Education Plan 2021-2027, encourage women's participation in STEM.

Educational gender bias and horizontal segregation, reflected in the significant underrepresentation of women in STEM fields, persist into the job market, where women remain underrepresented in the workforce and in decision making roles across critical sectors. This imbalance hampers the European economy and sustainable growth. In response to this situation, the EIT GEP sets as one of the objectives ensuring gender balance in the EIT Community education programmes. In 2025, women made 43% of students of the EIT-labelled education programmes, exceeding the EIT GEP target of 40% women.

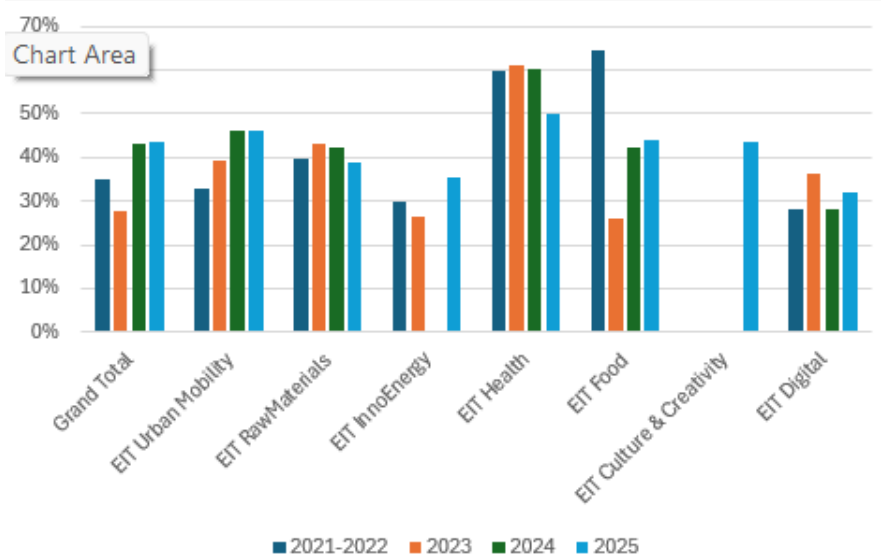


Figure 3 Students enrolled in the EIT-labelled education programmes. KPI EITHE09.1 – Gender
EIT GEP target minimum 40% women. Status: 43%

Throughout 2025, the EIT KICs continued several initiatives to increase participation of women in the EIT education programmes. It also initiated its work on a new EIT GEP objective: the incorporation of the gender dimension into the education content, understood as systematic consideration of sex, gender analysis and, integration of a gender perspective into the design, implementation and evaluation of education programmes, learning materials and learning outcomes. Across the EIT Community, integrating the gender dimension into education content is recognised as a foundation of gender-smart innovation.

EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES FROM THE EIT COMMUNITY

INCLUSIVE OUTREACH AND SCHOLARSHIPS

EIT KICs are uniformly adopting strategies and measures within their marketing and recruitment efforts to increase gender diversity in STEM. For example, 28Digital MSL adds are specifically targeting women and girls to attract them to 28Digital educational programmes. Another example is the [InnoEnergy Diversity & Inclusion Scholarship](#), fostering inclusivity and equity in InnoEnergy's Master's programs. The scholarship takes into consideration various diversity dimensions, including nationality, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

INTEGRATION OF THE GENDER DIMENSION INTO EDUCATION CONTENT

EIT Urban Mobility course [INSIGHTS INTO GENDER DIFFERENCES IN URBAN TRANSPORT](#), explores gender differences in travel behaviour and their impact on urban transport plans and decision-making process. The course is recommended both for wider innovation ecosystem, and for staff, project leaders, and partners of the EIT Urban Mobility.

EIT GIRLS GO STEM

[Girls Go STEM](#) (earlier Girls Go Circular) equips girls aged 14–19 with STEM, entrepreneurial and innovation-skills, through the Circular Learning Space. This EIT Community flagship education initiative has scaled rapidly in

2025, marking a transition from Circular to STEM, as part of the EU STEM Education Strategic Plan. Girls Go STEM



was a finalist of the European Digital Skills Awards 2025 in the Education category and won the EUAN 2025 Diversity and Inclusion Award for an 'Outstanding External Initiative'. Programme's Alumni are equipped with the knowledge, skills and motivation to pursue STEM studies and careers. The Programme aims to train 100 000 girls in STEM by 2028, building on the success of Girls Go Circular initiative which trained 100 000 students, including 86% girls, and engaged more than 1200 schools, between 2020 and 2025.

2.5. ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY AT THE EIT, INCLUDING GENDER BALANCED REPRESENTATION IN EIT STAFF AND MANAGEMENT

The EIT's second objective outlines eight activities on: recruitment and promotion; retaining women talents; awareness raising and capacity building; and institutional set-up for the implementation of the EIT GEP; with clear KPIs and targets, to ensure strengthening gender equality, including increasing gender balance, at the EIT.

Through cooperation with the European Union Agency's Network (EUAN) Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Working Group, the EIT takes part in the inter-institutional cooperation on inclusive working environment. In 2025, this cooperation included, among others, conducting a D&I survey to better understand which diversity dimensions are most relevant for the EIT staff. One of the dimensions identified was trans-gender inclusion. In response to staff's needs, the EIT hosted a dedicated workshop on this topic.

One of the EIT top priorities is gender balance in the EIT Community management. EIT actively encourages women to apply for positions where women are underrepresented, including through the inclusion of a statement encouraging women candidates to apply in Job Offers. EIT selection committees are gender-balanced and committees' members have undergone unconscious bias training.

In 2025 the participation of women in the EIT Management has remained at 50%, exceeding the EIT GEP target of 40%.

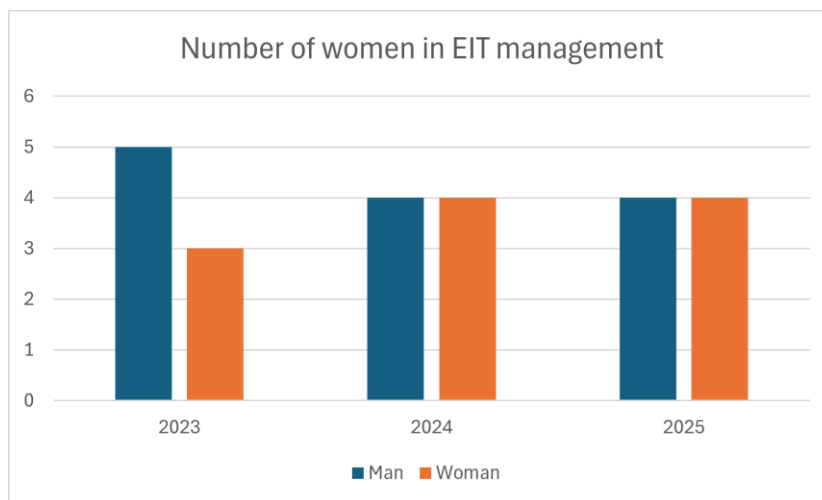


Figure 4 Women in the EIT Management

EIT GEP target 40% (by the end of 2024). Status: 50% (2025)

The EIT Social Policies, including: the EIT Director Decision on schooling and kindergarten; Working time and hybrid working rules, support parents in combining professional and carrying roles. While available to all staff, these measures are particularly beneficial to women, who continue to undertake majority of caring responsibilities.

Acknowledging the importance of gender balance in decision making positions, in 2025 the EIT has maintained the gender equality KPI, linked to finance allocation, for the EIT KICs governance and management. This strong incentive contributed to increasing women's participation in the EIT KICs decision making from 40% (2023 data) to 41.1% (2024 validated figures), slightly exceeding the 2024 EIT GEP target of 40%.

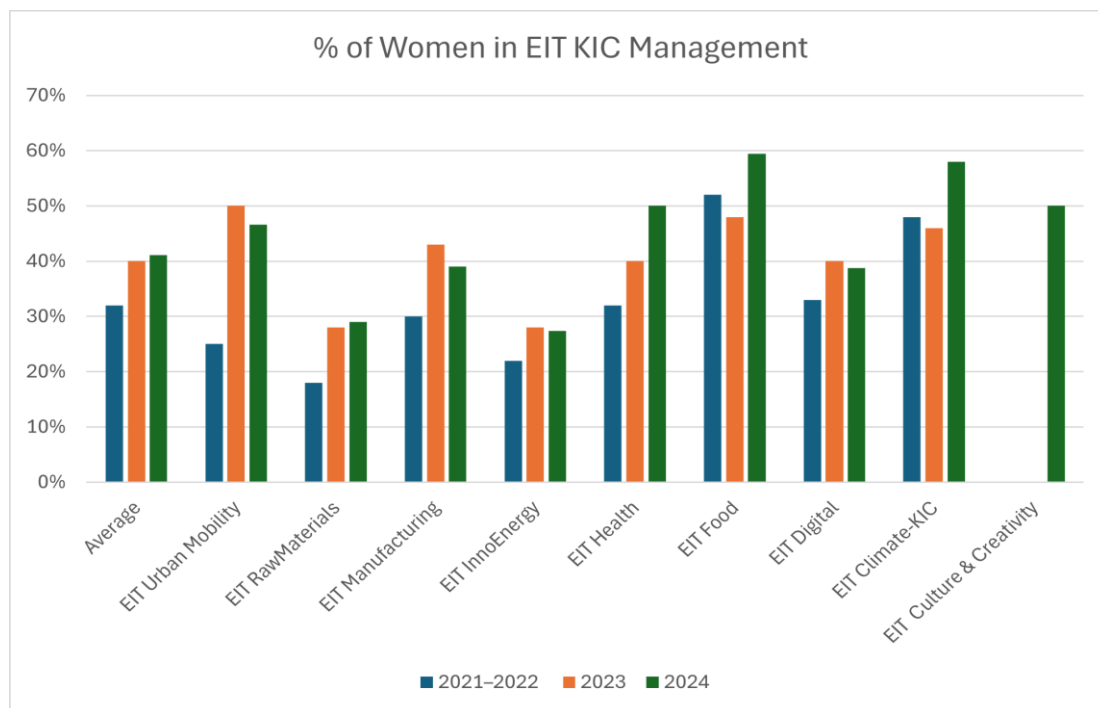


Figure 5 Women in the EIT KICs decision making.

EIT GEP target 40% (by the end of 2024). Status: 41.1% (2024 reporting)